

Back of the nyet

TIM VYNER
WORLD CUP
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I spent most of the day in excited anticipation of last night's game. I based myself in and around Red Square, with the waves of fans and roaming media teams getting interviews and build-up stories.

There was airport-style security on every entrance and exit point to the square, where Colombia and England fans mixed well, with everyone feeling confident. It has been that kind of World Cup, but this was the first time I had seen large numbers of English supporters with their flags on display, singing and ready to go.

When pre-match nerves get the better of me I find the best way to cope is to draw. This illustration was made in the few hours before kick-off, soaking up the atmosphere, enjoying the landmarks of Red Square: Kremlin, State Historical Museum, St Basil's Cathedral, Lenin's tomb - and the temporary TV studios broadcasting to the world.



WORLD CUP DIARY
ADAM HURREY

Costa spot on but may pay penalty

The paranoia of penalty shoot-outs was laid bare by footage of Spain's deliberations between Fernando Hierro and his players, during which the ever-constructive Diego Costa appeared to express surprise that Koke had been chosen. When his Atletico Madrid teammate duly missed, Costa was seen to turn to Hierro and exclaim: "I told you so!", which should ensure a warm reunion when they return to club duties.



Ballerinas bow down to salute Russian win

Football: better than ballet. Well, both have cultural merits and largely involve highly-trained people throwing themselves about, but dancers at the Bolshoi provided one of the abiding images of this World Cup as they huddled around a single mobile phone to watch the host nation's progress against Spain during a break in a performance of *Raymonda*.



Perhaps they could teach Neymar a thing or two about his diving technique.

Vertonghen heads for obscure records book

Another day, another hitherto unheard-of World Cup record broken. Jan Vertonghen's header against Japan, which was the springboard for Belgium's dramatic comeback in Rostov, has been confirmed as the furthest headed goal at the tournament since 1966 - an



impressive 20.3 yards. Not a fluke, though, absolutely not...

Why not everyone is a Harry Kane fan...

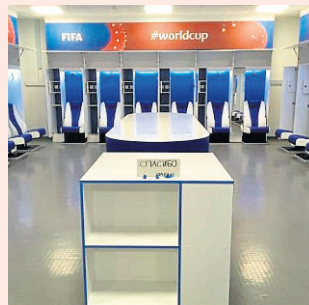
Build 'em up to knock 'em down, so the old saying goes where England players are concerned. Preparations for the clash with Colombia were duly rocked by a tweet from someone purporting to have gone to school with

Harry Kane, who "may be a star in your eyes but in mine he'll always be the boy who flicked a bogey into my chocolate custard at primary school and hell yes I still hold a grudge". Comforting to know his aim was true even then...

Reasons we all fell in love with Japan By Alan Tyers

1. The team cleaned their dressing room

Japan left their dressing room spotless after defeat by Belgium, and even left a note saying "Thank you" in Russian. In Britain, we are more used to stories of footballers trashing things, chucking pizza around, or throwing tea cups, so this seemed particularly sweet. A bit weird, admittedly. But sweet.



2. The fans tidied up the stadium

Meanwhile, their loyal supporters had pulled on the Marigolds and were also giving the Rostov Stadium a thorough going-over before they left. They tidied up after the end of every game. What a people. No stranger sight in Russia than a person in traditional Japanese dress with a recycling bag.

3. They played hard but fair

Japan gave their all in an epic defeat by Belgium, and rugby referee Nigel Owens was among those who praised their sportsmanship: "Playing the game how it should be. No diving or rolling around and not running up too and abusing the referee. Well done all. Respect."



4. The folks back home put in a shift

There were heroic scenes of early-morning drinking in Tokyo's bars as the match kicked off at 3am local time yesterday morning. Dawn broke to find Japanese workers staggering out of the pubs in stunned disbelief after the sucker punch. A top effort, nevertheless.



5. The heartbreaking reactions of the players

It was impossible not to feel for the Japanese lads after their last-gasp defeat by the Belgians. Some slumped to the floor, others wept: while they may have lost the match, they won a lot of hearts at this World Cup and will be welcomed back at the next one, if they qualify.

