

Andrew studies the different ways to announce a 'Goooooooooooooal!'

# The language of football is the same around the world

**SCOTTISH** language expert Andrew Milne-Skinner has a job at the University of Innsbruck in Austria that football fans would die for.

By James Millar

He watches recordings of big matches over and over again.

But he's not tuning in to admire the skills of Ronaldo or Rooney — he's listening with a keen ear to the language the TV commentators use to describe the action.

## Linguistics

Andrew (61) works for the Innsbruck Football Research Group, and his team there focus on football to make linguistics more accessible to people. They're trying to see how different countries handle the language of football.

He studied German at his home-town university in St Andrews then moved

to Manchester (where he supported Stockport County) before going to Austria to teach and landing his current job.

"Sometimes academics are regarded as living in an ivory tower. Football is so popular and pervasive these days, that this is a way to relate our work to the real world," he says.

Their most recent project involved studying commentary of the 2006 World Cup final in six different languages, specifically the moment when legendary French midfielder Zinedine Zidane was sent off after headbutting Italian defender Marco Materazzi.

It was the turning point in a dramatic final and



■ Andrew Milne-Skinner.

arguably cost France the World Cup as Italy went on to beat them on penalties. It was an inglorious way for Zidane to end an illustrious career.

"I was surprised by our results," says Andrew. "You might expect the Italian commentators to be volatile and explosive but they were very measured.

"One of their commentators described the headbutt as 'a very inconsiderate thing to do'.

"The French on the other hand were stunned into silence. They refer to

the player by his nickname 'Zizou', but by the end of the incident they were using his full name of Zinedine Zidane as if to afford him more respect for a distinguished career."

Andrew's team found that the Spanish are generally the most volatile commentators, largely because they work in teams of three, which gives them more opportunity for interaction.

In South America the commentators are famously over the top. In Argentina there's one pundit whose sole task is to shout 'Goooooooooooooal!' when someone scores.

And while armchair fans in this country were driven mad by co-commentators John Motson and Mark Lawrenson at this year's Euro tourney, German TV only has one man at the mike — and he's told by his producer to often be quiet to let the action speak for itself!

There was no specifically Scottish commentator at the World Cup final, but Andrew would like to include some in his future work.

He reckons Scotland's biggest name — Archie MacPherson, catchphrase "woof!" — could be worth a research project.

"He has a very individual way of commentating," says Andrew. "It would be interesting to study his style."

Andrew's team concluded that there are more similarities than differences in commentary and that people largely describe and talk about football in the same way, just in different languages.

## Disbelief

On the 2006 cup final they found that all the commentators started by expressing disbelief and moved on to eulogise Zidane's career when it became clear it was over. The shock of the incident also caused them to make mistakes. The Russian commentators described it as 'a 360 degree twist'!

Andrew's group presented their findings at a symposium last autumn attended by academics from across the continent.

Unusually all the



■ The infamous moment in the 2006 World Cup final when Zidane headbutted Materazzi.

participants submitted papers to be included in a new book that includes chapters with such titles as "Football lexis and phraseology in contemporary Bulgarian" and "A discursive analysis of soccer halls of fame".

Their next project is looking at how footballers and coaches of different nationalities and languages integrate into one team. The idea is to produce a handbook to help clubs settle expensive foreign signings.

Andrew's been a football fan all his life and was at the 1970 European Cup final in Milan that Celtic

lost to Dutch side Feyenoord.

With the new season about to kick off he'll be paying more attention than most. Although he'll spend August reviewing and researching footage of the Euro 2008 final, the first game of the season he'll actually attend in person will be at Forfar's Station Park.

He explained, "I'll be over in Scotland in August and hope to make it along to a Forfar game as a fan rather than for research.

"I think I'm the sole member of the Austrian branch of the Forfar fan club!"

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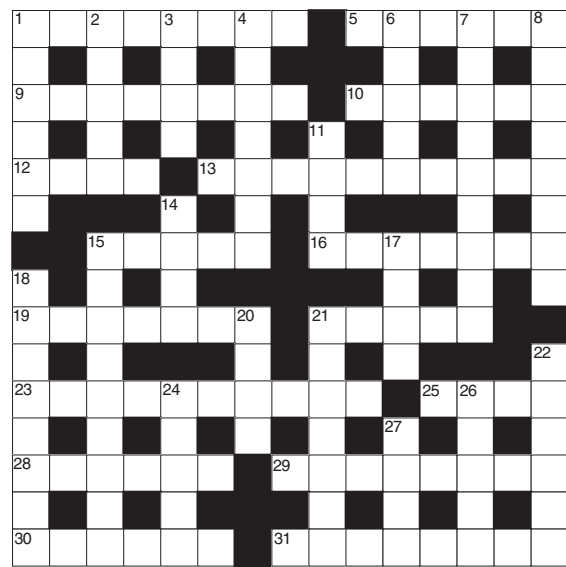


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### ACROSS

1. Creator, designer (8).
5. Military show (6).
9. Thrift, frugality (8).
10. Cite, offer proof (6).
12. Ceremonial act (4).
13. Relating to past events (10).
15. Drinking vessel (5).
16. Large church (7).
19. Enthusiastic applause (7).
21. Well pleased (5).
23. Leg protectors (10).
25. Bird's mouth (4).
28. In a superior way (6).
29. Enjoyable (8).
30. Making mistakes (6).
31. Stated forcefully (8).

### DOWN

1. Disclose information (6).
2. Leap over (5).
3. Require (4).
4. Exotic flowers (7).
6. Small snake (5).
7. Shortened (9).
8. Supreme ruler (8).
11. Stop the flow (4).
14. Hire car (4).
15. Ancient Roman fighter (9).
17. Midday (4).
18. Could be (8).
20. Tidy (4).
21. Walks in the sea (7).
22. Glided on ice (6).
24. Colour (5).
26. Precise (5).
27. Confusing path network (4).

**£100 for the first correct entry pulled out of the bag on Thursday.**  
Last week's winner was William Lindsay, Stonehaven.

### LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

**Across** — 1 Featherweight. 7 Clients. 8 Donegal. 9 Ape. 10 Weighty. 11 Newsmen. 14 Studios. 18 Awry. 19 Ohio. 20 Decline. 25 Arduous. 27 Glacial. 28 Car. 29 Othello. 30 Utility. 31 Counterfeiter.  
**Down** — 1 Falter. 2 Avenue. 3 Essay. 4 Widen. 5 Grease. 6 Thawed. 12 Idyll. 13 Wan. 15 Toe. 16 Own. 17 Goo. 21 Critic. 22 Bureau. 23 Ocelot. 24 Natter. 26 Scone. 27 Gruff.

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