SPORT AND FAITH

Discofoot – a marvellous addition to the beautiful game … or just plain mad?

SPORT

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Apparently, the FIFA World Cup attracted an average of 3.2 billion viewers in 2010 and 2014, making it the most watched overall live event on television worldwide in the 21st century. However, two of the other 4.8 billion on our planet thought that soccer just isn't fancy-footed enough, and set about inventing a new derivative of the beautiful game. Introducing... Discofoot

As a Yorkshire character would say: 'there is now't so queer as folk'. For some, like the inventors of Discofoot, European football is just too dull. It needed to be spaced up with dance, its aggression neutered and each team to be gender plural.

These creative geniuses have taken the general principles of the game and made them – to their mind – significantly more beautiful.

Discofoot is not something you, dear reader, can probably play but, if serious 'soccer' – or European football – appears to you too dull and not your cup of tea, you can watch it on video. Just Google 'Discofoot'.

Discofoot is a modern dance piece launched by Petter Jacobsson – born in Stockholm - and Thomas Caley – born in the USA, and first performed by the Ballet de Lorraine, at the Place Stanislaw, Nancy as a side-show for the UEFA Euro 2016 competition.

Choreographers Jacobsson and Caley said: "We often work with the starting point of finding new angles and expressions within dance itself. The idea and concept of Dancefoot is already an experimental performance, since we're combining two components with very separate basic principles.

"Sport and dance have always been enemies in a way, so why not put the two together and tone down the macho tone and view on football?"

Ditte Feuk, Head of Theatre, Opera and Dance at SVT Drama, said: "Whenever uplifting playfulness and original expressions present themselves, the right thing is to embrace them. Discofoot is such a fun choreographic idea. To us, it was an artistic offer we couldn't refuse."

The match/performance is played using the basic forms, placement and rules of European football. However, to move, the players must dance. Never at rest, a continuous improvised dance not only follows the ball but also pays close attention to the team's artistic merit.

The performance/match uses the rules and organisation of professional football as its choreography. The main and dividing rule from European football is that you may not run. Your only way to advance on the pitch is to dance. But not just any dance! Your teams' skills are judged and, like in figure skating, given scores by a panel of judges. The goal is not only to score a goal, but to dance with finesse.

Choreographic beauty is even more important than a ball in the back of the net.

There is certainly less falling and acting then in a real FIFA game,

This finesse is judged by three artistic judges twice during the match – the first at half time, the second after the end of the game.

These two rounds of scores are added to eventual – if any – goals. The side that receives the higher artistic score, wins.

Discofoot is soccer, but with gold hot pants, spicy disco music, free-form dance moves, and zero gender divisions. The end result is, it seems to me, more of an entertaining dance than a game of football.

Fighting to get control of the ball just seems undignified when there are splits to be done, ponytails to be whipped, and booties to be bounced.

In Discofoot, football's rules are twisted and thrashed by dance. Let the choreography of the ball take you on a ride that passes the unknown and spectacular possibilities of this dead serious performance of a football match...

You will never look at a pair of golden shorts and a "discofied" football the same again.

"We make fun of everything," Petter Jacobsson said, adding that he wanted to create enjoyable entertainment where genders are mixed in every team.

The rules are simple. Two teams perform swirling, expressive dance moves while adhering to the strict regulations of football. Men and women are equally involved. The gold micro-shorts are a social commentary on gender.

The Game has five parts.

1. The Start (5 min.)

The match begins with the usual ceremony of a typical football match: announcements, warm-up, handshake, anthem, team photo opportunity.

2. The First Half (10 min.) , Starts with a 2 min. choreographed 'stretch' sequence. After, artistic scores, a maximum of 6.0, are awarded to each team from a panel of professional judges. These points are tabulated with eventual goals. The announcement of scores is made.

3. Halftime (5 min.)

4. The Second Half (10 min.)

Runs on similar lines to the first half, with more dancing and, hopefully, goals.

5. Finally, the winning team is announced and a trophy given.

With the United States, Mexico, and Canada hosting the World Cup in 2026, afficionados have a couple of years to get their Discofoot teams formed and fabulous. It will be interesting to see how many, if any, nations develop and bring along their Discofoot performances.

Next Summer, Ballet de Lorraine are due to perform in Morocco. How their performances might be seen by the guardians of Islamic morality will be interesting.

Participants : 1 Referee & 3 artistic judges with 24 dancers - in two teams of 12 - from the CCN Ballet-de-Lorraine/

Discofoot is seriously controversial. Lovers of soccer see it as a mickey-take lacking respect for a game that has spread around the world and a sad sign of our culture's journey towards decadence.

The supporters of Discofoot see it as a serious step in the right direction towards gender equality and reduction of aggression where the quality of beauty is more important than the quality of goals scored.

For them, "Discofoot is the World Cup antidote we've been waiting for."

This entertainment might – one day – end up as a TV appendix to Match of The Day. It is worth taking a look at the videos. Google that new word and see what you think.

One thing's for sure: you'll never watch *Match of the Day* in the same way again