

**KEEP YOUR GAZERS OUT FOR  
IN WHICH THE AUTHOR  
NUDGES YOU GENTLY**

*Special North London Edition*

Just about one-thousand years ago a farmer in Anglo-Saxon England walled in an area of land along the old Roman Road and convinced several dozen families that he was now their sovereign and they were now his subjects. That farmer's name was Tota, and many, many years later that primitive domain would become known as Tottenham, a neighborhood in the North of London. Historically unrelated, but imminently to be united within this article, is the life of Sir Henry Percy, the fourteenth-century English man-at-arms and wildcat who was struck in the mouth with an arrow and killed while aiding Henry of Bolingbroke (later King Henry IV of England) in his overthrow of King Richard II. That was July, 1403. Nearly two-hundred years later Sir Henry was immortalized as 'Harry Hotspur'—a nickname he had previously received for his unpredictable nature—by William Shakespeare himself (see *Henry IV, Part 1*) and, nearly three-hundred years after *that*, a group of grammar school boys in London's North End adopted the nickname of their forebear in the creation of the Tottenham Hotspur Football and Athletic Club. That's all basically true, as true as any History of England you're likely to find.

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**PLAYING  
THE HITS  
OF  
TOMORROW**

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These days Tottenham, as that clever and industrious tenth-century farmer Tota surely envisioned, is a thriving and charming district that may or may not have been visited by this author on a boyhood trip to Great Britain; during which most every waking hour was spent examining the inside and out of cathedrals, castles, museums and anything else sufficiently aged (fortunately, this did include both Stonehenge and Wembley). Whatever the case, Tottenham is a neighborhood of some distinction and Tottenham Hotspur F.C. is a football team of immeasurable talent and thrill—and a certified favorite of the Shuttlecoque Sporting Club.

Tottenham, like the Rolling Stones, were great in the sixties and have teased their adoring fans with moderate domestic successes ever since. Though by no means a 'guppy,' the team is a mid-table in the Premiership and hovers on the cusp of Great English Football Team only for their persistence and history. However, if the daily-vacuumed Afghani rugs covering the weekly-polished cherry-wood floors at the Club office could talk, they would no-doubt tell you that the Sporting World is abuzz and atwitter with the anticipation Tottenham's long-awaited return to the acme of English football; beginning last weekend with the Hotspur's 2-1 defeat of London rival—and Shuttlecoque Nemesis—Chelsea in the Carling Cup Final. Though that tournament is, for all intents and purposes, a pointless exhibition, Tottenham's victory was well-deserved and an indication of the team's mounting dominance; as well as a vindication of new-since-last-October head-coach Juande Ramos' 'Continental Style'.

But the team's recent success and future hopes are not solely in the hands of one cosmopolitan Spaniard, but rest equally in the variegated palms of a multi-national and predominantly youthful squad. At the top of their ranks is the wildly popular Bulgarian Bandit Dimitar Berbatov, a center-forward with killer instinct and a Midas touch in the penalty box.

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**THE NEW ENTHUSIAST  
SPORTING WEEKLY  
EXALTING THE WORLD OF SPORT, CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF LEISURE  
30 FEBRUARY 2008**

## THE NEUTRAL SUPPORTER IN WHICH THE AUTHOR SLICES AND DICES

Each week (sort of) Carson Cistulli puts the chaos of global football into order by previewing the match most likely to please the fan whose only allegiance is to his own enjoyment. The four factors of the *Enthusiast Quotient (EQ)*—our very proprietary and shockingly precise metric—are 1) *Provocation Factor*, which assesses the game's potential for moments of individual brilliance, 2) *Dutch Factor*, which evaluates each team's penchant for controlled attack, 3) *Tugend Factor*, which considers each team's dedication to the cause, and 4) *Long Term Prospects*, which takes into account how worthy each team might be of the neutral's prolonged affection.

Match of the Week  
Sampdoria v Torino  
Sunday, 02 March 2008, 6:00 AM PST\*  
TV: P2P [<http://www.myp2p.eu/>]

### Provocation Factor: 7

\*La mia famiglia is from Bari, Italy, the same hot and smarmy Italian port town from which the less hot and incredibly smarmy provocateur Antonio Cassano (of Sampdoria) hails. Cassano is, in some ways, the *uberest* of the *menschen*, having gained as much notoriety for his various and sundry temper-tantrums as for his imaginative footwork. He's been dropped from the national team once or twice, gotten into rows with trainer Fabio Capello at multiple clubs, and has a generally nasty habit of stripping down to his scivvies before leaving the field of play. For all his antics, though—and an ongoing battle against the calories native to Italian pastry—Cassano has managed to find himself again, after several lost years, with Genoese club Sampdoria. In Samp's last two matches, it has been Cassano who has authored the defining moment—first, in the form of a clever chip to assist on a game-winning goal versus rivals Genoa, and then scoring a goal himself at the death to secure a 1-1 draw versus Inter Milan. For Torino's own clutch of provocateurs, read on.

### Dutch Factor: 6.5

\*My analysis thenceforth is seriously handicapped by the fact that I know very little about Sampdoria outside Cassano and another feller whose name sounds a little like a combination of the words *plumber* and *columbo*. Torino, on the other hand, I know something about. Depending who plays, they can be *very* attractive. If I had my druthers—which, now that I'm engaged, is becoming less frequent—but *if* I had them I would play Stellone at striker with Recoba and Di Michele flanking him on the left and right, respectively; Corini, Lazetic, and Rosina in the midfield; Commotto at right back, Pisano at left, and then a couple defender-types to beat up on Sampdorian attackers. Pisano's not so great but the rest of those guys are a joy to watch on the ball, and Recoba and Corini are both singularly talented passers.

### Tugend Factor: 6

\*Tugend factor gets seriously complicated when one attempts to apply it to the Italian game. For, while Italians have a famously borderline-neurotic desire to win, they're not shy about pursuing victory by means nefarious and histrionic. The normalcy with which Italians fall over and, subsequently, appeal to the referee for assistance is enough to make the average German man regurgitate his *wienerschnitzel*. Perhaps a more culturally-appropriate moniker for this criterion is *virtu*, the term used by Machiavelli to describe that quality which must be possessed by the prince in order to remain in power. "By any means necessary" is the motto at the heart of the Italian game, nor do these specific teams stray demonstrably from such thinking. That said, Commotto and Rosina on Torino are full of vigor, and Barone runs like bull.

### Long Term Prospects: 6

\*As I've said, I know so little about Sampdoria that it would be irresponsible to make too assured an analysis. I will say however, that Samp is one of those teams—like Bayer Leverkusen in Germany, or Parma, also in Italy—that lack a great local tradition and have relied, instead, on infusions of money to reach the top flight. Real Genoese

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support Genoa; I-don't-know-who supports Sampdoria. Torino are quite the opposite. While Juventus have been built up and supported by the Fiat corp, Torino are the local team who make trips down to Serie B for reasons other than bribing officials. Of course, I could be lying.

### Enthusiast Quotient: 6.375

\*Eamon ffitch won't believe it, but this match—this *Italian* match, that is—might not be terrible. Sampdoria remain a wildcard for the neutral, but Cassano and almost all Torino offer enough material with which to work. Ya heard!

—Carson Cistulli

\*It occurs to the author that the match in question may be too soon for the gentle reader to schedule a viewing. Even so, these two teams deserve a gander, if not a goose or two. Sampdoria play at Parma on 09 March 2008, while Torino plays home versus Atalanta on the same date.

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JOEL STRONG'S  
SILENCE  
IS BROUGHT  
TO YOU  
BY  
XBOX

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Berbatov—who claims to have learned to speak English from *The Godfather* trilogy—is one of the Premiership's most exciting players and deadly players, and his strike partner, the Irishman Robbie Keane, is no less talented. In support of that front line is the veritable next-wave of English National Team football: Aaron Lennon plays out wide on the right and is faster than a gazelle; Jermaine Jenas causes mayhem in the center of the pitch; Tom Huddlestone, big as a chest of drawers and with an amazing full-field vision, can play comfortably in mid-field or in central defense; Michael Dawson, Jonathan Woodgate, and captain Ledley King hold down Tottenham's back line like the 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Light Dragons. Allied with this crop of English tear-aways are three Frenchmen of some interest: Younes Kaboul and Pascal Chimbonda in defense, and Steed Malbranque in midfield. Another man to watch at White Hart Lane is the young Gareth Bale. Bale is Welsh and plays on the left-wing, therefore garnering many complimentary comparisons to Manchester United living-legend Ryan Giggs. Unfortunately, Bale is out for the season—so, sorry for that.

Although Tottenham Hotspur F.C. still languishes in eleventh place in the Premier League, they are a team on the up-swing that is passing into a new era, one that necessarily demands attention. Their style of play is swift and attacking, and modeled off the Spanish technique of short, direct passing and superior fitness. (Indeed, Ramos' first action as manager was the implementation of a new diet and fitness regimen at the club, and it shows.) They run, they jump, they razzle and they dazzle. They are a team with the full support of the Shuttlecoque Sporting Club and they most certainly live up to their nickname.

Next Match: Wednesday, 06 March 2008 v PSV Eindhoven in UEFA Cup action.

—Eamon ffitch