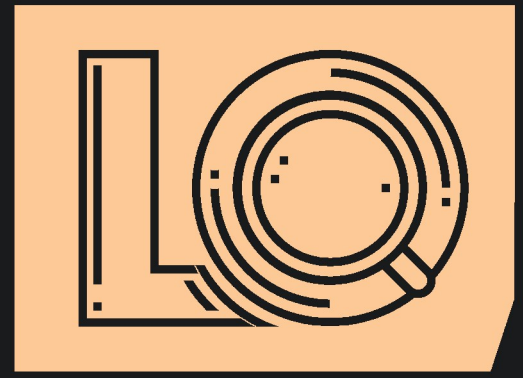


LATTE

QUARTERLY



Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training, Everything FM | **Issue Fourteen**
Published: 24 February 2023

Editor's Note

As a sci-fi nerd, it felt like I stepped into the worlds of the Oscar-winning movie "I, Robot" or the millennial neo-noir sci-fi thriller "Blade Runner 2049." Reader, I've read LQ14 front and back at least 3 times, and I'd like to know whether this issue was sponsored by ChatGPT or not.

FM Stag and FM Tahiti discuss the common scenarios that FM players and creators face. They also explore the psychological traits that drive players and creators, such as the human brain's reward system and something about first-person shooter game, Halo.

Tony, FM Grasshopper, a.k.a. 48.97% of the GNG Podcast, looks closely at how AI is transforming the FM experience. He makes five predictions for what AI will bring to FM by 2030. Although some of his predictions may seem far-fetched, they are not inconceivable given the rapid pace of AI.

#EdLasso discusses the shared experience of FM players reaching a crossroads and how to overcome them, such as when feeling like your save has become stale.

Lastly, FM Heathen shares their experience of reading "Dynamo" and how it inspired them to take on a short but satisfying save in Ukraine. As a history fiend, he reminded me of the power of history and its ability to inspire us.

Overall, LQ14 will encourage you to keep an open mind when stuck at a crossroads, thinking about the game's future, creating content, or simply playing the game.

Now sit back, grab one of your Nespresso Vertou pods, and enjoy a latte.

José / Youth Intake

LQ Issue Fourteen:

The Psychology of New

By FM Stag & FM Tahiti

LQ Book Review:

By FM Heathen

AI and the Future of FM

By FM Grasshopper

Latte Quarterly Crossword

Argentine Crossroads

By Ed Wilson



The Psychology of New FM Stag & FM Tahiti

There are two notable scenarios within the Football Manager content community which greatly frustrate creators and players alike. One relates to those who play the game and may consume content, the other ties to those who create FM content for others to enjoy.

For players, many often find themselves losing interest in a save or story quickly after the initial excitement settles. They find themselves hitting an invisible wall of gaming apathy, ditching a save and seeking the buzz which inevitably surrounds starting over with a new team. Often before even the first season is over. The moment they do, they often find their enthusiasm slump is over and the game is 'fun' again.

For creators, this common scenario can consequently affect the number of viewers or readers a creator has continued to keep hooked in once they reach the fourth or fifth YouTube episode or blog post. This, for many, can make the process of investing time in creating detailed content feel wasted. Sure, there are many exceptions, but ask any FM content creator and I guarantee you they will have experienced frustration at the contrast between the hype, views and comments on their 'new adventure' introductory piece of work, versus, for example, how episode or post 10 is received and engaged with, when it's covering the winter transfer window of 2033 in their particular journey and carefully crafted narrative.

The human brain reacts to novelty by releasing dopamine. There's a wonderful lifehacker article written by Belle Beth Cooper in 2013 which articulates this very concept. How the brain seeks the 'reward' of the excitement of discovery and how the emotional stimuli links to the substantia nigra/ventral segmental area of the brain. Whether it's a loud noise or a piece of cheese, rats are the same. If something is new, they orientate towards it and divert attention towards it. Some say they only make marginally worse tactical decisions than the average FM player.

FM Players

Football Manager is a game with lots of flexibility and choices. More so than in most other games in the market. Whether you love managing a team of minnows on a shoe-string budget, working your way up each grimy rung of the professional football ladder or if you love the challenge of managing the egos of football's elite, investing huge sums of money in the biggest and best players the game has to offer. Maybe you love the 'journeyman' concept where your commitment is not to a particular club, but instead to the development of your manager character and their progression from unemployed to European trophy winner.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

These are some general considerations every player or creator makes when starting a new game. That's without even touching on whether you manage each tiny detail of planning individual training sessions and the minutiae of every contract renewal negotiation. If you prefer to delegate and focus on player selection and tactics, or somewhere in the middle.

As consumers, we love choice, but lots of choice counterintuitively tends to provide negative results more often than we would like in terms of commitment to a single save or story. More choice doesn't mean better choice, and many players simply feel like they have chosen incorrectly, and this leads them to abandon their save and start again, often with a different project in mind. Much like food envy. There's nothing wrong with our meal of Vanarama hardship but someone else's plate of UCL glory might make us regret our choice just through comparison.

There's also a potential lack of insight too. When we think about some of our best FM experiences, what do we look for in a 'good' Football Manager save? Sometimes just 'going with the flow' can result in wonderful experiences, but with something so detailed which requires a significant time investment like an FM save, understanding what makes you invested into your gaming experience and having goals in mind can help shape your choices when trying to get your teeth into something for the longer term.

Gamers also commonly suffer from the 'Halo effect.' No, not Master Chief and his science fiction adventures, but the cognitive bias noted in studies of psychology. A good start to something increases how positively we regard that something. I.E. If our pre-season form at the start of a save produces great results and we then win our first three league games in a row, it's perfectly natural to be riding a wave of positivity when you think of your team and all you will achieve together. At the same time, it's also perfectly natural to feel less fondly towards the whole experience when you hit a rough patch of results and you feel like the disappointment or emotional cost start to outweigh the emotional benefits of playing a video game ultimately designed to entertain.

Now, some players will see rough patches in form and a string of poor results or unhappy footballers as exciting and engaging puzzles to be analysed and solved, in a two-way value exchange where the payoff of an upturn outweighs the frustration of the issues. Much like the complex choices and complicated narrative arcs involved in role-playing games. Though for many casual players that defeats the purpose of playing a video game for pleasure. We are all differently wired, yet mostly share the same psychological impulses and reactions to positive and negative stimuli.

As consumers, many of us simply freeze when confronted with too many decisions to make all at once, and this can lead to a poor choice of save, or inadequate thoughts of goals or priorities. Choice paralysis is certainly a thing.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

FM Creators

As outlined in the introduction, the same psychological traits in us as players and consumers of content applies to those who create videos, stream to an audience, or write blog posts and publish them online for all to see.

Consumers are naturally drawn to novelty, so the shiny, fresh series with a lively introduction logically captures the imagination of the follower more so than other later instalments. We are not saying that FM players are magpies, but we've never seen them both in the same room.



Also, if material requires a perceived effort from the consumer to get through, for example having to have watched or read all previous entries in a series for the current one to make sense, it's back to the emotional cost/benefit analysis before viewers or readers decide to stick or twist.

This gets worse the deeper into a concept or series a creator is. If you are more than a blog post or video or two behind, the cost to catch up is high. Even if the material isn't lengthy, it's natural that if viewers or readers perceive a high amount of time or effort is required to become engaged, many simply don't.

There's a lot on the psychology of pacing and narratives in media around retaining attention. How to introduce a problem, when and how to resolve it are the core elements of screenwriting, for example. Hallmark movies have a formula almost down to the minute for introducing a hook or twist to keep the audience going. Save updates and series are trying to sell some sort of narrative as well, but do so without the pre-written hooks. If all is going well and there's no drama, it's not going to pull people along as much. We don't control the saves in that way so we can't always package them in a way that gets people drawn in.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

On a positive note, however, once people are 'in,' it's much harder to lose them. There's something called sunk cost. The more you've spent or put in, the less likely you are to stop because it feels like you're losing that investment. Even if sticking around carries more cost. Like repairing a car. There comes a point where the repairs cost more than a new car but people still stick with the repairs because of all the money and time they've spent in the past. If you can get to that stage where people are really invested then there's a good chance they'll carry on (especially with a nice halo effect). But you've got to get them there first.

This is where the frustration for the creator comes in.

Do they want the initial high clicks but must constantly shift saves and reinvent themselves to constantly appear as a shiny new thing to the largest number of people? Or do they accept that the numbers will naturally dwindle, but will leave behind a core 'community' of committed and engaged viewers and readers?

There's no wrong answer as every content creator has different goals in mind, but the challenges are the same for creators and viewers or readers alike.

We all want to be engaged with content that really speaks to us, but viewers or readers, let's not jump ship too early whenever something new and shiny comes along. Creators, let's not be too disheartened when many inevitably do. We're only human, after all.

FM Stag and FM Tahiti



AI and the future of FM

FM Grasshopper

In the form of AI generated face packs courtesy of Midjourney, we are now beginning to see what AI can add to the Football Manager experience. Today's magazine cover art is an example of that too: artificial intelligence has blended the key themes within each of LQ14's articles into one single graphic that we've used.

But I believe AI can go further, and with a view into the LQ Crystal Ball, I am going to predict five things AI will bring to Football Manager by 2030...

Machine Learning will deliver FMers the Ultimate Hard Mode

The hard mode that some FMers desperately want is coming. With pattern/machine learning the AI in the Football Manager series is going to learn across editions. The Managers you will be coming across will have learnt their trade through 500,000,000 years of simulated matches. Each AI manager you come across will be able to react to your in-match tweaks and counter them. They'll be learning from you before you even learn from yourself, think SkyNet only more cruel. Basically, except that you're never going to win at this game again!

On a more serious note, the AI learning your save narrative could enrich your in-game experience. More tailored Press Conference questions could be thrown at you recalling specific results or goal scorers against you. The social media and news screens could learn from your save universe and predict future events.

Football Manager 2030 will have zero bugs on launch day

AI is becoming increasingly better at testing software through automations. Could it help Sports Interactive release an edition of Football Manager containing no bugs? Sounds like a dream, but it's not inconceivable. AI can quickly test what a human user would have to click through...but additional soak tests could be run during the early testing phase of an edition, like providing analysis on Newgens' attribute distribution. Fewer aggressive, but cowardly, Centre Backs with Crossing 16? Yes please.

Football Manager 2030 launches with no bugs, a fully functioning and streamlined User Interface and reduced Twitter animosity from its fans on launch day! A dream to developers and players alike.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

Procedural generation of in-game stadiums - headline feature for FM30

Similar to player likeness, stadiums are also licensable. Instead of Sports Interactive parting heavy sums of money to acquire a Camp Nou or San Siro...perhaps let AI generate stadiums procedurally? Like how planets are generated in No Man's Sky OR how no two Minecraft 'seeds' are never the same. The stadiums in Football Manager could have the same logic applied to them, ensuring that each one is unique within the 3D match engine...and to your own save.



Blogging goes automated!

Football Manager blogs are not as popular as they once were in the mid to late 2000s. However, by 2030 it is expected to be the most common form of FM content again. By 2030, Football Manager blogs can be churned out by an AI. The guides, tactical explanations and even stories can be mashed together from the previous 20 years of documented words; serving the reader regular and informative blogs

Few humans will stream Football Manager by 2030

Unfortunately, streamers are going to be the ones that suffer due to AI. It's predicted that AI Streamers will be more entertaining than most FM streamers by 2025, by 2028 they will also look more alive than the comatose real-life streamer on their seventh birthday subathon of the year, and by 2030 they will have overtaken in terms of active subs. It is a sad way to see the end of real-lifers streaming the game we all love, but there will always be an underground niche market that prefers to see 'the real thing' (and all the imperfections a real-life Football Manager player has).

FM Grasshopper



Argentine Crossroads

Ed Wilson

There are so many people that play Football Manager these days. Lots have been playing for decades now (like me) and others can be new or have only really got into it in the last 5-10 years. No matter who you are or how long you've been playing the game we all experience very similar experiences during our umpteenth hours of FM.

One of these experiences is that feeling you get when things feel a little stale. You start to wonder: do I want to carry on playing the way I'm playing? Is the grass greener somewhere else? Will the fun kick back in if I try something new? I am in no doubt that all FM players will be asking themselves these questions during the course of their game time.

This is where I found myself recently and it's been a more recurring theme for me these past few versions of the game – a crossroads. Unlike some players who know exactly who they're going to manage months before a new release, I usually wait until the beta drops so that I can scour leagues and clubs for something to take my fancy. In recent years (at least the last 5 years I'd say) I like to play with a #narrative that usually makes it easier to produce FM content for. If there is a purpose to my game time, alongside the 'just having fun' aspect, then it gives me a target – a focus, another reason to play and (hopefully) something engaging for people I'll share the story of my save with.

Finally getting to the point I was trying to make – I hit a crossroads. I'd had it all planned out – La Nueva Joya, a save managing IACC in Argentina – where Paulo Dybala (an FM hero of mine, we go way back) first played professional football. I had a link to him through the club and a plan to earn promotion, compete with the best clubs in Argentina – become one of the best whilst also looking to produce our very own La Nueva Joya, our own jewel of a player to become a legend before jetting off into the sunlit uplands of European football.

I spent 5 years with IACC and this was way out of my FM comfort zone. I'd never managed in South America before for any prolonged length of time – more because Europe is my comfort blanket and I was worried I wouldn't enjoy it. I was wrong. It was fantastic learning about a different league and format with different competitions and the challenge of balancing all of these. I quickly got into that place in FM where everything clicks and rather than just aimlessly hitting spacebar to pass the time I was genuinely enraptured by the save, keen to play each day and really keen to blog about it.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

Success came quickly and a little unexpectedly with promotion in the first season followed instantly by competing at the top of the Primera Division with the likes of Boca and River – finishing at the dizzy height of 2nd in our first season in the top flight. 3 more seasons followed quickly with progress made each season either on the pitch or off it, newgens came and went. We could never quite compete with Boca or River each season, always being the ‘nearly men’. Whilst we were punching above our weight in the beginning, as the seasons wore on there became an inevitability at how each season was going to go. I would do absurdly well in the League Cup stage, really well in the league season proper, but never quite well enough. We would regularly have to sell our best players and young starlets for really good money, try to replace them before seeing those replacements sold further down the line.

This started to feel cyclical and that initial joy and fun I had – with the goals and parameters I’d set myself to follow all achieved in record time. I’d hit that point where I felt ‘well, what else is there for me to achieve?’ Of course, there was still the title to play for and success in continental competitions but each season they seemed more like a pipe dream given we could never really best Boca, let alone the strong Brazilian clubs. Did I want to stick around and keep repeating the same processes each season? Or was it time for something new?

So this is an FM crossroad. I have the choice to carry on and hope I can retain some enjoyment with IACC, or I can hope the grass is greener in pastures new. I’d speak with a few friends about it, put ideas and thoughts down in my Slack channel and on Twitter. But the decision is always a tough one to make and not one that should be made on a whim (I’ve definitely done this in the past). It’s an important decision right? I spend around 1,000 hours each cycle of FM on the current game so I want to be using that time for maximum enjoyment don’t I? So how do you break down the barrier and make a decision?

Notice I didn’t say ‘right’ decision – ultimately at this stage you’ll never know if it’s the right decision until you’ve made it. I like to think there are things we can consider to aid us in this thought process:

1. What targets or milestones can you set yourself? Is there a narrative behind the choice you make?

I’m a firm believer that if you give yourself targets or milestones to achieve within your save this can add to your experience when playing FM. Why do you want to manage in a certain country or with a certain club? Do you feel an affinity there? Are they a fallen giant? Do they produce an inordinate amount of quality newgens? Your local team?

Like with IACC I wanted to find the next Dybala whilst taking his old team to the top of Argentinian football – it’s a nice thing to aim for.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

2. What are your FM philosophies?

Many of us will have these and sometimes not even realise it. I'm a sucker for buying up as many wonderkids as I can so usually look for a save that gives me that freedom to do so. I rarely give new contracts to players over the age of 30 – although I have softened my stance on this of late. What would your philosophies be and would it be easy to introduce these to the team you're managing? There are some teams where board philosophy will clash with your own and that'll give you an uphill struggle right from the off.

3. Do you have a tactical style you prefer and would like to implement?

Lots of players will remember a save where they've had great success and instantly default to that tactic when starting up with a new club – regardless of the players there. Do you want to play with 2 up top? 3 at the back? Narrow or wide? Thinking about all of these before picking your next move can be crucial to your enjoyment of a save down the line. If you apply for a job at a club that want you to play defensive / counter attacking football and you only know how to play attacking/gegenpress then maybe it won't be a match made in heaven.

4. How easy can you implement this style to your potential new club?

It's all good and well having a set playing style but be conscious that it may not be an overnight success. As in real life, in FM it can take time for a team to adjust to a new way of playing – especially in the 'middle' of a save. Imagine if Pep left City and managed Everton with the view to implementing his style of football. It'd take years + a major player overhaul alongside numerous intense training sessions before that team even barely resembled a 'Pep' side.

Consider your style of play and whether your new team would be suited to it given the board's expectations and the makeup of the currently playing team. Of course, if you're after a challenge then you can just dive in blindfolded.



Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

So how did I apply the above points to my own save? After lots of thinking and deliberating I'd decided I'd achieved all I could with IACC, I'd produced my own newgens, sold one of them for more money than Dybala was sold for, and took the team to challenging for trophies on all fronts (bar Copa Libertadores). It was time for a new start elsewhere.

I wanted to move back to Europe as the lack of prize money in Argentina was incredibly frustrating – I decided my new #narrative would be to find a team that's either fallen on hard times and is struggling around the relegation zone, or a larger team who has had no success in my save so far and needs me to be the one to reignite the fire.

So for a few months I continued with IACC whilst keeping an eye on the job market – as an Arsenal fan I'd spotted that they'd had 4 years outside of the Champions League with two 8th place finishes. I have an affinity there...they're underperforming hugely. Tuchel was in charge but was 'Stable' so one to watch but not a role I thought would come around quick.

Almeria came up on my radar, 1 point off the relegation zone at Christmas 2026 yet finances were 'Rich' and they had a phenomenal 16 year old right back in the team valued at £60m. I had an incredible save with Real Betis back on FM21 where I took over them in a similar position so I thought the stars were aligning again. I enjoy the Spanish league a lot in trying to dethrone Real and Barca and here was another opportunity with a new club. I applied for the job.

In the twists of fate that occur in FM, Tuchel plummeted to new depths losing 4 games in December and with Arsenal in 10th place he was sacked – just as Almeria offered me a job. I delayed my response as I applied at Arsenal thinking this is the stars aligning. My club. They need me. But I didn't know if, after 5 years in Argentina, I'd be the type of manager they'd go for.

Alas, I was and a deal was done to take me to the Emirates Stadium with a view to putting the club back on the map. Almeria was but a distant memory as we soared into a 4th place finish in that first half season at the club before dominating domestic and European football alike in season 2 as we celebrated a famous quadruple.

The crossroads were far, far behind us as these past 18 months (in game) have been hugely enjoyable again. But with instant, colossal success...is that a crossroads I see on the horizon?

Ed Wilson



LQ Book Reviews – FM Heathen

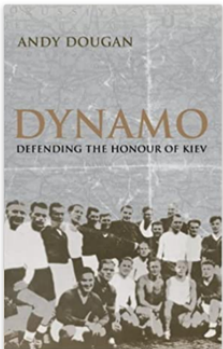
"In history, a great volume is unrolled for our instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the past errors and infirmities of mankind."

While Edmund Burke undoubtedly meant this as a philosophical ideal and absolutely nothing to do with winning football matches, this is a pertinent quote. There are many ways in which reading about the rich past of innovative historic tacticians can inspire and motivate us to think differently about the chess match that is every football match we may (virtually) manage in future.

Sometimes the inspiration can even come from books that are not principally about football.


In a semi-regular feature for Latte Quarterly, an FM blogger will tell us about a book from their collection. They will let us know a little about the content and its key themes, but most importantly; how a deeper understanding of football or at least how unique lessons picked up from this title influenced how they play Football Manager, and the lessons you could learn too.







History › Military History › World War II 1939-1945



Dynamo: Defending the Honour of Kiev Hardcover – 1 Mar. 2001

Follow the author

 [Andy Dougan](#)

| Print length | Language | Publisher | Publication date | ISBN-10 | ISBN-13 |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
|  256 pages |  English |  Fourth Estate |  1 Mar. 2001 |  1841153184 |  978-1841153186 |

For anyone who knows me from my FM twitter feed and my pretty niche interest in recreating historical databases it will come as no surprise that the book I have chosen for this review is a football history book. In fact, I consider it to be perhaps THE most memorable one I have ever read, and that is "Dynamo" by Andy Dougan. I think it was a good 10 years ago now when I first picked it up on the way to some holiday or other and I remember not being able to put it down for the week, which is rare praise indeed for me. Let me tell you why that was and how it inspired a very interesting, yet brief, FM save.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

Both a football book and a WW2 history book, it tells the story of how the former players of Dynamo Kiev reformed in 1942 during the German occupation after "Operation Barbarossa" (The Nazi invasion of the USSR) into a team named FC Start, led by their inspiring goalkeeper Mikolay Trusevich. What followed was a series of staged exhibition matches against teams assembled by the German occupiers who were always better prepared, better fed and much fitter than the Kiev players, who had been forced to work in a factory to produce bread for the occupying troops.

At times I found it almost unbelievable, at others deeply thought provoking, but always inspirational about how perseverance and incredible determination can bring hope even in the face of devastating hardship and adversity. What is more, it almost goes without saying that any reading of it now resonates even greater because of the bizarre fact that it is all happening again in that very same city with the Russian invasion, where the descendants of that brave XI are being repressed in almost the same way.

Without giving too many spoilers away, the book has echoes of the 1981 movie "Escape to Victory", for which it must have been a source of inspiration, as well as themes of comradeship, resistance and resilience. It also has some very unexpected turns that are likely to be a mix of the actual story and the myth that has grown around it.

The impact on playing Football Manager

By sheer coincidence I just happened to be re-reading it when Football Manager 2019 came out and I was looking for a short beta save with a team who weren't far from the top of their league in real life. It seemed logical then to take over the modern Dynamo Kiev. I did that, and even blogged about it on my website, fmheathen.com.

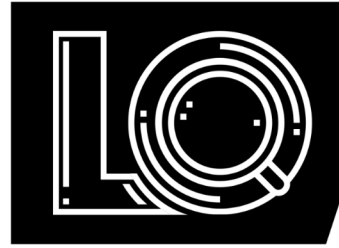
As you will read if you visit the blog, the main reasons/goals for the save apart from the historical link were:

1. They were overdue to win their league, last winning it in 2016 (they later won it in real life in 2021).
2. To overcome Shakhtar Donetsk, their greatest sporting rivals.
3. To emulate Valeriy Lobanovskiy, their greatest ever manager and recreate his high-pressing style which was way ahead of its time

What followed was a cracking little 30 hour or so save that resulted in me learning a lot about Lobanovskiy's style and prising the Ukrainian Super Cup from Shakhtar's claws. Sadly we didn't win the league, finishing 2nd, until the beta ended and my shiny main save beckoned. All things considered it was a very satisfying jaunt that I may come back to one day after all the real world trauma in the region is over.

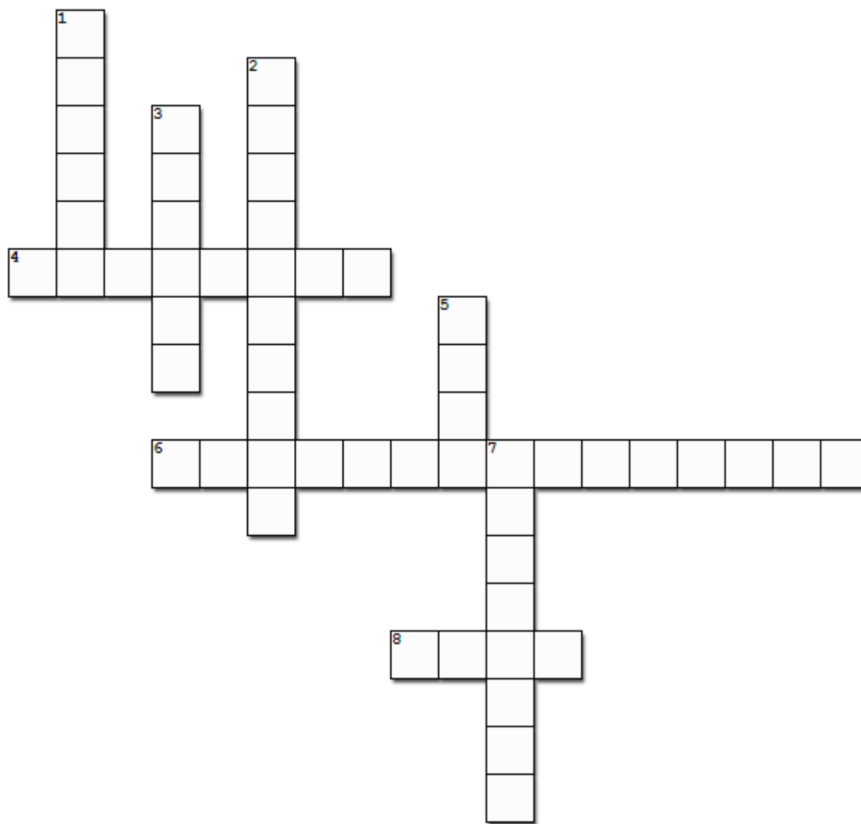
I love teams with a rich and interesting history, and I channel a lot of this interest into my historical recreation database files, like 1946 or 1902. In this case it was less about hours in the editor but taking the influence from Andy Dougan's wonderful book and diving into a short yet satisfying FM experience.

LATTE QUARTERLY



Our LQ Crossword is back, can you be the first to crack it?
There's no prize, other than our respect...

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Across

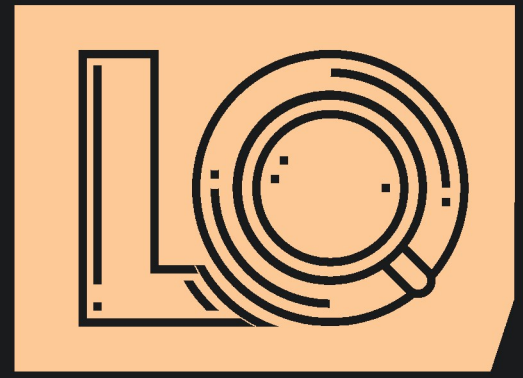
4. Unattached World Cup winner in the 1998/99 'CM3' MadScientist DB
6. The only defensive striker role
8. A social gathering attended by men only

Down

1. Our Editor Note writer's FM23 Swedish retreat
2. The programme used to create LQ14's cover
3. Ed's original La Joya
5. FM Heathen's FM20 Northern French City save, known as 'Les Vikings'
7. Argentine teenager Winger in line for an FM23 Winter Patch boost

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