We’re on the march with...

Barry’s Army

Somewhat to the surprise of its editors, Barry’s Army — obligatory reading for anyone on the march with the Ann Arbor Arsenal Under-Nine Blue team — has survived to a second issue. Moreover, its Chief Editor himself survived, although, after copies of the first issue were distributed, he was chased on to the pitch and threatened with physical violence by one of the parents depicted on the back page of that issue. Meanwhile, the other parent in the photograph complained that the image in question had not made it to the front page.

Clearly the attacker had little respect for the First Amendment. The weapon of choice in the attack was a rolled up copy of the fanzine, so, true to the first issue’s prophecy, it came in useful, although at Novi, not Airport Fields.

As the season nears its end, a second issue was called for, and here it is. Who knows what will happen at tryouts and what the team will look like next year, but it has certainly been a great year — and, for many families, a great first year with a travel team.

For next year, Play Big, and thank you, everyone, for a great time and some wonderful games. Good luck to everyone at tryouts.

Comments, suggestions, complaints? Contact the editors at: mlmakin@umich.edu

Message from the Master and Commander

As the spring 05 season draws to an end, the boys continue to develop and impress me. This is the end of our first 'full' season and what a season it has been! Our development has been great, with every player taking huge strides forward in his development as a soccer player (and hopefully as a person as well). Our results, although not too important at this age, have been fantastic. It is unbelievable that a team this young can play 17 league games without a loss. Every team has an 'off' or 'bad' day and, when you do, playing against the best teams in the state, you would expect to lose the odd game.....but not these guys. Even on our bad days (which by all accounts, are not that bad!) we seem to be able to find that 'extra gear', and dig deep to find something extra to get a result. That is something that will set these guys in great stead as they progress through their soccer careers. We are a competitive team, with competitive and driven players (I wonder where they get it from...dads?) and that mentality and attitude has helped us develop and progress. You improve in practice and games by playing with and against good players (although there may have been some doubt about that over the winter, when playing U10s). My other concern for these guys was playing the so called 'best teams', such as Wolves and Vardar (who have fantastic programs) — that seems to be a mental issue with a lot of youth players in this state. But with our defeat of Vardar in the PSI tournament, another step in our development was taken.

I have enjoyed every minute of my time with these guys (and the parents) and look forward to our next season.....and whatever that brings.

Coach Barry
Evan Jones is one of the team’s finest and strongest players. He has played very well all year, and has had a particularly good Spring Season. Of the fifty-nine goals scored by the team up to and including the Vardar game, Evan has scored ten, including a hat trick against the Classics at Pacesetter. He also kept goal extremely well in the second half of the Vardar match, making a very significant contribution to the 5-4 come-from-behind win. He is a versatile all-round player, with excellent ball skills and a strong shot, as he demonstrated when scoring the first goal of the outdoor Spring Season, from the penalty spot. Here is what he told Barry’s Army.

Evan, when were you born? August 4, 1995.

What are your plans for weight and height as a senior player? 175 lbs and 6’3”.

How long have you been playing? Since age four in clinics and age five on teams.

Why did you choose number eleven? It is my lucky number and it is Freddy Adu’s old number. I was number 11 on the Ninjas, 11 on the Rockets and 11 at tryouts.

What can you say about Airport Fields? They are very bumpy.

What was your greatest moment on the pitch so far? When I saved the goal that allowed us to win the game against Vardar.

And what, in the future, will be your greatest moment? When I get an Olympic Gold medal for America, not England. [Editor’s note: England is not an Olympic nation. English athletes compete for Great Britain, which has not entered an Association Football team in the Olympic games for many years]

What was your favorite moment as an Ann Arbor Arsenal player? Beating Vardar and winning WSSL Division II in the Fall.

What other sports do you play? Basketball and flag football. Of them the one I like most is basketball because it is almost as exciting as soccer.

If you weren’t playing the Beautiful Game, what would you be doing? I would be playing travel basketball.

What does “Play Big” mean to you? I don’t know.

Who is your favorite player, and why? Freddy Adu because he was very young when he started playing for DC United.

And your favorite team? DC United because they are cool.

What is your dream on the pitch? To play pro and win the World Cup seven times for America, not England. [Editor’s note — that would take a minimum of 28 years — no mean pro career]

And off the pitch? To have a happy life and have lots of friends.

What do you like about school? I get to see my friends.

What don’t you like about school? Our music teacher.

What was the funniest moment of your life? When I watched one of my classmates eat the bus seat because he was hungry.

What do you like most about your brother? He gives me candy.

What do you like least about your brother? He is annoying.

What is the one thing you wish your Mum, Lisa, and Dad, Rick, wouldn’t do? Make me go to bed and not let me go places whenever I want. [Editor’s note, that’s two].

Barry’s Army has heard that you have the reputation of a ladies’ man. What would you like to say about that? What the Hell is a ladies man? After hearing an explanation of the term, I like that!

Barry’s Army hears that you plan to play the game at the collegiate level. At Indiana. What’s wrong with Michigan? Indiana is a better team.

What is Barry Scott? Cool and nice.

If you were Barry what would you do? Try playing pro soccer again but not give up coaching our team!

Thank you, and good luck. Play Big (even if you don’t know what it means).
### Arsenal Blue Fixtures and Results — Outdoors Seasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>OPPONENT</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 September 04</td>
<td>Brighton</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>7-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 September 04</td>
<td>Canton Oaks Premier</td>
<td>GST</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>5-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 September 04</td>
<td>WAZA Blue</td>
<td>GST</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 September 04</td>
<td>Metrostars Red</td>
<td>GST</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 October 04</td>
<td>Canton Oaks Select</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>4-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 October 04</td>
<td>Waza Green</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>9-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 October 04</td>
<td>CW3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>7-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 October 04</td>
<td>Livonia Meteors</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>2-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 October 04</td>
<td>Northville Black</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>14-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 October 04</td>
<td>Tricounty</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>7-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 October 04</td>
<td>Novi White</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>2-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 October 04</td>
<td>Plymouth Kicks</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>8-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 April 05</td>
<td>Hamburg Utd</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>2-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 April 05</td>
<td>Bloomfield Navy</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>5-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 May 05</td>
<td>Bloomfield White</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>4-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 May 05</td>
<td>Canton Oaks Premier</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>6-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 May 05</td>
<td>Novi White</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>2-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 May 05</td>
<td>Northville Orange</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>5-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 May 05</td>
<td>Novi Green</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 May 05</td>
<td>Olentangy Classics II</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>5-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 May 05</td>
<td>Pacesetter Crew</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>17-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 May 05</td>
<td>Ohio Elite Navy</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>11-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 May 05</td>
<td>Vardar Red</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>5-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 June 05</td>
<td>WAZA Blue</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 June 05</td>
<td>Michigan Wolves</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spring Season to date:**
- **Total number of goals scored so far:** 59
- **Shots on goal:** 323
- **Goals from set pieces:** 5
- **Penalties awarded:** 2
- **Penalties scored:** 2

Abbreviations: V — Venue; R — Result; GST — Global Soccer Tournament; PP — Pacesetter Park (Sylvania, Ohio). Home matches in the Fall Season were played at Concordia; home matches in the Spring Season are played at Ann Arbor Airport.

Many thanks to Rick Jones supplied the stats — for more details, check his team web site: [www.personal.umich.edu/~rickey/soccer/arsenalu9/](http://www.personal.umich.edu/~rickey/soccer/arsenalu9/)
Survey of the Spring Season to Date

Arsenal (2) — Hamburg 0
Evan, pen., Lawrence.

Arsenal began life in the First Division with a physical match against Hamburg on a very bumpy Airport pitch. Evan coolly put away a penalty, and Lawrence calmly shepherded the ball in after running on to Mike’s corner, both goals coming early in the first half (clearly, set-piece work in practice was bearing fruit). Our opponent became frustrated late in the game, and Gino was the object of a particularly rough challenge (in the back, away from the ball). Gino and Josh kept clean sheets.

Arsenal (3) — Bloomfield Navy 0
Evan, Mike, Adam, Adam, Evan.

Another victory over a mid-table team from last season. Evan and Adam both scored two, Mike one. Alex and Gordon kept clean sheets, with Alex the busier keeper in a tight first half. Alex delighted the crowd with a splendid penalty save that broke our opponent’s back. Mike’s goal from distance, Evan’s two fine goals, the second off an incisive pass from Adam, and Gino’s goals off excellent passes from Adam, Lawrence made some fine saves.

Northville Orange (3) — Arsenal (2) 5
Gordon 15, Josh 15.55, Mike 26.10, Josh 42.46, Mike 47.55.

Northville’s sloping pitch in the rain — a tough away match, made tougher when Arsenal conceded three goals inside the first ten minutes. But Gordon’s goal, quickly followed by Josh’s from a free kick, got the team back into the game. Once Mike had equalized early in the second half, Arsenal took control. Josh scored a second, and then Mike finished a fine move begun by Gordon and continued by Evan, using the entire length of the right wing. Alex got over a tough start in goal, Kevin kept a clean sheet in the second half.

Not for the first time this season, WSSL officiating caused some distress on the Arsenal touchline. One linesman seemed not to understand the offside rule at all. Coach Barry Scott was unusually diplomatic in his explanations.

Novi Green (0) — Arsenal (1) 1
Gordon, 9.14

Arsenal’s toughest league opponent so far (who only dropped two points last season, finishing second in Division I) put up very strong resistance on another wet, cold day. Gordon beat the Novi midfielders and their full back to score in the first half, and Arsenal hit the woodwork several times. But in the second half Novi piled on the pressure and scored after Lawrence had made a good initial save. Arsenal felt that a whistle had gone, but the goal stood. Novi pressed for a winner, but without breaching the Arsenal defense again. Arsenal dropped their first league point all year, but played well against a difficult opponent. At the end of the match there was a feeling that the strange, ice-hockey-style two-referee system had not helped the flow of the game, while refereeing decisions had given cause for concern throughout play.

Novi White 0 — Arsenal (0) 2
Josh 41.40; Evan 59.05.

A typically tight match with a defensive Novi team, who had been a difficult opponent in Division II last season. Things were made harder by a greasy pitch and rain. Arsenal hit the woodwork several times, had a goal disallowed in the first half, and were occasionally threatened with breakaways. But solid goalkeeping kept the opposition out, and persistence finally brought a goal, for Josh from distance after sixteen minutes of the second half. Only a late goal by Evan, following up Mike’s shot, put it beyond doubt. Clean sheets for Gordon and for Henry, who made some fine saves in the second half.

For more-or-less up-to-date tables, check out the WSSL web site:
www.wsslsoap.org/standings/spring05/boys%20sel%20sp05.pdf
Tournament Journal — Pacesetter Invitational

September 04
I’m in Russia, for a conference, during the team’s first tournament of the year. I keep telling everyone at the conference to keep their fingers crossed for my son’s team, but the hotel’s poor Internet connection makes it hard to check email. When Alina calls me on the evening of the day I gave my paper, and catches me drinking beer with a friend in the hotel bar, I realize I’m not going to get any more updates on Gordon’s football. She’s just come out of a two-hour class (mine, in fact, which she’s given for me, so I can go to the conference), and no amount of commentary on “time difference” and the “importance of networking” will help me out of this one. Gordon, however, sends an email after the first match. Subsequent silence indicates disappointment, I assume. When I get home I learn that I was right about the tournament (but wrong to have gone to a conference in the middle of the semester, leaving Alina with my children and my teaching, and certainly wrong to drink beer in the hotel bar). We’d better be more successful next time (and I’d better be more careful what I do when my cell phone rings in the evening of the day I gave my paper).

17 May
Still no fixtures posted. Susan has made a group hotel reservation. But we hear that she refuses to stay in a hotel below four-star class. I’m alarmed – I’m not sure that I want to stay in a Four Seasons for a football tournament. And I’m not sure there’s one in the Toledo area anyway. Later I learn that there was an hour’s discussion before they settled on a Comfort Inn, fifteen miles south of Sylvania (are they in the Four Seasons chain now, I wonder?). I’m glad I wasn’t there. Rick tells me that he went to sleep in his car after the first half hour of discussion. But the hotel does have a pool – essential for travel with children.

October – February
I see the club web site has us going to the Pacesetter Invitational in Sylvania, Ohio at the end of May. Like several other over-anxious parents, I now begin regularly to check the Pacesetter Club’s web site for information. The facilities at Pacesetter Park look great. That will be a nice change – good pitches. Should we stay at a hotel (that would give it a real, away-from-home feeling)? Alina is already making plans for picnics. Gordon wants to know what other clubs are coming. When he hears “Wolves” and “Vardar” he gets very excited. In fact, we’re all excited: for most of us, it’s our first year of travel sport. This will be the first big away event since Blue Chip. Everyone is really into it.

March – April
In our house there are constant discussions of tournament plans. It will be Neil’s birthday that weekend – what are we going to do? Where should we stay? When will they post brackets? Alina looks at the rules – there is no offside in the Under-Nine bracket. That must be a mistake.

Early May
Still no fixture list on the web site. By now we are checking the WSSL web site every day for updates, too, but that’s another story. Plenty of hotels, but we must have one with a pool. We do nothing.

18 May
10.30 a.m.
Just before I drive to campus I check the Pacesetter site again. At last, fixtures are posted. If I have read the schedule correctly, we have matches at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Saturday, 28 May, and at 9 a.m. on the Sunday. Our opponents are Olentangy Classics II, Pacesetter Crew, and Ohio Elite Navy. I send an officious email to everyone. Don will kill me.

22 May
10.40 a.m.
While in my car, I call Rick and leave him a message. “I think that we are playing in the weaker of the two under-nine brackets; our opponents seem all to be second teams, meanwhile the first teams of the Ohio clubs, plus Vardar, are in the other bracket. So they count us as a Michigan B team, I suppose”.

9.30 a.m.
I get an email from Rick, who has not got my message yet. “We seem to be playing select teams”, he writes, and sends the URLs for home pages of all the clubs we’re playing (or, as our sons would put it, we’re vector — their Latin is more rudimentary than ours, I suppose, and they perceive versus as a third person singular verb).

Over the day an email correspondence entails. I write with the National Soccer Rankings positions of all the clubs we’re playing. Rick, Alina, and Lisa comment. It’s a slow time on campus.

24 May
5.00 p.m.
Practice. “We’re playing all B teams”, says Stephen, who also must have time on his hands, because he adds details of the performances of major Michigan clubs in Ohio tournaments over the last year. But it seems that Ohio thrashed Michigan. Maybe it’s good we’re playing B teams, although I keep saying that I wish we could play Vardar.

May
We ship three early goals before storming back. Everyone talks about the added match at Pacesetter. “Was that your work, Michael?” some parents ask. I feel guilty (but it had nothing to do with me). We all know that the club is ranked fifth in the nation by NSR. So do most of our sons.

25 May
11.30 a.m.
First dropped points of the season, but we played well in a 1-1 draw against last year’s runners-up. Pacesetter will be interesting.

28 May
Intense discussion of plans: hotels, food, transport. Alina draws up menus. Everyone looks at Mapquest. We’ll miss the USA vs England match on ESPN (our boys are playing at that time on Saturday), the first England match I’ve missed in years. Every day for two weeks Gordon has had two questions: “Can Liverpool win the Champions League? How do you think we’ll do against Vardar?” Finally, after the extraordinary match in Istanbul gives him ideas, he adds a third: “What will you buy me if we beat Vardar?” He has two ambitions: to score at least once in every match; to score a headed goal. We hear that Evan has told class mates that the team is playing the top four clubs in the country.

27 May
Intense preparations. I buy Neil’s birthday presents: Pugg pop-up goals and a computer game. Alina shops for food. We plan to leave at 2.30. We leave at 4. The Joneses, who left on time, of course, have already been to Pacesetter Park (“looks great”), and are at the hotel by the time we leave Michigan. We hear that Mike drove Adam halfway to Toledo before Susan.
called to tell him that Adam might like to have his cleats with him. Mike and Susan meet south of Ann Arbor for a footwear transfer.

After dinner, three of us drive from the hotel to Pacesetter Park to check things out. The pitches are great, but there won’t be enough parking.

The hotel’s fine, but it doesn’t look like a Four Seasons. As well as the Joneses and us, three other families are staying here: Henry’s, Kevin’s and Adam’s. Alex’s family and Lawrence’s are staying further north, closer to Ann Arbor, in case Christina goes into labor, but rumor has it that Stephen has told her not to do so on a match day. Three families, all with extensive sport experience, older children are less sanguine, and stay in Ann Arbor: Josh’s, Mikey’s and Gino’s. Players from other teams are staying at our hotel – including some girls’ teams. Our sons ignore the girls (that will change soon), but show great interest in the Under-Fourteen Boys Allegheny Force, who play keepy-uppy in the car park into the small hours. Gordon knows that coaches do bed checks at big tournaments (largely to keep professional players from heading for “bad girls and bad bars”, I tell him). He expects Barry to impose a curfew tonight for his team. We tell the boys that Barry’s bed check will be at 9.45. They don’t quite believe us, but they still go to bed. In the morning, Neil and Colin help us out by claiming to have seen Barry at 11 p.m., checking that curfew was kept. 28 May 6.00 a.m.

Despite the hospitality we’ve shared with other parents, I wake early with a clear head. The Joneses, of course, were up an hour ago. They call from the lobby, where a very modest breakfast is served. Colin was worried that we might not have got up. But — miraculously — we have. Neil has found his Pugg goals (hard to miss in our cramped room), opened and installed the computer game, and also received the trophy he won in the last indoor season. Gordon promises him victories for his birthday.

At breakfast we learn that Adam fell asleep at 11.30 and woke at five. He couldn’t get to sleep because he kept worrying that Gordon and Evan might be getting more sleep than he was. Mike tells the best stories about his children. And they’re true.

Another miracle — we are all ready by 7.30, and leave for Pacesetter Park. Everyone parks without difficulty. We are astonished to find Barry there before all of us (except, of course, the Joneses). Must be a big tournament. Alina claims to have spotted Barry, by his ankles, at 200 yards. Later, mothers envy Colin Jones, who lovingly strokes Barry’s athletic calves. Vardar are playing when we arrive. They look good. So do the pitches. In fact, they’re the best I’ve ever seen outside of the professional game (and better than many at professional clubs).

9.00 a.m.

Kickoff against the Olentangy Classics II. We dominate early and lead 4-0 at half time. So far so good. But in the second half they come back, making good use of set pieces, and adjusting more quickly to the absence of an offside rule (Alina was right; Rick, uncharitably but perceptively, suggests that the organizers simply want to save money by having no linesmen, sorry, “referees’ assistants”). The second half is tough; Josh, in goal, makes some great saves, and we escape 5-4. Adam played an absolute blinder (yet again; during the game he beamed shyly when I yelled something about a great play; at the end of the match, Mike tries not to look pleased when I praise his son). The Classics are in tears. They played well, and we congratulate them; they’re surprised and pleased to hear praise and commiseration from the opposition. Odd. Especially as they made a very sporting gesture at the beginning of the match — giving each of our players a patch with their club crest. Why don’t we do something like that?

The pop-up goals are popular, but they don’t keep Neil from picking fights. Still, the siblings are distracted. Later, Mike will get them all to collect pine cones. He’s trying out some complex economic strategy. Fortunately, Neil doesn’t pick a fight over pine cones, and doesn’t seem to care about economic strategies. His father’s son.

10.00 a.m.

Back to the hotel. The boys should rest (but they don’t). We decide to take over the lobby, and picnic there. Half the team fills the available tables, with Lisa, Kate, and Alina running the buffet. As usual, Alina has produced food far too elaborate for most nine-year-olds (chilled cucumber soup, muffaleta sandwiches, etc), but every-one eats enthusiastically. I make all the boys drink a toast of “children’s champagne” to Neil on his birthday. They look puzzled, but oblige. We wish the Allegheny Force good luck — they play at four.

12.15 p.m.

We head back in a casual caravan to Pacesetter Park. Of course, there’s no parking (although we later learn that Rick, when he drove up to the barrier, pointed to his five children in the back of the van, and the police let him in). Rick goes to the over-flow parking (he never pays to park), but is let in. The Allegheny Force good luck — they play at four.

3.00 p.m.

We kick off against the Pacesetter Crew. Gordon is in goal for the first half. Like every parent, I feel terrible anxiety when my son is keeping goal. I needn’t have done. We have a two-digit lead at half time. Gordon’s kept a clean sheet. He also made his best save of the year — diving full length to his left, and, while in the air, pushing their one decent shot round the post. Shame he made such a good save in a match that we could only win. Still, as we kick off the second half, I shout out “Play up, Gordon Banks”. He looks at me shyly, and grins — he’s more than happy to be associated with England’s greatest ever keeper, and doesn’t care about hyperbole, even though he’s a philologist’s son. We win by a lot. Kevin gives a fine hat trick, Josh powers in four. Gordon is unhappy that Barry told him not to score more than one goal (by the time he got out of goal, the game was well and truly over). It rained hard in the second half. Rick’s fingers froze as he wrote down scorers and shifts, still his statistics give precise details on wind speed and temperature change for the half. Rob covers four children and himself in a makeshift shelter. Midwestern weather.

The Allegheny Force straggle in at six. Barry spent the second half coaching from a chair. No one can believe it. Someone suggested taking him a beer. I’m tempted to yell to him: “Barry, you’re sitting down! You can’t coach the game sitting down. You’ve got to be on your toes!”, but I can’t imitate a Scottish accent, and, anyway, I’ve got just about enough sense not to be provocative during a match.

4.00 p.m.

Back to the hotel. Pool. Rest. There are additions to our party — all our families seem to have gained more sons. Means more noise.

England have beaten the Americans with a third-string team. I disturb the maid so I can watch the end of the match as she vacuums. Thank goodness for our victory, despite David James in goal and a teeth choice centre back anchoring the defense: no stick from the other parents this weekend.


Most families head to the Madhens, but Alina hates baseball, so we stay at the hotel to rest. Susan, despite choosing the hotel, turns out to be abandoning her husband and children to sleep in her own, Ann Arbor, bed both nights, but she accompanies us to dinner, along with Rick (who relishes the sight of rain while everyone else is at the baseball). We struggle through a mediocre meal in some chain restaurant. Mike calls: he and Ann fought for five minutes over a ball struck in their direction. He’s lying, of course, but Ann did catch a
ball. Lynne calls, Mikey has stayed with the Joneses, but his regular shoes haven't. Footwear issues continue to haunt the team. Barry's bed check isn't quite as effective as last night, but all the boys are in bed reasonably early. Gordon, Neil, and Olivia fall asleep in the same bed (she'll hate being reminded of that when she's older). The adults are too tired to party. 29 May 7.00 a.m. Emboldened by the ease of parking yesterday, we breakfast later. But the Allegheny Force have been there before us. There's virtually nothing left of the "Deluxe Continental Breakfast"—the Pennsylvania teenagers stripped the lobby of food like a pack of red- and black locusts. The hotel staff can't believe how much growing followers eat. We're not at all surprised. The Force watch ESPN with great interest. Something about last night's major-league baseball. I reflect again on the oddity of America's love affair with the Beautiful Game: yesterday their national team played against the "Forefather of Football", a major European power (even if we have only won one major trophy), currently ranked seventh in the world, yet almost none of the approximately 2,000 football families who've shelled out hundreds of dollars to come to Pacesetter Park and must be passionately committed to the sport, seemed to care. Of course, it was a nothing game — there was at least one name on our own team sheet that even I didn't recognize, but even Beckett Owen, Lampard, Terry, et al. had been there, I suspect that no one much would have been interested anyway. And, to make matters worse for the home side, the Americans played well, but they seemed to have little support — all you could hear was our fans singing. It must have been frustrating to play at home for your country in the world's biggest sport, and have the stadium filled with away supporters and their songs. But maybe my point of view is skewed. After all, I anxiously checked the sports news on Friday for the result of the Southend Lincoln City playoff final (League Two), so I must be mad anyway.

7.45 a.m. Off to Pacesetter Park. We park easily, again. When we reach our pitch we hear that Vardar have just lost to the Classics first team. Is that good news or bad? 9.00 a.m. We kick off against Ohio Elite. They're not quite as elite as we feared. At half time, we're seven-nil up, and Barry tells the team to take feet off accelerators. Despite conceding two goals, we win easily. Dan, the most experienced travel-sport parent, retreats from the touchline during the second half, and finds shade and a breeze. "Don't tell Josh I watched from here, he'll beurious", Dan laughs. Again, we've moved the ball quite well. Adam and Kevin continue to disrupt with their speed; Gino and Josh with their power. Evan continues to put the ball away well, and scores a fine hat trick. Alex has been tiresome in midfield. Our Vardar match has been re-scheduled for one, which is great for the Joneses and the Chernews, who efficiently checked out this morning, but not for us, with our field kitchen spread all over our hotel room. We planned to take a late check out. Now we have to rush back to the hotel. Gordon pretends to rest, but then grabs the lap top and plays a game. Alina and I pack. Alina makes sandwiches. We hurry back to Pacesetter Park, which now has no parking. Another $5 shelled out, and a fence adventure. It's great to see all the Arsenal teams out on the many Pacesetter pitches. I walk past two — Mikey's elder brother Chris and his under-tens are 2-0 down at half time to Vardar's under-elevens. But they're still in the game, and playing well. A good omen. One of our girls' teams is destroying the Classics. I stop to watch. If I had a daughter who played the game, I'd be just as caught up in her team, I reflect, as I am in my son's. Funny, I never thought I'd like the women's game, but I do. Amenea has an odd effect on you. Let's hope the English girls do well in the European Championship this June.

1.10 p.m. Kick off against Vardar. There's no denying it — we've been waiting for this moment all week. The parents are anxious. The boys seem much calmer. Just enough time to pause and wonder how a club playing in the American Midwest takes its name for Skopje's top club, which, in turn, is named after Macedonia's principal river. America's eccentricities are very evident in the Beautiful Game: Vardar playing Arsenal (who play in blue). With a minute gone, Mikey takes a great corner, and Gordon, "in traffic", as he later puts it, heads home. He tries not to look too delighted. I make no such effort. "Alan Shearer, Alan Shearer, la, la, la, la-la-la", I sing hourly and un-melodically, as he grins shyly back. Of course, my son has no resemblance whatever to the Newcastle United and former England centre forward, but who cares? Then things get harder. We concede three times in quick succession: weak defending is mostly to blame, but Vardar possess and move the ball well. Brandon, our guest player, who has kept goal for one half in each match, plays well: his size and good hands help us, but we're still in trouble. However, with a few minutes to go in the half Henry powers into the box and lays the ball off to Lawrence, who calmly slots home. A great goal, and we're back in the game, down by one at 3-2. Evan's the keeper for the second half. Lisa and Rick edge towards the end we're defending, where Evan is in goal. I try not to look at them. It's hard to see your child keep goal. But Evan does very well, and makes a couple of absolutely vital saves. We concede one, but get another back — again from a corner. Brandon is in the right place at the right time, and uses his size to force the ball home. 4-3, and game on. All the parents are tense and excited. I've never seen Linda — one of the parents with older children, who usually takes it all in stride — so vocal in her support. It's all us with about ten minutes to go. From now on, the game is a bit of blur, and no one I talk to afterwards is quite sure of the sequence of events. But, as I remember, the next big moment comes when they handle — I think it's in the box, but the referee signals for a free kick just outside. With Josh on the pitch, there's no doubt who'll take it, and he powers the equalizer home. Our families are going crazy. First Liverpool, now Ann Arbor Arsenal Under-Nines. (And it's true, I feel the same about this team as about the national team or, for that matter, the team I've supported since I was a child, never mind Liverpool. It really is a funny game). With a few minutes remaining, Lawrence forces his way down the right wing (he's playing six inches taller and thirty pounds bigger than he actually is today). He nearly puts it in, but takes a hard foul and goes down. To ecstatic applause he steeps up, but has to limp off all the same. Barry puts Josh back on, of course. The huge free kick is cleared, but it comes back to Josh outside the box. A powerful lob beats the keeper. We're back in the lead at 5-4, for the first time since the first goal of the match. Barry's got my stop-watch, and I've lost track of time, but it turns out there's five minutes to go. We survive some big Vardar chances. Evan makes a great diving save (later he, like Gordon, attributes his achievements in goal to Dana's clinic). Mikey comes on for Gino, who's played very hard, and makes a great run down the right wing. His shot caroms off the underside of the bar, and the referee waves play on. A late corner to them. We survive, the whistle goes, the parents are all screaming, the boys are overjoyed. We've done it. A great team effort, and a tremendous show of spirit, against a good opponent. Mike sums it up: "I'd like to say that I'm thrilled for my son — and I am, of course — but I think that my reaction also includes something more visceral." He's beaming. We all are.

The mothers claim that our coach has smiled for the first time since September. They adore him all the more for it. I must have blinked and missed the smile, because I talk briefly to Barry, and he, like any normal coach, can only complain about defensive failings, although he does seem pleased with the win — a confidence builder, he thinks. Three families abandon property on the touchlines. We get our "participation" awards (no trophies for the under-nines). Astonishingly, the Joneses are taking three boys to the zoo. We’re too tired to do anything. Gordon and Neil fall asleep in the car. At home we unload, then Alina falls asleep. I put on the England match I’ve taped. And fall asleep. When I wake up, I check my email. Bill, who must be the quietest, calmest father among us, has already put his computer to good use: “My household is abuzz with the Pacesetter triumph. And a little disappointed with the words ‘Participant.’ To better recognize the achievement, I have produced this little document to add to the plaque. If you would like to indulge your U-9 player, print it out on a high-quality printer and cut it out. (There’s a little extra black on all sides.) It will fit right over two of the sets of words "UNDER 9 PARTICIPANT!" and blend right in.” The patch has the scores of each of our matches.
Player Profile — Kevin Turnbull

Kevin Turnbull is one of the fastest players on the team. His great speed has enabled him to score some spectacular goals running out of midfield onto long balls played up to him. Of course, fine finishing skills have helped him, too. His eight goals this season, including a hat trick against the Pacesetters, put him in third place on the Arsenal scoring charts to date. This is what he told Barry’s Army.

Kevin, when were you born? The tenth of November, 1995.

How big do you plan to be as a senior player? 200 pounds; 6 feet 1 inch.

Why did you choose number nine, the traditional number of the centre forward? I chose my number because it is Freddie Adu’s number.

What do you think of Airport fields? They are not fit to be fields.

What has been your greatest moment on the pitch so far?

My volleyed goal against Northville. That was also my favorite moment as an Arsenal player.

And what will your greatest moment in the future be? A bicycle-kick goal against the Wolves.

What other sports do you play? Basketball and (American) football. I like basketball most, because I like the non-stop play.

If you weren’t playing the Beautiful Game, what would you be doing? I would be playing PS2.

What does “Play Big!” mean to you? Scoring goals.

Who is your favorite player? Freddie Adu, because he is the youngest player in MLS.

And what is your favorite team? The American national team, because I live in the U.S.

What is your dream on the pitch? To score a bicycle-kick goal.

And off the pitch? To become a basketball player.

What do you like about school? Social Studies.

What don’t you like about school? Recess and learning things.

What was the funniest moment in your life when I ‘panted’

Kevin Turnbull has scored eight goals so far this season. A fine volley against Northville was his best.

Barry’s Mantra. No doubt you’ve learnt these by now, but in case you haven’t, here is something to do in the summer, before the fall season starts. We might even have a quiz on these at the tryouts. The editor suggests that these are memorized with the appropriate Scottish accent as well.

1. Movement, blue, movement!
2. You’re standing still! Don’t stand still!
3. Go wide!
4. We don’t pass through players!
5. Don’t pass to their defenders!
6. First touch!
7. Play soccer with your eyes open!
8. Hands, hands, hands… feet!
9. Pressure, Blue, pressure!
10. Pay attention! We are not defending!
11. Play the way you face!
12. You can’t dribble through defenders.
13. You’ve got to talk!
14. Don’t turn your back on the ball!
15. Play to feet!
16. You’re dribbling when you should be passing, and passing when you should be dribbling!
17. Great defending! (Said only of himself, during practice).

Our resident linguist does some discourse analysis

Barry’s Mantra. No doubt you’ve learnt these by heart now, but in case you haven’t, here is something to do in the summer, before the fall season starts. We might even have a quiz on these at the tryouts. The editor suggests that these are memorized with the appropriate Scottish accent as well.

1. Movement, blue, movement!
2. You’re standing still! Don’t stand still!
3. Go wide!
4. We don’t pass through players!
5. Don’t pass to their defenders!
6. First touch!
7. Play soccer with your eyes open!
8. Hands, hands, hands… feet!
9. Pressure, Blue, pressure!
10. Pay attention! We are not defending!
11. Play the way you face!
12. You can’t dribble through defenders.
13. You’ve got to talk!
14. Don’t turn your back on the ball!
15. Play to feet!
16. You’re dribbling when you should be passing, and passing when you should be dribbling!
17. Great defending! (Said only of himself, during practice).

Would-be diplomats might also like to recall some of Coach Barry Scott’s favorite addresses to match officials.

1. You have to be kidding me!  
2. How can you be offside in your own half? [Editor’s note — yes, how can you?]
3. Hey ref, which game are you watching?!  
4. How can you be offside when you’re dribbling the ball? [Editor’s note — yes, how can you?]
5. You’ve let everything go, and now you call that!!  
6. It’s indirect WSSL rules!
Blues News

The biggest news for Arsenal Under-Nine Blue families is also the happiest: on 29th July, Coach Barry Scott will marry Rebecca Grambeau. Careful research by team family members who should have been doing other kinds of research located details of the nuptials and made it possible to present the happy couple with a small gift. Every family felt that Barry Scott should be thanked for his great work with the team this season, and that Barry and Rebecca should be wished every possible happiness.

Barry’s Army understands that a large contingent of Coach Barry Scott’s associates from his student and playing years will be arriving in Ann Arbor for the wedding. Calls to City Hall, asking if all police leave for the weekend of July 29th had been cancelled, were not returned. Nor was Frazier’s Pub willing to answer questions on how it would treat orders of “a pint of heavy”. However, Frazier’s did confirm that double the usual volume of deliveries are expected that week. Among Arsenal Blue families, Alina Makin is offering a seminar on “Handling the British Spouse”, which will cover such topics as: what to do if your spouse invites ten expatriates to watch a match live on pay-per-view TV at five in the morning; and how to handle depression after the national team’s elimination from major tournaments. Rebecca may be in especial need of preparation on the second topic. All Arsenal Blue wives are expected to contribute to Ms Makin’s special session on maintaining spousal obedience.

The amazing Champions League final (won after extra time on penalties by Liverpool, who came from 3-0 down to defeat a technically far superior A. C. Milan) was overshadowed by a baby shower, thrown by Arsenal Blue mothers for Christina Tsien, to whom Barry’s Army also wishes all the very best. She’s been playing big for some time.

The end-of-season potluck party will be held on Sunday, 26th June, beginning time tba. It will open with a light-hearted family tournament at Hudson Mills Park, off North Territorial Road, and will continue at 7200 Mountain Ridge. For more information and to send suggestions for the party schedule, contact the editor (mlmakin@umich.edu).

Summer sees a number of small-sided tournaments that Arsenal players might find interesting. Wide World of Sports holds its summer tournament on Saturday, 25th June. For more information, go to www.wideworld-sports.com/Summer3v3TourneyBrochure.pdf. The University of Michigan hosts a popular three-on-three tournament on Saturday, 16th July. More information at: www.umsoccer.com/3v3_summer.asp. Ypsilanti’s Heritage Festival, on Frog Island, has run a fun tournament in recent years, but so far none is announced for this year’s festival (19-21 August www.ypsilantiheritagefestival.com/). The summer also sees many large-sided tournaments (including those at Kalamazoo, Petoskey, and Saginaw). For a list go to www.msysa.net/clubtournaments.asp.

Don’t forget the AAYSA annual golf outing, Sunday 12th June, at Reddeman Farms, Chelsea. Fundraising continues, contact Lisa Jones (lisaj@umich.edu) for more information.

It is doubtful that any family has forgotten details of Arsenal tryouts, but, just in case, Barry’s Army reminds everyone that potential Under-Tens try out on Friday, 17th June, 7-8.30 p.m., and Saturday, 18th June, 12-1.30 p.m. But check the club web site for confirmation: www.aaysa.net/2005TryoutSchedule.pdf. And good luck to all.

Barry and Rebecca marry on 29th July.
Barry’s Army wishes them all the very best.
And Play Big!
Know the Game — Real Madrid C. F.

Founded 1902.
Play at Santiago Bernabéu Stadium, current capacity (all seated) 80,000.
Record attendance 124,000 (vs Fiorentina, European Cup Final, 1957).
Major trophies: Nine European Cups/Champions League Titles; 2 UEFA Cups; 29 Spanish League Titles.

Biggest Rivalry — El Clasico, vs Barcelona.
Web site — wwwrealmadridcomportada_enghtm

Manchester United fans are fond of boasting that their club is not only Association Football’s most famous and popular club, but the biggest club in any sport. In terms of worldwide popularity and monetary worth, they may be right (after all, MUFC’s leveraged buyout has just captured United for well over $1.5 billion). And, of course, the tragic Munich Air Crash, which destroyed the great and very young team of Busby Babes in 1958, followed ten years later by United’s triumph over Benfica in the European Cup Final gave the Red Devils a special hold over the hearts of many sports fans around the world. But few fair-minded fans of the Beautiful Game are likely to dispute the assertion that the greatest club in the world is Madrid’s Royal Club (for those of us who missed out on Spanish 101, it might be good to recall that Real means “Royal”, and that the Club has enjoyed Royal patronage since 1920). Indeed, for what it is worth, FIFA chose Real as the “greatest club of the twentieth century” in 2000.

Madrid’s unmistakable all-white strip has been imitated all around the world — from junior clubs playing on city sports fields to great names in the game (multiple English champion Leeds United turned from gold to white, in imitation of Real, before beginning their great run in the 1970s). But no one can imitate Madrid’s record in Europe. Nine (out of a total of fifty) European Cups/UEFA Champions League Titles is simply a staggering figure, and five successive titles is surely a record that will never be beaten. Only A.C. Milan with six and Liverpool with five come even close. Moreover, Real have always aspired to win with real style, playing an attacking game that really is beautiful.

Real Madrid’s origins are fairly typical for a club in Southern Europe. Founded under English influence (in fact, the famous Real strip was chosen in imitation of one of the great amateur clubs of the organized game’s early years — England’s Corinthian Casuals, who also played in white), Madrid’s first decades form a story of fast development, aided by a willingness to tour abroad and make contact with other, better teams. Despite the disruption brought by the Civil War, and Spain’s relative isolation in the post-war period, Real Madrid remained very open to the rest of the world (a key to the development of Europe’s great clubs, and in great contrast to the isolationism of the game in its homeland). Under the presidency of Santiago Bernabéu, after whom the club’s stadium would eventually be named, a dominant force in Spain and Europe was created. Long before most other big clubs looked abroad for talent, Real hired foreign managers, and, crucially, signed foreign players. Two of the greatest names the game has known are associated with Real’s glory years in the late fifties and early sixties: the magnificent Argentine Alfredo di Stefano, and the most magical of the “magic Magyars”, Ferenc Puskás. Di Stefano came from isolated Argentina (where Perón refused to have his country compete internationally), while Puskás left Hungary, for whom he never played again, after the failure of the 1956 uprising. Real dominated the first years of the European Cup, created in 1955 from the Latin Cup. In its first decade, Europe’s biggest club competition firmly reinforced the superiority of Southern European teams, with Madrid clearly the cream of the crop. Real won an amazing five in a row, with the fifth Cup won at Hampden Park in a 7-3 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt that many fans consider the greatest club match ever played. Di Stefano scored a hat trick, and Puskás scored four. Real won the European Cup once more in the sixties, beating Partizan Belgrade in the 1966 final. After that, the club, although still a force in Spain and Europe, seemed to have become one of the great names of the past, as northern European and Italian clubs dominated the major competitions. But Real returned to international prominence in the late 1990s, winning the UEFA Champions League in 1998, 2000, and 2002. Managed by a succession of foreign coaches — Fabio Capello, Gus Hiddink, and John Toshack among them — and stocked with stars such as Clarence Seedorf and Roberto Carlos, Real Madrid were, again, Europe’s greatest club.

In the last few years, under the presidency of Florentino Pérez, Madrid has become famous for its galácticos policy. In successive summers, “galactic” stars have been signed: Luis Figo from arch-rivals Barcelona, then Zinedine Zidane, then Ronaldo, then David Beckham, and finally Michael Owen. All have done well for the Royal Club, but many have questioned the playing and financial balance that has resulted: only forwards and attacking midfielders have received the galactic treatment, and salary, while defensive needs have been overlooked (defensive midfielder Claude Makele, for example was allowed to leave for Chelsea). Even Madrid’s customary Spanish core has been somewhat weakened, although striker Raul and goalkeeper Casillas are among the current team’s stars. The seasons 2003/4 and 2004/5 both ended without any trophies, an unacceptable outcome in Madrid. Currently, there are rumors that Figo, and his $160,000 per week salary, may be leaving Real. Real has also gone through a succession of managers, with Brazilian Vanderlei Luxemburgo the current, uncertain occupant of the hot seat (and fourth in a year). Losing the title this year to Barcelona was a particularly bitter pill for Madridistas to swallow, and changes can be expected.

Fans around the world often reflect on the paradox of Spain’s relative lack of international success, in contrast to the dominance of Spanish clubs and the strength of the Spanish league (currently, UEFA ranks it joint top with England and Italy). The culture of Real Madrid provides, perhaps, part of the answer. While for many clubs the biggest matches of the season are local derbies with cross-town rivals (River Plate and Boca Juniors; Celtic and Rangers; Liverpool and Everton; A.C. Milan and Inter), the Clásico is played between Real and Barcelona. That rivalry is based on the intense identification of Catalonia, separate in language and culture from the rest of the country, with Barcelona, and on the strong Castilian affiliation of Real. The rivalry is, moreover, strengthened by the widespread feeling that Real were close to the Franco regime, while Barcelona, along with Catalonia, resisted fascism. Comparable observations can be made about clubs in other regions (for example, of course, in the Basque Country). The ties of fans to the clubs are also strengthened by the structure of Spanish football: whereas the top English clubs are now corporate entities, and the top Italian clubs are the playthings of wealthy individuals and families (Berlusconi and Milan; the Agnells and Juventus, for example), Spanish clubs are, essentially, run by their members, who elect presidents. For these several reasons, it has been speculated, Spanish fans are fanatically loyal to their clubs, while rather less committed to the national team than is the case in Italy, England, Germany, or Holland — all of whom have a much better international record. Passionate Madridistas, with an equally passionate sporting press, seem untroubled by these concerns. They will spend this summer worrying about how to knock Barcelona off the top of the league next year, and return Real to European glory.
Follow the Beautiful Game — End of Season Report from Europe

For most European nations the club season is over now and the major trophies have been awarded. Readers who followed the advice of the last column in this space, and watched or listened to the European game actively, will already know what follows. Everyone else — read on.

The continent’s (and the sport’s) greatest and richest trophy is the UEFA Champions League. Teams qualify on performance in domestic leagues — Spain, Italy, and England send four clubs; Germany, France, and Portugal three; nine nations two; the rest only their league champions. This year’s host city, Istanbul, saw an extraordinary final between A. C. Milan and Liverpool. The Italian team were technically outstanding and, in a dominating first half, took a three-goal lead, only for the Scousers’ captain, Steven Gerrard, to lead a magnificent second half comeback, cheered on by tens of thousands of trophy-hungry Liverpool fans. 3-3 after extra time, the match was won by Liverpool’s Polish goalkeeper, Jerzy Dudek, who saved two penalties, the second from European Footballer of the Year Andriy Shevchenko (whom Dudek had also blocked brilliantly from point-blank range with two minutes of extra time to go). Hard luck on Milan, and their young Brazilian star Kaká in particular, to go). Hard luck on Milan, and their young Brazilian star Kaká in particular, but magnificent heart was shown by Liverpool. They could only manage fifth place in England, but surprised everyone in Europe, defeating this year’s champions of Italy and England — Juventus and Chelsea, respectively — along the way to the final. Managed brilliantly by new appointee Rafael Benitez, with their defense anchored centre back Jamie Carragher, Liverpool overpowered astonishingly where teams much better on paper — Real Madrid, Barcelona, Arsenal, Manchester United, and Bayern Munich failed (not to mention the three top teams Liverpool themselves dismissed from the tournament). Some observers had hoped for a final between what were probably the continent’s two best teams this year — English champions Chelsea and Barcelona, champions of Spain, but the pair met in the quarter-finals, and the London club won a fascinating two-legged duel, only to go out to Liverpool in the semi-finals.

Europe’s second trophy, the UEFA Cup (for teams just below the top of domestic leagues, domestic cup winners, and teams eliminated early from the Champions League), was won by TsSKA Moscow, who triumphed over Sporting Lisbon, even though the latter had the great good fortune to be playing in their own stadium (a “neutral” ground chosen ahead of time). TsSKA came back from a one-goal deficit, with their Brazilian winger Carvalho playing brilliantly. Akinfeev, TsSKA’s young goalkeeper, also deserves praise for generating the third of three counterattacking goals with a swift and powerful throw from the box, after Lisbon had somehow failed to score from less than a yard. TsSKA became the first Russian club ever to win a European trophy (from the USSR only Kiev twice and Tbilisi once could boast success — and that decades ago in the now-defunct Cup Winners’ Cup). Russians hope that the money now pouring into clubs in Moscow and elsewhere will produce more European trophies in the near future.

Scotland’s league may not be among Europe’s best, but it surely produced the best final. On the morning of the last Sunday of league play, Celtic, playing at Motherwell (who had nothing to play for), led Rangers by two points, but with an inferior goal difference. Rangers had a much harder final match in Edinburgh, at Hibernians — who were anxious to secure a UEFA Cup place. Celtic took an early lead at Motherwell’s Fir Park, so Nacho Novo’s second-half goal for Rangers at Hills’ Easter Road looked likely to mean nothing. But round the world, listeners to Radio Clyde (webcast at www.rangers.co.uk) enjoyed the sweetest of moments with three goals to go: a huge roar could be heard from the six thousand traveling supporters — all equipped with radios and mobile phones, of course — followed quickly by the commentators’ own joyful and astonished confirmation of a late, late Motherwell goal against Celtic. Hibernians, happy to lose by one and keep their UEFA Cup place on goal difference (from unlucky Aberdeen), did little to threaten Rangers in the dying minutes. The Rangers fans sang and danced in astonishment, their joy redoubled when news came of a second Motherwell goal. Rangers had won the title outright, in the last three minutes of the season. The helicopter carrying the championship trophy had to be re-routed from Motherwell to Edinburgh. Coach Barry Scott is understood to have made a series of deeply sympathetic calls of condolence to Celtic-supporting fellow countrymen, as soon as the final whistle went.

In England, the top three places had been clear since New Year, and Chelsea (who reported losses of $160 million this year and couldn’t care less, since they are bankrolled by Russian multi-billionaire Roman Abramovich) duly won the title, with Arsenal second and Man. Utd a weak third. Everton beat cross-town rivals Liverpool to England’s fourth Champions League place, in the only surprise at the top. But until the last day of the league season none of the three relegation spots was decided. Of the four bottom teams fighting for survival, all were available place above the drop zone (and the prospect of saving some $40 million a season in lost revenue), Norwich were best placed, but they were destroyed 6-0 at Fulham. Southampton ended 27 years in the top flight with a loss to Manchester Utd, while Crystal Palace looked safe with eight minutes to go, but gave up a set-piece equalizer to Charlton, allowing West Bromwich Albion to become the first team to be bottom of the Premiership at Christmas and to survive (they beat Portsmouth 2-0).

England’s F. A. Cup went to Arsenal, who beat Man. Utd on penalties, after extra time (the first F. A. Cup final to be decided in this manner). United had dominated throughout regular time and extra time, with Rooney brilliant, but could not score, and ended the season without a trophy.

In Spain, Figo, Raúl, Ronaldí, Beckham, Zidane, and Owen (the galacticos) could not do enough to help Real catch Barcelona, who played some of the most attractive football on the continent all season. Surprising Villareal and Betis won the other Champions League spots.

In Italy A. C. Milan’s challenge for the title fell away at the end, leaving Juventus comfortable champions. Inter and unlikely Udinese won the third and fourth Champions League spots.

In Germany it was the usual result — Bayern were champions. Schalke finished second, fading in the last month. Werder Bremen finished third.

In France an attractive Lyon team won its third championship in three years, while in Holland PSV Eindhoven were champions by a big margin. PSV were unlucky not to make the Champions League final, outplaying Milan in their home (second) leg of the semi-finals, but conceding a late goal to the Italians. In Portugal, another familiar name topped the table — Benfica, who edged Porto, last year’s surprise Champions League winners.

Editor’s picks for players of the season: Samuel Eto'o, Barcelona’s Cameroonian forward; the brilliant young Ghanaian forward Michael Essien of Lyon; Petr Čech, Chelsea’s outstanding young Czech goalkeeper, and his team mates John Terry (centre back) and Frank Lampard (midfield); Paolo Maldini, Milan’s ageless left back, and his team mates Ukrainian forward Andriy Shevchenko and young Brazilian midfielder Kaká; Wayne Rooney, the bull-like forward, for whom Man. Utd paid nearly $60 million last summer. He might even have been worth it (but should United really have let Uruguayan Diego Forlan go — he scored over twenty goals for Villarreal).

In Europe, the game works by league pyramids, with the best teams in the top division. Relegation and promotion keep teams moving, and reward good management and play, even if the club itself is small. Poorly run big clubs get relegated. A bit like WSSL...

Every country has one or two knock-out competitions (“Cups”) which can produce surprises, matching teams from different divisions and even leagues. Not at all like the State Cup...

Editor’s picks for next year: England — Chelsea; Scotland — Rangers (go to please Barry); Spain — Real; Italy — Inter (surely they must do it some time soon?); Germany — Bayern (who else?); Holland — PSV; France — Lille. Champions League — could it be London’s first win?
Can you guess?

1) How many Ph.Ds there are among our families (hint, who looks most distressed)?

2) How many M.Ds and LL.Bs there are among our families (Barry’s Army would like to suggest a hint about prosperous appearance, but fears repercussions)

3) How many published authors there are on our team?

4) Who among them wrote the following:
   “Schizophrenia as a Disorder of Neuroplasticity”;
   “Control of rectification in the current-voltage relation of the AMPA class of glutamate receptors”;
   “Intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) for locally advanced paranasal sinus tumors: incorporating clinical decisions in the optimization process”;
   "Использование Интернета в преподавании русского языка как иностранного"

5) How many hours of U. of M. computer time have been spent on the Arsenal Under-Nine Blue team this year (your tax dollars at work)?

6) How much money Verizon and other carriers have made on cell phone calls.

7) Which was the most common question asked during those many cell phone calls:
   “Where the blazes are we playing today, and how do you get there?”
   “Did you find my son’s ball?”
   “What did your son say Barry told the team after the match today?”

8) How many times the cry “Play Big” has been heard on our touch-lines this year?

9) How much money Verizon and other carriers have made on

10) How many hours of U. of M. computer time have been spent on

11) Which was the most common question asked during those many cell phone calls:

12) How many times the cry “Play Big” has been heard on our touch-lines this year?

13) Commitment to the Cause Award. Must be shared between Susan Chernew and Christina Tsien (who also wins Throw in of the Year award for her effort at Blue Chip). They both showed commitment beyond the cause of duty, and may have surprised themselves.

14) How many times the cry “Play Big” has been heard on our touch-lines this year?

15) How much money Verizon and other carriers have made on

16) How many hours of U. of M. computer time have been spent on

17) How much money Verizon and other carriers have made on

18) How many hours of U. of M. computer time have been spent on

19) How much money Verizon and other carriers have made on

20) How much money Verizon and other carriers have made on

**End of Season Family Awards**

1) Play Big Award. It has to be Rob and Cheryl. If you don’t know why, count the occupants of that van.

2) Parental Wit Award. A hard one, but we’ll give it to Mike Chernew, who tells the funniest stories about himself and his family.

3) Statistics Survival Award. To Rick Jones, who not only continued keeping statistics, but even recorded precise details of the weather, during a hail storm at Pacesetter Park.

4) Sibling Management Award. To Lynne Richards, who has kept two Arsenal stars happy all year, even when Chris has joined our scrimmages.

5) Pine Cone Futures Award. Olivia Chernew, of course. She’ll be worth a million before she’s 25.

6) Social Organization Award. General Lisa Jones. And salute while you read this line.

7) Commitment to the Cause Award. Must be shared between Susan Chernew and Christina Tsien (who also wins Throw in of the Year award for her effort at Blue Chip). They both showed commitment beyond the cause of duty, and may have surprised themselves.

8) Support of Younger Players Award. A special award to Gino Meneghini for his support of the Spartfires at the UM Tournament (but every under-nine player did a great job), to Adam Saferstein, who also gave great support that day, and led the cheering against Vardar, and to Chris Utz, who cheered all year.

9) Phlegmatic of the Year Award. Naturally, to Dan Saferstein, who’s seen it all before. He abandoned his favored shade and quiet for the really big matches, though.


11) Sibling Distraction of the Year Award. We all work on it (let’s hope Barry does—see other parts of this page; still waters run deep once more). However, Linda was definitely heard very vocally urging Gino on against Vardar. And it was Bill who took first action on the Participation Plaques.

12) Best Combination of Apparent Calm and Fierce Competitiveness Award. Kate Turnbull. Still waters run deep, it turns out.


14) Best Spousal Dig in the Ribs. Susan Chernew, at Novi, in one of many attempts made by mothers to keep fathers under control.

15) Played the Most Games with the Most Children Award. Has to be Colin, who didn’t bite and didn’t pick fights.

16) Calmest Parents of the Year. Must be shared between Don and Linda Meneghini, and Bill and Ann Winters (whose social life turns out to be very active — see other parts of this page; still waters run deep once more). However, Linda was definitely heard very vocally urging Gino on against Vardar. And it was Bill who took first action on the Participation Plaques.

17) Best at Raising Son’s Game. We all work on it (let’s hope Barry doesn’t hear). But Barry’s Army chooses James Utz.

18) Best Defender of Son Award. Linda Meneghini, who made sure that the referee knew that he should have given a yellow card (at least) to the player who flattened Gino, in a shocking challenge, miles from the ball, and from behind, in our first WSSL game of the Spring Season.

19) Sophisticated Catering Award. It’s close to home, but how can we not give it to Alina Makin, whose range, from pirozhki to mufuletta sandwiches, was unpronounceable to most of us, but certainly made the team stand out. Might explain her husband’s girth, too. Alina also wins a special award for identifying Barry Scott’s ankles at 200 yards (PSI).

20) Loudest and Most Obnoxious Parent Award. Modesty forbids the editor to indicate the winner. But it has to go to the only parent threatened with a Yellow Card this year (at CW3).