Watch the Ball, Not the Dance  
  
 When I was between ten and fourteen years old, soccer was my favorite sport. I was an above-average player because at that age, I was taller and could run faster than many of my classmates. On a good day, my reasonably good ball control allowed me to dribble past many opposing backs. I still remember vividly that during one scrimmage I was so full of myself that on a whim I tried to dribble past five opposing players all by myself --- I think I got past three or four of them before they finally ganged up on me together and robbed me of the ball.   
 There was another boy whose athleticism and ball handling skill was heads and shoulders above everyone else. His surname was Fan. He must often have played outdoors, because he sported a golden brown tan beneath his habitual crewcut. He had a compact lithe frame with washboard abs and a razor-straight back which he carried like a soldier on parade. It was common knowledge that on the track field he could beat anyone in our class in any run of any distance. On the soccer field, he could dribble and dance past most players with his quick feet, feinting left while moving right or apparently rolling right before switching incredibly fast to the left with a drop of the shoulders. In front of goal, his shot rocketed like a cannon-ball to the back of the net.  
 There seemed no way to stop him one on one. I still remember one time I faced him one on one near midfield with all of our defenders out of place, knowing that if he got past me, he would have a free run at goal. Now I am not a “dirty” player by any measure, and I can honestly say that I have never intentionally stretched out a leg to trip someone up. But I was very determined to stop him or at least slow him down, and as he came towards me with the ball, I quickly formed a plan. Sure enough, with a quick feint which made me throw my weight to the right, he proceeded to run past me on my left. He was almost clear by the time that I turned back, stuck out my arm and grabbed a fistful of his shirt to pull him back bodily. Surprised at my audacity, he raised a hue and cry but the opportunity at goal was gone. Despite the ensuing foul against our team, I was smiling inside.  
 In any game when we played against Fan, we always assigned our best defender to guard him, with the understanding that one or two additional team members would come help. One of our defenders was named Tsai. He was skinny and smaller than Fan and me and was not considered to be that good of a player. When teams were chosen for scrimmages, he was never chosen first, but also never last because he played with heart could kick the ball a good way upfield, making him a more than decent defender.   
 We soon noticed that Tsai was amazingly effective against Fan. In one on one situations, Fan still got by Tsai a good percentage of the time, but often Tsai managed to kick the ball away from him. That was far better than the rest of us could do.   
 We could not understand why more skillful and speedier players than Tsai fared worse than him when defending against Fan. So one day we asked Tsai to tell us his secret when guarding Fan. He hemmed and hawed for a bit, and finally confessed that he did not really know. But then he said, “When I see Fan dribbling towards me with the ball, I just run up as fast as I can to kick the ball away from him, and I don’t pay attention to any of his moves”. So that was Tsai’s secret. By ignoring Fan’s feints which tricked other players into throwing their weight the wrong way, and only concentrating on the path of the ball which is, needless to say, the true object of the game, Tsai was able to get the better of Fan at least a good fraction of the time.

Therein lies a lesson for all of us, I think: Ignore the feints, the dance, but cut to the chase and aim for the ball.  
 In life, people will say many things, only some which are true. There are outright liars who will say things they know are outright lies to cheat you; that is rather rare because it is not so easy to tell such a lie without giving it away. More likely, people will tell you things they know deep down are not true but somehow, they have willed themselves to believe that it is, possibly to gain an advantage of some sort, or possibly to serve a larger cause which they believe in.   
 How can we tell what someone really believes to be true? The only way to tell is by their actions.