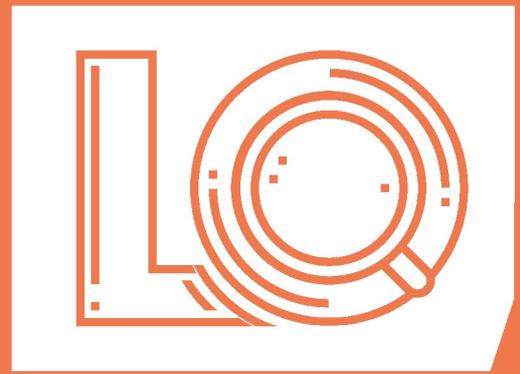


LATTE

QUARTERLY



Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training, Everything FM | **Issue Fifteen**

Published: 26 May 2023

Editor's Note

Welcome to another issue of Latte Quarterly! Did I ever think this beautiful little niche of a Football Manager e-magazine would make it this far? Heck no.

This issue is more of what you've come to expect by now if you're an avid reader. If you're new to LQ, hello! Where have you been? But more importantly, thanks for giving it your time. You won't regret it.

FMAventure kicks off LQ15 with a typical FMAventure piece. Will kids under 8s football ever make it to FM one day? Beautiful chaos, as per.

Continuing down an IRL football theme, FMGrasshopper walks us through why replicating the tactics we see every weekend is so alluring to us FMers.

The guys then team up for a piece that can't really be described. All I can say is I have checked on them both, and they're okay.

We've then got FMStag philosophising about playmakers followed by FMTahiti giving us the book review, continuing along a tactical theme by looking at The Mixer.

Heading into LQ injury time we've the only bit of the magazine you'll probably actually pay attention to, the LQ Crossword is back!

Enjoy, and make sure you share it with all your internet friends if you do.

FMSamo

LQ Issue Fifteen:

FM U8 Database

By fmadventure

To pass is human, to playmake divine?

By FMStag

Replicating The Tactical Replicators

By FM Grasshopper

LQ Book Review:

By FM Tahiti

FM Fairytales Revisited

By The Bloggers Grimm

Latte Quarterly Crossword



FM U8 Database – fmadventure

Around the beginning of 2022 I was roped into coaching a kids' football team. My son had started to play for the academy of my old club and they were short of volunteers to help out, I was asked if I could "lend a hand" and within months the team was being referred to as "my" squad. This is very much the clichéd beginning of almost every grassroots coach's story.

I've played football and ended up coaching a senior team previously so I assumed that taking on a team of primary school children in football would not be too dissimilar. Before long I had learned how very wrong this assumption could be.

FM Grasshopper is in a similar predicament and one of our long running jokes is how our experiences in managing youth teams would be replicated in FM. What follows is my (very light hearted - "funny" being utterly subjective) summary of just that very hypothetical.

Under 8 Football - the DLC

The addition of Under 8s football to Football Manager is more than just a custom league. It comes with various different rules, mechanics and a very unfamiliar Match Engine.

The pitch is smaller. Much smaller. As are the players. We're operating a 5-a-side set up here with goalkeepers. Sometimes the pitches are enclosed and so the ball never runs out. Sometimes the pitch is open and we have kick ins.. Or throw ins... there really does seem to be very little strictly adhered to stadia criteria as each venue is very much its own beast.

The subs are roll-on/roll-off however the rules of this can be very liberally applied. For some of the players being "on" or "off" the pitch is more of an abstract concept as opposed to a literal position.

1-2-1, 2-2 Box, 3-1: Learning the new tactical interface

It's like learning a whole new game. A double-pivot is alien terminology and we start to talk simply in terms of "in our/their half" or "in the middle/on the sides", in deference to this: Team and Player Instructions are severely limited in number. Use in moderation is heavily advised.

The players nod in agreement during pre-match tactical team talks. I assumed it was in agreement. I was incorrect as the play out on the pitch indicated to me.

I've gone for a simple 1-2-1. A ball playing defender at the back, two wide midfielders on support duty and a pressing forward up top. Within seconds our rigid 1-2-1 shape becomes part of an 8 person scrum around what I assume to be the ball. Tactical familiarity yet to be achieved.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

Dynamic Attributes

This totally new feature became apparent quite quickly. Attributes are much more dynamic, in that they can change entirely from week to week. One week my defender has top ratings for tackling, position and concentration. The next they appear to have plummeted to 1s all round. It's a ludicrous concept but it makes the game all the more interesting.

A revamped Medical Centre

ACL injuries don't appear to be as frequent in the U8 database, almost entirely making way for such ailments as Chicken Pox, sniffles and the dreaded stomach bug. Expect your matchday squad to be entirely decimated at least twice per season because "it is doing the rounds at the minute".

On account of the fact the Balance and Agility attributes appear to have been dropped, bumps and bruises are commonplace on training and match days. The magic sponge has long since gone (on account of an advised cautious approach by the Academy Head) and replaced by the magic spray bottle - a £3.99 purchase from the Steam Store that immediately heals any near-impact injury.

The condition heart indicator appears to be buggy. One moment players appear to be out on their feet and the next they are sprinting down-field like Daley Thompson in his pomp.

Transfer and Squad Registration

Transfer windows are non-existent at this level and the whole transfer system appears to be much more simplified. With that, agents and their exorbitant fees are banished. Don't rejoice too soon because that role is now filled by the player's parent who can be altogether much more difficult to negotiate with. Expect disagreements over how their player isn't getting enough game time or playing in the right position.

Most player's representatives are easy enough to work with however others communicate far too little. For some, the first sign that they have moved on to another club is when they don't show for training on Wednesday night.

It's five-a-side on match days so taking a squad of seven is entirely reasonable for fair and even game time. However it is advised to keep a squad size of anywhere between 9 and 15 players to be prepared for the inevitable unavailability due to sickness, injury or a bank holiday weekend away down the coast.

League registration rules are convoluted to say the least. Girls can play down an age group, boys in a higher ability league can play up an age group. Players shouldn't play for more than one team in a weekend but no one keeps track. Maybe it's just the poorly generated newgen faces but I'm fairly certain we've played against a few players with five o'clock shadow...

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The Match Day Experience

The match day UI is more or less the same although the match speed appears to set itself, switching from slow to fast each match - usually in correlation to the time of kick off.

Shouts are much more condensed with 'Berate' taken off the list. "Good Job", "Unlucky" and "Right Idea" are my most commonly used although their effect is negligible.

A Full Season Completed!

I've reached the end of my first season with the new U8 database. I'm not entirely sure how my team has done because the game doesn't track results, an inbox item tells me that it's all about enjoyment and not score lines. What a waste of time...

MUSTERMANN23

A skin that radically changes the way you see and play Football Manager

Available on the SI Forums, at FMScout & sortiouts!

The collage features several overlapping screenshots from the game's interface. On the left, there are tactical screens showing player positions and statistics like 'Progressive Passes' (7.28) and 'Possession Lost' (12.44). In the center, a player in a red jersey with the number 12 is shown celebrating with arms raised. To the right, there are tactical analysis screens with various attributes like 'BALL CONTROL', 'CREATIVITY', and 'PASSING' displayed with red and blue indicators. At the bottom, there are more tactical screens with heatmaps and player profiles.



Replicating the Tactical Replicators FM Grasshopper

I should stress from the onset that there is no right or wrong way to play Football Manager. Some players want to win as much as possible...and some like the anguish and struggle this game can cause. Some players like to download and import the high intensity gegenpress 4231s from behind a Creator's paywall, and then there are some who start their tactic from a clean canvas. There are also some who look to replicate, and I count myself in that bracket of Football Manager players.

Looking back, replicating a tactic or style has personally brought me the most joy out of the game in recent years. Tactical recreations are currently vogue too, from FM Blogging to FMYT... we're just obsessed right now with replicating the real-life tacticians on the sideline.

So, this post's purpose is to find out 'why'. But also to find out 'what' it can add to your FM experience and also some 'tips' if you're wanting to start out and make the switch to replicating the tactical replicators.

Why is replicating a tactic appealing to a lot of people?

Speaking from personal experience, there has been a clear shift in the way football is discussed and how opinions are formed. A lot of that shift has come from the evolution of data. I am old enough to remember a time when Sam Allardyce was seen as the innovator... through his use of ProZone tracking data. Allardyce's style of football became evident through more accessible data, and although bitterly labelled as 'Medieval' by The Special One, it had its plaudits. Expected Goals then entered the discussion in the last 10 years, further categorising teams and the type of chances they create. Replicating a tactic in Championship Manager/Football Manager has moved on as a result. Instead of replicating a tactic based at the view from the touchline (hi guys), Football Manager fans can now lean on data and a subculture within the industry to base their replications from.



England's data tracking revolutionary?

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Just take a look at the wealth of literature or video analysis that is just, if not more, popular as the 442 Magazine of the 90s...The Coaches' Voice, Tifo and even Fantasy Premier League now adding statistic after statistic. We have moved from Shots, Goals and Assists, to xA, Influence, Creativity and Threat (ICT).

It is not just the teams' tactics that are more easily identifiable nowadays: the player data gathered in football can now lead us to distinguish between a ball playing center-back compared to a more traditional 'no-nonsense' type. Likewise, those players at Full Back can now easily be separated as ones who like to carry the ball into advanced areas (progressive carries, dribble success,) over those that are more reserved (short pass completions, defensive duels won).

Simply put, tactical replications are popular because they are easier to do. It is no longer a guessing game, it is instead more evidenced based.

What can it bring to your FM experience?

I have touched on it above, but replicating tactics obviously brings about a greater understanding of the various Team Instructions and Player Roles in the game (duh). In the same way that it is much easier to copy Vincent van Gogh's style than to come up with it from little to no recollection, imitating a style of football is easier when basing it off of something. You will learn and adopt instructions that you may generally overlook, as it does not fit your inherent 'philosophy/vision' of football.

Furthermore, you may find yourself using Player Roles that you would never have used. We are, after all, creatures of habit. I'm wedded to the idea of a Deep Lying Forward alongside an Advanced Forward...perhaps that comes from growing up in the 1990s with the Wenger 442. But replicating something like Spain in Euro 2012 could force me to use a False 9 with aggressive wider players coming into advanced central areas. They are totally different, requiring different roles.

Similarly, replicating may take you to a league you would often overlook. Maybe you want to replicate Jorge Sampaoli's Chile Half Back system with a side in Chile, for the sheer romance? Or adopt some Catenaccio tactical elements and go to the place it was made famous: Italy.

I would say the other major attraction to replicating a tactic is the satisfaction you get when you see it all come together. You will see the cogs in a wheel that work together in the overall machine. Football, when you break it all down, is a series of combinations on the pitch. It's why First XIs do not usually change in their entirety from week-to-week, therefore breaking down a tactic, thinking about the roles used, and then seeing it in action will give you both the micro (and macro) detail of a tactic. You will think about your Football Manager match, not just in terms of Shots, Possession % or Result...but also as to how your team played with and without the ball. Did the overlaps/underlaps that you hoped to imitate play out in-game, or is this something you need to tweak further? Were any of the goals you scored true to the style of football you wanted to see? Did you sacrifice space in the areas of the pitch you were happy to do so in?

What to look out for when replicating...

Make an initial assumption of what I think the roles would be.

You can do this early on, perhaps before even properly sitting down and watching/reading about the side you wish to replicate. It could be that you know of the players, either through watching them earlier on in their careers or from International Football.

A valid counter point here, made by Cleon @ViewFromTheTouchline, is that you should not be overly dictated by the player role name/label. Instead, read the settings assigned to the role and choose the behaviours/actions that you feel you need from that position.

Shape and mentality are a bit tougher to define, don't get hung up on this. Remember that teams will change so much throughout a real-life match.

Instead, focus on a particular moment or common passage of play that you see. Like what I wrote earlier, football is about the combinations between players. To provide an example close to me, 2022/23 Arsenal will often have Oleksandr Zinchenko cutting inside from full back when Granit Xhaka plays on the left side of central midfield. The move is both a ploy to allow Xhaka to move forward into the attacking half-space...but also a defensive security in certain moments, knowing that Xhaka can drop in when Zinchenko roams. When either of those two players are missing, the patterns of play are very different and thus any tactical replication would/should also be. Likewise, those two players mentioned will play various 'FM roles' within the 90 minutes e.g. Xhaka as a Mezzala, Deep Lying Playmaker, Full Back etc. So, again the tactical replication would be different depending on which scenario you use.



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You do not need a WyScout subscription, you don't need to watch copious amounts of 90-minute games. Sometimes the inspiration can be from a BBC Match Report or a Twitter thread.

This is not to say you cannot watch a full campaign to replicate. If you feel that is an enjoyable use of your time...go for it. But as I mentioned previously: if your replication is based on a particular moment or common pattern of play...sometimes a highlights package or written report is enough. For the more historical replications, you may need to rely on words to find out about a particular player/team anyway.

If you do want to watch games, check out footballia.net (if it's not geo-locked)

I was reminded of this site by Tommysboy007 on Slack, but I originally heard about it shortly before the global pandemic from Fernando @ RocksEndFM. Safe to say, the site came into its own during the 1st lockdown when I re-watched the full-match of the 1984 Intercontinental Cup Final Vs Liverpool whilst researching Ricardo Bochini (Independiente's greatest ever player)...for an article on Fernando's site. Whilst I used the site to watch a side I previously had never watched, Tommysboy007 went on to tell me that he used the site to relive some of the teams from his childhood that he enjoyed watching, particularly the Croatian national team in Euro 1996. Maybe this could help spark your desire to replicate the tactical replicators?

Thank you for reading,

FM Grasshopper



Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training...**Everything FM**

Latte Quarterly happily invites submissions from the wider community. They can be anything from serious analysis, tactical discussion, guides, hints and tips ...or even tongue in cheek humour.

Contact: coffeehousefm.com/lattequarterly | [@LatteQuarterly](https://twitter.com/LatteQuarterly) | tony@coffeehousefm.com



FM Fairytales Revisited

The Bloggers Grimm

Pinocchio

Grasshopper Grimm

This fairytale does not begin in Italy, it begins in Swindon. A young rebellious FMer is longing to complete the Pentagon Challenge...but his improper conduct outside of the game with Genie Scout extends his challenge by +1 year until he learns to be better at the game.

His quest leads him to encounter all manner of FM Content Creators. From Twitch Streamers to Bloggers and everything in between. Alas nothing educated him enough to stop the cheating... especially the lure to stop the end of season slump being just a few clicks away*.

*See: 'Add Manager' [and play your upcoming weakened foe's XI] hackz.

But the save continued to get longer each time he cheated. Until our titular character saw the answer right beneath his nose: play Football Manager YOUR way. Accept a couple of seasons of mediocrity or a relegation here and there...ride the wave of FM and bit-by-bit: be less shit. Soon there were more wins than defeats, the trophies of the Pentagon Challenge were mounting up and only Asia was left to crack...which is where our story ends. Our hero gets bored of the game and travels downstairs to re-introduce himself to his parents and be a real boy again.

The End.

Cinderella

Adventure Grimm

This is the tale of The Little Glass Slipper; the search to fill a very specific void. The selector goes from place to place seeking out the richest of the rich to see if the shoe fits. He tries for silky Brazilians, technical Argentines, fleet footed Spaniards and majestic Frenchmen. Despite the most enthusiastic of shoe-horning, none of them are an exact match, despite their exotic pedigree.

He happens upon an unassuming Eastern European option, one not surrounded by the splendour of an £800m squad. To the selector's surprise, the shoe fits. It fits perfectly. This is the bargain Bulgarian playmaker, signed for peanuts from Ludogorets who develops into the jewel in your team's crown. A tale of hope for the underappreciated newgens from the less-lauded states.

The End.

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Hansel and Gretel

Grasshopper Grimm

Traditionally the story of Hansel and Gretel is a cautionary tale about strangers and child obesity. Now I could go down that route in a rather bullish approach about the energy drink and sugar crisis encircling gamers, I am instead going to slant this FM Fairytale towards the sometimes unhelpful AI within the game.

Our FM Fairytale begins with our German FMers sharing a Vanarama League North network save, but in order to speed up the save certain tasks are delegated to their respective backroom staff. What backroom staff? Auchtung, the Assistant Manager is going to be busy arranging loans, running the training drills and arranging friendlies...please be patient with him/her.

The Financial side of FM is also going to be less efficient for Hansel and Gretel's save too. The AI has worked in extensions to 38-year-olds on the basis that they play more than 10 games. Of course they are, the only question is whether they are played at Right Back to fill in during the injury crisis or slot in upfront on the basis that they have 16 Bravery.

The Stranger AI is hell-bent on creating their own schadenfreude at the expense of Hansel and Gretel. The lower leagues is an unforgiving place, with a rapid slide into the red and a disgruntled squad putting in substandard performances...both are relieved of their duties before the end of the 1st season.

The End.



To pass is human, to playmake divine? FM Stag

Marcello Lippi once described one of the most iconic deep-lying midfielders of our time, Andrea Pirlo, as a silent leader who speaks with his feet. Zbigniew Boniek said that to give the ball to Pirlo is like hiding it in a safe.

Playmakers can take many forms. They can be nestled in the infamous half-spaces, picking the pockets of defenders like a nimble-fingered thief. Popping up in the spaces they've discovered, calling for the ball in the attacking third, in order to direct her route to goal. Think Maradona, Bergkamp or Messi.



Or in the case of l'architetto, a playmaker can be at the base of the pitch, surveying all ahead of him like a commander on the battlefield; binoculars in hand, strategic approach well defined and directed with all the precision of a military exercise. Think Busquets, Xabi Alonso or indeed Pirlo.

A playmaker attracts the ball. He controls and directs her, but she is a happy and willing participant in such an arrangement.

As the overseer of your team's footballing strategy, you may feel compelled to anoint the most adroit of your troops with this responsibility.

But what if you choose not to? What if you build a system without a definitive playmaker role?

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In a display of sporting socialism, you could instead lay the challenge of making successful plays at the feet of all your players on the pitch. Don't appoint a playmaker by role, instead deploy a scrum of equal partners with differing responsibilities, incrementally advancing together, performing with all the harmony of an experienced choir. Think Central Midfielder on Support rather than Deep Lying Playmaker or Regista. Think Attacking Midfielder on Attack rather than Trequartista or Enganche.

Without a chosen orchestrator on the pitch, this relies on the wisdom of the collective. Adopting a playmakerless approach could be akin to cutting the head off the snake and expecting it still to nudge the apple towards Eve. Or it could lead to beautiful unpredictable football, keeping the opposition guessing; running for cover, not knowing when the next advance will come, nor who will deliver the decisive penetrating pass.



The erudite Norman Schwarzkopf once said "It doesn't take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle." Conversely Alexander the Great said "An army of sheep led by a lion is better than an army of lions led by a sheep."

Define a playmaker or don't define a playmaker. It's Schrödinger's quandary in footballing terms.

Which tactical approach is best for your group of players? That's not for me to tell you. Football is a beautiful puzzle, but one where the pieces constantly change shape and form. The best way to complete the puzzle is subjective. I can only point to the picture on the box.

FM Stag



LQ Book Reviews – FM Tahiti

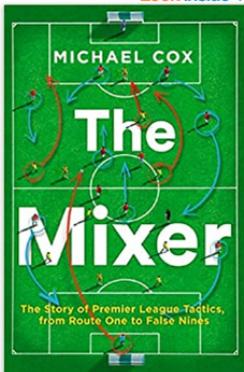
"In history, a great volume is unrolled for our instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the past errors and infirmities of mankind."

While Edmund Burke undoubtedly meant this as a philosophical ideal and absolutely nothing to do with winning football matches, this is a pertinent quote. There are many ways in which reading about the rich past of innovative historic tacticians can inspire and motivate us to think differently about the chess match that is every football match we may (virtually) manage in future.

Sometimes the inspiration can even come from books that are not principally about football. In a semi-regular feature for Latte Quarterly, an FM blogger will tell us about a book from their collection. They will let us know a little about the content and its key themes, but most importantly; how a deeper understanding of football or at least how unique lessons picked up from this title influenced how they play Football Manager, and the lessons you could learn too.

Sports, Hobbies & Games › Football › Leagues

[Look inside](#)



The Mixer: The Story of Premier League Tactics, from Route One to False Nines Paperback – 11 Jan. 2018

Follow the author

 [Michael Cox](#)

Print length	Language	Publisher	Publication date	Dimensions	ISBN-10
 486 pages	 English	 HarperCollins	 11 Jan. 2018	 3.3 x 12.95 x 19.56 cm	 9780008215552

The Mixer is perhaps a book you have already heard about, or maybe written by an author that's at least on your radar. It's certainly not a niche book, as it covers the history of the English Premier League. It's not quite chronological coverage but each chapter settles on a key tactical development or event and the ripples it caused in the division. Writer Michael Cox leads with the change of the back pass rule and the chaos it caused during the inaugural Premier League season and finishes with post-scripts about the 25th anniversary of the Premier League taking place under the shadow of Brexit.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

Along the way it touches on the Invincibles, the difference between Henry and Van Nistelrooy, Big Sam's Bolton, Tiki Taka and even Leicester's amazing title run. As it's largely not in linear order, you can just dip in and out as you please. You can read it from cover to cover, but you don't have to. The book is broken down into sections that cover a broader style or event which then take you through the development and shift of that tactical change.

For example, the three chapters in the possession section cover the Italian influence of the likes of Ancelotti and Mancini before shifting to a chapter on the Spanish effect and Tiki Taka. That section ends on the introduction and influence of False Nines in the Premier League. If you're not a fan of that wish-washy passing football you can read an earlier section on direct attacking, inverted wingers and Stoke's use of set pieces and time-wasting. Lovely.

Overall, there's something for everything and everyone. Whether you like the beautiful game and total football or if you prefer muddy slide tackles and long balls, there's something for you. Likewise, if you've lived through the formation of the Premier League, the nostalgia is strong. You'll find yourself nodding as certain names come up (Sutton and Shearer? Jay-Jay Okocha? Anelka again and again?) and muttering to anyone around (whether they care or not), "I remember when Beckham did that." If you didn't live through it, and are young with all your own teeth, then it's a genuinely engaging presentation of the tactical history of the league.

The impact on playing Football Manager

The Mixer is great for Football Manager inspiration too. It covers different tactical styles expertly and as it is all pinned to real life examples, it makes it really easy for you to try and replicate in FM.

As discussed earlier on in this issue of LQ, everyone apparently loves a remake of a historic tactic and you've got all the ammunition you need for one here. Manchester United's treble winners, Leicester's shock title lifters, Arsenal's Invincibles, Big Sam's European qualifying Bolton, the list goes on. Before I start a save, I always have a re-read of the chapters on Bolton's data driven approach; the long ball influence and Stoke and their disruptive presence under Pulis.

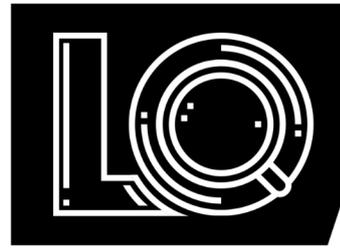
I tend to play with smaller teams with small budgets. It's perfect for when I'm the underdog. But when I start getting too big for my boots there's something inspiring about the chapters of Newcastle's entertainers and Arsenal's Invincibles. If I recruit someone to play behind a striker in FM, you can bet that it's because I've recently read the Cantona and 4-4-1-1 chapters. It is so clearly written that regardless of where you extract the inspiration for FM, it is still very easy to translate into your gameplay.

The way certain midfield roles are described, for example. The explanation of how the "Makelele role" operates and midfield trios tick, makes it really easy to pop into the scouting filters and select the attributes you need for your next transfer target. I also love Jonathan Wilson's Inverting the Pyramid and Cox's other hugely popular work, Zonal Marking, but for me this book is the best Football Manager primer, in terms of replicating tactics and translating player descriptions into FM attributes.

So, if you've got it, read it. If you don't, buy it. If you want an audio companion, try the earlier Football Time Machine Podcast episodes. Happy managing!

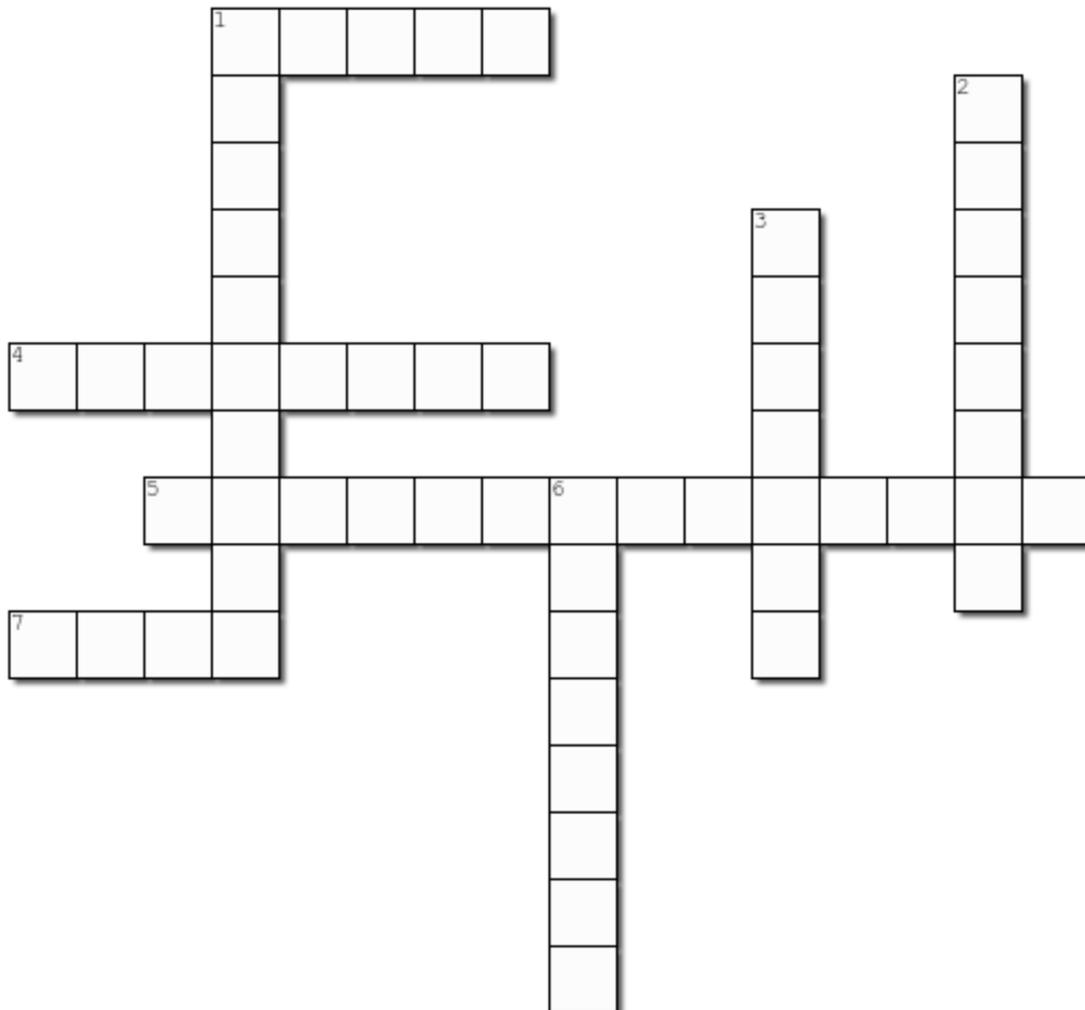
FM Tahiti

LATTE QUARTERLY



Our LQ Crossword is back, can you be the first to crack it?
There's no prize, other than our respect...

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on [TheTeachersCorner.net](https://www.theteacherscorner.net)

Across

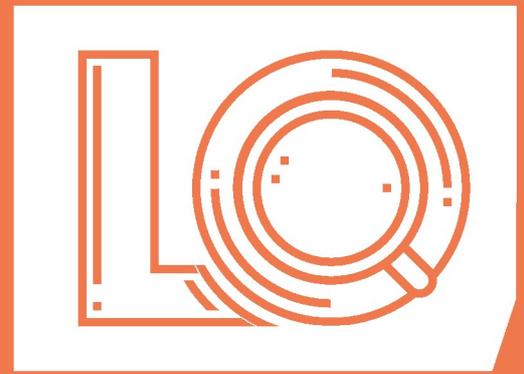
1. A soft drink that can be mixed with alcohol
4. Football Manager 2023 PS5 release month
5. The only training session to Greatly Increase Happiness AND Team Cohesion
7. Four letter award in FM23, showing the ones to watch

Down

1. A new FM23 skin, inspired by a fictional Jens
2. Sam Allardyce's first management role
3. A brutal foul on a player, an FM Tahiti specialism
6. Which challenge was Grasshopper Grimm's Pinocchio attempting?

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