

THE TEAM USING A PACK OF CARDS - AND NOT FOLDING LIKE CHELSEA

AS Velasca are an amateur team playing in the ninth tier of Italian football. They were founded in 2015 by Wolfgang Natlacen, an artist. Natlacen produces egg-shaped funerary urns, for the storing of ashes, among other projects. And his club, a ten-minute walk from Milan's San Siro

Stadium, are most definitely a project. A different artist designs the kit each season — the present one is the work of sculptor Nada Pivetta — and Natlacen's mission is to meld the worlds of sport and art.

Velasca could not have started lower — they are at the last step of the pyramid from

which it is possible to reach Serie A — but even so, Natlacen thought that this season his players have not been getting enough enjoyment from the game. So he came up with a plan. Last Sunday, against Vighi 1967, he decided that the entire game should be played using Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies*.

In 1975, Eno and Schmidt came up with a deck of cards

offering suggestions designed to cure artistic block. Examples include, "Listen to the quiet voice" and "Give way to your worst impulse". As a musician, Eno directed many commands towards the recording studio: "Imagine the music as a moving chain or caterpillar." He used them during the recording of David Bowie's three albums from Berlin, *Low*, *Heroes* and *Lodger*.



Eno's card-based method for promoting creativity, "Oblique Strategies", was used by the Italian amateur side Velasca in their entertaining match against Vighi last Sunday

Coldplay and David Byrne of Talking Heads were also fans.

During a football match, not so much. One of the strategies reads, "Give the game away." Unhelpful. Anyway, Natlacen assembled the deck of 103 cards and, every five minutes, presented it to his manager to select one. This resulted in the instruction "Don't build a wall, build a brick" coming out just before an opposition free kick.

Vighi hit the bar. Other picks included, "What would your best friend do?" — shouted at the referee after a harsh call — and "Throw the best thing away". Velasca lost 2-1 — Vighi are 27 points superior this season — but Natlacen insists their goal was the best they have scored all year and their performance the strongest this term.

It won't catch on, but it may explain some of the decision-making at Chelsea.