

Tombakheya

I was playing football with my grandchildren when I shouted, “Give me the *tombakheya*!” They laughed at me, as if their grandfather told a joke. I began to explain to them the meaning of *tombakheya*, which means “ball” in the Kuwaiti dialect, and I asked them which one of you is *Qadsawi* or *Arbawi*? Of course they didn’t know what I was talking about and no one answered. I found this was a good opportunity to tell this generation about our heritage. So I had to explain, “Are any of you supporters for the Qadsiya football club, or the Al-Arabi team?” Then they answered no, they were fans of Barcelona. Our kids are fans of European clubs and know nothing about our own sports legacy.

They quickly lost interest in the subject. I did not get the chance to tell them that their grandfather is a long-time *Kuwaitawi*—a fan of the Kuwait Sporting Club team. I didn’t get the opportunity to tell them about the history of our own football champions, Al Trabulsi, Drehim, Al Jassas, Shuaib, Hmood Sultan, and Al Anbari. I don’t blame the children, or even the adults, because once you enter the diwaniya all you find are European matches on the television and people are talking and arguing enthusiastically about Barcelona and Real Madrid.

As for me, I still live in the lovely past watching the sixties and seventies leagues, listening to the master of commentators Khaled Al Harban. I also love to listen to Umm Kulthum and Awad Al Dokhi. I feel sorry for myself as I walk those memories alone. Today we are destroying our sports legacy with our own hands just like Kuwait Municipality destroyed the city walls and our architectural heritage. The Kuwait sports crisis reflects the loss of a social good because of political rivalry. Politics have ruined everything that is beautiful and professional, and to make it worse, all for the benefit of narrow personal interests.