

# beautiful game

It's the biggest sporting event in the world and, for the first time since its inception in 1930, the FIFA World Cup™ is being held on African soil. The significance of this for South Africans, who are hosting the 64-match extravaganza, is hard to convey. More than any other sport, soccer is the universal game. From makeshift goalposts and balls fashioned from rolled-up plastic bags to the gleaming high-tech stadiums that have been erected in its honour, it's played by disaffected youths and monied professionals alike. Between 11 June and 11 July, some three million people are expected to attend the matches, whose effects will ripple far beyond their 90 minutes on the pitch. Here, we analyse and celebrate the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. ▶





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**RIGHT, ABOVE** According to the United Nations Environmental Programme, the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ will 'have the largest carbon footprint of any major event with a goal to be climate neutral'. Durban's Moses Mabhida Stadium has achieved carbon neutrality in terms of its construction impact, but it remains to be seen whether efforts to minimise and recycle waste will be supported by the 400 000-plus spectators anticipated at the seven matches to be played here.



GALLO IMAGES/AFP (2)

**RIGHT** Soccer fans crowd around a television set in Accra, Ghana. The estimated global television audience for the final on 11 July 2010 is at least 250 million people. It's difficult to predict how many Africans will be tuning in (sub-Saharan Africa lays claim to just 2.5 per cent of the world's television sets), but free-to-air rights have been secured by national broadcasters across the continent in an effort to bring the live action to as many as possible.

**OPPOSITE** The total carbon footprint of the event is estimated to be more than 2.7 million tonnes; that's six times higher than the finals played in Germany in 2006. This increase has been attributed to the long-haul flights that are expected to deliver some 370 000 international supporters (85 000 from within Africa) to South Africa and to the internal flights that will ferry them to matches in different cities. The country's reliance on 'dirty' coal to produce 77 per cent of its electricity is also a contributing factor.

**PREVIOUS SPREAD** An informal (but no less passionate) match is played out in Cape Town. Following intense criticism for its 'online only' bookings policy – it is widely believed that 80 per cent of South Africans have never been on the Internet – FIFA sanctioned cash sales in mid-April. Combined with a US\$20 ticket available only to locals, this shift brought the possibility of attending a match closer to ordinary citizens. ▶



JEREMY JOWELL/AFRIPICS.COM

**BOTTOM and BELOW** Soccer City has been called the spiritual home of South African soccer and it is here that the first and final whistles of the competition will blow. The new stadium, which resembles a giant calabash, was built on the site of the original Soccer City and lies within kicking distance of Soweto, home to most of its construction workforce and a quarter of Johannesburg's population. In an attempt to beautify the township ahead of the inaugural match between South Africa and Mexico, the Greening Soweto Initiative planted more than 50 000 indigenous trees. ▶



MICHAEL MAUREL

Like Moses Mabhida in Durban, the Green Point Stadium in Cape Town was built with the aim of limiting its construction carbon footprint. Some 95 per cent of the stadium demolished to make way for it was salvaged, recycled or reused, and topsoil collected during construction was used for landscaping. Despite these and other emissions-limiting efforts from the country's nine host cities (such as the US\$2.5-billion investment in upgrading public transport), the cost of offsetting the domestic carbon footprint of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ has been estimated at a minimum of US\$6.8-million, funding that by April had not been secured.



GALLO IMAGES/AFP



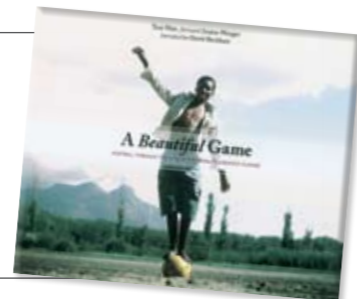
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JULIUS MWELU/AFRICA MEDIA ONLINE

Reuse and recycle. Whether it is car tyres in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (TOP), or plastic bags salvaged from rubbish dumps, rolled up and held together with string in an impoverished township of Nairobi, Kenya (ABOVE), the bare necessities for a soccer match can be fashioned from almost anything. With an increasing number of African players signing contracts with high-profile international leagues and six African teams qualifying to compete in the 2010 FIFA World Cup™, football is not only an accessible and immediate distraction from the travails of life, it also holds the promise of an escape from stultifying poverty. ■

Many of the photographs that appear in this portfolio were drawn from *A Beautiful Game* by Tom Watt (Wild Dog Press, 2010). With a moving introduction by David Beckham, the book is an ode to the all-encompassing nature of the world's most popular game. *Africa Geographic* and Wild Dog Press have three copies to give away. Simply send an e-mail with the subject line A BEAUTIFUL GAME to [sarah@africageographic.com](mailto:sarah@africageographic.com) and one could be yours. Available at South African bookshops or from [www.kalahari.net](http://www.kalahari.net)



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