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Rob Scott's Footy Haiku

Rob Scott was born and raised in Melbourne, Australia. There, he fell in love with the game of soccer, and more specifically, Collingwood Football Club of the Australian Football League. Rob's love for Collingwood stayed with him into adulthood as he traversed the globe as a teacher. He has taught in Australia, Japan, Holland, and Sweden. He currently resides in Sweden, but he found his love for haiku while teaching in Japan in 2000. Haiku became a way for Rob to stay connected to and express his support for Collingwood from across the globe. After moving to the Netherlands, Rob started writing what he dubbed "footy haiku" to combine his interest in haiku and Collingwood. Derived from football, footy is a colloquial term for soccer used around the globe by fans and players alike. When people use the word footy, they usually are talking about soccer in a positive sense and are excited about watching or playing football. Therefore, footy haiku is the perfect way to describe Scott's haiku, because he finds happiness in his haiku no matter the result of the football Collingwood played.

Today, Rob writes footy haiku match reports about all Collingwood's games throughout the season. Match reports are common in sports, and almost every game played around the world is summarized in a few paragraphs by some published writer. This way people who missed the game can find out quickly the events that occurred during the match. When reading a match report, it is important to find plenty of details about the game so one can understand what happened, not just the score of the game. Before learning about Mr. Scott's work, I had never imagined haiku being able to summarize a game of soccer, because it simply was not long enough to include all the information necessary to do so. However, Rob's footy haiku match reports (usually consisting of 7-9 haiku) not only allow their reader to understand what occurred during play, they are insightful, relatable, factual, and enjoyable. I came across parts of Rob's match reports in his book *Down to The Wire* which is a collection of Rob's best footy haiku from his reports of Collingwood's games over the years. The book takes the reader on a journey of Rob's footy haiku through a season of supporting Collingwood soccer. As a lifelong soccer player/fan, the footy haiku is relatable for me, and I can understand the emotions Rob expresses as a supporter of a struggling soccer team. The haiku from *Down to The Wire* I will discuss stood out to me the most, because of their comparisons to nature, real life parallels, and imagery.

footy season begins
all the teams
freshly tattooed

Rob Scott, DTTW, 10

I think this is the perfect poem to start my analysis of Scott's haiku. Not only does the haiku focus on the beginning of the season, it also brings up an important thing to notice about soccer players and soccer in general. Fans do not see any of the players during the offseason. Although many players are in the spotlight around the clock during the season, the offseason provides a time away from the sport and the media focus it brings. The second and third lines of the poem "all the teams freshly tattooed" symbolizes the life away from soccer that each player has. Players go through many things in their lives away from the spotlight each year that fans may never find out about. Fans sometimes can dehumanize the players of their favorite teams into pawns toward success. However, each player, no matter how good, is still a human being. They have families and live a normal life away from soccer just like the rest of us humans do. It is important for fans of soccer to remember that away from the field, these men are the same as you and me. Scott's poem is a perfect reminder to all fans of soccer that the players we rest our hopes on every week are human, despite all the attention they get. The placement of this poem in the beginning of the book helps the reader to keep that in mind going forward while reading many of Scott's poems that the players he writes about are humans and will make mistakes.

second-half comeback
the crossword
half-finished

Rob Scott, DTTW, 13

This haiku exhibits the emotions of fans who can do nothing but sit and watch the game at home. Scott's favorite team, Collingwood, is not a team that wins most of their games. Rob endures their struggles from his home and deals with the sadness the team sometimes brings him by ignoring the team he loves. Essentially, in this haiku Rob gave up on the game he was watching, because Collingwood was playing so poorly. Then, when the team started playing better, he quit his crossword puzzle and turned his attention back to his game to watch his team win. Some people might call Rob a sore loser for only watching his team when they are winning. However, I think this poem shows how much he cares for Collingwood. He can not stand to watch them lose and must distract himself from the disappointment he feels. The structure of this poem is what makes me think he has to distract himself from the game. The haiku uses short lines, and it starts with second-half comeback to show how important that is. Then the last thing the reader reads is half-finished, which lets the reader know Rob does not intend to continue the crossword anymore and the matter is closed. Overall, almost all sports fans sometimes can not bare to watch the team they love play, however they still support the team at the end of the day. This haiku is a perfect example of what Rob and many fans around the globe experience during the season.

twilight
the defender caught
in two minds

Rob Scott, DTTW, 27

This haiku compares nature to footy. The comparison of soccer and nature is a major theme throughout Scott's book. Nature is a huge part of haiku's identity. However, many people would think that soccer has little to do with nature. Scott disagrees, and his combination of nature and soccer is special. First, the nature aspect of this poem is twilight; the time between day and night, and it is really neither day nor night. A defender in two minds is the decision that a defender must make to either stay with the man they are marking or go defend the attacker with the ball. Usually, the phrase caught in two minds means that the defender hesitated which caused them to choose neither option completely. Oftentimes, not choosing either option is the worst thing to do. A defender failing to be decisive and twilight are similar because both are periods in limbo between two things. I think this is a great comparison, and the imagery of this haiku is incredible. Another way to approach this haiku is the beauty of twilight also contrasted to the ugliness of the aftermath of a defender caught in two minds. Overall, this poem has many layers beneath the simple surface of the words, and that is what makes this haiku interesting.

winter chill –
some extra heat
in the first tackle

Rob Scott, DTTW, 29

This haiku again focuses on the comparison between nature and soccer. The reader can feel the temperature differences on their skin as they traverse this haiku. Professional soccer season goes straight through the winter so some games during the season can be very cold. Many casual soccer fans do not know there is an importance to the first tackle of the game. The first tackle sets the pace for the whole game. If the tackle is strong then many tackles throughout the rest of the game will be very hard tackles that could cause serious injury. Since the first tackle of the game was hard though, all other tackles are acceptable, and the ref has to be very careful the game does not get out of hand. So, some extra heat or strength in the first tackle means

this game Rob is watching is going to be very hard fought, and the players will not hold anything back when fighting for the ball. Overall, the differences in temperature make this haiku so striking.

the game goes
down to the wire –
my thinning hair

Rob Scott, DTTW, 33

The topic of this haiku is the razor thin margins in the end that can decide the outcome of the game. I think any fan of soccer can relate to this poem, because there are always certain games in each season where your team is clinging to a lead, or just trying to keep the game a tie. Certainly, Rob has seen his fair share of games like this, and this poem reflects how the games have had an effect on him. The stress of the outcome of the game has compounded with Rob's old age, making him lose his hair faster. The idea of losing hair or hair turning grey over stressful things is evident in this poem and everybody in the world can relate to that. I also found the comparison of end of the wire and thin hair to be exquisite. The imagery of the hard wire next to the soft, fine hair really completes the story this haiku is telling.

back in the eight
we start talking again
about the future

Rob Scott, DTTW, 37

This haiku is all about hope. Hope plays a huge part in our lives, even if we do not realize it. Everyone hopes their future is going to be good, or at least will have good things in it according to their own standards. This poem encapsulates that hope in a soccer sense. The phrase "back in the eight" was unknown to me at first, but I found it means that a team is in the top eight places of the league. The top eight teams at the end of the season make it to the postseason each year in Australian soccer. Clearly, Rob hopes each year that Collingwood will make it to the playoffs at the end of the year, to reach the ultimate goal of winning the Australian Football League. Every soccer fan wants their team to win the league, it is a common goal. However, seeing your team win the league is incredibly rare. It is the blind hope that this is going to be the year that the team wins that keeps fans loyal to their teams for so long. The second line of this poem is important, because it contains the word "again". This means that the hope of making the playoffs was once slim, but now the hope has been rekindled. The bleak time where hope was slim was worth it, because now there is fresh hope to win the league. That sounds like a perfect example of the twists and turns of hope in life, which is what this poem is to me.

gloomy afternoon –
another kick forward
gets us nowhere

Rob Scott, DTTW, 48

It is fitting that after discussing a poem I found so uplifting and full of hope that I insert this poem full of angst and sadness. If that does not sum up the inconsistency of teams from game to game and the madness that bestows on fans, then I do not know what does. The difference in tone of each poem depicting different results of games was evident throughout *Down to The Wire*. This poem sets the scene with a nature aspect. The gloom of the afternoon foreshadows the dark outcome of the game. Even to diehard fans, watching a team struggle to play well can be very boring. At times, soccer can seem like a hopeless sport, because it is so difficult to score. Seeing failure over and over again is depressing even for the most upbeat fans. Surely, Rob has struggled to watch Collingwood play many times, and he can be easily frustrated just like all fans are when the team is not playing well. Overall, the comparison between the gloomy afternoon and the bland, lifeless footy makes this haiku into something special.

rotting leaves
we win
ugly

Rob Scott, DTTW, 54

The main takeaway I received from this poem was that things cannot and do not always have to be perfect. Again, Scott starts with a scene in nature. This time, the scene is gruesome, and the rotting leaves are not appealing for the reader. Then, Rob compares the rotting leaves to the outcome of the game. This short, simple comparison allows the reader to understand the grotesqueness that unfolded despite the appealing result for Collingwood. Many times, even though the game is not played the way the winning team intended it be, it is still good enough to get the job done. This theme of imperfection being good enough is an important thing to remember in life. Life will not turn out the way it is planned, and sometimes it will be ugly, but it is still possible to win ugly.

spring breeze
the whiff
of an upset

Rob Scott, DTTW, 63

This haiku gave me a strong sense of optimism. I can imagine just looking around on a bright Spring gameday against a good team and just thinking there is no way that this game will end in a loss. I liked that strong feeling of belief. There are always games during the season that the other team is supposed to win. Rob's poem acknowledges the role of the underdog, giving them belief and hope. The game being set in Spring is an important part of this poem, because Spring is an uplifting time of the year, full of new life. That feeling of new life is bestowed on the underdog and they can play with no fear. The second and third lines of the poem reminded me of the saying in sports where someone claims they can smell an upset. I have never understood how it can be smelled, but I certainly have felt games where it seems the underdog is destined to win from the beginning. I think the word whiff in the second line makes the entire poem. It is a faint smell of a small chance at the upset, and whiff of hope provides the belief for the whole game. Overall, the combination of the nature element and the "whiff" of a feeling for an upset made this footy poem stand out to me.

night rain
soaking up
the victory

Rob Scott, DTTW, 67

This footy haiku shows how much football means to Rob, and people all around the world. As we have seen, supporting his favorite team, Collingwood, throughout each season can sometimes be a drag for Rob. However, this haiku here displays why all the stress and disappointment are worth it: that feeling of victory. Winning games lasts far longer than the 90 minutes of the match. The feeling is never gone. The winning fan base can always look back and remember that on that day of the season in that game they were winners. That high of victory is like no other, and this poem perfectly captures that feeling. First, the poem starts out on a negative note and the reader fears another loss for Rob's beloved Collingwood. Again, Rob uses nature to grab the reader's attention, and he sets the scene in a negative way. The next lines, "soaking up the victory" completely change the tone of the poem. I get this image of fans celebrating in the stadium into the night after the match is over, even though they are soaking wet from the rain. This image is the joy that footy brings to the everyday person. It does not matter to any of them that they are standing out in the rain. They are soaking up the feeling of victory in addition to the rain, and the feeling of victory is so empowering that they do not mind the rain tonight. That is what the feeling of victory does for soccer fans. It is the reason why we support our favorite club week in and week out. If there is one poem of Rob's that I would show soccer fans to spark their interest in footy haiku, this is it, because it captures the feeling that all soccer fans seek.

Overall, Rob Scott's footy haiku in *Down to The Wire* opened my eyes to the numerous ways that haiku can impact someone. I was skeptical of the ability to write match reports of soccer in the form of haiku. Yet, Scott's footy haiku from his match reports clearly convey what happened in the match, and even make me feel as if I was at each Collingwood game. Furthermore, the layout of the book covering a season from start to finish allowed me to understand the ups and downs of the season. The individual poems portrayed the emotions Rob feels as a fan of the game each week when his team plays. The differences in each poem depending on the result of the game were clearly apparent. The imagery and the comparisons of soccer and nature combine to form many of Scott's best footy haiku. In addition, some of the haiku also parallels to life lessons, which I found very insightful. Footy haiku is a perfect way for Rob Scott to express his love for Collingwood and soccer in general. *Down to The Wire* allows for soccer fans to relate to the mutual feeling of love for the beautiful game, but in a new way in the form of beautiful haiku.

Much like Rob Scott, I have always loved soccer. On the other hand, haiku is still a relatively newfound interest to me. Rob Scott's *Down to The Wire* has exposed me to footy haiku, and it has motivated me to try to write some haiku about the team I support in the future. I never would have thought that I could combine two of my interests like he has. Up until now when I write haiku, I have mainly expressed my feelings and inner angst. Going forward, I will follow in Rob Scott's footsteps and try to incorporate more haiku about soccer into my writing.

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Works Cited

Scott, Rob. *Down to The Wire*. Red Moon Press, 2016