

THE FOOTBALL PINK

The Zinedine Zidane Issue



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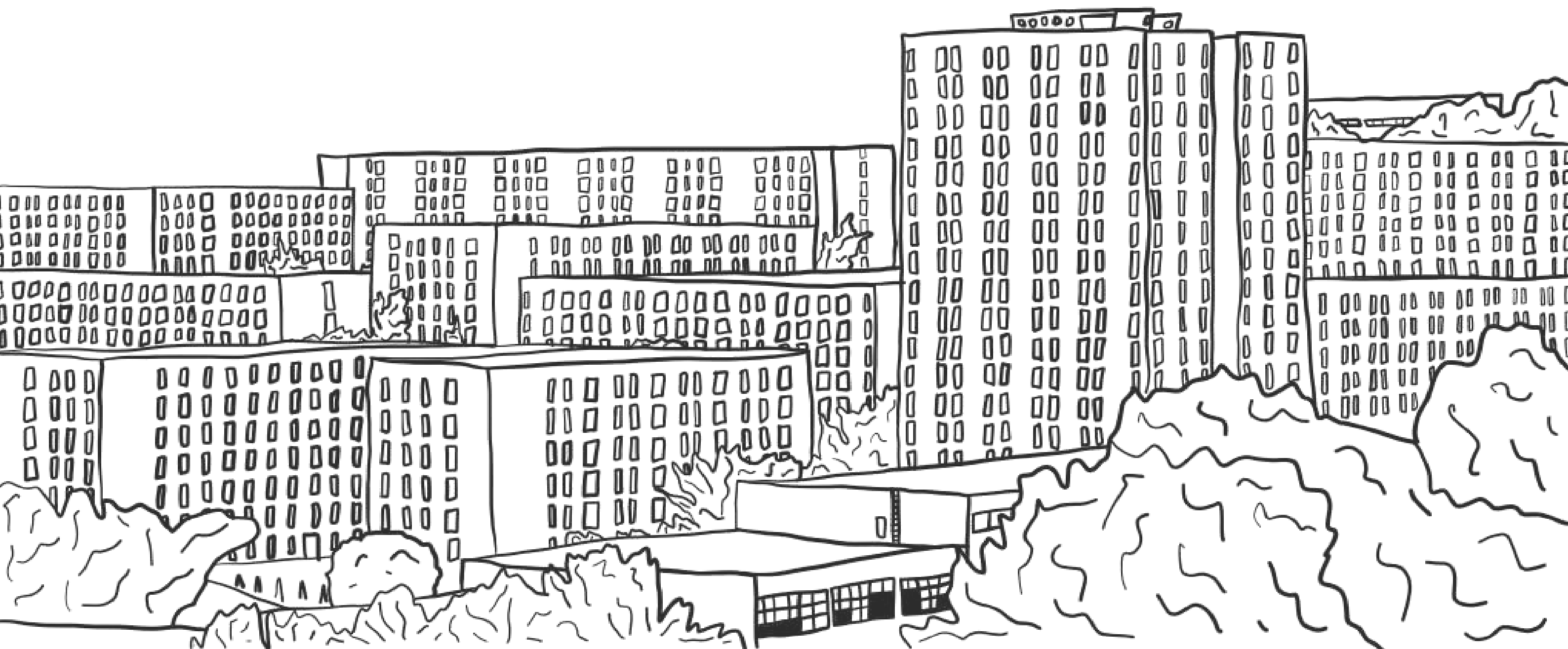
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LA CASTELLANE

THE UPBRINGING THAT FUELED ZIDANE'S QUEST FOR GREATNESS



Today, Zinedine Zidane is footballing royalty but his humble beginnings don't paint a picture bearing any semblance of nobility. La Castellane is just over 10km north of the centre of Marseille and while, near the heart of the city, you can swoon over the glorious gardens at Palais Longchamp, this bit of grandeur doesn't tell the whole story of life in Marseille. Young Zidane's palace was the streets in which he sowed the seeds of a football legend - 'Zizou'.

Before he became Zizou, the playmaker who would go on to win just about every honour he possibly could during his illustrious playing career was 'Yazid' - a son of Algerian immigrants, Smaïl and Malika, who are originally from the Kabylie port city known as Béjaïa.

His parents left Béjaïa in the early 1950s, before the outbreak of the Algerian War which saw the North African nation's National Liberation Front fight their French rulers to eventually gain independence.

Smaïl and Malika originally moved to Paris but in the late 1960s, life led them to La Castellane, which was originally built as a neighbourhood for refugees of the Algerian War that waged on from the mid-50s to the early-60s, and quickly became home to various families of North African origin, such as the Zidanes.

La Castellane, then, is a relatively modern area and there is something very 'mid-late 20th century' about its architecture. It's not necessarily an area of conventional beauty. Some sights in Marseille, such as Le Palais Longchamp and its gardens, are full of life and vibrance at first glance but La

Castellane is a concrete maze which may not necessarily make you fall in love at first sight.

This, however, was all that Yazid - as the young Zizou was affectionately known by family, friends and all those within La Castellane - knew and when he began to play football in this area surrounded by said family and friends, that's when he brought life and vibrance to these, at first glance, unspectacular streets.

Still to this day, this area is not without its issues, as it is associated more with crime and violence than it is associated with a rough-around-the-edges area containing an inner beauty.

However, it is an area full of youth and with youthfulness comes hope.

Hope is exactly what Zidane represents for La Castellane. He is the city's most prosperous son. While he reached the heights of global superstardom in spite of the area in which he was brought up,

his upbringing also provided the fuel for his meteoric rise to greatness.

The city provided Zidane with a stage far less glamorous than Le Stade de France, where the legend would score twice to help France overcome Brazil in the final of the 1998 FIFA World Cup but an arena where the tools required to accomplish such a feat were developed - Place de la Tartane.

In this La Castellane square, grass is concrete and gravel, while stands and supporters are cold and grey apartment blocks.

One of the buildings surrounding this square - the G building - became known as 'the

Zidane building' during and after his time living and developing his legendary skills in this community. While that building has now been demolished, Zidane's legacy lives on and still casts a ray of light over the gloomy surroundings.

On the pitch, some of Zidane's primary attributes were his dribbling and his unwavering determination. His dribbling, in particular, was simply majestic. Anyone who's watched Zidane, at his best, playing a game of football could surely do nothing more than marvel at the legendary playmaker as he glided around the pitch, taking the ball past opposition player after opposition player with the elegance of a figure skater

Meanwhile, in addition to his technical excellence, another part of his game that evidently played a key role in making him such a difficult player to dispossess, is, as mentioned, his determination.

Despite being very good at holding onto the ball and regularly using his frame to position himself between it and opposition defenders, Zidane was never necessarily a man of great strength. However, the way in which he played and used his body to hold onto the ball personified a will to not be thrown off course by any challenger.

This is the determination that we saw in Zidane every time he stepped out onto the pitch. When in possession of the ball, he was defiant in his belief that he was taking it exactly where he wanted to regardless of any other player's intentions and this defiance was emboldened by the fact that oftentimes, he succeeded in doing just that.

This element to his game was undoubtedly mastered during his development throughout his playing career but it was born in La Castellane.

The way he carried the ball is something that is difficult to teach and, in Zidane's case, he

taught it to himself. It is typical of the street footballer to be a very good ball-carrier. It is generally very much a 'fend for yourself' environment to develop your skills. On the streets of La Castellane, playing football is, in some ways, an escape and when the streets of that labyrinth transform into a stadium for would-be stars of the game, Place de la Tartane becomes Le Stade de France or Estadio Santiago Bernabéu and football is played for the sake of playing football.

This is why Zidane was such an artist and why he truly expressed himself every time he was on the ball. It was how he knew the game.

Additionally, the streets tend to play by different rules. Everyone wants the ball and they are prepared to take what they want. So, in a sense, this also shows how the other prevailing element to his game throughout his career - his determination - was born.

It's clear that this street footballer background helped him to hone the dribbling side of his game but this also shows us that in an environment in which every budding star wanted the ball and there weren't necessarily any rules to stop them from getting it, young Zidane was still capable of keeping it for prolonged periods and this is where his determination and physicality, despite not being the world's largest player, were created.

This allowed him to more than make up for not possessing all of the physical gifts in the world and still saw him become a giant when running around the pitch.

That only tells part of the tale of how Zizou came to be from Yazid of La Castellane.

While technical ability and determination were heavily evident in Zidane's game throughout his career, so too was the influence of his family.

**HOPE IS EXACTLY
WHAT ZIDANE
REPRESENTS
FOR LA
CASTELLANE.**

Zidane's career was not without elements of controversy. His success led to him and his heritage being heavily politicised during his career and while he generally tried to not get too involved in this, he always made it clear exactly who he was and what he stood for, ensuring that he never, ever forgot where he came from.

Zidane has made it clear throughout his career that he sees himself as a Kabyle from La Castellane before he sees himself as anyone or anything else, even a Frenchman, which, it needs to be said, is something he also holds immense pride over.

This way of identifying himself came from his family, who he has always seemingly been very close to and protective of. This is evidenced by numerous occasions throughout his career in which his passion and temper got the better of him as he reacted to provocation regarding his family, his upbringing or his heritage.

This first became apparent when he joined AS Cannes - the first professional club of his career - and it remained an element to his game right up until his very last moment on the pitch, when he reacted to a provocative comment about his sister, made by Marco Materazzi in the 2006 World Cup final - Zizou's last professional game - which saw him get sent off for headbutting the Italian in extra-time.

For some, this may represent a moment of madness which left an unwanted mark on the end of a great career but in reality, this moment was nothing out of the ordinary for the legendary France international. This reaction from Zidane to a comment about a family member was unfortunate but the

question is - could Zizou ever have existed without the intense connection and love that he had for his family?

It was, indeed, far from a palace that Yazid and his five siblings were raised. It was a modest home which created a tight bond between the family members.

It has always been made clear by the man himself that the teachings of his father have made an immense impact on his life. Smail taught his son values that he had to learn the hard way as an immigrant who had to work hard for everything he ever earned. Smail's hard work after arriving in a new country allowed him and Malike to raise their family with enough of everything they needed to get by.

As he passed these values down to Yazid, his son then applied them to his own life. He learned everything he needed to learn from his father. Smail's guidance helped him, as much as anything else, to figuratively and literally 'take the ball and run with it' as far as he could. Looking back on

it thus far, these values have allowed him to go a great distance and leave a beautiful mark on the world.

Zizou was not born with abundance but he had everything he needed to reach heights in the footballing world that many would argue are unparalleled. The environment of and the people within La Castellane moulded the young first-generation Frenchman of Kabylie heritage to become a king in his own world.

BY FINTAN O'REILLY

A KING IN HIS OWN WORLD.



ENZO FRANCESCOLO: ZIDANE'S IDOL

It's the 11th of December 2000 and at a star-studded gala in Rome, FIFA are unveiling their 'player of the century award'. They are also announcing their player of the year award and Zinedine Zidane is in attendance. He will go on to win that year's honour beating off competition from Luís Figo and Rivaldo.

Zidane has already cast his vote for his player of the century. There is a long list of impressive names to choose from. Would he choose Pelé or Maradona? Two exceptionally talented playmakers in the Zidane image? Or perhaps Michel Platini his fellow countryman. Platini would make sense. They have several similarities. Both born in France from migrant backgrounds, in Platini's case Italy and Zidane's Algeria. Both talismans for the French national side in the two distinct successful era's. Euro 84 for Platini and France 98 for Zidane. Zizou turned 12 during Euro 84 when Platini lifted the trophy aloft. The perfect idol for any young French footballer but it was not Platini that Zidane voted for. Nor was it joint winners Diego Maradona or Pelé or even another wonderful midfielder like Johan Cruyff. No, when Zidane cast his vote he voted for who he was sure was the best player he had ever seen: Uruguayan Enzo Francescoli.

Zinedine Zidane was born in Marseille in 1972. His parents Smaïl and Malika were from Aguemoune in northern Algeria. They moved to Paris in 1953 before the start of the Algerian War. In search of work, they lived in the suburbs of Barbès and Saint-Denis, where life could be hard. They found little opportunity, so in the mid-1960's they moved to Marseille and settled in the La Castellane district. The neighbourhood could be an unforgiving place to live with high crime rates and skyrocketing unemployment. Despite this Smaïl found work at a department store as

a warehouseman and nightwatchmen. His wife Malika was a housewife looking after their five children.

The oldest Madjid was born in 1963. Two brothers followed and a sister. The youngest of the family, and nine years younger than his oldest brother, was Zinedine. He disliked his first name and so preferred to be known by his middle name. To this day his oldest friends and the residents of the neighbourhood he grew up in know him only as Yazid. His father was strict but very loving. The influence of his father plus his older brothers kept young Yazid from the perils of falling into the trap that many in La Castellane had, a life of crime. His main obsession like so many in Marseille was football. When he wasn't playing he could be found at Stade Vélodrome. Even though he has never played for them, Zidane still regards Olympique de Marseille as his club.

Over 10,000 kilometres from Marseille lies Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay. It was here that Enzo Francescoli was born in 1961. Like Zidane, his family background was of migrant stock with his family hailing from Italy. Francescoli was shy and introverted, speaking little but regarded as a good listener and being very observant. He supported Peñarol, one of Uruguay's big two clubs that contest the Uruguayan Clásico with National. Francescoli was hoping to play for his beloved side, and although he impressed in a trial and was offered a place at the club, he was frustrated by a lack of playing time. During the trial, he was only given 20 minutes on the pitch, so told his father he didn't want to sign. This skinny Uruguayan just wanted to play and complete his studies. When he left school Francescoli was offered a contract at Montevideo Wanderers, one of the capital's smaller clubs and the youthful Uruguayan, already a smoker, signed up.



Francescoli made his debut for Wanderers in 1980. In his debut season, they achieved their highest finish since they were last champions in 1931, coming second to Nacional. Such was Francescoli's impact that he was nicknamed 'El Príncipe: The Prince. He also developed a habit of chewing gum during games in an attempt to combat mouth dryness, although this took on a superstitious or mental aspect as he didn't feel right during games without it. It was not long until El Príncipe won his first cap for his country and just over a year later he won his first honour as Uruguay won the 1983 Copa América.

Francescoli's performance at the tournament caught the eye of Argentine giants River Plate, who signed him that summer. Francescoli struggled at first to adapt, but his performances improved to the extent that he was named South American player of the year in 1984. His crowning glory came in 1986 as he finished as River's top scorer with 25 goals as they secured the 85-86 Primera División title and the 1986 Copa Libertadores, River's first and long-awaited.

Racing Club Paris brought Francescoli to Europe in 1986. From the modern perspective, this may seem like a very odd move. RC had been a giant of French football but had faded from view being usurped by the newly formed PSG in 1970. Businessman Jean-Luc Lagardère had started investing in the club, and following promotion from Ligue 2 one of his new investments was Francescoli. He excelled at the club, being voted player foreign player of the year in 97-88 and following the arrival of European Cup-winning Artur Jorge, the team challenged at the top of the table, but failed to win the title. Francescoli's performances led to interest from Juventus who were looking to replace the retiring Michel Platini with another stylish number 10. The parallels with Zidane, if this move had come about, are there for all to see; Zidane left Bordeaux who at the time were one of the top teams

in Ligue 1 for Juve. Francescoli decided against the move to Italy which if he had gone ahead with, then Zizou perhaps would never have taken him as his idol. RC filed for bankruptcy and Francescoli left for Marseille. The following season RC were relegated.

Marseille is something of a unique city in France. This once run-down port city has improved immensely in recent years and is now attracting more and more tourists by the year. Despite lying in the warm south of France on the Mediterranean coast it can be an unforgiving place. Staunchly working-class and gruff compared to Paris, it is like many port cities home to migrant communities hailing mainly from north Africa, just like the Zidane's. One of the things that make the city so unique is the importance of its football team. Everyone in Marseille is an Olympique fan. If you are born in Marseille then they are your team. There are no two ways about it. These days there is a mural of Zidane in the city. Covering 150 square meters it bears his face and the words 'Made in Marseille'. Zizou may never have played for his beloved team but the affection for which his city shows for its most famous son is beyond doubt. Back in 1989 when Francescoli arrived Zidane was 17 and already playing for Cannes. When he could he would still make the pilgrimage to Stade Vélodrome and be mesmerized by the new number 10.

Francescoli's time in the south of France was a fruitful one where he scored 11 goals in 28 appearances, securing the Ligue 1 title. Watching footage of Francescoli at Marseille it's clear to see how Zidane modelled his game on him. The deftness of touch, the drag-backs, turns and above all elegance of play. Zidane has spoken of how he used to watch from the stands and study Francescoli, wishing he could meet him. He didn't know it yet but that time would soon come. After a spell in Italy at Cagliari and Torino respectively, Francescoli returned to River Plate. In Francescoli's first season

at River, Zidane had a son with his wife Véronique whom he met while playing at Cannes. He named him Enzo in tribute to his idol.

Francescoli's return to River was a great success. He may have been 33 when he arrived in 1994 but age proved no barrier as he led River to an unbeaten league season. Further success came in 1996 where River won their second Copa Libertadores. Meanwhile, Zidane had joined Juventus following a successful spell at Bordeaux. While he had not been part of Juve's Champions League success in 96, it did mean he would play in their Intercontinental Cup match against the champions of South America. It just so happened that this was Francescoli's River Plate. The match, as was the tradition at the time, was played in Tokyo. Juventus won 1-0 with a goal from Alessandro Del Piero, giving Zidane his first title with Juve. The title was important but the trophy Zidane took home with him that night was much more precious. At the final whistle, he sought out his great hero Enzo and had the chat with him that he had long dreamed of. Francescoli gave Zidane his shirt and the Juventus star was so enamoured by it that he often slept in it. When he did so he was Yazid the boy from La Castellane again.

Despite his success on his return to River, Francescoli decided to retire in 1998 after failing to help Uruguay to qualify for the 1998 World Cup. Francescoli admitted he couldn't continue, despite receiving an offer of nearly a million dollars to keep playing. He cited injuries along with poor sleeping habits brought on by stress as his reasons for his retirement. Enzo had suffered from this since 1996. The year of Francescoli's retirement would, of course, be Zidane's greatest, winning the most coveted prize in football of the World Cup. The Champions League followed in 2002, with Zidane scoring a sublime volley that his idol would have been proud of.

In retirement, Francescoli has worked in television and declined several offers to coach River Plate where he had the most successful spell of his career. He did return to the club as head of player personnel and it was Francescoli who decided that they should appoint his former teammate Marcello Gallardo as coach following a shock spell in the Argentine second tier. Gallardo has gone on to become the most successful coach in River Plate's history.

For Zidane, retirement from playing has, unlike his idol, led to a management career that has brought him great success with three Champions League titles in a row. On Francescoli, Zidane has said this - "when I saw Francescoli play, he was the player I wanted to be. He was the player that I saw and admired at Olympique de Marseille, my idol when I played against him when I was at Juventus... Enzo is like a god."

The two have become friends since their first meeting on the pitch in Tokyo. This is not surprising as not only were they similar players, they are also similar in personality - quiet, introspective and shy. The mutual respect is there for all to see. In Geneva, at a UNICEF event Francescoli, the man who Zizou named his son after, was there with his son. Marco Francescoli was a budding footballer and his hero and idol was Zidane. The three went to dinner that evening and the shy, even shyer than his father, Marco, wanted to ask Zidane something. Enzo encouraged him to do so. Marco wanted to know how he had learned his oriented chest controls and other skills. Zidane smiled and said, "Ask your father because I learned it all from him."

BY JAMES BOLAM



THE FOREWORD TO A BESTSELLING CAREER: ZIDANE'S CAREER IN FRENCH FOOTBALL

For many football fans, the career of Zinedine Zidane started the minute he pulled on the black and white shirt of Juventus in 1996. Others became aware of the great man only when he rampaged to World Cup glory with France in 1998. There are even some who only truly began to know the depths of Zizou's talent when he signed for Real Madrid at the peak of his powers in 2001, becoming the embodiment of the Galactico ideal and sealing his place in posterity with that Champions League final goal at Hampden.

But the journey to the top of those footballing Himalaya contained some pretty interesting foothills en route, and it would be a mistake to write off Zidane's time in French domestic football. Between making his professional debut in 1989 and packing his bags for Italy in 1996, Zidane managed to fit more into his early years at AS Cannes and FC Girondins de Bordeaux than many footballers squeeze into their entire career.

YOUNG YAZID ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA

Although Zidane was famously born to Algerian immigrants in Marseille, his career in professional football started 100 miles along the coast in Cannes, when he joined the academy of AS Cannes at the age of 14. The swanky home of the world-renowned Cannes Film Festival, the wealthy Riviera city was a far cry from Zidane's upbringing in the rough La Castellane neighbourhood of Zidane's childhood.

The juxtaposition between the player's origins and present circumstances led to conflict early in his time at Cannes. When an opponent mocked Zidane's ghetto origins, he received a punch in return - a foreshadowing, perhaps, of how Zidane would end his career so many years later. His punishment for this reaction was to spend much of his early weeks at Cannes on cleaning duty. Zidane sometimes found himself in conflict with spectators too, a result of insults coming from the stands about his race and family. Although Zidane (who in those days was often referred to by his middle name, Yazid) initially stayed in a dormitory with other hopefuls during his initial six-week trial, he was later invited to move into the home of Cannes technical director Jean-Claude Elineau - presumably in an attempt to hone his passion and fiery nature into something which could be used on the pitch. The unorthodox arrangement worked, Zidane escaping his homesickness in the bosom of the Elineau family and settling into his football.

Zidane didn't forget about home, though, and in particular, the footballing love he had left behind along the coast. Despite never having the opportunity to play for the club, Zidane is a lifelong supporter of Olympique de Marseille. During those early years at Cannes, he took advantage of the relative proximity to his home by nipping off to watch his heroes from the stands when he got the chance.

After spending time in Cannes' youth ranks, Zidane made his professional debut in May 1989 in a match against Nantes, aged just 17. Even in those early days, Zidane was creating a



stir in French football. "I will never forget when I saw Zidane playing for Cannes as an 18-year-old against Monaco in one of his first professional games," said former Tottenham sporting director Damian Comolli in an interview with the BBC some years later. "He scored the most unbelievable volley I've ever seen, hitting the ball into the corner from a cross. For some reason, the goal was disallowed, for what reason I still don't know. It is an image in my mind and I will never forget it."

A couple of years later, Zidane scored a first Cannes goal (well, his first one that counted, anyway) and was rewarded with the gift of a car from the chairman, in satisfaction of a longstanding promise. In three seasons in the Cannes first team, Zidane played a total of 61 matches, scoring six goals for a team that had some memorable days. Most notably, season 1990-91 (Zidane's first season as a first-choice starter) saw the team finish in a best-ever fourth place in the table and qualify for the UEFA Cup, ahead of storied sides such as Saint-Étienne and PSG. Perhaps just as excitingly for the young Zidane, his boyhood heroes Marseille won the title for the third season in succession, as well as reaching the final of the European Cup.

Unfortunately, Cannes followed that high with a season of lows in 1991-92. Their European adventure was short-lived, losing out to Dynamo Moscow in the second round. Domestically, things were even worse, with Cannes sinking like a stone and ending a hotly contested season second bottom of the table. One year after their greatest ever success, Les Dragons found themselves relegated to the second division.

Cannes' relegation would mark the break up of their talented side, with a number of them jumping ship to stay in the top flight. Zidane, by now one of the division's hottest prospects, was no different. His next home would be Bordeaux, a team that was passing Cannes in the other direction

after having sealed promotion back to the top flight after a single season in the lower leagues.

A COMING OF AGE IN THE GIRONDE

Bordeaux may have been newly promoted, but they were not your bog-standard "yo-yo" team. Having enjoyed a golden decade in the 1980s, a period in which stars such as Jean Tigana and Alain Giresse led the club to three titles and two Coupes de France, the club was still one of the big players in the French scene by the time Zidane made his professional debut at Cannes, narrowly missing out on the league title to Marseille that year. At the end of the following season, in which they finished mid-table, the club was relegated for administrative reasons following financial irregularities. When Zidane joined them one year later in the summer of 1992, this was a club that was impatient to re-establish itself among France's elite.

Zidane was not the only exciting young talent in the Bordeaux squad. Waiting for him on his arrival at the Stade Chaban-Delmas were two homegrown talents who were causing a stir for Les Girondins - forward Christophe Dugarry and Basque full-back Bixente Lizarazu. Together, the three emerging talents would go on to form a triad that was the basis for much of Bordeaux's subsequent success.

In Zidane's first season, Bordeaux's ambitions of grandeur were shown to be anything but delusional as they secured an impressive fourth-place finish. Having been on the wrong end of the footballing asterisks with their relegation a couple of years previously, they now found the administrative gods to be working in their favour as they were upgraded to third in the table following Marseille's high profile match-fixing scandal. Perhaps more importantly, in finishing only seven points

behind their disgraced rivals (and only three behind the best "clean teams", PSG and Monaco), Bordeaux had instantly announced themselves as being back among the potential title contenders. Zidane was a key component of Bordeaux's success, playing 35 times and scoring 10 goals.

Bordeaux never quite managed to translate that near-miss in 1992-93 to a more sustained title challenge, their form slipping over the next few years as they finished fourth in 1993-94 and seventh in 1994-95 (in each case only a few points ahead of a resurgent Cannes). Most alarmingly of all, season 1995-96 saw the club flirt with the possibility of another relegation (this time on purely sporting terms), as they slumped to a disappointing 16th placed finish.

ZIDANE, DUGARRY AND LIZARAZU - COMMITTED EUROPHILES

With Bordeaux's domestic form deteriorating during Zidane's spell at the club, it was in Europe that the club really earned its reputation as an exciting young team.

Having returned to European competition at the first time of asking post-relegation, Bordeaux entered the UEFA Cup in season 1993-94. An easy 6-0 aggregate victory over Dublin's Bohemian FC (Zidane and Dugarry both netting) was followed by a much tighter 3-1 aggregate victory over Swiss side Servette. The third round saw Les Girondins drawn against German side Karlsruher SC, who had already dispatched of PSV Eindhoven and Valencia (the latter by an aggregate score of 8-3) in earlier rounds. Zidane scored the only goal of the first leg as Bordeaux took a narrow win at the Stade Chaban-Delmas, but a disappointing 3-0 reverse in Germany brought the adventure to an end. Karlsruher, for their part, made it all the way to the semi-finals of the competition, ultimately crashing out against

Austria Salzburg (in its pre-Red Bull form) on away goals after two tight draws.

Bordeaux returned to the UEFA Cup for season 1994-95, but a disappointing campaign saw them dispose of Norwegian side Lillestrom, only to exit the competition in the second round after a shock defeat to Poland's GKS Katowice. Perhaps equally frustrating was the fact that Bordeaux's disappointing domestic form was not good enough to seal a return to the UEFA Cup the following season, their seventh-placed finish only enough to qualify them for the Intertoto Cup (a competition that had only just come under UEFA's auspices).

The Intertoto Cup was the bizarre runt of the European litter, an unloved and little understood competition that saw teams start their season in midsummer. However, the ultimate prize for the "winners" of the competition (there were two that season, soon increased to three) being a place in the early rounds of the UEFA Cup. Laborious though it may have seemed, the Intertoto Cup did at least mean that the backdoor to "proper" European competition was slightly ajar. Bordeaux soon kicked it open.

The Intertoto's schedule meant that the new season started on 1 July, just over a month after the old one had ended. Bordeaux found themselves in a very Nordic-centric group with Odense, HJK Helsinki, Norrköping and their old friends, Bohemians. Zidane scored four goals in four matches in the group stages, starting with a brace in that opening match (a 6-2 win against Norrköping), as Bordeaux topped the group with 10 points. He scored again in the last 16 match against Eintracht Frankfurt, and his free-scoring side continued their march through the competition with a quarter-final victory over Heerenveen and a 4-2 aggregate win over Karlsruher in the semi-finals - some degree of revenge for their UEFA Cup tie two seasons previously. This being the Intertoto Cup, there was no final - both Bordeaux and

fellow French side Strasbourg were crowned joint winners of the competition and had sealed a place in the first round of the UEFA Cup. Zidane, for his part, had scored five goals in seven Intertoto ties, and it was still only August!

The early rounds of the UEFA Cup saw Bordeaux defeat Eastern European opposition in the shape of FK Vardar Skopje and Rotor Volgograd. A blockbuster third-round tie against Spain's Real Betis was won by the narrowest of margins, with Zidane scoring the crucial second leg goal in Seville that ultimately decided the tie.

Things got properly serious in the quarter-finals when Les Girondins were drawn against AC Milan. Managed by Fabio Capello, Milan were one of the finest sides on the continent, having won the European Cup in 1989, 1990 and 1994 as well as being losing finalists (to Marseille and Ajax) in the 1993 and 1995 editions. With the likes of Baresi, Maldini and Costacurta marshalling their backline, they were hot favourites to swat aside the upstart Frenchmen of Bordeaux, by now facing their 11th different European opponent of the season. Milan had already made short work of Bordeaux's compatriots Strasbourg in the second round, and the smart money was on this being the tie where the momentum of Zidane & Co would be brought crashing to a halt.

The first leg at San Siro certainly followed that script, with Milan easing to a 2-0 win, Robert Baggio among the scorers. The relatively paltry crowd of 22,740 for such an important match perhaps indicated that the Milanese crowd, so used to a diet of champagne in the European Cup/Champions League, saw the UEFA Cup as small beer - a stark contrast to fans of Les Girondins, who were delighted to be mixing it with the big boys after their time in the Intertoto.

The second leg of the tie was surely one of

the most famous nights ever to take place at the Stade Chaban-Delmas. Scoring three against the storied Milan defence was not something you would have bet on anyone achieving, but that was what Bordeaux knew had to happen if they were to progress. An early goal from Didier Tholot (who converted a cross from the battling Lizarazu) got the ball rolling, bringing Bordeaux within one goal of levelling the tie and giving the home crowd some belief that their favourites were not there solely to make up the numbers.

In the second half, the young partnership of Zidane and Dugarry combined to outfox the wily Milanese defence. First, Zidane took a free-kick which bounced off the referee's head and into a crowded box, Dugarry showing razor quick reflexes to fire the bobbling ball into the net and send the crowd berserk. "They took the atmosphere to another level," Zidane later said of the home fans. "They were so positive - and they transmitted that feeling to the players."

Six minutes later and with only 20 minutes of the tie left to play, the young Frenchmen were at it again. Zidane received the ball from Lizarazu just inside his own half, turned and embarked on a diagonal run that took him up the left flank and into the centre of the pitch. His first attempted through ball foundered on the rocks of the Milan defence, but the ball broke kindly back to Zizou, who managed to stab it through to Dugarry, lingering at the edge of the 18-yard box on the right. One swing of the right boot and the ball rocketed into the top left corner of the net. Bordeaux had done it, three goals against a defence that many considered to be virtually impregnable. They held on to their lead for the remaining twenty minutes, and the tie was over. The defeat of AC Milan was arguably the crowning moment of the Zidane/Dugarry/Lizarazu generation at Bordeaux, who had shown on the continental stage that they possessed some of the most exciting talents in Europe.

The semi-final against Slavia Prague was

a nervy affair, Bordeaux taking the tie after consecutive home and away 1-0 wins to seal their place in the two-legged final, where they would face Bayern Munich. By the time the first leg against the Germans rolled around on 1 May 1996, it had been exactly 10 months since Bordeaux started their European adventure against Norrköping, and the final ultimately proved a bridge too far for the plucky French underdogs. Deprived of both Zidane and Dugarry for the first leg due to suspension, Bordeaux succumbed to a 2-0 defeat in Munich. Unfortunately, the second leg did not follow the fairytale comeback arc of the AC Milan tie, with the Bavarians taking a comfortable 3-1 win at the Stade Chaban-Delmas to deservedly lift the trophy.

It was a sad end to a truly epic European adventure for Bordeaux, who had taken the stairs from the basement of UEFA competition all the way to its penthouse that season, travelling the length and breadth of Europe in the process and facing everything from the part-timers of Bohemians to the blue-riband megastars of AC Milan and Bayern. Their name might not have been on the trophy, but this team had provided the fans with memories that would never fade.

MOVING ON AND LOOKING BACK

Zidane's sparkling form at Bordeaux had attracted the attention of the French national team, for whom he made his debut in a friendly against the Czech Republic in August 1994. In a match which took place in the familiar environs of the Stade Chaban-Delmas, Zidane made an instant mark, climbing off the bench with his country two goals down and scoring a quick brace to seal a comeback draw. It was a fitting start to a dramatic international career.

Zizou was the last of the young Bordeaux trio to play for France, slightly behind his colleagues Lizarazu (who had made his

international debut four years earlier) and Dugarry (who had first played for Les Bleus four months previously). All three would go on to feature at Euro 1996 shortly after their UEFA Cup final defeat, as France reached the semi-finals only to be knocked out by the Czech Republic on penalties.

The UEFA Cup final would ultimately be the last time Zidane played for Bordeaux. With the club having finished in a disappointing 16th place (their European exertions perhaps taking their toll on domestic form) - and Zidane having cemented himself that season as one of the top talents not just in France (he was named the league's Player of the Year that season, despite Bordeaux's travails), but in Europe - it was time to move on. Juventus came calling, making a £3.2m bid for the playmaker that saw him follow in the footsteps of national team legend Michel Platini in pulling on the famous black and white stripes. Bordeaux's team was further broken up by the exits of Dugarry (who had sufficiently impressed AC Milan for them to sign him) and Lizarazu (whose status as a Basque made him irresistible to Athletic Club of Bilbao). In the end, the three players' achievements on the continental and international stages meant they had outgrown Les Girondins.

The Bordeaux of Zidane, Lizarazu and Dugarry was well and truly over, and Zizou was about to embark on the second phase of his career - in which he would become a truly global superstar. However, he left behind a foreword to his story that was full of excitement, development, memorable European adventures and success against the odds. The wider world may have forgotten that first phase of Zidane's career, but you can be sure that supporters of AS Cannes and FC Girondins de Bordeaux never will.

BY RODDY CAIRNS

POST-PLATINI DECLINE: FRANCE, EURO '96 AND ZIDANE'S NEW GENERATION

Difficult to imagine today, but French football was in a mess in the early 1990s. The glory days of Michel Platini on the field had long gone, and the most famous French footballer of all time now occupied the dugout. There was promise of more, presumed to be built around the shape of the Marseille squad who had brought a first European Cup to the country, but even that seemed to be fading away.

A disastrous campaign had seen France fail to qualify for the 1990 World Cup, and while there were memorable moments in the European Championships qualifying campaign (a couple of victories against Spain which served to highlight the skills of Eric Cantona and Jean-Pierre Papin), Euro 92 offered little to the French by way of inspiration.

Something was needed, and while Platini's assistant and eventual replacement Gérard Houllier looked a safe pair of hands, he also represented a continuation of a status quo that was getting France nowhere. Houllier's final international straw, at the end of the qualifying campaign for World Cup 1994 might have been disastrous at the time, but there is a well-established phrase about omelettes and eggs, and the French football team was about to get cracking.

SUCCESS IN THE PROVINCES

Again, promoting from within, Aime Jacquet took control of the side after the

departure of Houllier and looked to build his team around a larger than life figurehead, echoing the approach France had used with considerable success in the 1980s.

Cantona was no Platini, however, and the Manchester Utd striker was never far away from controversy. What was needed was a new attacking force, a new spearhead, and to that end, one of the most exciting teams in France was Bordeaux.

Already from that side, Bixente Lizarazu, who scored nine goals from full-back in the 1993/94 season, had made the step up. There was more attacking prowess in the shape of Christophe Dugarry and Zinedine Zidane.

Zidane had been around the French set-up since 1991, making his name for France in an Under 21 side that contained a lot of names that would become a lot more familiar in 1998, be they Fabien Barthez or Bruno N'Gotty.

N'Gotty made his first full appearance for the French side in an August 1994 friendly with the Czech Republic, only the fledgeling nation's fifth international match after their split from Slovakia. By half-time, he and fellow debutant Lilian Thuram were marshalling a new-look 4-4-2 after Jacquet re-organised due to player shortages, and the fact the Czechs were two goals to the good.

Zidane's old team-mate Dugarry had started that game but had struggled to produce alongside Cantona, and Lizarazu replaced another failed creator, David Ginola at half time. The game still hadn't turned in France's favour by the hour mark, so Jacquet turned to Zidane, sending him on in place of Corentin Martins in front of his home crowd at the Parc Lescure.

Twenty minutes later, Zidane had made his

mark. He picked up a pass from Laurent Blanc, surged forward, avoided a couple of tackles and unleashed a shot from 25 yards that rifled into the net. A star was born. That star was to rise even further a couple of minutes later when, left unmarked from a corner, he bulleted a header into the net to equalise.

The die was cast for France, not that Jacquet realised at the time.

ENGLAND AND THE ENGLISH

Bordeaux and Paris Saint-Germain were two of the best sides in France at this time, and the feeling in the French press was that Les Bleus would come to be a mirror of one or the other of those two sides in years to come. Standing in their way before that, however, and looming large, was Marseille.

Didier Deschamps and Marcel Desailly were the part of the spine of the team, and with Cantona in the forward line, joined by Papin (who by now was showing his age), the influence of the southern giants was creaking as 1994 wore on.

When the European Championship qualifying campaign began, Jacquet turned to the capital. Ginola, Bernard Lama, Alain Roche and Paul Le Guen all played for the champions, while the coming force, Bordeaux, saw their star men kept on the bench.

None of that group, nor Lizarazu or Dugarry, were able to puncture a resolute Slovakian defence as the campaign began with a dreary 0-0 draw in Bratislava. The next game saw the influence of Zidane begin to tell. The French might have drawn 0-0 again in St Etienne against a much-fancied Romania side, but the arrival of Zidane pushed captain

Cantona forward from the deeper-lying position he had occupied beforehand, not that the 18 minutes produced much.

Cantona was, by now, a hero at Manchester Utd, and was attempting to captain his country to a competition that would allow him the chance to thrill the same supporters as he did at club level. He played up front with Nicolas Ouedec in the next qualifier, a third 0-0 in a row, this time in Poland, and while Jacquet was gaining plaudits for the fact his side was difficult to beat, the lack of dynamism in attack was a definite problem.

A routine 2-0 victory over Azerbaijan in Trabzon, Turkey closed out the year, with a new-look 4-3-3 formation allowing Cantona, Papin and Loko to play alongside one another in attack. When 1995 began, France were still struggling for an identity, and Cantona was holding the trump cards in the team. The name Zinedine Zidane was known, but it was not on the team sheet by any means.

Accruing points one by one was never going to be enough, not least when Romania had started the group in such fantastic form, but Jacquet was seemingly neither able nor willing to work with a settled team during the



qualifying campaign. Each match provided certain answers, but posed questions going forward, and the cohesion and direction of the squad seemed lacking.

1995 began with a friendly against the Netherlands, which was really the end of the beginning. Cantona captained the side on what was to be his last appearance in a blue shirt, playing alongside Papin, in the coda of his international career. While neither perhaps reached the heights that might have been hoped for, seeing Papin replaced by Ouedec was a signal of the scarcity of options and, though the Netherlands were defeated by a Loko goal, once again, the French public were left wondering.

Ouedec started the next game, another 0-0, this time in Israel, but by this stage, the rumblings were that Youri Djorkaeff might be the next cab off the rank. Djorkaeff entered the fray in place of Martins in Tel Aviv, as both he and Ginola looked to make a mark on a side that had been left distinctly bereft of an attacking force.

Everything changed with the visit of Slovakia to Nantes in April, and everything changed, predictably enough, because of Zidane.

By this point, Cantona's kung-fu kick had seen him banned from international football for a year, so the captain's armband had passed to Deschamps. Deschamps operated on the right of a diamond midfield against Slovakia, playing to the right of Vincent Guerin whilst staying ahead of Desailly and, crucially, behind the playmaker, Zidane. The following day, Libération described the three as 'récupérateurs', their tasks being like that of a scrap-man. They retrieve waste football, pry it from the Slovaks, and get it straight to the man who might polish it into something better.

"For me, it's not a surprise," Jacquet noted after the game. "This guy is a genius of the game. At the highest level, you have to assume enormous responsibilities without

being paralysed by it."

Zidane, despite a seemingly reluctant start and his substitution with fifteen minutes to go, did exactly that. Growing into the role, had a hand in three of the four goals, either directly or indirectly, as France played with vim and freedom that had been lacking for some time. A plan was beginning to emerge, though it still wasn't clear who would play ahead of that recycling plant of a midfielder.

In terms of squad building, this was an important time for France. The players coming into the team were judged not just on their abilities on the field, but also their integration into the squad. It is difficult to know how well Zidane did on that front, but there were occasions when other members of the French set-up found their treatment differed.

Midway through the campaign came the easiest task – a home game against Azerbaijan. The Friday before the game, Jacquet took a phone call from a relative newcomer to the side, Christian Karembeu, with just nine caps to his name at that stage.

Karembeu was released by Sampdoria for international duty but called Jacquet indicating he had a family problem and his spot was filled and left open for his return. Meanwhile, Ginola, who had started his Premier League season in fabulous form was left out. Indeed, Deschamps indicated that they were better off without some players and, though Ginola was not named, the implication was clear. In the end, he came off the bench with the game long won.

That game against Azerbaijan was almost unfair; a brand new nation with inexperienced players, had struggled to keep up with much lesser players than Zidane and, though he only scored one goal, there was a highlight reel of involvement in the game.

So much came to ride on the away game

in Romania, and Zidane excelled again, providing a goal and an assist in what turned into a routine 3-1 victory and ended up being the result that ensured that France qualified for Euro '96. Even so, there were question marks over the squad, albeit not in the Zidane role.

As well as the names mentioned above, a whole host of other players were given the opportunity to shine. Some grabbed it with both hands, such as Djorkaeff cementing his spot in the side, while others fell by the wayside somewhat. Djorkaeff was such an important figure alongside Zidane, the two stars ascending in blue together towards the tournament gloriously.

Marc Keller, Mikael Madar and Cyrille Pouget were some of the lesser names tried before the European Championships began in England – a tour of Cantona's domestic haunts, without Cantona involved.

When qualification was finally achieved, as the sixth-best second-placed side, France did not look a name to be feared, but their long unbeaten run muddied the water a little. By the start of the tournament, they were fourth or fifth favourites to emerge victorious, behind Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, England and Spain. Looking at the French build-up, it was obvious why.

The first friendly of the year was a 3-2 victory over Portugal, with Zidane having a hand in all three goals. He turned his other trick, with a goal just a minute after coming on for Djorkaeff. Absent from the next two victories, he came back for the 1-0 win over Germany, and the first half of the final warm-up against Armenia.

France were a force, with the only concern being that their strength lay defensively rather than going forward.

As such, it would have been satisfying that their progress through Group B was

secured by goals scored by their attacking players. Dugarry netted the only goal against familiar foes Romania, while Djorkaeff gave Les Bleus the (later cancelled out) lead against Spain with a beautifully timed run and prodded effort. In the third match against Bulgaria, Blanc popped up with his traditional goal, and Loko sealed the deal late on.

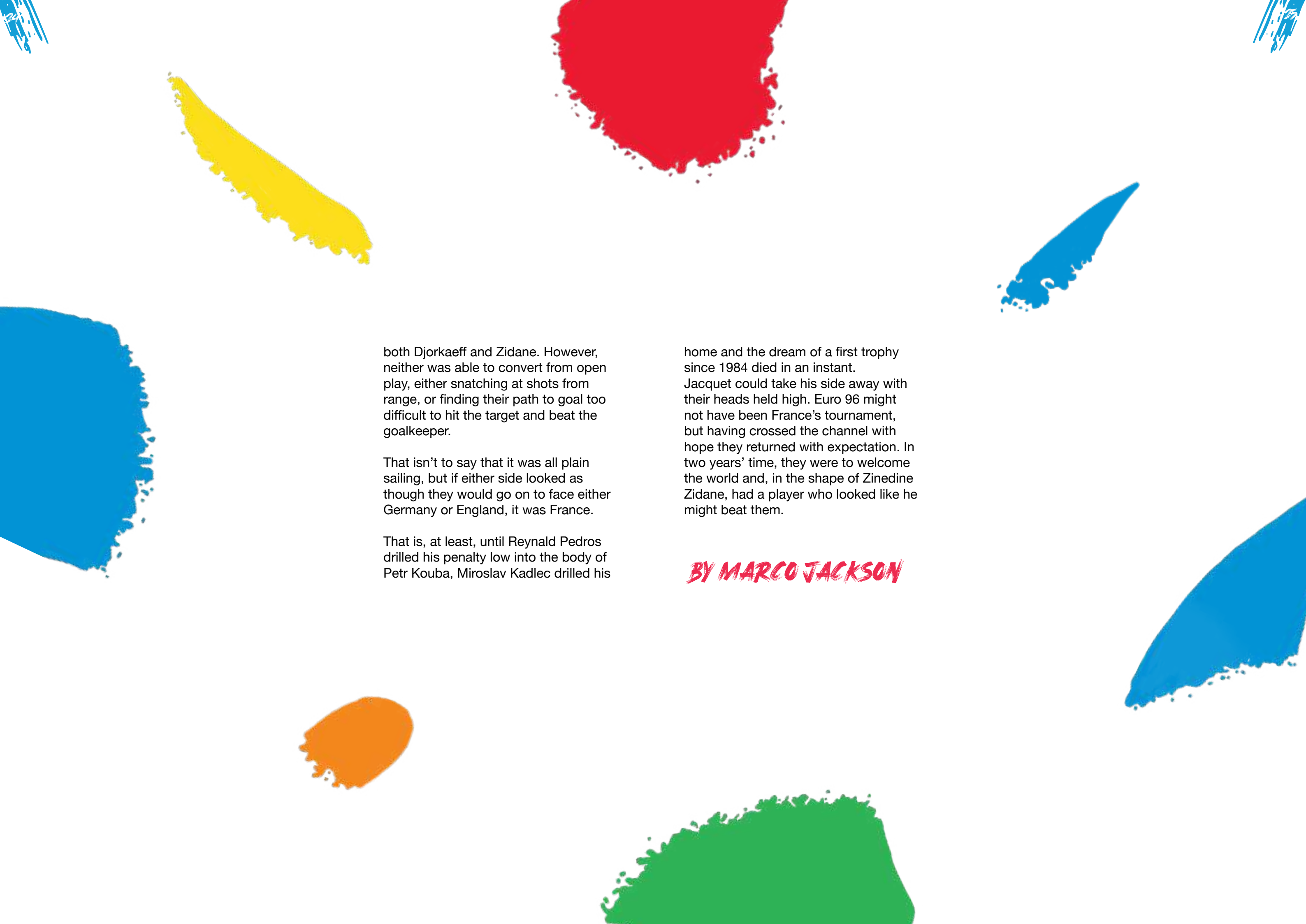
Then the goals dried up. Pitted against pre-tournament favourites the Netherlands in the round of 16, Jacquet pulled Zidane into a flatter midfield role, meaning Deschamps was more able to cover Dennis Bergkamp. In some ways, the plan worked. In others, it failed.

The Dutch had the best of normal time, producing the better of the few chances that were created and could be rightly aggrieved to see a Desailly handball awarded outside the box when replays showed clearly it was within the lines.

However, extra time was a different story. Zidane and Djorkaeff picked up the baton, with the former taking the support role and producing a litany of chances that his teammate was unable to take. The most unlikely was a pass nudged into a shockingly empty penalty area, after Zidane had hustled his way into the box. To see a pass like that was unlikely, but to execute it when losing balance, and to find Djorkaeff perfectly, deserved better than the smothered Edwin van der Sar save it received.

When it went to penalties, the two stars of the show Zidane and Djorkaeff scored. Eventually, on the tenth kick, Clarence Seedorf, just as he was in the closing moments, was denied by Bernard Lama. France went through to face the surprise package of the Czech Republic in the semi-final.

In truth, Les Bleus should have put four or five past Dusan Uhrin's side, with chances falling like Manchester rain at the feet of



both Djorkaeff and Zidane. However, neither was able to convert from open play, either snatching at shots from range, or finding their path to goal too difficult to hit the target and beat the goalkeeper.

That isn't to say that it was all plain sailing, but if either side looked as though they would go on to face either Germany or England, it was France.

That is, at least, until Reynald Pedros drilled his penalty low into the body of Petr Kouba, Miroslav Kadlec drilled his

home and the dream of a first trophy since 1984 died in an instant.

Jacquet could take his side away with their heads held high. Euro 96 might not have been France's tournament, but having crossed the channel with hope they returned with expectation. In two years' time, they were to welcome the world and, in the shape of Zinedine Zidane, had a player who looked like he might beat them.

BY MARCO JACKSON

ZINEDINE ZIDANE AT JUVENTUS: BECOMING THE KING OF ITALY

It was summer 1996 at Juventus. The mood in Turin was one of quiet satisfaction. Yet there was also palpable determination. The satisfaction stemmed from the Bianconeri having just claimed their second-ever European Champions' Cup triumph, and they had done so in Rome of all places. There, they had beaten a very strong, young Ajax side 4-2 on penalties, after the game finished level at 1-1 after 120 tense, fascinating minutes.

However, by the time veteran captain Gianluca Vialli had hoisted the large silver continental trophy into the Roman evening sky (his last act before moving to join Ruud Gullit at Chelsea), Marcello Lippi's Juventus were no longer champions of their own country. The Serie A title had been lost to old rivals A.C. Milan, and not by a small margin either. The Milanese had won the title by eight points, a significant margin in a league with only 18 teams in it.

Therefore, the signing of young French midfield prodigy Zinedine Zidane from Bordeaux for just over £3million on 1 July was considered a necessary, if not exactly hold the front page, squad addition. Although the young man clearly had massive potential, a fact that was reflected in the reasonable size of the transfer fee, he was still relatively unknown outside of France to most football fans.

That unknown status had changed a little when he had helped Bordeaux reach the 1996 UEFA Cup final. Ably assisted by international colleague Christophe Dugarry, Zidane had been instrumental in the club's run to the

two-legged final against Bayern Munich. That run had included a fabulous 3-2 aggregate victory over A.C. Milan at the quarter-final stage, all the more remarkable as the unfashionable French side had lost the first leg 2-0 at the San Siro. However, Bayern Munich were much too strong for them in the decider, triumphing 5-1 on aggregate. That lost final was Zidane's farewell to French domestic football.

Of course, by 1996, Zidane was also an integral part of his national squad. That summer, prior to signing for Juventus, he had been an important member of the French team that made the short journey across to England and then performed admirably at Euro '96. Under manager Aime Jacquet, Zidane was usually deployed as the right-sided attacking player in a 4-3-2-1 formation at the tournament. In the later stages, he became a central midfielder in a 4-4-1-1 lineup. That ability to flexibly fit into a number of positions equally well would prove invaluable during Zidane's career at the top level of the game.

Ultimately, France fell at the penultimate hurdle, losing their semi-final penalty shoot-out 6-5 to the Czech Republic at Old Trafford. Zidane had been the first penalty taker for his country, calmly slotting home, just as he'd done in the 5-4 quarter-final shootout win over the Netherlands.

However, there was no time to dwell on that semi-final disappointment with the national team. In moving to Turin, Zidane was taking a massive step up in quality from Ligue 1, both in terms of those within his own dressing room and those



he would be facing most weeks in Serie A. The Juventus side he joined included such household names as Alessandro Del Piero, Angelo Di Livio, Antonio Conte, Alen Boksic and Christian Vieri. In such exalted company, the young Frenchman was initially very much just another cog in the machine.

He took his place in the Juventus side that battled to an opening day 1-1 draw at Reggiana on 8 September. By the time he scored his first league goal, the clincher in a 2-0 home win over rivals Inter Milan on 20 October, Juventus sat on top of the table. Zidane was regularly showing the sort of sublime skills and ability on the ball that quelled any doubts his teammates might have held about this quiet young Frenchman.

The quality of several of their rivals in Serie A in 1996-97 reads like a who's who of world football royalty: A.C. Milan (Costacurta, Baresi, Maldini, Boban, Davids, Roberto Baggio, Weah); A.S. Roma (Totti, Balbo, Di Biagio, Tommasi); Parma (Buffon, Cannavaro, Thuram, Dino Baggio, Sensini, Crespo, Chiesa); Inter Milan (Bergomi, Zanetti, Djorkaeff, Zamorano).

Despite this level of competition, Zidane quickly became the focal point of the team from Turin. He had supreme confidence in his own ability, able to show for and receive a pass despite being tightly marked. He would then find a way to not only retain possession but pose a huge threat to opponents, his imagination and technique with the ball already virtually unmatched despite his relative inexperience at the top level of the game.

With Zidane in regal form, defeats for Juventus became a very rare event. An early season 2-1 defeat at Vicenza on 13 October 1996 would be their last league defeat of the calendar year. The Coppa Italia two-legged quarter-final defeat to Inter Milan just before Christmas simply served to focus their minds on Serie A and the Champions

League, in which the Bianconeri were imperious.

In a Group also containing Manchester United, Juventus finished top with 16 points out of a possible 18, conceding only a single goal in their six games. Boksic and Del Piero were lethal in the penalty area, Zidane often conducting the orchestra just behind them.

The New Year opened with a narrow 1-0 defeat at Parma, who had emerged as Juventus' main rivals for the Scudetto. However, often the problem for the other sides in Serie A was that conceding a goal to Zidane and his teammates was the end of their hopes in the match, as Juventus were extremely miserly at the back.

By the end of the league campaign on 1 June 1997, a Zidane-inspired Bianconeri had tasted defeat just three times in 34 games and conceded only 24 goals. It meant that their 14 drawn games wouldn't be enough to allow second-placed Parma to snatch the crown. Juventus were, once again, champions of Italy.

Zidane had scored five goals, but that only told part of the story. Playing in behind front players such as Alessandro Del Piero, Michele Padovano, Alen Boksic and Christian Vieri, his abilities to find space, link play and unlock the tightest of defences with devastatingly accurate passing were fundamental to the way Lippi's team dominated almost every game they played.

Having won their Champions League group, Juventus battled past Rosenborg (3-1 on aggregate, with Zidane scoring the opening goal in the decisive second-leg victory) and then Ajax (6-2 on aggregate, Zidane adding the final goal in a 4-1 win in Turin) to reach the final in Munich against Borussia Dortmund. However, in one of the rare occasions that it happened, Scotland's Paul Lambert successfully stifled Zidane's influence and creativity in the historic Olympic Stadium as the German side

somewhat surprisingly triumphed 3-1 in the decider.

Despite that disappointing end to the club's European campaign, Zidane had made a huge splash in his debut season in Italy. It was no surprise whatsoever when he was named Serie A Foreign Footballer of the Year, quite an accolade when you consider the standard of the competition he faced for that title.

That was only the beginning. If anything, the following season Zidane stepped his game up yet another level. The club had signed penalty-area poacher supreme Filippo Inzaghi from Atalanta during the summer. Alongside the world-class Del Piero, the pair wreaked havoc across the continent, as well as domestically within Italy. Zidane was the orchestrator, more often than not the supplier of their bullets, though he did claim seven league goals himself.

The Serie A title was emphatically retained with an almost procession-like dominance. In their 34 league games, the men in the black and white striped shirts were defeated just twice. Those losses were at Inter Milan, who finished runners-up by five points, and Fiorentina, who finished fifth. It was a truly remarkable feat and underpinned the belief amongst Juventus fans that Zinedine Zidane was now the undisputed King of Italy, a generational talent. In blossoming his natural abilities to their full range he had carried a very special team to uncharted new heights.

Del Piero and Inzaghi had been the chief beneficiaries, claiming a fabulous 39 Serie A goals between them. The pair were in no doubt as to who they needed to thank for their stellar season in front of goal. After he had retired, Del Piero summed it up: "Zidane had an extraordinary talent, which contributed to his sole interest in helping the team. He was not a selfish player. He had a unique ability to be a great and to be a team player. I was lucky to play with him."

Despite their utter domination of Italy, Juventus were more fragile in Europe than during the previous two seasons. They finished runners-up in their Champions League group to Manchester United, to whom they lost 3-2 at Old Trafford. However, they brought in defensive midfield kingpin Edgar Davids from rivals A.C. Milan just before Christmas. With Davids in front of the defence, Juventus once again advanced through the knock-out rounds (overcoming Dynamo Kiev and AS Monaco) with relative ease to face Real Madrid in the 1998 final at the Amsterdam ArenA.

That would end in yet another deflating experience for Zidane and his comrades. Despite enjoying long periods of possession, and missing several very presentable openings, Juventus fell to an opportunist poachers' goal by Montenegro's Predrag Mijatovic midway through the second half. Yet again, it was a galling way to round off an otherwise fabulous season.

However, Zidane didn't have time to dwell on that disappointment. June and July of 1998 witnessed his nation hosting their second-ever World Cup tournament, and the French knew they had a squad with enough individual and collective talent to go all the way to the final... and win it.

Wearing an iconic shirt design from Adidas, Zidane was at the absolute peak of his now-substantial powers, operating as the creative lynchpin ahead of a holding midfield duo of team captain and Juventus teammate Didier Deschamps and Arsenal's Emmanuel Petit. Behind them stood the resolute "rocks" of Laurent Blanc and Marcel Desailly, with pacey attacking full-backs Lilian Thuram and Bixente Lizarazu constantly probing for openings down either flank.

For targets, Zidane had Youri Djorkaeff, Thierry Henry, David Trezeguet and old-Bordeaux colleague Christophe Dugarry ahead of him. It was no wonder they

stormed through their opening Group stage with ominous ease, defeating South Africa 3-0, Saudi Arabia 4-0 and Denmark 2-1.

However, Zidane's tournament had not gone smoothly. In the second game against the Saudis at the Stade de France, he was shown a straight red card after 70 minutes for seemingly planting his studs into an opponent as they collided in a challenge. He, therefore, played no part in the narrow win over the Danes in Lyon, nor the fraught, nerve-racking 1-0 extra-time victory over a resolute Paraguay in the Round of 16 in Lens. That game was won via a golden goal from Blanc, the first time the controversial method had been used to decide a competitive World Cup fixture.

Zidane returned for the quarter-final clash against some familiar faces: Italy. Amongst those lining up against him in St. Denis were club teammates Del Piero, Vieri and Di Livio. What followed was the perfect example of two finely balanced sides cancelling each other out, Italian stubbornness proving the equal of French invention.

After 120 minutes of attrition, it was down to penalty kicks to decide a victor. As he had done for several years, Zidane was the first man to step up to the spot for France, successfully beating Gianluca Pagliuca. That set the tone, as the hosts triumphed 4-3 to seal a place in the semi-finals against the very strong Croatians.

That semi-final game didn't lack for drama and tension either. Zidane and France grimly held on to a 2-1 lead given to them through two Lilian Thuram goals before Laurent Blanc was sent-off with 15 minutes remaining at the Stade de France.

The twelfth day of July 1998 would represent the peak of Zidane's glittering football career, the evening he truly announced himself to a watching world. In the World Cup final against Brazil, he scored with two brave first-half headers to give

France the lead their forging, aggressive play deserved. The lacklustre Brazilian side had star man Ronaldo very much out of sorts and never threatened to ruin the hosts' World Cup party. When Petit added a third with virtually the last kick of the game, it confirmed Zidane as the midfield maestro for the new World Champions.

Suddenly you couldn't go anywhere without seeing a kid running around in a football shirt with 'ZIDANE 10' on the back of it. The man from Marseille was no longer just King of Italy, he was threatening to become the King of the World. As if in recognition of that fact, FIFA awarded Zidane the World Player of the Year award for 1998; he became the first Frenchman to win the prize.

It would be the high-point of his career, at least in the short term. Back in Turin, Zidane sustained a knee injury before the new Serie A season had even kicked-off, and that contributed to a stop-start season for both himself and Juventus. A disastrous run of four defeats in five games before Christmas left the Bianconeri trailing behind front-runners A.C. Milan and Lazio, a deficit they never threatened to bridge. By the end of the season, they trailed home in a dismal seventh position, 16 points behind new champions A.C. Milan, and missed out on Champions League qualification altogether.

They did manage to battle through to the semi-final stage of Europe's premier club competition. However, there they came up against a Manchester United side that was in imperious form, on their way to an unprecedented Treble for an English club. United won 4-3 on aggregate, inflicting a devastating but thoroughly deserved 3-2 defeat on their hosts in Turin in the second game. By then talisman Zidane was out for the season, having aggravated his knee injury a week earlier against Bologna. The club had also let manager Marcello Lippi leave, replaced in the dugout by Carlo Ancelotti.

It was the first time Zidane had finished a season at Juventus without silverware, and he was determined it wouldn't happen again. That same grit amongst the rest of the squad, to right a wrong, led to the Turin giants storming into the new season, having had to commence early due to participation in the Intertoto Cup competition (which they won, to secure passage into the UEFA Cup).

By the time Serie A kicked-off at the end of August 1999, Juventus had been playing competitively for six weeks; Zidane was part of the side which claimed a point against Reggina on the opening weekend. Despite an early defeat at Lecce, the Bianconeri stayed in contention at the top of the table, winning every single home game for the rest of the calendar year, and remaining unbeaten away from home too.

Zidane was, again, pulling the strings, creating chances for Inzaghi, Del Piero and new Serbian striker Darko Kovacevic (signed from Real Sociedad in the summer) to gobble up. As Christmas gave way to a new Millennium, the enigmatic Frenchman found the net himself two weeks running, in wins over Perugia and Reggina which propelled Juventus to top spot in Serie A.

However, it would all end in tears. The month of March witnessed Juventus crash out of the UEFA Cup, thrashed 4-0 at Celta Vigo, having had two players sent-off in a stormy opening half. Two weeks later, and with Lazio hot on their heels, they lost 2-0 to A.C. Milan at the San Siro, and then 1-0 at home to the Roman side a week later, on April Fools' Day.

Going into the final day, 14 May, Zidane and his comrades only had to win at mid-table Perugia to reclaim the league title. However, rivals Lazio applied pressure by winning 3-0 against Reggina, moving a point clear of the Bianconeri. Then disaster struck, in the form of a rainstorm in Perugia. It delayed the restart of the second half and turned the pitch into a quagmire. On 60 minutes, the

home side scored against the general run of play. Try as they might, Zidane and Juventus couldn't find an equaliser in the mud, much less a winner. Defeat gifted the Scudetto to Lazio, by a single point.

Season 2000/01 would be Zidane's final one in the Juventus colours, and despite once again proving himself to be the leading creative talent in Italy, he couldn't prevent the Scudetto again slipping away to a rival club, this time to A.S. Roma. The pivotal game had been the clash between the top two in Turin on 6 May. Juventus had raced into an early 2-0 lead after only six minutes, Zidane scoring the second goal himself. However, an uncharacteristic fumble by 'keeper Edwin van der Sar had gifted Roma a goal with ten minutes remaining, and a last-gasp equaliser by Vincenzo Montella had completely deflated the Bianconeri.

Despite winning all five of their remaining Serie A games, Juventus trailed home two points behind Roma. Like the club from the capital city, they had lost only three times all season but had crucially drawn one more game than Roma. Essentially Montella's late equaliser had cost Zidane a third Serie A winner's medal in his five seasons at Juventus.

It summarised a disappointing final season in Italy for Zidane. In the Champions League, his often-fierce temper had gotten the better of him. He had been red-carded early in the penultimate group phase game against S.V. Hamburg for head-butting an opponent, therefore, missing the final game against Panathinaikos in Athens. Juventus had lost both those games 3-1, to crash out of Europe at the group stage for the first time ever.

The failure of his club to secure silverware for the third season in succession (which ultimately resulted in manager Ancelotti being replaced by the man he himself had succeeded, Marcello Lippi) wasn't detrimental enough to prevent Zidane

being awarded the prodigious Serie A Foreign Footballer of the Year award for the second time of his sojourn in Italy. It would be a parting gift from the Italian football authorities to the man who had lit up their top flight with his outrageous football talents for five years.

On 9 July 2001, Zinedine Zidane became the most expensive player in history when

he moved to Spanish giants Real Madrid for just under £70million. Juventus had made a profit of around £66million on the deal. During his five years in Turin, Zidane had become the undisputed King of Italy. Now, he would try to achieve that same billing in Spain.

BY RODNEY MCCAIN



ZINEDINE ZIDANE: "MORE ENTERTAINING THAN EFFECTIVE"



When Zidane arrived in Turin in 1996 from Bordeaux, he was a diligent, hard-working, introverted character, a million miles away from a galactico. Juventus was the perfect club for the Frenchman to reach the next level. Giampiero Ventrone, the notorious fitness trainer nicknamed 'The Marine' by the Juventus players, was the man in charge of whipping Zidane into an Italian workhorse rather than just a French playmaker. "Often I would be at the point of vomiting by the end, because I was so tired," Zidane once said.

Marcello Lippi was Zidane's first coach at Juventus. Alongside the tough fitness sessions from Ventrone was the intense tactical approach from Lippi. It struck a chord with Zidane who described Lippi as "....like a light switch for me. He switched me on and I understood what it meant to work for something that mattered. Before I arrived in Italy, football was a job, sure, but most of all it was about enjoying myself. After I arrived in Turin, the desire to win things took over."

Lippi had similar praise for his midfield maestro, "He is, without a doubt, the greatest player I have ever coached, he is the greatest player of the next 20 years. The previous 20 it was Maradona, and the next 20, Zidane. I am convinced of that."

In today's era, which has been so superiorly dominated by two players, Leo Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, it has driven us to compare players more and more by what records they hold, trophies they have or haven't won, and game by game stats, including distances ran and passes completed. Zidane is held in the same

bracket, not just with Messi and Ronaldo but also the greats of the past. It's easy to say that Zidane is one of the greatest footballers to have ever played the game just from seeing him play. He might not hold many individual records in terms of goalscoring or assisting, as he only won the Ballon D'or once and finished runner up once. In addition, he only won 3 league titles and one Champions League in his club career.

Despite this, I love that he gets the recognition he does. You can't put a trophy on his touch, but when you play in the park with your friends and you bring the ball down perfectly, you describe it as a 'touch like Zidane'. When you hit a stunning volley, it's a 'Zidane volley'. A wonderful pass, it's a 'Zidane ball'. His style, his vision, his swagger has left an impact on the game that will go on forever. He entertained a generation who have passed on their views to the next generation and now that Zidane has taken up the role of management, he can inspire us all again.

Zidane has however one title that has eluded many great players, the World Cup. In 1998 he enjoyed a fantastic season for Juventus, before going on to win his country the World Cup on home soil. However, when Zidane returned to Turin, the two seasons that followed the World Cup win were quite disastrous. Juventus had pretty much dominated the European game for the previous three years; although they only won the Champions League once in 1996 they should have probably won it three years in a row, as they were comfortably the best team in Europe at the time. It was bizarre that Zidane had such a poor period domestically from 1998-2000, as this was when it

seemed that he would be at the peak of his powers. After all, these were the years in-between him scoring the winning goals in a World Cup final (1998) and a tournament where he was by far the best player, and led his country to the European Championships (2000).

In the season 1998-1999, Zidane hit his first rocky patch in Turin. It was brought on by a serious injury to Alessandro Del Piero, Zidane's partner in crime. Expectations grew on Zidane to step up. He struggled massively, managing only two goals and three assists all season as Juventus finished sixth. The following campaign was just as bad if not worse, as he went eight months without a goal and was even booed by Juventus fans in a 1-0 victory over Venezia. Zidane said after the game "I didn't like being booed and whistled in the Venezia game, but I took it on the chin, as you have to, I didn't think I played that badly, but I wasn't the same Zidane that played two years ago."

In the 1999-2000 campaign, Zidane scored three goals from free-kicks, but astonishingly for a player of his calibre playing at Italy's most dominant club, he managed only one goal from open-play and one assist (which was actually Juventus' first goal of that campaign). It's crazy to think he somehow managed to turn on the gas for the European Championships that summer and became a world-class player again.

Zidane was at the peak of his powers in the 2000 European Championships, with vital goals against Spain in the quarter-final and a 117th-minute winner against Portugal in the semi-final, both of which were direct free-kicks. It wasn't just his goals that led him to be the tournament's best player, as some of his individual performances from this tournament have gone down in history.

Before the tournament got underway, Zidane said in a pre-game interview before the opening game that "...at 28 I've matured,

and I've reached the summit of my art." Zidane was most certainly an artist on the pitch; the way he glided past players with what looked like no effort, his touch that was often so good that he would accompany it with two or three keepy ups before moving the ball gracefully onto a teammate. He was an artist, and if you call Euro 2000 his canvas you have to admit he created a masterpiece.

Gianni Agnelli, the Juventus owner once famously regarded Zidane as 'more entertaining than effective.' Juventus needed players who would buy into their way of playing and perform roles that improved the team as a whole. Real Madrid, on the other hand, had a criteria that was a lot simpler, to put a team together of the best individuals. Entertainment was the main focus of the 'galactico' project. Zidane moved to Madrid, and just as he had to do when he moved to Turin, he had to adapt to his new surroundings. There, the power was with the players and training was very relaxed going into games, so the players could go out and put on a show for the fans who would pack out the Bernabéu.

Zidane was a free spirit in Madrid, allowed and encouraged to showboat, reigniting his youth, where he would be found playing football on the streets. Zidane had to return to his roots as a flashy playmaker once again, just how he looked when coming through the ranks, before the days in Italy where he became more of an efficient player.

Just like his time in Italy, it was Zidane's second season in which he played his best football. In 2002/03 Zidane was La Liga's stand out performer, as Madrid won the title. He was undoubtedly a France player over a club player, but he would always turn up for the big games. It doesn't get much bigger than the Champions League final and everyone remembers his goal in the 2002 final, played at Hampden Park against Bayern Leverkusen. A volley that came from a perfect cross from Roberto Carlos,

it was almost too perfect as it found Zidane directly, meaning he couldn't run onto the ball and finish. He also did not need to adjust his position, which in a way made it harder, but he still managed to connect perfectly and send the ball flying into the net using his weaker foot.

The perfect technician would enjoy another dip in form, similar to his time at Juventus, but this time it also affected his international form. You would think Thierry Henry would be a perfect partner for Zidane, with his pace and ability to run in behind would be a dream for Zizou to assist. However, his new role at Madrid as a flashy player caused his performances to dabble between marvellous and mediocre. Henry on the other hand was devastatingly consistent. He was awarded French player of the year five times, while Zidane only received the award twice.

Throughout their international careers, in which they played together regularly, Zidane only assisted Henry on two occasions. Zidane wanted to slow it down and play the game at his pace, while Henry was the opposite, he wanted the ball quickly so he could be direct. Henry underlined this problem in 2004 when he said: "The sooner I get the ball, like at Arsenal, where we play without a playmaker, the better it is." Without naming Zidane directly you know it was aimed at him. After poor showings by France as favourites at both the World Cup in 2002 and Euro 2004, Zidane announced his International retirement in 2004.

With France struggling to qualify for the World Cup in 2006, Zidane was called on to come out of retirement and help them not only qualify but also compete against the best teams in the world. Zidane, in the weeks before the tournament, had also announced his retirement from club football, meaning that the World Cup in Germany 2006 would be the last chance to see one of the greatest players ever bless us with his art. Zidane did not disappoint, helping his country reach the final with some authentic

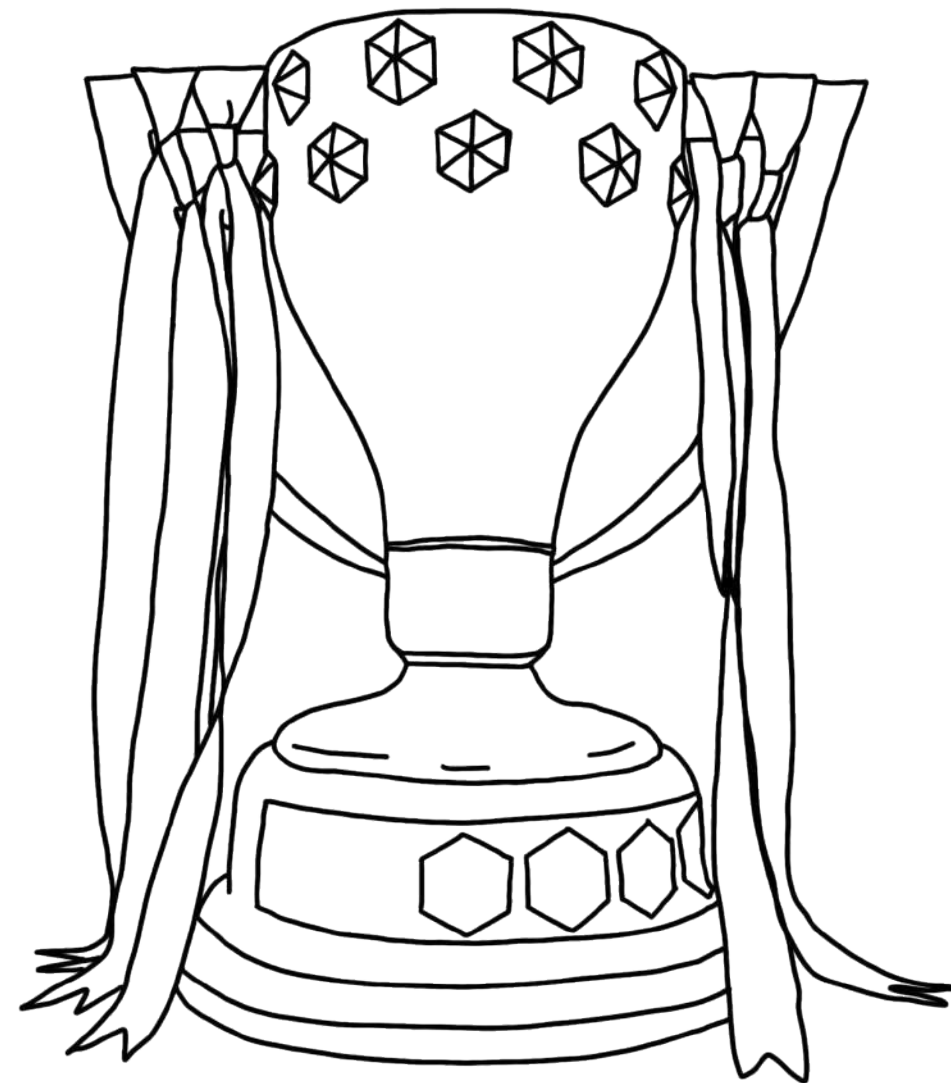
Zidane performances. France went on to lose the Final on penalties to Italy, a final that although Zidane didn't win, he certainly had the biggest impact in.

He scored a chipped penalty that gracefully spun off the bar then narrowly bouncing over the line, before receiving one of football's most memorable red cards. The image of Zidane leaving the game early, down the tunnel, head down as he trotted passed the World Cup trophy, is more famous than the images of Fabio Cannavaro lifting the trophy for his nation an hour or so later. The end of an era.

It may appear that I have just tried to denigrate Zidane's career by highlighting that he was often inconsistent and did not win as many trophies as others, but instead, it is the complete opposite. The facts found in this article won't ever change your mind on what a great player Zidane was. What I want is us as fans to appreciate Zidane more. He brought us art on the pitch, moments that we cherish.

By continuing to give Zidane the respect he rightly receives we must also go back to viewing football in this way, respecting those types of players who like Zidane, entertained us as fans. Turning away from judging players solely on stats and trophies. We will see a side to the game, lost if we drive the narrative of stats and trophies, as it should be the players who entertain us the most who are applauded the most.

BY JAMES JACKSON



2003: WHEN ZIDANE AND RONALDO STUNNED OLD TRAFFORD AND ZIZOU'S SOLE LA LIGA TITLE WIN

Picture the scene; it's 2003 and Real Madrid are trying to reclaim La Liga and defend their UEFA Champions League title. Vicente del Bosque has quite frankly a ridiculous squad of players to choose from. Ronaldo, Luís Figo, Roberto Carlos, Guti and of course Zinedine Zidane were just some of the players in that team, who wore that gorgeous Adidas strip.

Zidane, fresh from his antics in the final in Glasgow the season before was once again the Rolls-Royce in a midfield that was

tearing apart La Liga and Europe. This was where Zidane would hit his peak as a player. Fresh from the disappointment of Korea/Japan '02 with the French national side, Zidane would scoop up the FIFA player of the year award in 2003 for the third time, and for the most part of the 2002/03 season would be unplayable as he led Los Blancos to their 29th league title and the Champions League semi-finals.

Zidane had been at the forefront of the side that had won the Champions League

the season before and Real Madrid were expected to defend their crown, becoming the first side in Champions League history to do so.

Unsurprisingly, Madrid finished top of their first group stage in the competition. Roma, AEK Athens and Genk put up a better than expected fight, as Los Blancos only picked up two wins in the group, but it was enough to see them through. A 6-0 win over Genk at the Santiago Bernabéu alongside a 3-0 win in Rome, two draws against AEK and a draw

in Belgium meant that Madrid were into the second group stage, a format that UEFA would abandon at the end of that season.

Zidane was absent from the squad that beat Genk and only played for 70 minutes against Roma. It was Guti and Raúl that would steal the headlines in the two wins, but Zidane would become more prominent in the second group stage.

Madrid were joined by two European giants in this stage of the competition. A.C.

ZIDANE WAS PERFECT FOR EVERYTHING ABOUT THAT PERIOD AT REAL MADRID.

Milan and Borussia Dortmund, both past winners of the competition would make up an exciting group alongside Lokomotiv Moscow, who were probably fearing for the worst.

However, things didn't get off to the best of starts. A 1-0 defeat in Milan alongside a 2-2 draw at home to Lokomotiv meant that the pressure was now on, and if Dortmund managed to do the unthinkable and win at the Bernabéu, Del Bosque's side would have to win the rest of their games to realistically qualify.

Jan Koller silenced the Bernabéu on 30 minutes with his goal against the run of play, striking the ball with his second touch just outside the Madrid box. Dortmund had gone in front and Madrid needed someone to step up for them to take the three points. Raúl equalised just before half time, and once again Zidane would be the player to win the game for Los Blancos.

Halfway through the second half, Figo found Zidane on the right-hand side, making a darting run into acres of space. Zidane carried the ball into the Dortmund box, before effortlessly teeing up Ronaldo to give Madrid the lead.

Zidane was perfect for everything about that period at Real Madrid. The all caps stencil lettering on the shirts, the white-collar and the Siemens Mobile sponsorship are all synonymous with him, dictating the play in his No.5 shirt. There was no response from Dortmund, and Madrid would only drop two more points in the group. Two wins against Milan and Lokomotiv alongside a draw in Dortmund would seal a spot in the quarter-finals, Manchester United would await.

There isn't much to be said about this tie, that hasn't been said already. Ronaldo's performance in the second leg got a standing ovation at Old Trafford and that second leg, in particular, is widely regarded as one of the best in Champions League

history.

Although Ronaldo was on a different planet to every other player that night, his performance wouldn't have been possible without Zidane pulling the strings in midfield.

Zidane had carried on his form from the first leg that Madrid won 3-1. 12 minutes in, he set up Figo for the opener on the night, pulling in Wes Brown with a fake shot and teeing up the Portuguese on the edge of the box, who chipped Fabian Barthez.

16 minutes later it was Zidane again, who capitalized on Nicky Butt's poor touch and found Raúl, who made it 2-0. Five minutes into the second half, Raúl added a third for Madrid with a move that started once more with Zidane in midfield. He'd been all over the pitch that night and it was impossible really for anyone to stop him. The 3-1 win was unrecognisable to the early struggles in the second group stage.

The second leg wasn't particularly unique for Zidane's form that season. He just picked up where he left off. Madrid's first goal at Old Trafford was typical of Zidane. The Frenchman won the ball inside the Madrid box, before starting a one-two with Steve McManaman and then spraying the ball out wide to Guti, who found Ronaldo, who struck the ball inside Barthez' near post to give Los Blancos the lead and the first goal of his hat-trick on the night. Although United won 4-3, Madrid's lead from the first leg was enough to see them into the semi-final.

Ronaldo deservedly grabbed the headlines the following morning with his hat-trick, but Zidane was also in blistering form over the two-legs and was a huge part of the 6-4 aggregate win.

Zidane's former club in Juventus would stand in the way between him reaching a second consecutive European final. A 2-1 win at the Bernabéu in the first leg put

Madrid in a great position to face one of the Milan sides in the final and with Old Trafford hosting the final, Zidane et al were probably rubbing their hands together at the prospect of returning there.

But it wasn't to be. Juventus won the second leg 3-1. Despite Zidane pulling a goal back in the 89th minute at the Stadio delle Alpi, it wasn't enough and Juventus made it through into the final. Despite being one game away from the final, it had still been a disappointing European campaign for Los Blancos, who should've really capitalised on the lead they had from the first leg against Juventus.

It would be the closest that Zidane would come to picking up the Champions League again before he retired as a player. Disappointing quarter-final exits to the likes of Arsenal and Monaco would be something that would hang over Zidane's career and Madrid themselves, who would have to wait 11 years to lift Europe's premier competition again.

Del Bosque's side couldn't dwell on this for too long, however, as they still had a title to contend for.

It was a surprise outfit in Real Sociedad who led the table on the penultimate day of the season. It had been a strange season for the Basque side, who had managed to put themselves in the driving seat for a surprise title win under Raynald Denoueix.

Sociedad had to beat Celta Vigo in order to remain a point clear at the top of the table, which could've been four after they failed to take advantage of Celta's 1-1 draw the week

before at the Bernabéu. Sociedad matched Celta's result after they were held at home by Valencia, so if Madrid lost to arch-rivals Atlético Madrid and Sociedad could beat Celta, the gap would go to four points, Sociedad would be champions and compile Madrid's misery even further.

But like throughout Zidane's career, it would be him that would have a large say in how his side would perform. It's an overused cliché to say that 'x is not an easy place to get the three points' but the Vicente Calderón was genuinely a horrible place for away sides to visit. The closeness between the stands and the pitch, the hostile atmosphere and sheer steepness of the stands alongside the tough style of play that Atlético employed meant that it could have easily been the game that ended any hopes of Los Blancos picking up a single trophy that season. Even if at this point Atlético had just come back up from a two-year stint in Segunda, they would have loved nothing more than to have stopped their arch-rivals from winning the title.

It would end up being a perfect day though for Zidane and Del Bosque's side in the end. Atlético were easily seen off 4-0 and Sociedad also lost 3-2 to Celta which opened up a two-point gap between the sides going into the last day.

Zidane had been instrumental in the 4-0 win. Just six minutes in, like he had done in the first leg against United, he set the tempo for the match with a ball that split through the entire Atlético defence and into the path of Ronaldo, who prodded it home to give his side the lead. The beauty of Zidane was being shown in this game when he

was needed the most to step up. He was effortless on the ball, stroking it around like a golfer on a putting green. The assist for Ronaldo's opener didn't leave the surface of the pitch but somehow, it meandered itself through four players in red and white.

12 minutes later it was Zidane again, who's pinpoint pass would lead to another Madrid goal. This time, after collecting the ball just inside the Atlético half and taking a couple of touches to put the ball on the inside of his foot, the Frenchman sprayed the ball out to the right-hand side where Figo was waiting to trap the ball with his chest. Because of the pace on the ball, Figo managed to chest it onto his foot and knock it past the poor Sergi in the same move.

Like clockwork, Raúl was waiting in the box to tap in the cross from Figo to make it 2-0 on 18 minutes. Once again, Zidane had started a brilliant move with a pass that had indirectly resulted in a goal.

The Madrid Galacticos side on their day were relentless. Ronaldo added a third on 31 minutes with a goal from a well-worked short corner, and Raúl completed the rout with just over 15 minutes to play after a whipped Zidane free-kick on the edge of the Atlético box, only needed a single touch from Raúl from three yards out to complete the perfect evening for Los Blancos, especially with Sociedad dropping points at home.

Going into the last day of the season, the title was now in Madrid's hands. If they could beat Athletic Club at home, the La Liga trophy would return back to the Santiago Bernabéu after a year's absence in Valencia.

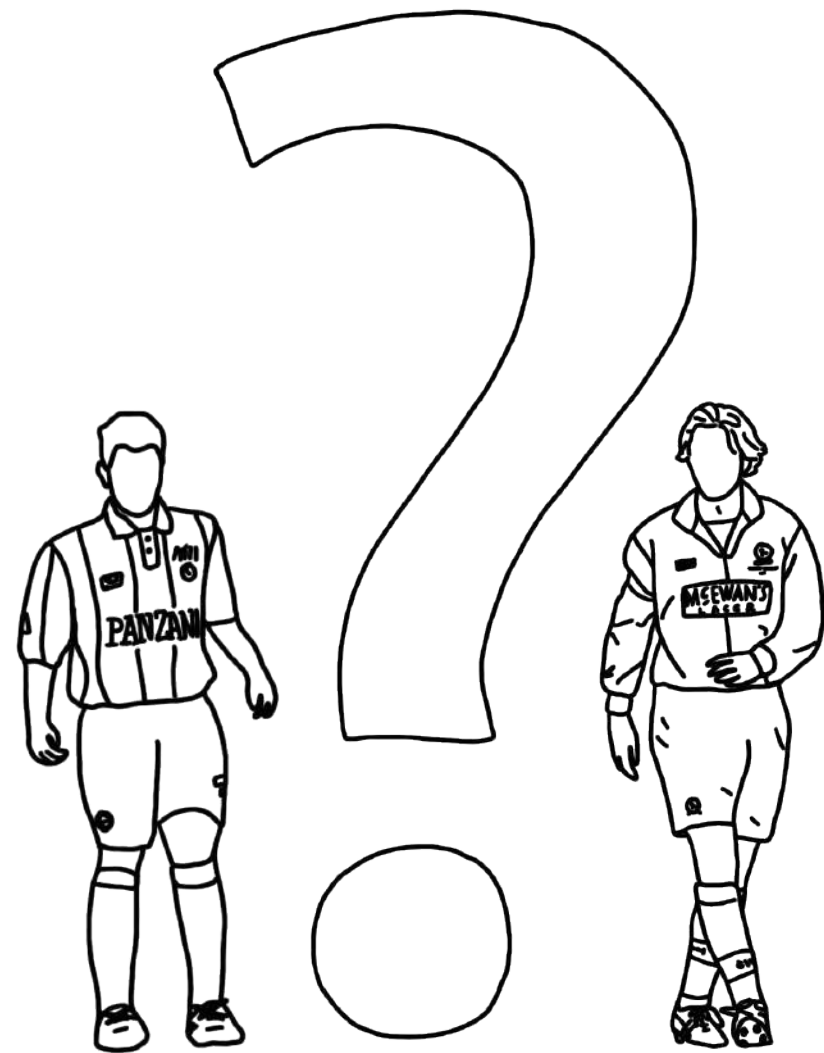
Sociedad had done brilliantly to take the title race to the last day of the season but the inexperience of being in these types of situations had caught up with them. A brief spell in the early 1980s where they picked up back-to-back titles was their only flirt with success, so it was no surprise that this Real Madrid side especially, would eventually catch up with them.

La Real did everything they could by beating Atlético 3-0, but it was now out of their control. A comfortable 3-1 win over Athletic was enough to take the title back to Madrid.

Zidane was once again magnificent and he replicated his pass at the Calderón for Madrid's third on the evening, easing the ball through the Athletic defence on the perfect Bernabéu carpet surface and into Ronaldo, who sealed the title.

It would end up being the only La Liga title that Zidane would pick up at his time at Real Madrid, due to how the Galacticos system would inevitably fall apart, and the rise of Frank Rijkaard's Barcelona side that would reach the 2006 Champions League final. Although the Champions League win in 2002 would never have happened without Zidane's performances in the final and throughout that competition he was the centre of a lot of key moments, he managed to up his game for 2002/03 and reached the peak of his professional career.

BY JAMES YOUNG



SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR: "WHY DO YOU WANT TO SIGN ZIDANE WHEN WE HAVE TIM SHERWOOD?"

When people get talking about the greatest players of the last couple of decades, they probably think about Lionel Messi, Ronaldo (both Cristiano and O Fenômeno), Rivaldo, Ronaldinho and Alessandro del Piero. Right there in the mix will be Zinedine Zidane.

A former French international – making 108 appearances – Zidane began his career with Cannes, before making his name at Bordeaux, becoming a genuine star at Juventus, and latterly one of Real Madrid's Galácticos for a world record

transfer fee, winning numerous honours, including the FIFA World Player of the Year three times, and the Ballon d'Or once. On retirement from playing, he has gone on to manage Real Madrid over two spells very successfully, winning two La Liga titles, and three consecutive Champions League titles, becoming the first manager to do so.

Yeah, Zinedine Zidane is one of the best.

Zidane is of Muslim descent and was born in La Castellane on the fringes of Marseille

to Algerian parents Smail and Malika, who emigrated to Paris in 1953 prior to the start of the Algerian War. Zinedine began to show an interest in football at the age of five, playing the game with friends from his neighbourhood on the main square within the housing project in which they lived.

He began to follow Olympique Marseille, idolising Enzo Francescoli and Jean-Pierre Papin, and at the age of ten started to play junior football. When aged fourteen, Zidane attended a three-day training camp at a venue run by the French Football Federation, and it was here where he was spotted by AS Cannes.

Zidane initially went to AS Cannes for a six-week trial but ended up signing for the club, eventually turning professional. It quickly became apparent to his coaches that he was sensitive and had a violent streak, and became prone to attacking players and spectators who insulted his race, something which erupted at various points throughout his career.

He made his professional debut in an end-of-season game with Nantes in 1989, a month before his seventeenth birthday. He spent three seasons with AS Cannes, helping them to their highest ever league finish and UEFA Cup qualification in his first full season, before signing for Bordeaux during the 1992/93 season.

At Bordeaux, Zidane became part of a French Holy Trinity, a formidable midfield trio that also included Bixente Lizarazu and Christophe Dugarry. He became the heartbeat of both Bordeaux and the French national team.

It was during this period that English football was starting to change. The Premier League was launched in 1992 backed by the Sky TV millions and sound-tracked by Simple Minds, promising 'a whole new ball game'. The early days of the Premier League were dominated by British and Irish players.

Foreign imports were few and far between, the most notable during those early days perhaps being Peter Schmeichel, Tony Yeboah, and of course, Eric Cantona.

Cantona arrived in England with a reputation. He was acknowledged as being a serious talent, but as with Zidane, he could be temperamental and had a short fuse. He went on to help a mainly Anglo-Saxon Leeds United team to win the last First Division title, before a controversial move across the Pennines to a Manchester United team led by Alex Ferguson. He became an icon at Old Trafford, a figurehead for a young and vibrant United side that was on the verge of dominance.

Prior to Arsenal Wenger's arrival at Arsenal, the two clubs that pushed Manchester United for honours were Blackburn Rovers and Newcastle United. Both clubs rose from the second tier, their charge underpinned by the money of two local boys done good. Both had the opportunity to sign Zinedine Zidane.

Sir Jack Walker made his money from the steel industry, going on to buy his boyhood club Blackburn Rovers, pledging to take them back into the big time. In the North-East, property developer Sir John Hall took on Newcastle United, making similar promises.

Walker set about transforming Blackburn by investing what, at the time, were huge sums. He brought in former Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish who invested in the likes of Chris Sutton, Tim Sherwood, and Alan Shearer, who – alongside Rovers stalwarts such as Colin Hendry – helped to transform the club on the pitch, while Walker set about transforming it off.

Hall took over Newcastle with the club on the verge of relegation to the third tier and brought in Magpies legend Kevin Keegan. He kept them up, before leading them to promotion to the Premier League and the

top end of the pile thanks to signings such as Andy Cole and returning hero Peter Beardsley.

The Magpies immediately challenged Ferguson's side, but it was Dalglish's Blackburn team that interrupted United's march to greatness, when they won the 1994/95 Premier League title. It was a close-run thing; Dalglish's side clinching what was the club's first major honour in decades at Anfield of all places on the final day of the season. Blackburn lost to Liverpool, but Manchester United's failure to win at West Ham saw Dalglish lifting the trophy in front of his former supporters.

The summer of 1995 saw Blackburn preparing for a first-ever Champions League campaign. With the potential of an extended calendar, Dalglish began to discuss transfer business with Sir Jack Walker but shocked the football world by resigning as first-team manager to become Director of Football, with Ray Harford replacing him.

One of Dalglish's big transfer targets was Zinedine Zidane. Although his successful Liverpool teams tended to be Anglo-Irish affairs, he never shied away from the foreign market, bringing the likes of Ronny Rosenthal and Glenn Hysén to Anfield. He'd begun to look towards Europe for potential new Blackburn signings, suggesting to Walker that Zidane and his Bordeaux teammate Christophe Dugarry – whose reputations were growing quickly – would strengthen Blackburn's midfield for the coming season. Dalglish went on to agree a deal in principle for Zidane.

Although Walker's views on Dugarry are not known, he reportedly rubbished the idea of bringing Zidane to Ewood Park, asking Dalglish: "Why do you want to sign Zidane when we have Tim Sherwood?" This wasn't necessarily Walker questioning Zidane's talent, perhaps more of a case of him backing a familiar player that was important to Blackburn's title triumph.

Thus, Zidane remained with Bordeaux for the time being, helping them to win the Intertoto Cup and qualify for the 1995/96 UEFA Cup, where they lost to Bayern Munich in the final. Zidane's form that season saw him named Ligue 1 Player of the Year.

Dugarry eventually came to England, signing a loan deal with Birmingham City before making the move a permanent one, but Zidane never arrived on these shores, though there was a further opportunity following Blackburn's interest.

Clubs all over Europe were competing for his signature during the summer of 1996, and according to agent Barry Silkman, Newcastle had the chance to sign Zidane, claiming that he was offered to the club for just £1.2 million. This was to be the final summer of Kevin Keegan's first spell in charge at St. James' Park, and although they passed up the opportunity to sign Zidane – the club claimed that he wasn't good enough for the Premier League – they did break the world-record transfer fee to bring Alan Shearer to the club from Blackburn Rovers.

Instead of going to North-East of England, Zidane instead went to Italy, signing for Juventus in a £3million deal. His impact in Turin was instant, helping the Old Lady to 1996/97 Serie A title, while he was named Serie A Foreign Footballer of the Year. He also helped Juventus to the Champions League Final, though this was to end in disappointment for both the club and Zidane personally, as they were beaten by Borussia Dortmund 3-1, with Zidane marked out of the game by Paul Lambert.

After achieving great success with Juventus over a five-year spell, Zidane left in 2001 for Real Madrid for a world-record transfer fee, becoming a key figure in the Galácticos era, helping the club to numerous honours, his most memorable moment perhaps being the spectacular volley he scored in a 2-1 win

over Bayer Leverkusen to clinch the 2002 Champions League title at Hampden Park.

Although the Premier League continued to attract many of the world's best players, Zinedine Zidane was not one of them, though there were always rumours. Arsenal were often linked with Zidane given the healthy French contingent at the club, but this was perhaps a case of people putting two and two together and getting not very much; Arsenal were never in a position to afford the signing of Zidane. Manchester United often popped up as a possible destination, as Sir Alex Ferguson often looked to buy the best.

Towards the end of the 2005/06 season, he announced his intention to retire following the 2006 World Cup in Germany. In France's run to the final with Italy, Zidane put in some of the greatest performances of his career, particularly in the knock-out rounds.

In the final, Zidane once again excelled, and put France ahead from the penalty spot, becoming only the fourth player in the history of the World Cup to score in two different finals. But the game went to extra time, and in the 110th minute, he was involved in an incident that perhaps provided the abiding final image of Zidane the player, when he butted former Everton defender Marco Materazzi and received the red card. Italy subsequently lifted the World Cup, winning a penalty shoot-out.

After a four-year gap, Zidane eventually made his first steps towards management in 2010, becoming a special adviser to Real Madrid's first team, before taking charge of Real Madrid Castilla – the club's B-Team – in 2014.

In 2016, he took charge of the first team for the first time when the club fired Rafa Benitez. Zidane spent two-and-a-half years in charge, winning the La Liga title, and three consecutive Champions League titles before resigning from the club in June 2018, stating

that there was a "need for change" at the Bernabeu.

At the end of the 2017/18 season, Chelsea had sacked their manager Antonio Conte, and following his departure from Real Madrid, Zidane was linked with the vacancy at Stamford Bridge, though in the end, Chelsea appointed Maurizio Sarri, and Zidane eventually returned to the Bernabéu in March 2019.

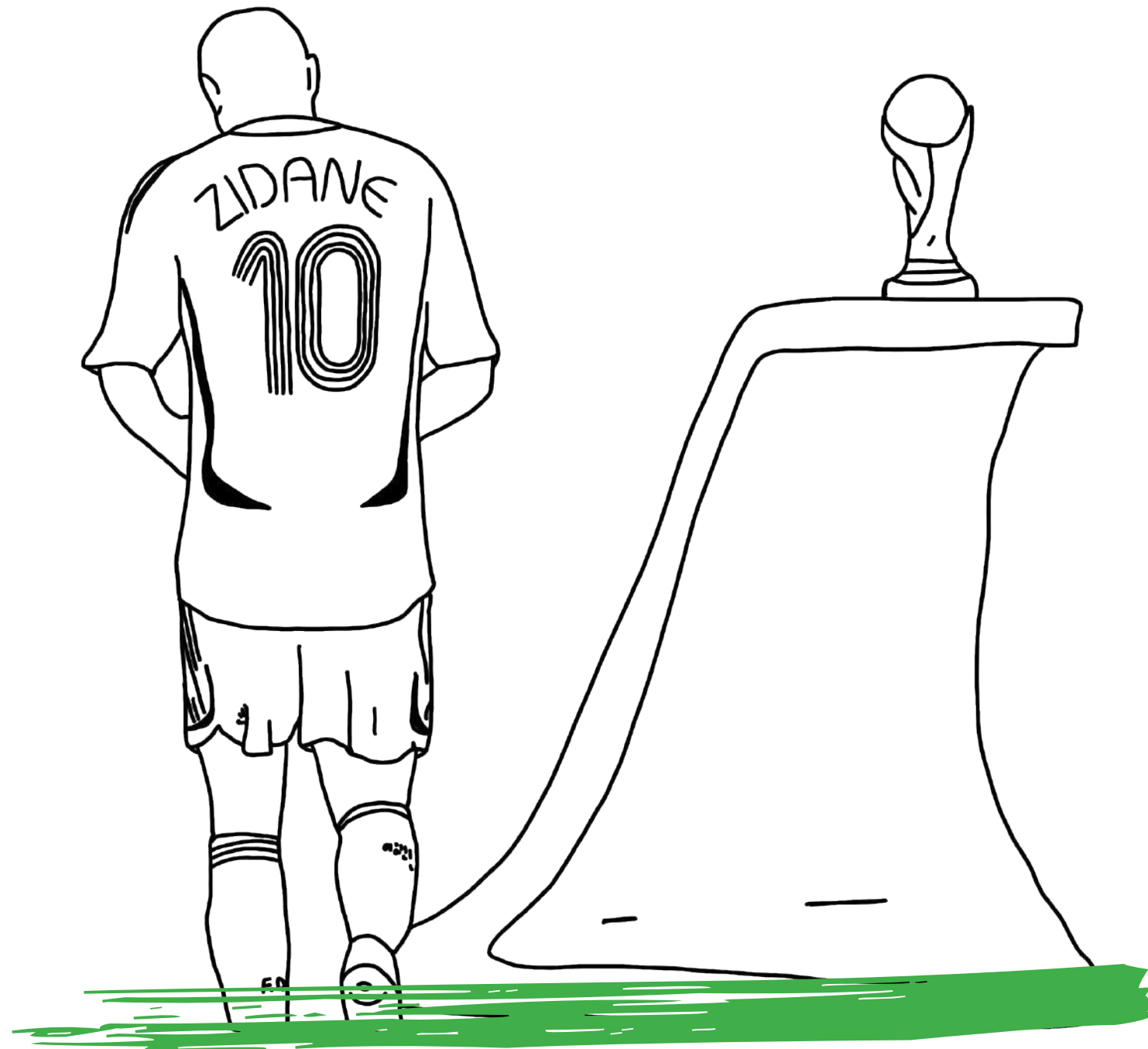
Since the creation of the Premier League in 1992, we have been lucky in that many genuine world-class players have plied their trade over here. The likes of Eric Cantona, Dennis Bergkamp, Thierry Henry, Cristiano Ronaldo, Didier Drogba, and Sergio Agüero have all played their football in England and left an indelible mark. Sadly, for fans of English football, Zinedine Zidane was never one of those players. When he'd established his reputation as an emerging talent at Bordeaux, the Premier League was still dominated by British and Irish players, and in some quarters, there was still suspicion towards foreign players despite the impact of players like Eric Cantona, hence Sir Jack Walker's comment and his rejection by Newcastle United. By the time that a player's nationality was of no concern to English clubs, Zidane had become a superstar, unaffordable to most.

Zinedine Zidane is one of the greatest players of my lifetime, and one of the greatest of all time, and he would've been idolised here if he'd graced the Premier League, and he'd have no doubt greatly influenced the development of our game.

Zidane was a unique talent, unquestionably the right player for English football, but at the wrong time.

BY DAVE PROUDLOVE

ZIDANE'S SWANSONG.



THE 2006 WORLD CUP

“Well, the pictures tell the story. He leaves football in disgrace. And he leaves his team in big trouble. France down to ten men, and the showpiece of the world game has an unsavoury moment here.” - Martin Tyler’s commentary from the 2006 World Cup final.

Goodbyes are always difficult to get right. This is especially true if what has come before them has been much celebrated and lauded. Think of popular TV shows such as Game of Thrones or the Sopranos, or film series such as the Batman Trilogy or the new Star Wars films. Because of the anticipation that has been built up over years before, there always is a sense of disappointment when the ending isn’t quite what the public want or expect.

It is an interesting comparison when looking at Zinedine Zidane’s career as a whole, but also with a specific focus on the events of the 2006 World Cup, and how it unfolded for both him and his French side. In fact, even the final saw the absolute best of what he was capable of, only to be followed by an exit from a playing career that will likely never be forgotten.

The 2006 edition in Germany was Zidane’s third appearance at the World Cup finals. 1998 was, of course, the year that he truly burst on to the international scene; he was at the heart of France’s midfield, playing crucial parts in their early wins in the group stages. It wasn’t fully without controversy, as he became the first Frenchman to be sent off in a World Cup, after a stamp on Fuad Anwar in the second group match against Saudi Arabia. Following his suspension, he instantly returned to the side, helping them overcome Italy in the quarter-finals, and then Croatia in the semis. The stage was set.

In a final that was supposed to be dominated by Brazil and Ronaldo, it was Zidane who played the starring role. He was the conductor of the match, at the centre of everything positive the home side were producing. His two first-half goals were enough to give the home side a lead they never looked like relinquishing and was given the man of the match award as the French lifted the World Cup for the first time.

2002 was a far less glamorous affair for the French and Zidane, where despite being reigning World and European champions, they ended rock bottom in their group. Zizou was injured for the curtain-raiser, where France were on the receiving end of a shock 1-0 defeat at the hands of Senegal, who were appearing for the first time at the tournament. He also missed out from the drab 0-0 against Uruguay but was deemed fit enough to start the crunch match against Denmark. However, he failed to have an impact, with the Danes winning 2-0. France were out, having not scored a goal. This was the worst performance by a defending champion in the history of the competition.

Following the surprise exit to Portugal at Euro 2004, it appeared that Zidane’s time playing for France had come to an end. Zidane released a statement on his website, saying that “I have thought long and hard over this decision. I think that at a given moment you must say ‘stop’ ... There have been some great players who retired in 2000 and 2002, other players are doing it and now I’m doing it.” It appeared pretty final, and for a year he stayed away from the national set-up, content to have closed the book on that chapter of his career.

It seemed like a good time to stop. He was

already 32, and many top players tended to end their international career around that time, in an attempt to prolong their club football. He wasn’t the only one from that generational French side that had come to the same conclusion; Marcel Desailly, Bixente Lizarazu, Claude Makélélé and Lilian Thuram all felt it was appropriate to call time on playing for Les Bleus.

That seemed that, a great international career regrettably finishing on a low point, instead of one of the many glittering highs Zidane and France had achieved earlier between 1998 and 2000. However, just over a year later, Zizou made a return to the fold, alongside both Makélélé and Thuram. France were struggling in their qualifying group for the 2006 tournament, languishing in fourth place behind Switzerland, Israel and the Republic of Ireland. Coach Raymond Domenech managed to sweet-talk the trio into reversing their decisions, and soon enough they had helped guide France to the top of the group, meaning Zidane would be in Germany for his third World Cup finals.

It was widely known that the tournament would be Zidane’s final swansong in his glittering playing career. His Real Madrid contract had come to an end at the end of the 2005/06 season, and Zizou announced his plans to retire following the conclusion of the World Cup. It meant that all eyes would be on him for the duration, to see if he could end his career in spectacular fashion.

The 2002 hangover still appeared to be in effect for Les Bleus, as they struggled in their opening two games. A 0-0 against Switzerland in Stuttgart was followed by an equally uninspiring 1-1 draw against South

Korea in Leipzig. To make matters worse, Zidane (who had been made captain for the tournament) was booked in both games, meaning for the second time he would miss the final group game of a World Cup finals. Thankfully for him, France finally found some form, dispatching Togo 2-0, meaning Zidane would have another chance to grace the knockout stages of an international tournament with his presence.

He assisted Patrick Viera, then scored his first goal in the finals in eight years against Spain, as France eased past Luis Aragonés side 3-1, setting up a rematch of the 1998 final against Brazil. It was here that those watching were lucky enough to witness Zidane at his majestic best. Easing past two, three midfielders with a quick turn and a burst of pace, with just 35 seconds on the clock. Bullying current superstars like Kaká off the ball with ease, making him appear like a child in a man’s game. The game is played at his tempo, being at the centre of all France’s positive moves, and at times it genuinely appears that the game has slowed down around him.

He also gets the assist for the only goal of the game, delivering a whipped free-kick right onto the foot of the unmarked Thierry Henry, who doesn’t have to break stride before lashing it home past the helpless Dida. Before the tournament there had been questions of whether Zidane deserved his place in the team, considering his age and his (relatively speaking) poor domestic form over the previous two seasons. Shockingly, those calling for him to be dropped had fallen silent after this astonishing performance.

Portugal were the next team standing in

Les Bleus' way, and in another tight affair, the game was decided by a penalty from France's captain and talisman. He had found form just at the right time, and was on the brink of lifting the iconic golden trophy for the second time. The final was to be his last ever game as a professional footballer, and it almost seemed like it was the closing act of a Hollywood blockbuster.

The match followed the script to begin with. Within six minutes France were ahead, from yet another Zidane penalty. Florent Malouda had gone down after minimal contact with Italian hot head Marco Materazzi. The man from Lecce was only in the side due to Alessandro Nesta's injury in the group game against the Czech Republic, so was never meant to play such a starring role in the final. The penalty was rewarded, and Zidane faced up against Gianluigi Buffon, his almost teammate from his time at Juventus.

Buffon was an imposing figure, widely considered to be one of the greatest goalkeepers of all time. To date, he has stopped 30 penalties in his time, an astounding figure. The stage couldn't have been bigger, the pressure couldn't have been higher. Zidane, oblivious to all this, does something us mere mortals wouldn't even have begun to have considered. Coolly as you like, he panenka-ed it down the middle, kissing the crossbar, with it dropping just over the line to give France the advantage. It was the fifth-fastest goal in a World Cup final, and would have been the overriding image for any other major final. However, it is of course overshadowed by what was to follow.

The lead lasted only 12 minutes, as Materazzi made amends by heading in an

Andrea Pirlo corner. The two sides traded blows, but neither could land a winning punch. Extra time began, and Zizou was close to winning it. Finding himself unmarked by the penalty spot, he sent a powerful header towards the Italian goal. Buffon was equal to it, tipping it over the bar with a strong right hand. The game was edging ever closer to penalties.

Then it happened. All of a sudden, a red card was flashed, and the most talented player of his generation was walking off the pitch. It wasn't immediately clear what had happened; play was up the other end of the pitch before the referee stopped the game, with Materazzi in a heap on the floor. The TV camera hadn't shown it at the time, but replays showed the Italian and Zidane exchanging words as they jogged back into position, readying themselves for the goal kick. It appears light-hearted, as Zidane is smiling. The mood swiftly changed, with the French captain turning on his heels, and planting his head into Materazzi's chest. Whatever the insult was, it was enough to tip Zidane over the edge, causing him to erupt in dangerously aggressive fashion.

It took a few seconds for everyone, both on the pitch and watching at home, to realise what had happened. Buffon remonstrated with anyone who would listen, while the Italian manager Marcello Lippi had to be restrained by his colleagues. After consulting with his assistants, the referee had the simple task of holding aloft the red card, signalling the end of Zidane's game, and time as a professional footballer. The image of him heading down the tunnel, walking past the trophy without looking up at it, is one that everyone who watched the game will remember forever.

As captain and the designated penalty taker he undoubtedly would have taken responsibility in the penalty shoot out. Without him, France missed the chance to make it two World Cups in eight years, as instead, the Italians lifted the trophy for the first time since 1984.

Understandably, his teammates were furious with their captain. He gave a speech to apologise, and afterwards, Domenech tried to begin applause, but instead was met "only with the grinding of teeth...certain players hated their captain." They shouldn't have been completely surprised by the incident, as the fact that he was coerced into rash action wasn't anything new; Zizou received 14 red cards during his career, of which he claimed he was provoked for 12 of them.

Frank Lebouef, a member of the 1998 winning side described himself as "ashamed" of his former teammate. The French paper Le Figaro called the incident "odious", while the front page of another, L'Equipe, went with criticism in the form of a question "What should we tell our children for whom you have become an example forever...How could that happen to a man like you?"

While clearly showing remorse for what happened, and seeking forgiveness from his teammates and the French people, there is still one person who Zidane doesn't feel it is necessary to reconcile with. It doesn't take a genius to work out who he is talking about here.

"If I ask him forgiveness, I lack respect for myself and for all those I hold dear with all my heart. I apologise to football, to the fans,

to the team. After the game, I went into the dressing room and told them: 'Forgive me. This doesn't change anything. But sorry everyone.'

"But to him, I cannot. Never, never." Perhaps surprisingly, the French public were a slightly more forgiving of the episode. Polls conducted not long after the conclusion of the tournament showed that 61% of people had already forgiven him, while 51% understood his actions. Unlike the way David Beckham was treated following a similar incident in the 1998 World Cup, Zidane certainly got off rather lightly from the fans.

Despite this forgiveness, they still would all have preferred a different outcome. Because however, you look at Zidane's time in the game, it should not have ended like this. This was not in the script. A glittering career, which amongst others included two Scudettos, a La Liga title, a Champions League and a World Cup winners medal was over in the most controversial manner possible.

It could have been the perfect final episode, wrapping everything up in a satisfying and fulfilling way. Instead, it left people asking 'I wish it could have ended like this...'

**BY GRAHAM
HOLLINGSWORTH**

ANGER MANAGEMENT:

We all know how the story ends. With extra time well underway, Zinedine Zidane trots up the pitch following an unsuccessful set piece. As he passes Italian centre-back Marco Materazzi, words are spoken. This isn't unusual. Whether it was conversation or slander, both are commonplace on the field of play. What happened next, however, became one of the most iconic moments of World Cup history.

Zidane jogs past and something is said. The French midfielder takes a few steps ahead of Materazzi and waits. The Italian continues to walk confidently, no-doubt assuming that he will be able to barge past his opponent. Instead, Zidane lowers his head and thrusts it into the chest of the Internazionale defender with immense power and precision. Zidane was a good three inches shorter than Materazzi, but the weight he put behind his headbutt crumbled the player like he was a Styrofoam cup.

The hullabaloo that followed was baffling. The referee and linesman weren't supposed to have known what had happened; the play had continued around the players and, as such, the officials were following this. Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon stormed out of his area to address the situation and suddenly, play subsided. It became apparent that the referee had used information fed to him by an external monitor to view the incident. The right call was made, Zidane was shown a red card, but the morality of this was questions – VAR was not to be introduced for over a decade, officially. If no matchday official saw this act of foul play live then Zidane, shocking as it may sound, should have been allowed to stay on the field and continue the game.

For right or for wrong, Zidane was dismissed. France held on for the remainder of extra-time, but without their star penalty taker – Zidane's sumptuous chip from 12 yards in the first half had put Les Bleus

ahead. The Italians took the win in a dramatic penalty shootout.

The image of Zizou trodding off the pitch, a picture of shock and disenchantment, is iconic. The way he calmly unwraps the tape from his wrist, walking past the World Cup trophy as if it wasn't even there. Even during one of the lowest moments of his

career, he is the epitome of cool.

For nearly 15 years the world wondered what had been said. What could Marco Materazzi have said to Zidane that could have made him act this way? It wasn't even a simple case of a player losing his cool, he had enough time to hear the words and plan his response. It was an act of brutality. A planned assault. The world assumed it was

a slight at his North-African heritage, or his mother, or both. This was not true, though it did involve a family member.

After some back and forth verbal jabs, Zidane apparent said to Materazzi "I'll give you my shirt later", insinuating that to the soon-to-be World Cup winner, this was an act of charity to a starstruck young fan, not a decorated opponent.

Materazzi allegedly retorted that he would rather have Zidane's sister, and

the most gifted footballers to ever play the game, but that talent came with a price; an aggression which would often fuel his fire to success, and on occasion, would cost him a red card. In his professional career, from his debut for Cannes in 1989, through to his retirement following the 2006 World Cup, Zizou was sent off 14 times. Twelve of these, claims Zidane, were a result of provocation.

He is not using this as an excuse. He admits that his reactions are over the top and costly, but it is who he is. In an interview with Esquire in 2015, he stated "My passion, temper and blood made me react. In my life I've always tried to soften things with people. I have tried not to anger or provoke. So, when I'm provoked it has double the effect. It builds up. Then it explodes."

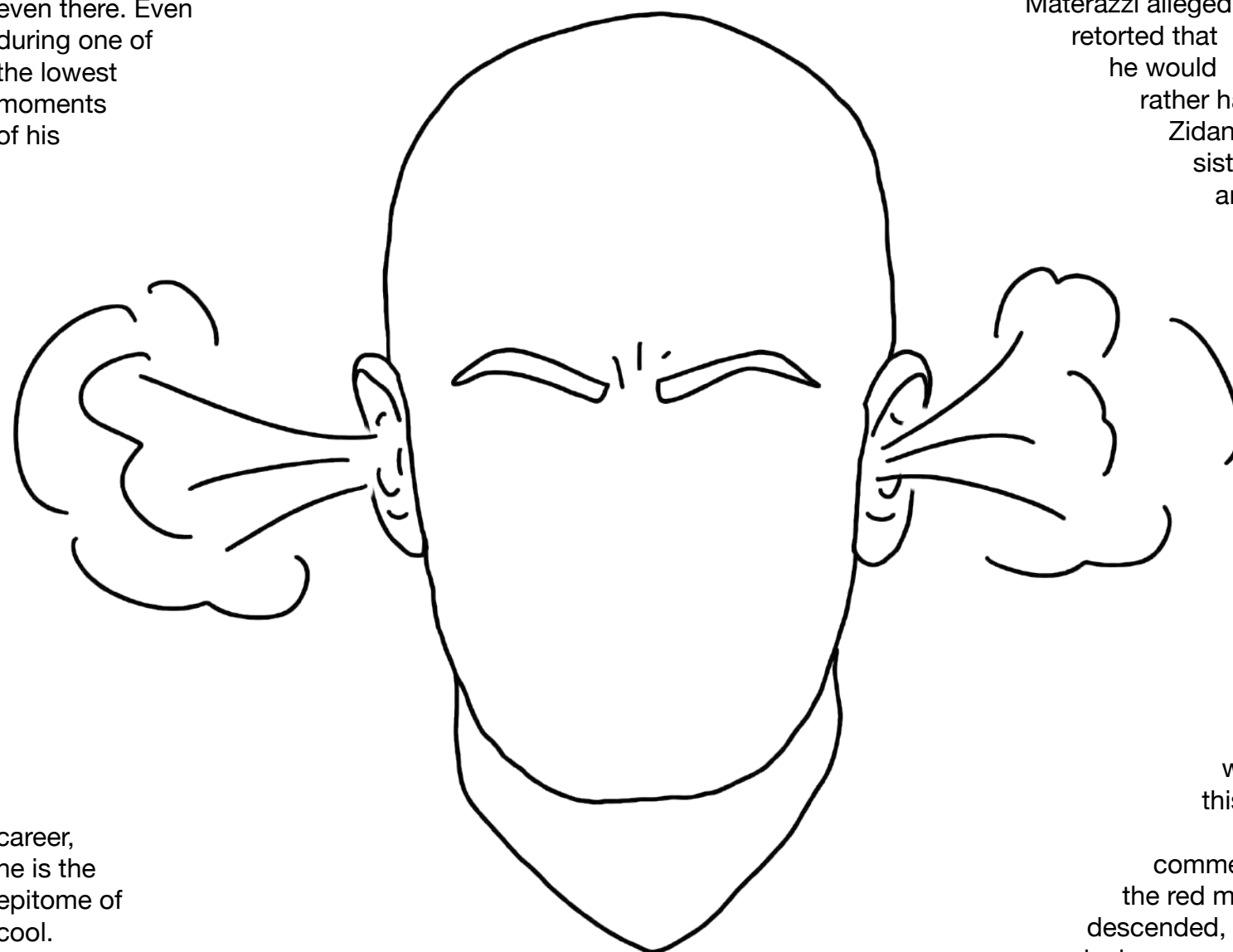
The first of his many red cards came for Bordeaux, back in 1993. He was on the receiving end of an elbow from his future international teammate, Marcel Desailly, and was aggrieved to see the referee take no action. Soon afterwards, with the ball fired into the box and confusion high, Zidane took his chance, striking Desailly in the face. Zidane was provoked, but he didn't trust the system to dole out justice eventually, he wanted vigilante justice, and he wanted it that same day. He waited and, when the moment felt right, he struck his opponent. The vindication may have felt good; the red card and subsequent ban must have felt less gratifying.

with this

comment, the red mist descended, and a legacy career had an ugly black mark against it.

The thing is, this isn't the only mark against Zidane's name. He is undoubtedly one of

The hatchet was evidently buried between the two, with the pair both going on to amass over 100 caps each for France between the mid-90s to mid-noughties. This was Zidane though. He wasn't one for holding grudges. He didn't harbour long-lasting resentment. If someone wronged him then nine times out of ten, he would show them up on the field, the correct way.



BALANCING THE TALENT WITH THE TANTRUMS

OCCASIONALLY THE
SLIGHT ON HIM,
HIS FAMILY OR HIS
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Occasionally the slight on him, his family or his heritage would be too great, and the rage would spill over into an act of violence. He should consider himself lucky that he was a professional footballer and not living in the 'real world' where such acts garner police action rather than a short ban!

Followers of French (and latterly Italian) football were beginning to understand that this was Zidane's way. It was infuriating at times, but overall, if this was the cost of his greatness, his fans, coaches and teammates were willing to let it be. In the summer of 1998, the rest of the world caught up with the aggression of Zinedine Zidane.

It was the second game from France, who were hosting the World Cup that summer. Having put three unanswered goals past South Africa, Les Bleus were facing Saudi Arabia. They were 2-0 up and cruising into the knockout stages when defensive midfielder Fuad Amin launched in on Zizou with a tough tackle from behind. While Amin was on the ground Zidane stayed upright, off-balanced, but able to stand straight if he wanted. Unfortunately for his teammates, what Zidane wanted was retribution. He stamped his right foot down on the thigh of Fuad Amin, in direct line of the referee, Mexico's Arturo Brizio Carter. The red card surprised nobody.

France, and Zidane, were lucky. They were cruising to victory and Saudi Arabia had been playing with a man less since the 19th minute. They were able to finish the game with a scoreline of 4-0 and their place was booked in the knockout rounds. Zidane was given a two-game ban. He missed their final group game against Denmark, a game that he may well have been rested for anyway, and their round of 16 tie against Paraguay – a 1-0 win in extra time. Upon his return, he was influential in seeing off Italy and Croatia, before his incredible performance in the final against Brazil. He was the catalyst in that final (albeit the main takeaway from that final was the bizarre Ronaldo incident).

He was heralded as a hero and the world remembers his triumphant performance in Stade de France.

David Beckham, a future teammate of Zidane, had a similar situation during the World Cup that summer, however, his experience was much more traumatic than that of Zidane. His red card was an act of rash stupidity and petulance. After being fouled by Diego Simone, Beckham kicked out and caught the Argentinian. It wasn't as blatant or as openly aggressive as Zidane's stamp, but like the Frenchman's assault, it was in direct eye line for the referee.

Unlike Zidane, Beckham didn't go on to play an instrumental role in his country winning the World Cup. In fact, many would go on to blame Beckham for England's departure, with Argentina eliminating the English that day. Beckham was chastised for his mistake, hounded by the media and opposition fans, even sections of his own fanbase at Manchester United. He received death threats for months and one newspaper led with a photo of a burning effigy of the winger.

Eventually, Beckham managed to shake his hoodoo. Winning *that* iconic treble in 1999 pacified his own fans at Old Trafford, and scoring *that* free-kick against Greece to qualify for the 2002 World Cup went some way to the Three Lion support forgiving him – his penalty against Argentina in that World Cup tie feeling like the hate had finally plateaued. Nowadays, two decades on, Beckham has become something of a media darling.

Different incidents, different men, different countries and different stages of the competition, this may not be a fair comparison. It is worth considering, however, what could have happened to Zidane. If things had panned out differently then perhaps France may have exited the tournament early. Zidane may have experienced similar treatment to what

Beckham suffered and maybe the second half of his career may have crumbled into a disappointing tale. This didn't happen, though. Zidane got lucky. Zidane won the World Cup, and once again his aggression was chalked up to a rash mistake.

The red cards continued at Juventus. He was shown red for a high foot on Emerson, one of the rare dismissals in his career that felt more accidental than malicious, in spite of its horrific nature. His most notable dismissal for the Old Lady was in a Champions League group game against Hamburg in 2000.

Aggrieved to see his team a goal down against the Germans, Zizou was on the rough end of a tackle from Jochen Kientz. As Kientz tried to get up, he inadvertently kicked the French midfielder. Contact was there, but there appeared to be no ill intent. Zidane felt aggrieved, however, eyeing his opponent up and down whilst leaning over him, before unleashing a hellacious headbutt on the German defender. A five-game ban resulted.

Like so many of his red cards, this was a choice. He saw the red mist, but it wasn't an immediate reaction. He took just enough time to consider his options and he chose this course of action. Whether this was the intention or not, only Zidane will know. The frequency of how often these bizarre reactions occurred does not help his case. Football is a sport littered with hotheads; Zidane is not being singled out because of his reactions. It is just rare that this level of aggression is matched with such outstanding talent.

He left Juventus at the end of this season, with Real Madrid making him the most expensive player in the world. They spent £46.6 million turning him into a Galáctico, a fee that they were more than willing to spend. Rather than worrying that he may pick up a reckless red card, they banked on his performances being stellar for the

majority of games. Even the biggest bans wouldn't keep him out for too long, and so star-studded was their squad that they knew that there would always be an elite player able to fill his void if a suspension occurred.

The red cards became less frequent in Spain – perhaps due to a more placid defensive style to that stereotypical Serie A defence of the 1990s. His only straight red card for Real Madrid was typical Zizou – not as overtly aggressive as some of his finer work, but still, it showed a nasty streak and, importantly, was a high-stakes moment.

This was Zidane's final season, 2005/06. Zidane: a 21st Century Portrait was a 2006 documentary by filmmakers Douglas Gordan and Philippe Parreno. It focused on the playing style of Zizou; the film showing Zidane playing an entire 90-minute football match where the cameras were trained only on the Frenchman – his touches, his vision, his movement off the ball. It aimed to show the game from his perspective, and it was quite brilliantly done. There was just one slight problem... Zidane evidently doesn't 'do' overtime in the film industry.

As the clock ticked over the 90-minute mark, Real Madrid were 2-1 up. Zidane had set up the equaliser and played very well in this crucial match as they chased for his second La Liga title. A small scuffle broke out between Guti Hernandez, Zidane's teammate, and Villarreal defender Quique Alvarez. A number of players rush over to defend their teammates, but Zidane, of course, barged in heavier than the rest.

While most players played out the usual ritual of pushing each other, jumping from side to side whilst offering up verbals, Zidane laid in with heavy hands to the face, a grab to the throat, taking the attention away from everyone else and ensuring the scrap was now between Alvarez and himself. Both players received their marching orders and Gordan and Parreno both received the perfect ending to their

documentary.

This was Zidane; this was the majesty. He played a wonderful game, left his fans with a sense of awe and wonderment for 90 minutes, then in the space of 30 seconds, their jaws were dropped for another reason entirely. He was defending his teammate. He defended his family name. He defended his principles.

That was the thing about the great Zinedine Zidane, he had a nasty streak. He could, and did, fight dirty. He was cold and calculated, he hurt opponents. The thing is, he rarely started these fights. He was very good at finishing them though.

He was not the kind of player to leave the elbow in, unprovoked. Any fight he appeared to start was often a reaction to a late tackle, a slight on him, or in defence of a teammate. He could be a liability at times and the opposition knew that once you got under his thick skin, there was a red card in him. That being said, his worst quality was a consequence of his best quality – loyalty. Sheer, unwavering loyalty.

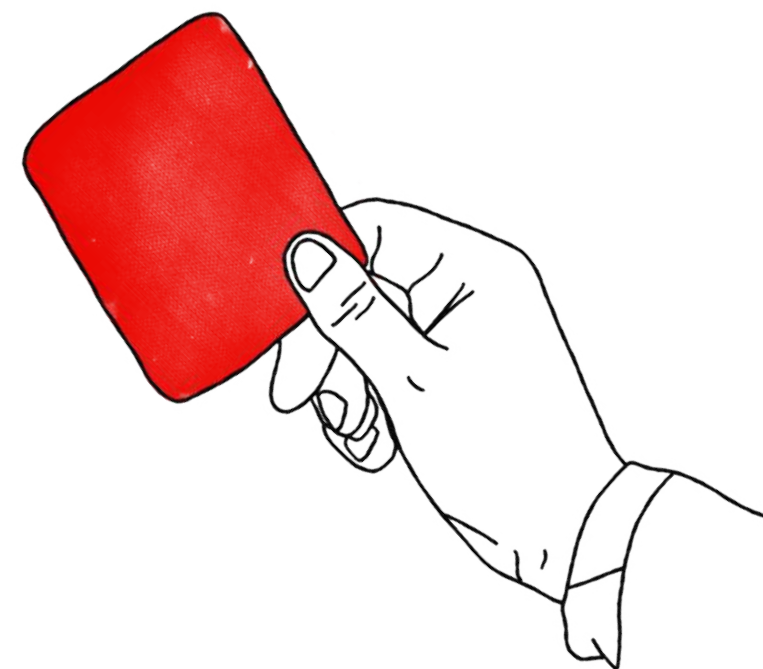
Zidane was no angel, far from it. Anybody who claims this, or that refers only to *that* World Cup headbutt and how Materazzi was the bad guy, rather than the player

who speared his head into the chest of an opponent during a game of football, needs to reevaluate their opinions.

Every big-name player has their vices. For years, Cristiano Ronaldo had his diving (with much darker personal issues lurking over him in recent years), Lionel Messi has his tax problems, George Best was an alcoholic, while Maradona became a coke addict – and we are not talking about Coca Cola here. This is not to excuse Zidane, what he did on the pitch would have landed him several jail sentences over the years in any other environment, but in the grand scheme of things, other elite-level players have committed more heinous crimes.

Zidane was an artist on the pitch, and the great artists are all tortured in some way. If Zidane had to reach these dark moments to achieve these lofty heights, then I'm sure we can agree it was all worth it. Well, almost all. I'm sure Fuad Amin, Jochen Kientz, Quique Alvarez and Marco Materazzi may not be the biggest fans of Zizou. For those of us not personally assaulted by Zidane, I'm sure we can all say merci pour les souvenir, Zinedine – thanks for the memories.

BY JACK WILLS



THE ZINEDINE ZIDANE EFFECT: TURNING THE REAL MADRID EMBARRASSED BY BARCELONA INTO EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS



Rafa Benítez stands still on the Santiago Bernabéu's touchline. His skin was peachy, his shoulders were broad and his grin was blinding. But not now. Not after this.

He checks his watch. Time is just not going fast enough. He holds, motionless, in front of his dugout. The 80,000-strong crowd of Madridistas are glaring at him, he can feel the weight of their anger on his now drooping, sorry back.

He looks out onto the pristine, green, Real Madrid turf. What does he see? Sergio Ramos on the ground, helpless as Andrés Iniesta twists and turns past him to put Barcelona further ahead of his side. Keylor Navas does not know what to do, except make that confused, bewildered face that every goalkeeper is good at making.

Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale stand over the resulting kick-off. Benítez checks his watch. And again. He then checks the scoreboard to check if it is really true. He should not have done that, it shows the irreparable damage that Iniesta's dainty frame has done. There really are 40 minutes left, and his side really is 4-0 down in El Clásico.

This win for Luis Enrique's Barca extends their gap at the top of La Liga to six points. But it was more than that. A gaping chasm, lightyears apart, split the two sides filled with planets, stars, a black hole - probably where Benítez wanted to go - and everything else besides. Six points may as well have been another solar system.

Barcelona had effected this merciless victory without Lionel Messi, too. Sergi Roberto, who had not yet made himself famous by scoring *that* goal against Paris Saint-

Germain in the UEFA Champions League, was the trundling right midfielder of mass destruction. It was bad. Very bad.

This was Benítez's first season as manager in the Spanish capital. The defeat to Barcelona was their 12th match of the 2015-16 campaign but, actually, Real had started quite well. They had beaten Real Betis 5-0 and Espanyol 6-0 in consecutive matches, briefly topped the table and did not concede a goal until a tricky trip away to Athletic Club in their fifth match.

But they came unstuck a week before Barcelona's trip to Madrid, losing 3-2 to Sevilla. Real Madrid do not concede seven goals in two matches, and they certainly do not lose two matches in a row. No manager of Los Blancos should expect to sleep comfortably after that. 21st November, 2015, marked the beginning of the end for Benítez at Real Madrid.

He just could not quite shake off the defeat to Barcelona. Hell, Real even beat local rivals Rayo Vallecano 10-2. 10! Bale scored four goals, Karim Benzema notched a hat-trick and Ronaldo added two more. Vintage Real, right?

Incorrecto. They still could not touch Barcelona. The gap between the gentry and the working class in La Liga was getting bigger and bigger, hammering the relegation fodder had little relevance when Barcelona and Atlético Madrid were each doing the same, and Real were third by the new year.

A 2-2 draw against Valencia in January 2016 was the excuse Florentino Pérez needed to give Benítez the boot. He no doubt thanked him for the work he had done in the Champions League, in their quest to build

on the success under Carlo Ancelotti in 2013-14, but he was not the right manager for the job. And Pérez knew just the man who was.

Being a Galáctico is a state of mind. You can't just become one by virtue of a big transfer fee. It takes a gargantuan figure. It is about understanding that sometimes just winning is not enough, but losing is the end of the world as we know it. It is about appearances off the pitch, as well as on it. It is about being a part of the biggest sports team the world is ever likely to see.

And Zinedine Zidane gets it. He has a swagger; he remains unmoved when those around him have already lost themselves; he is one of the greatest players in Real Madrid's history and he knows it. He is the man. He gets it.

His task was simple: turn the tide. Some would say only can gods do that but some are wrong, because he did it. His first match as Real's manager was a 5-0 trouncing of Deportivo de La Coruña, which saw Bale score a hat-trick and Benzema snag a brace, but his coaching story at the club whose midfield he graced for five years begins earlier than that.

In June 2014, he became Real Madrid Castilla's manager. Well, actually, sort of. He was officially assistant manager because he did not have any coaching badges, whilst Santiago Sanchez was named as the manager. But this was true only on paper - as Spanish football's governing bodies were well aware - and you would only need a few seconds at one of their matches to see who was really the manager.

Zidane was the authority figure. He provided the know-how that only one of the greatest players of the modern era could, and Sanchez provided the coaching badges. He took charge of 57 matches, during which he did complete his qualifications, and lost only 14. For a young team playing senior

sides, whose best players by virtue would be moved into the first-team squad, this was enough to impress Pérez.

He was announced as Real's new first-team manager on the same day that Benítez was sacked. It was pretty harsh on the former Liverpool manager, maybe, but this is the Galáctico mindset, there is no room for sentiment, no room for emotions. Before the revolving door at Real Madrid City had stopped spinning, Zidane was working on toppling Barcelona sat in the chair which once belonged to Benítez and had not yet gone cold.

His second match was a 5-1 hammering of Sporting Gijón. Ronaldo, Bale and Benzema shared the goals, in a dominating afternoon in the capital. On their day, they were perhaps the best front line in the world.

But getting the best out of three unbelievably talented, all-round superstars was not going to be enough for Zidane and Real to claw back the lost ground. That would be too easy. The three of them did not need coaching, they just needed the ball. Give it to them, and they would score. They would interchange, baffle defenders and finish in all manner of ways. Even Benítez got them doing that.

The Galácticos in the early epochs of the 21st century had a problem defending. They too had incredible options in attack, such as Zidane, Ronaldo and Raul, but the backline was neglected. Claude Makelele was sold, David Beckham was often shoehorned into defensive midfield and the defensive signings were not good enough.

Zidane still has nightmares about Jonathan Woodgate's infamous debut. He sees Thomas Gravesen trying to tackle Ronaldinho every time he blinks. At Halloween, he dresses up as Carlos Diogo, to remind terrified Real fans of times gone by. He knew where Benítez had gone wrong.

Being a Galáctico also requires you to be ruthless. A midfield trio of Toni Kroos, Luka Modrić and James Rodriguez would appear to be one of the greatest of all time, but it was not - they were beaten 4-0 by Barcelona. One of them had to go.

And someone had to come in. For every Xavi, there is a Seydou Keita. For every Frank Lampard, there is a John Obi Mikel. For every David Silva, there is a Fernandinho. For Real Madrid, there was Casemiro, an unproven, raw, largely unknown defensive midfielder, but he was the final piece of the puzzle.

Need a counter-attack stopping? Casemiro will do it. Need a header cleared away from a set-piece? Casemiro is up there. Need a goal-saving clearance to keep three points? Casemiro will make it. James will not.

And so, as the season went on, Casemiro's minutes went up, and James' went down. It was simple, really. Real had all of the attacking talent they could ever need and more, but they just needed someone who was able to break up play to give them the ball. Someone who was happy to screen the defence whilst those in front of him flourished.

And flourish they did. They would lose to only neighbours Atlético in the remainder of the league season, but even that defeat preceded a 12-match winning streak in which they scored three or more goals eight times and ended Barcelona's 39-game unbeaten run with a memorable 2-1 win at the Camp Nou.

But, the league was always gone, Barcelona were always going to win it after *that* night in Madrid. Zidane pulled off a salvage of sorts by cementing second place ahead of Atlético, but winning the Champions League became his and Real's number one priority. And actually, Benítez had got them off to the best possible start with comfortable progression from the group stage.

First, they saw off AS Roma in the round of 16, with two routine 2-0 wins. A tie against VfL Wolfsburg in the quarter-finals was a surefire ticket to the semi-finals, then, right...?

No. A nightmare start at the Volkswagen Arena saw the Germans go two goals in front in the first half, thanks to Ricardo Rodriguez's penalty and Max Arnold's easy tap-in, in which he gave Ramos the slip and coolly finished past Navas. The match finished 2-0.

We are back to the Galáctico mentality again. Elimination from the Champions League would have been unacceptable, especially at the hands of an inferior team like Wolfsburg. When 80,000 Madridistas arrived at the Bernabéu for the second leg, they expected the first leg to be put right. And Zidane had the perfect player to do just that at his disposal.

He would have seen himself in Ronaldo as he watched on. When everyone else around him faltered, he had the weight of the world on his shoulders and still was able to rise above the rest and make the night his night.

His first goal was a simple tap-in, he was opportune to beat goalkeeper Diego Benaglio to a loose deflection and score. His second was a perfectly placed header from Kroos' corner, which he met outside of the near post and managed to turn into the far corner. With expectation laying heavy on him, jumping so high to meet it was mighty impressive.

His third? Well. Vintage Ronaldo. Vintage Zidane's Real Madrid. Vintage football, really. It looked as though the match was going to extra-time after Ramos saw a header somehow cleared off the line, but Ronaldo changed that. Really, when he stood over a free-kick 25 yards out, everyone knew he was about to.

Technically, it was not his best effort. It was not a cruise missile into the top corner, and it did not inexplicably swerve to bamboozle the goalkeeper. It did not even go up and over the Wolfsburg wall, it somehow went through it. Lucky? No. Real had done it, 3-0; the turnaround was complete, the semi-finals beckoned.

Manchester City stood in the way of a second final in as many years. Kevin De Bruyne, Sergio Agüero and co. would be tough, but Real were too, and a 0-0 draw at the Etihad in the first leg was a fair result. A ticket to the grand finale in Milan awaited the winners in Madrid.

Zidane's side needed only 19 minutes to go ahead. Their domination paid off when Bale's cross from the right side was turned into his own net by Fernando, past the despairing Joe Hart. All they needed to do was hold firm against the City onslaught, which, it is not unfair to assume, Benítez's Real would have struggled with.

His Real would not have got this far, but let us for a paragraph pretend they did. When De Bruyne surged forwards, Casemiro was there to halt him. The Belgian was restricted to strikes from long distance and set-pieces, which Navas dealt with comfortably. It was actually Fernandinho who had City's best chance, but he skewed his shot wide. Zidane's Real were glamorous in attack, but they were ameliorated in defence. They had done it; they were through to the final.

A second final in two years, and, once again, Atlético were the opponents. Diego Simeone and his side were desperate to make amends for their crushing defeat in Lisbon in 2014, in which they were seconds away from their first European crown before Ramos' late equaliser and the resulting extra-time storm.

Simeone's side was typically defensive. Saul and Koke played as auxiliary wingers, Antoine Griezmann dropped deep to leave

Fernando Torres in attack on his own out of possession and Juanfran and Filipe Luís were not as potent going forward as their counterparts, Dani Carvajal and Marcelo.

But he was not fooled by Simeone's selections. Galácticos are never fooled. Zidane is never fooled. He stuck to the style that had got Real out of the gutter Benítez had left them in and onto the plane to Milan, with the familiar front three, Casemiro anchoring the midfield and the back four we were accustomed to.

Ramos, the scrooge of Atlético, put Real in front with an early header. But Simeone's side was not going to make it easy; indeed, Real had a scare when they were awarded a penalty after Pepe fouled Torres, but Griezmann crashed his spot-kick off the crossbar.

Real had one hand on the trophy as the match approached the final 10 minutes, but Atlético scored an equaliser out of nowhere. Yannick Carrasco had found space in the penalty area to convert Juanfran's deep cross to make it 1-1.

When Real scored a late leveller in the 2014 edition of the final, Atlético crumbled. They never recovered. Zidane's Real were never, ever going to make the same mistake. They just could not. A team with Ramos, Ronaldo, Benzema etc. at the peak of their powers never would. And they did not.

Extra-time was closely fought, but neither side could find a winner. So it was to be a penalty shootout to decide the victor; to decide which Madrid team had the cojones to see the job through. You know how this went.

Juanfran missed Atlético's fourth penalty. He hit the post. He was the first to blink, the first to show a sign of weakness. You could see in his eyes that he was not going to score, you could see in his ungainly run-up that the ball was not about to nestle into the

corner in which he intended to strike.

Ronaldo just needed to score to seal Real's 11th Champions League. And he did, obviously. Juanfran, a former Real Madrid player, did not have the bottle when he needed it most. Ronaldo did. Zidane did. They were Galácticos, Juanfran was not, and the Galácticos won.

Winning the Champions League with the team that has won it the most often does not sound like a huge achievement at first, but looking back on the 4-0 El Clásico defeat only six months prior, it most certainly was.

They were European champions, and unflappable on the biggest stage. The only personnel change in that time was Zidane, which tells you all you need to know. It was the start of a dynasty as Real's manager, in which he would take back La Liga, complete a hat-trick of Champions Leagues, win the Club World Cup twice and come back and win the league again. A genius on the pitch, and a genius off it. Zidane is Real Madrid, and Real Madrid is Zidane.

BY RYAN PLANT



In life, they say that lightning will never strike in the same place twice, perhaps meant more as a comfort in the face of adversity rather than a statement of fact. However, at the Estadio Santiago Bernabéu, lightning has struck thrice – the third of which being Zinedine Zidane.

Of course, they are not literal lightning bolts in the Spanish capital, they are uncommon or rarely seen occurrences that have happened in the same place. The rarity in question is people who have had vastly successful stints at a club as a player before going on to replicate their successes at the same club as a manager.

Throughout the history of football, there have been countless legends at clubs across the world that have boasted an impressive trophy haul at the highest level, however, it is a seldom occurrence that those same players go on to do the same as a manager at the very same club.

While the names Kenny Dalglish, Pep Guardiola and the iconic Johan Cruyff immediately spring to mind, it would be a tricky task to name several; particularly multiple for one club. Yet, Los Blancos supporters have seen it happen on three occasions.

The first of these three lightning bolts began his journey before the two that would follow had even been born, that being the legendary Miguel Muñoz.

The Madrid-born midfielder is a man deep-seated in the successes of Los Blancos and is perhaps one of those that supporters of Real today can thank for the club's gargantuan stature in world football.

Having been born in January 1922, Muñoz began his playing career during the Second World War. While the Allied forces were beginning to turn the tide on the Axis powers to overthrow the threat of Nazism from Europe, Muñoz's career began in 1943.

Before arriving at the Santiago Bernabéu in 1948, shortly following the stadium's completion in '47, the middleman plied his trade with CD Logroñés, Racing de Santander and Celta de Vigo.

The 1947-48 season had been a solid one for Celta, they had finished fourth in La Liga and reached the final of the Copa del Generalísimo – known as the Copa del Rey today. Muñoz had done enough that season to convince Real of his abilities and he was then signed by the Madrid-based club.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Over the following 10 years, the Spaniard would feature in 278 official matches for Los Blancos in which he helped Real to nine pieces of silverware. The five-foot-five-inches midfielder would even score Real Madrid's first-ever goal in the European Cup.

Despite his arrival in 1948, though, Muñoz had to wait six years until his first piece of silverware at the Santiago Bernabéu. That came in 1954 in the form of the La Liga title, three more top-flight titles would follow while he was a player in the Spanish capital.

Muñoz also helped Real to three European

Cups, including victory in the competition's inaugural season during the 1955-56 term in a 4-3 victory over French side Stade de Reims.

Having hung his boots up in '58, Muñoz briefly became the coach of Los Blancos' reserve team, then named Plus Ultra CF, before he was promoted to being the first-team manager in 1959 for a short period, he was then made permanent in 1960 following stints from Luis Carniglia and Manuel Fleitas. What would follow would be a trophy-laden, 14-year spell in Madrid.

As many as nine La Liga titles were claimed by his imperious Real Madrid side along with two European Cups; the first in 1960 and the second in '66.

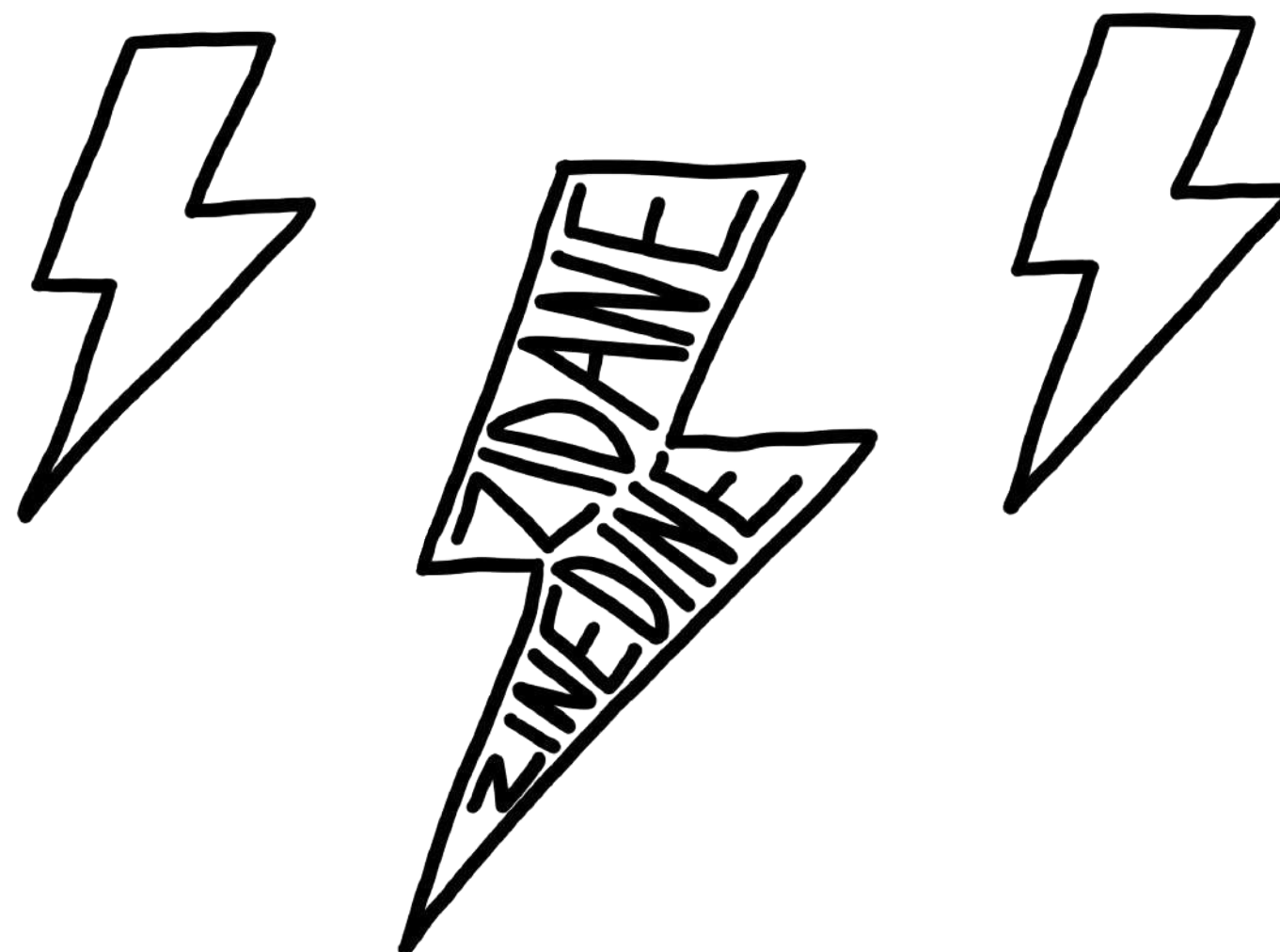
When the first European Cup during his managerial tenure was claimed during the 1959-60 season, Muñoz became the first-ever person to win the competition as a player and as a manager, something which has only been done by six other people to date.

In fact, there is only one other of those men that have won the competition as a player and as a manager that have achieved both feats with the same club – Zinedine Zidane.

Following a trophyless season and a half with the club, though, Muñoz left the Santiago Bernabéu in 1974 and was replaced by Luis Molowny. Sadly, Muñoz would not see the second bolt of lightning strike in Madrid as he passed away at the age of 68 in 1990.

However, lightning is not an instantaneous act. A stepped leader, or lightning bolt, that is visible to the eye is a discharge of electricity that has built up in a cloud over a period of time which then becomes so strong it breaks through the ionized air.

In this football-based analogy, the build-up to the bolt takes far longer. So, while Muñoz



ZINEDINE ZIDANE: THE THIRD LIGHTNING BOLT

did not get to see the stepped leader strike, the build-up began under his tenure while he was manager of Real Madrid.

This second bolt was another Spaniard, Vicente del Bosque. Despite signing for Real Madrid in 1968, the player would learn his trade from loan moves to Castilla CF, Córdoba and Castellón. Following these spells away from the Santiago Bernabéu, it was Muñoz who gave Del Bosque his debut for Los Blancos during the 1973/74 season.

While Muñoz left the club in the January of '74, the build-up had started.

Del Bosque went on to have a glittering playing career in the capital of Spain, claiming five La Liga titles and four Copa del Rey trophies, however, he never won the European Cup as a player. It is for that reason that he is perhaps less emphatic than Muñoz and Zidane, but his mark is still undeniable.

While he did not win the competition which is the pinnacle of European football as a player, he came devastatingly close. In May 1981, Del Bosque lined up against Bob Paisley's Liverpool side at the Parc des Princes in Paris.

Real had seen off Limerick, Budapest Honvéd, Spartak Moscow and Internazionale en route to the final of the competition, but the Reds proved to be a step too far. An Alan Kennedy goal in the final 10 minutes of the match condemned Los Blancos to heartbreak.

Yet, when the Spaniard called time on his playing career in '84, he did so having won a whopping nine pieces of silverware.

As Muñoz had done, Del Bosque returned to the Santiago Bernabéu at first to manage Real's reserve team – which by this point had changed its name to Real Madrid Castilla as Plus Ultra had folded due to the demise of the insurance company with the

same name.

Del Bosque held this position for longer than Muñoz, though, as he coached Los Blancos' reserve side between 1987 and 1990. It would not be until 1999 that the Spaniard was appointed manager of the first team.

The former midfielder was primed to step into the role as he had twice acted as caretaker manager for the club from the capital, first in 1994 and then again in 1996.

Over his four-year tenure at the Santiago Bernabéu until 2003, Vicente sealed an impressive haul of eight pieces of silverware. Two of those were the La Liga title and two were, the now-rebranded, Champions League trophies.

At this point, Del Bosque had become the sixth Real Madrid manager to guide Real to a European Cup or Champions League trophy, however, he was only the second to have been a successful player with the club first.

Perhaps it is harsh to not count the man who replaced Muñoz, Luis Molowny, amongst this list of lightning bolts.

He won three La Liga titles and one European Cup as a Real player and three La Liga titles and two UEFA Cups as a manager at the club, but he is set apart by his inability to claim Europe's Holy Grail while at the helm of Los Blancos. After all, that is the expectation of any manager of the 'Galácticos'.

Following Del Bosque's tenure at the Santiago Bernabéu, supporters of Real Madrid during two different eras had seen what the age-old phrase had deemed impossible – lightning had struck in the same place twice.

As had happened under Muñoz's guidance, though, the build-up to another had begun during Del Bosque's tenure. In 2001, Real

broke the world-record transfer fee and forked out a whopping €77.5m to sign Zinedine Zidane from Juventus.

Like the two bolts before him, Zidane operated in midfield, but the Frenchman differed in nationality to his Spanish predecessors. While Zizou did not hail from Spain, by the end of his playing days with Real Madrid, he was treated as one of their own.

In his first season at the Santiago Bernabéu, it is doubtless that he could not have introduced himself in a better way to supporters during the 2002 Champions League final. This would be the second triumph in the competition of Del Bosque's managerial career, and he would have Zidane to thank.

In the group stages, Anderlecht and Lokomotiv Moscow had been seen off twice while a win and a draw against AS Roma ensured an unbeaten finish in Group A. In a similar ilk to the first group stage, Real would again go unbeaten in the second.

The double was done against Sparta Prague and FC Porto while Panathinaikos were beaten once and then drawn against. In the quarter-finals Bayern Munich were seen off and Real's arch-rival Barcelona were beaten 3-1 on aggregate in the semis.

Del Bosque and Zidane had sealed a trip to Hampden Park to face German outfit Bayer Leverkusen, who had defied all the odds in reaching the final.

While Leverkusen boasted the likes of Oliver Neuville, Michael Ballack and a young Dimitar Berbatov, this was a Real side comprised of Fernando Hierro, Roberto Carlos, Claude Makélélé, Luís Figo, Raúl and the imperious Zidane.

Real had taken the lead in Glasgow early on in the tie through Raúl, however, were pegged back by a Lúcio equaliser not long

after. Up stepped Zidane. With the first half coming to a close, the Frenchman's sumptuous left-footed volley proved to be the match-winning goal and one of the greatest finishes in the history of the competition.

From that point, Los Blancos went on to win the UEFA Super Cup and Intercontinental Cup later in 2002, the 2002-03 La Liga title and the Supercopa de España in 2003 – having already won it once in 2001.

When the Frenchman called time on his playing career in 2006, Real Madrid supporters held a banner aloft which read Gracias por tu magia, 'Thank you for the magic', in his final match at the Santiago Bernabéu.


Zidane's journey with Real Madrid was not done there, though. Like Del Bosque before him and Muñoz before that, Zizou stepped into the coaching fray with Los Blancos' reserve team. In June 2014, he was appointed as manager of Real Madrid Castilla.

After a year and a half with the B team, Zidane was presented his first-team chance in January 2016 following the dismissal of Spaniard Rafael Benítez; the third bolt had almost cracked from the clouds in Madrid.

Despite having been in the job for less than five months, the now-48-year-old manager guided Real to the final of the Champions League at the San Siro in Milan. The stage was set for lightning to have struck thrice.

In the group stages, Shakhtar Donetsk, Malmö FF and Paris Saint-Germain had been seen off as the Madrid club topped the group. In the knockout phase, AS Roma, VfL Wolfsburg and Manchester City were seen off. Standing in Los Blancos' way in the final was their city rivals Atlético Madrid.

Zidane's Galacticos were provided with a tough test by Atlético as the scores were



tied at full-time. Sergio Ramos had opened the scoring in the first half only for Yannick Carrasco to bag an equaliser around ten minutes from time.

The ensuing extra-time would remain goalless and with the sides locked at 1-1, the game headed for a penalty shootout in Italy.

With cool heads like Zidane himself, Lucas Vázquez, Marcelo, Gareth Bale, Ramos and Cristiano Ronaldo all stepped up and dispatched their spot-kicks beyond Jan Oblak to seal the Champions League trophy, the 11th in the history of the club.

A year later, Zidane would do a La Liga and Champions League double, this time defeating Juventus in the final of the competitions at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff. Another year on and Zizou made it a hat-trick of Champions League titles.

This time at the NSC Olimpiyskiy Stadium in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. Put to the sword that day was Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool side thanks to a little help from German stopper Loris Karius.

Zidane's third triumph in the Champions was particularly pertinent as it meant that he became the most successful Real Madrid manager in the history of the competition. More so than Del Bosque, Muñoz, Carniglia and José Villalonga that had come before him and won two each.

However, the Champions League victory in 2018 would only be celebrated for a short while, as five days after the final, the Frenchman revealed his resignation from the

Santiago Bernabéu due to the club's "need for change".

Julen Lopetegui would replace Zizou and last less than half a year, Santiago Solari followed Lopetegui and he, too, would be in position for less than six months. With Real faltering, there was only one man to enter the fray; or re-enter it, that is.

On 11th March, 2019, Zidane was back in Madrid and since then one La Liga title and one Supercopa de España has made its way to the Santiago Bernabéu. Zidane had come as a player and conquered, returned as a manager and conquered again, then left and returned once more to devastating effect.

In around three years at the helm of Los Blancos, the Marseille-born manager has become the second-most successful Real manager of all time with 11 pieces of silverware to date, trailing Muñoz's haul of 14 which he achieved over 14 years.

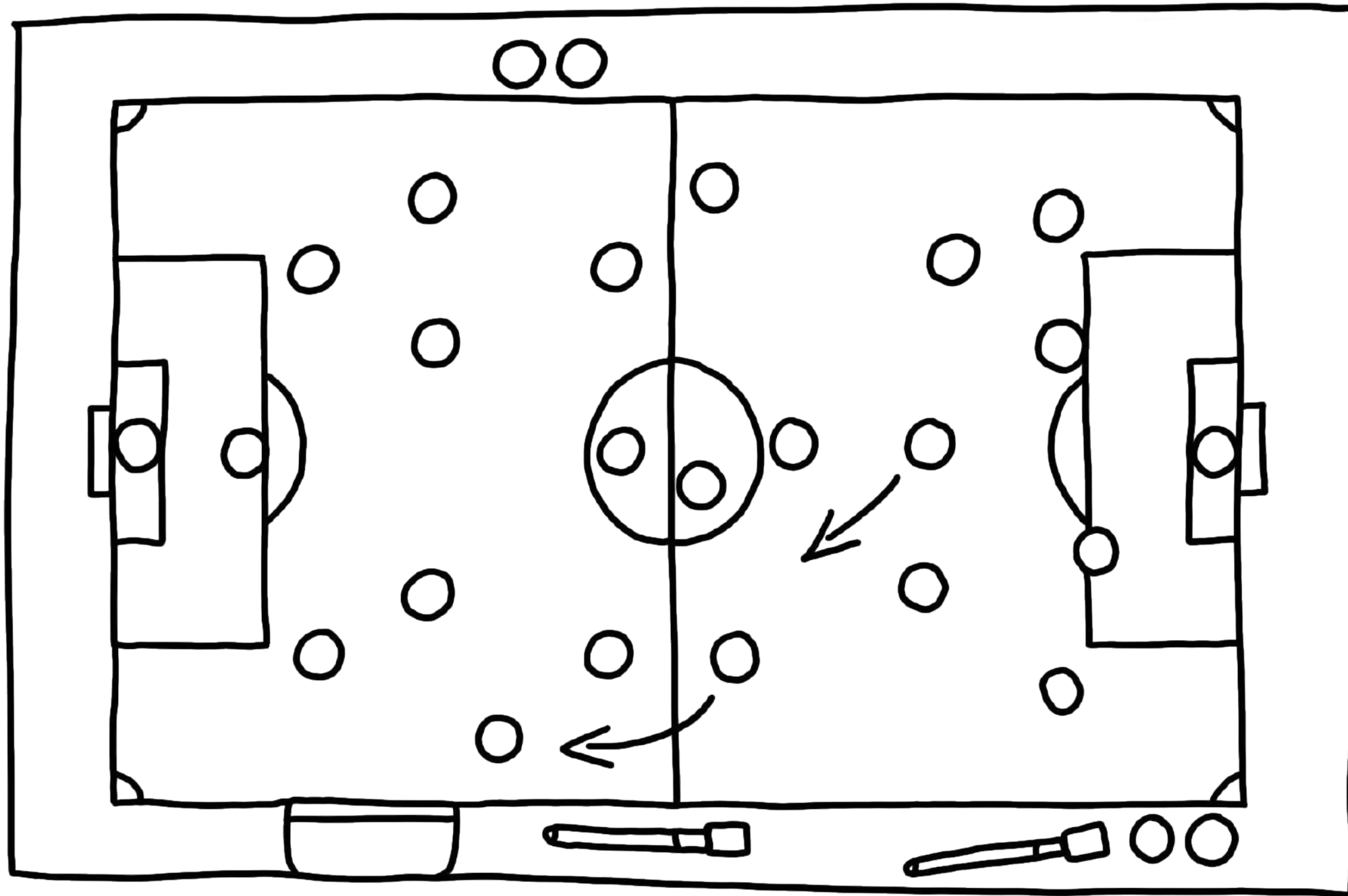
They say that lightning will never strike in the same place twice, in reality, around 100 bolts strike the Earth's surface every single second of the day, so, it is a statistical fact that it will happen eventually.

While it may still be a rarity and the occurrence incredibly few and far between, there is no one that knows it can happen more so, in footballing terms, than those at the Santiago Bernabéu.

BY ANDREW HAINES



UNDERSTANDING ZIDANOLOGY



AN INSPIRATION TO A GENERATION

On 13th June 2019, the Bernabéu atmosphere filled with a cocktail of anxiety, excitement and optimism. It was an anxious day for Real Madrid. It was time to show off their latest prized asset who was anticipated to join their Galactico Hall of Fame.

Their pursuit to secure Eden Hazard's signature was long, but Madrid had finally captured the 5'9 magician that dazzled in the Premier League. "One of the first dreams of your life has come true", President Florentino Perez proclaimed to his new signing. "Welcome to Real Madrid. Welcome to your home."

Hazard gracefully accepted Perez's warmth and proceeded to engage with the global media. The Belgian moved onto the next stage of the shining ceremony; the reveal to the fans. Hazard strolled up the steps to the freshly groomed pitch with a perceiving hidden smile. Over 50,000 fans welcomed their new star with eager applause. The Real Madrid anthem passed through the Bernabéu air like it was a spiritual hymn to the club's glorious empire. Hazard had dreamt of this moment as he waved to the crowd and kissed the badge.

Away from the extravagant show and fans dressed in Madrid's nationalist white colours was Zinedine Zidane. The Frenchman was not there parading Hazard's arrival. Instead, Zidane, or 'Zizou', stayed in the shadows.

His absent presence was a missing page to their shared storybook relationship. "Everyone knows the respect I have for Zidane as a player, but also as a manager. He was my idol," Hazard said in 2017. "To play under Zidane would be a dream."

The Belgian's once thought fantasy has been with him since he was a boy playing in the local fields. Pascal Delmoitié, the former general manager of Hazard's childhood local team Stade Brinois, reminisced about Hazard mimicking Zidane's "trademark moves" and how he

"always compared himself" to his elusive mentor's standards. Zizou's enchanting performances hypnotised Hazard to master Zidanology: the complex study of translating Zidane's idealism into his own.

The seduction was not one way. As Hazard began to turn heads at Lille, Zidane was on hand to revere him from Spain. "I would bring him to Madrid with my eyes closed," he declared in 2009. A year later, Zidane officially recommended him to the Madrid hierarchy. He continued his course by calling Hazard and enticing him directly during the 2016 European Championships. 'It would be good if you came' Zidane incited.

Their admiring relationship is why 13th June was a day to remember for them both. Real Madrid signing him not only showed the greatness of the gifted winger, but also his new manager. Zidane inspired Hazard by gliding across the football pitch, as an elegant ballet dancer floats across the stage, or as striking as Michelangelo sculpting renaissance artwork.

Zidane as manager has continued his inexorable trend to be one of the sport's greatest minds. Scott Martin, a La Liga tactical expert for Total Football Analysis, believes Zidane has changed from the hot-headed player to being a calm stabilising presence.

"Acknowledging suffering and trials leads to calmness" he begins. "That calmness is a product of understanding the battle. That understanding is itself a form of control, one that he uses to empower his squad. Rather than running from trials and fears, he's vigilant in confronting them before they become overwhelming. He's a master of psychological coaching and squad management."

He added, "Zidane said the 3-0 home win over Wolfsburg [in 2016] had been his best moment as a coach so far. Madrid had lost, 2-0, in Germany and was on the verge

of a stunning elimination that could have ignited another crisis and put his command in doubt. 'I never let things get to my head when I played, and I will not let them get to my head as a coach either,' he said."

Intertwined in this is his relentless winning mentality. In 2018, he originally left Madrid because he felt their dominance had surpassed after completing a Champions League hat-trick. Martin noted on this, "that mentality is a big part of the Madrid Way. You've got to be that cerebral mind that exerts control in a hostile environment or you simply won't survive."

These attributes as a player and manager have inspired generational talent to move beyond the boundaries we expect to see. His core principles have acted as a gravitational pull for footballers to look towards Zidanology for guidance. He has been and still is, a role model.

This idea is a complicated enigma in some senses. On one hand, there is no obligation for football figures to abide by society's moral standards we have set unconsciously for our public superstars. On the other, young people prize them as superheroes. The media heralds a goal, a penalty save or a Messi-esque assist like one of Stan Lee's comic characters saving the world. The enormous exposure to these ideas places the footballer into a unique position. The biggest names have the largest platform to inadvertently affect millions of people.

Zidane first accomplished this by inspiring and impacting his contemporary colleagues. Ronaldinho referred to him as his 'idol'. David Beckham viewed training with him for three years as a 'dream'. Young people wanted a taste of this spiritual experience. They became glued to their television screens. Suddenly, they started to imagine themselves controlling the ball like Zidane, passing the ball like Zidane, dictating the match's tempo like Zidane and delivering on the grandest of stages like Zidane. It

was Zidanology in its purest form. He was a beacon of inspiration for a new generation.

Mario Götze, Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Julian Draxler are members of Zidane disciples. Likewise, Mesut Özil was a student. On the streets of Gelsenkirchen, Özil paralleled Hazard's idolisation. He put on Zidane's shirt and utilised the powers the Frenchman blessed it with. "I watched how he did his passes" Özil documented in 2015. "He didn't do tricks for the sake of it. He never wanted to show off. He just played a clever game. He's the player who decides games. I watched his technique and tried to do that in my game, and a lot of times it worked."

Nevertheless, today's French players have felt the direct impact of Zidane the most. "Most of the current French players grew up with Zidane as a model" Axel Toudic, a French journalist, stated. "When we were young, he was like a god. In almost every French person's mind is that he is the greatest football player our country has ever had."

Toudic referred to Zidane's 2006 performance against Brazil as him coming back like the 'Messiah'. It was these moments that caused Pogba to learn what his countryman did with and without the ball as he grew up. Studying Zidanology was fundamental to him. Meanwhile, Mbappé agreed with Toudic's assessment. "If you're a boy and you're French, your idol is Zidane," he said. "I want to leave that sort of a mark with my values - a message in the history of football."

Mbappé raises a crucial point: Zidane's message. On the surface, it should be clear. His remarkable record speaks for itself after all. Zizou has won 26 major trophies as a player and manager, as well as countless individual awards, including the Ballon d'Or. The mark in that respect has already been created. Though Zidane's near-silent message extends further throughout the sport, particularly in France and their

THE PLAYERS INSPIRED BY ZIDANE PARALLELED HIS SUCCESS TWENTY YEARS ON FROM THE REMINISCENT 1998 WORLD CUP TRIUMPH.

national team.

The players inspired by Zidane paralleled his success twenty years on from the reminiscent 1998 World Cup triumph. Pogba bellowed in celebration and Mbappé crossed his arms in smugness as France became two-time world champions. If there was any moment to show it, the former students of Zidanology had graduated from the course.

During this he was once again in the shadows, giving the new generation their rightful place in the spotlight. Despite his noticeable absence, it was a far bigger victory for Zidane and France than many commentators realised at the time. The 1998 and 2018 World Cup correspond because of the unification message they presented.

Two-years ago, France's squad was monumentally multi-ethnic. Twelve of the twenty-three squad players had ancestral roots to African regions, specifically from former French colonies. An internet trend bantered 'Africa had won the World Cup'. Even South African TV host Trevor Noah joined in on the remark. The French ambassador to the United States fired back at the celebrity's use of the joke.

"This, even in jest, legitimises the ideology which claims whiteness as the only definition of being French," Gérard Araud told Noah in a criticising letter. "They were educated in France, they learned to play soccer in France, and they are French citizens. They are proud of their country, France."

Noah quickly defended himself. He said it was a way to include them in his "Africanness" and denied it was a method to devalue their "Frenchness". Nonetheless, it is understandable why Araud held this view strongly. The issue is sensitive for France. Similarly, to other European countries, reconciling with their history is a difficult political path.

French colonialism of Africa has had a profound effect on the continent that is still felt today. From the West African diamond riches and cocoa paradises in the former French Congo and Côte d'Ivoire to the North African oil fields in Algeria, there is a dark history of pillaging, looting and racist brutality. Corrupt dictators rose, fell and have risen again because of their colonial legacy.

La Castellane, a banlieue area in Marseille, is where Zidane's outer message began to transcend. The suburb is stereotypical of where Muslims and Africans live in France. Violence and poverty curse it. Zidane's Algerian parents lived in this environment when they arrived from the country's colony in 1953. It was a time when decolonisation started to take shape. France, stubbornly unwilling to leave their colonial crown jewel, pursued an eight-year war against Algeria to keep its grip onto power. It was a disaster. Algeria obtained their independence.

In correlation with Zidane's football career taking off, the French government began to introduce measures for the Arab-Berber immigrant families, associated with Algeria, in Paris and Marseille. Professor Paul Silverstein asserted the minority group were treated like they were undermining French interests. Their children became accessories to a campaign to 'civilise' them through sport. Zidane became an unintentional figure to the government's successful sports integration policy when his fame catapulted in the 1990s.

The 1998 World Cup presented itself as a possible gamechanger to fast-forward multiculturalism acceptance into western society. The build-up involved Jean Marie Le Pen, the National Front president, targeting the French team for their lack of 'Frenchness'. Four of the squad members, including Marcel Desailly, were born outside of Metropolitan France while six others came from migrant families, like Thierry

Henry and Zidane.

Victory transformed the social spectacle. France succeeded through multiculturalism and multi-ethnicism. Over a million people flooded the Champs-Élysées with a projection overlooking them on the Arc de Triomphe. The scene is only comparable to a sea of religious followers worshipping their God. In this scenario, it was French men and women singing songs to Zidane's photographic shrine. Their hero had spearheaded the triumph. The integration term Black-blanc-bleu (black, white and Arab) was popularised. Zidane's France achieved religious and racial unity, just like his successors promoted in 2018.

It is why the philosophy behind Zidanology moves beyond his skill and knowledge as a football figure. It inspires racial and religious harmony through sport. "The man who had brought the biggest success in French football history was Arabic. It meant everything", Toudic recounted. "French people never said Mbappé, Pogba or Kanté were not French when we won it in 2018."

"People in France are experiencing tough times right now. The social climate is not the best. For young people in the poorest suburbs of Paris or Marseille, the prospects are not good. Having models like that, who grew up with racism or didn't grow up in the richest of the backgrounds but succeeded the way Zidane did, is important. It portrays a message that there is hope."

This does not mean Zidanology's inspiring philosophy is bullet-proof. It has been weakened in the past. Two years after Zidane was glorified as France's saviour, Algerian fans stormed the pitch in an international fixture against France to send a message to the French government: they demanded a solution to their decimated social status, not just psychological gestures. In 2005, African and Arab minorities sparked violent riots because their community issues were still not solved.

Zidane's head-butt in the 2006 World Cup caused an opportune moment to attack Zidanology's importance directly. Academic Yasmin Jiwani argued the media reproduced Orientalist characteristics to categorise Zidane. She refers to how reports used Zidane's "street fighting" upbringing in a banlieue to explain his action. The head-butt was a sign Ziziou had failed to "civilise" and returned to his "animalistic" tendencies.

"Zidane's image changed a lot just after his head-butt" RMC sport journalist Johan Honnet noted. "French society was divided in two parts: the first understanding it's something that could happen on the pitch with a lot of stress and adrenaline; the other being angry. They believed Zidane was guilty. France lost the World Cup because of his head-butt. If you remember the World Cup, without Zidane's return, France would not have qualified for the tournament. Now everybody has forgiven him."

Most of the aftermath has been forgotten. All that is left to remember is the heavy images of Zidane in the act and walking past the trophy. But the power Zidane holds goes far beyond that one moment. His legacy continues to grow while his illustrious lure for being the mastermind at Real Madrid is a present story.

Zizou has always preferred to focus on his beloved sport, rather than fighting in the social justice frontlines. He has only given rare comments on the issues his inspirational image represents. He asked for the French public to 'avoid' voting for Marine Le Pen in the 2017 presidential election. Zidane even provided only a brief comment on the 98' World Cup tensions. "It was not about religion, the colour of your skin, we didn't care about that," he said in 2018, "we were just together and enjoyed the moment."

The contradiction between image and vocality is poignant. The reasons behind

it are one of the most curious elements regarding Zidane. His background presents him as a social justice pioneer, despite saying little on the topic. Former Netherlands midfielder Ruud Gullit has previously called for someone of Zidane's stature to contribute to the discussion. Yet he still sticks to his trusted shadows. "I would not say he has a duty to do that," Toudic said. "It is his platform, and it is up to him what he wants to use it for."

Honnet, meanwhile, offered a separate conclusion. "There has been a lot of racial polemics in France in the last 20 years. Zidane has never been involved in these polemics, even if he comes from an Algerian family. For me, he must be more involved in social initiatives, but not in politics. I want him to unite France. Not to divide it."

The polarising difference does not undermine the weight of Zidanology. The course has gifted the sport with a new generation. They may choose a different path, adapting to the ever-changing challenges society faces.

Events occur as a domino-effect. Zidane's lectures of how to control, pass, shoot, dictate and lead was the theory behind the new generations' greatness. Zidanology's inspiring wheel continues to turn. His presence feels silent, yet the impact has been deafening.

BY ELIOTT BRENNAN

