Watch the Ball, Not the Dance  
  
 When I was around twelve or thirteen years old, my favorite sport was soccer. I was an above-average player. I was taller than and could run faster than many of my classmates, which counted for a lot at that age. On a good day, my reasonably good ball control also allowed me to dribble past many opposing backs. One day in a scrimmage I was so full of myself that I tried on a whim 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 always displayed 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 was fired like a cannon-ball, but he was also capable of chipping the ball up softly past a charging defender or goalie.  
 There seemed no way to stop him one on one. I still remember one time I was left in the untenable situation of facing him 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 stretched out a sly 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 in my mind. Sure enough, with a quick feint which made me throw my weight to the right, he flicked the ball to my left and proceeded to run past me. He was almost clear by the time that I turned back and following my premeditated plan, grabbed a fistful of his shirt and pulled him back. The soccer ball kept going forwards but he was stalled. 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 me because my little cunning had managed to slow down the almighty Fan.  
 In any game when we played against Fan, we always assigned our best defender to guard him, with the understanding that one or two other team members nearby would come help because Fan was just too good. One of our defenders was named Tsai. He was skinny and smaller than Fan and me and was not considered to be that good a player. When teams were chosen for scrimmages, he was never chosen first but never last either because he always played with heart running all over the field and could kick the ball a good way upfield, making him a more than decent defender.   
 As the year progressed, we 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 out of his control. That was far better than the rest of us could do.   
 We could not understand why players adjudged faster, with better ball control and understanding of the game than Tsai fared worse than him when defending against Fan. I thought there must be a secret behind Tsai’s success. Did he latch on to some part of Fan’s body whose movement betrayed where Fan was intending to go? Did he notice some eye movement which signaled which way Fan’s dribble would lead?   
 One day we asked Tsai to tell us why he was so good against Fan. He hemmed and hawed for a bit, confessing that he was not really sure. When he saw Fan coming towards him one on one, he would run up to close the distance as quickly as he could. This was in contrast to most of us