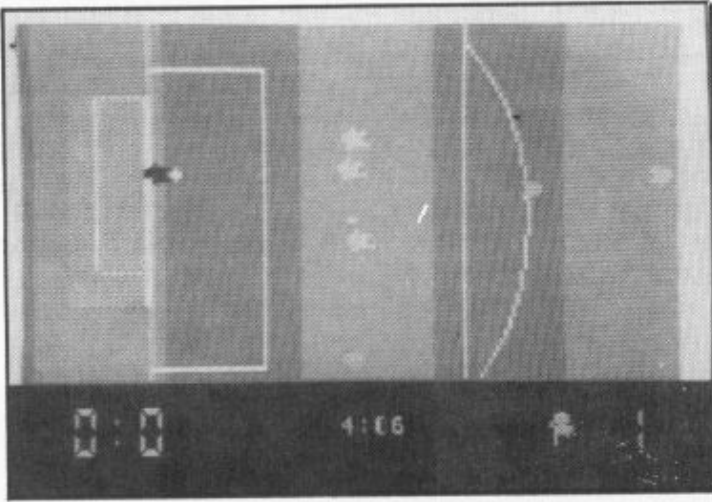


KICK OFF



At the time of writing, the football competition is just taking shape. England have drawn in a goal-less match with Holland, West Germany have thrashed the United Arab Emirates, and The Cameroon seem to have a better chance than many of collecting the World Cup! Whatever the eventual outcome, two things seem certain - Argentina aren't going to get anywhere near the final, and Anco (the software company) have made a proverbial pig's ear of marketing the Atari version of

KICK OFF, a soccer simulation already highly acclaimed on other machines. There's been no advertising, no press release and no review copy - in fact, no indication of its existence! How can Anco hope to improve their 8-bit sales if they don't announce releases? Anyway, Kick Off is definitely available and conspicuous in physical terms at least - its packaging is enormous! The instruction leaflet inside is unfortunately not of equally giant proportion, and the page sequence seems to have become muddled at the printers,

but with some effort you will find everything you need to know. The game is played via a scrolling window giving a birds-eye view of the pitch. The players are represented by small coloured 'blobs', highlighted in white once a player is in possession of the ball - it's not exactly realism taken to extreme, but the general approach is surprisingly successful.

The main menu offers several options, the first giving you a chance to test the joystick movements and improve your handling skills. There's a separate option for practising penalties, and another to choose the match duration. Each game is invisibly supervised by one of twelve referees, who have varying factors of experience and leniency, plus the power to issue yellow cards - and red ones - to either team. The computer supports corner kicks, throw-

ins, tackles, fouls, tired players, injuries and a lot more besides. For expert players, there is an eight-strong league competition lasting fourteen weeks and featuring international players with differing strengths and abilities. A save game feature is included here too.

Despite Anco's reluctance to promote it, Kick Off is easily the most detailed soccer simulation released on the Atari to date. The graphics aren't stunning but the game has sufficient depth to compensate. If you're looking for a football game, this is certainly one to consider.

Title:	KICK OFF
Publisher:	Anco
Price:	£8.95 cassette/ £12.95 disk
Players:	1/2
Reviewed by Paul Rixon	