



## A Close Game

I don't spend much time on the sports pages of my daily newspaper. Mainly this is because reading about sports seems a bit ridiculous to me. Playing in some game or other of course makes sense, watching people play I can understand, but reading about it just seems a complete waste of time. A story on the sports pages the other day did catch my eye though, because it made me think about my own printmaking work!

The story was a discussion of the 'ideal' score for a soccer game. One possibility mentioned was that a score of 1-0 was the ideal, signifying that the two teams were very skilled, and it was extremely difficult to score. The problem with that though, is that a lack of goals can leave the audience feeling somewhat frustrated; too much defense and not enough offense can sometimes be a bit boring.

The consensus seemed to be that a score something like 4-3 would be preferable. And to be perfect, the game would have to be a 'see-saw', with first one team in the lead, then the other, then back to the first team, etc. etc. This would leave everybody happy (except the losers): the players would demonstrate their skills, the watchers would be entertained, and there would be plenty of tension to keep the excitement level high throughout the entire game.

But what on earth does this have to do with my printmaking work?

Well, although I don't like to read about sports, nor spend much time watching, I too would love to enjoy being part of such 'battles' ... but who with? Just as those players in that seesaw game were pushed to a high level by their opponents, I think I would be pushed to better levels of achievement if I had 'competition' in my job.

This is common in the business world of course. If only one company is in a particular market, we see this as a negative situation; there is no incentive for them to increase quality, or to reduce prices. We encourage competition because it results in better performance, and better value for consumers.

You might argue the point that it shouldn't matter to me - that I should always work at the best level I can, whether or not I have competition. I guess that's true, and I think that overall, I do try and do my best, if for no other reason than pride - my name goes on the prints, and I want to be proud of them, not ashamed of them.

But imagine this situation: a marathon runner coming to the last section of the long race, where the track enters the huge stadium for the final lap. He comes out of the tunnel into the arena, and as he does so, the waiting crowd bursts into a huge roar. This must be a wonderful feeling for him. But then, just a couple of seconds later, yet another huge roar comes from the crowd. The runner takes a quick glance over his shoulder and sees ... yes, somebody else is suddenly there, and coming up quickly!

Now we see the benefits of having competition! This runner will now pour every last drop of his energy into his 'work'. No coasting ... no relaxing ... just total effort. This is how world records are created, and this is how great achievements are made!

Doesn't anybody want to 'come out and play'?

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