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Italians, Dutch go soccer crazy

BY FRED SIMPSON
 Staff Writer

It's mid-afternoon at Market Lane Plaza in Old Woodbridge on a Tuesday and the atmosphere is somewhat laid back, as a scattering of people sit on benches and lazily enjoy the sun.

But that would change in roughly 48 hours when Italy squares off against The Netherlands in the semi-final match of the European Cup, with the winner going to the finals against either France or Portugal.

Then, Market Lane and other areas of this predominantly Italian communi-

ty would come alive in earnest. "We will beat Holland, for sure," laughs Vito Caressa, proprietor of Tutto Gelato Bar and Grill, as he chats with some patrons.

The atmosphere is quiet — laid-back, but already talk has drifted to THE game.

"Technically, Holland is a good team but its defence is not so well, while Italy has a very strong one. Holland will never score as many goals as they did in winning against Yugoslavia.

"Also, we have a very strong offensive club," he adds, as another patron nods in agreement.

"If we have two or three chances, we can get two or three goals."

Caressa predicts the final score will be 3-2 for Italy.

Another shake of the head from the patron, only this is in mild disagreement.

"I don't think Holland can score two goals," says the patron, with furrowed brow.

"But in one game, everything can be possible. I think it will be a close game, but Italy will win 2-1."

So the chit-chat goes on as the afternoon wanes in the plaza, which only a couple of seasons ago was alive with cheers, moans and groans as the World Cup was played out.

Rocco Cerone has no doubts the Holland-Italy game will cause ripples of excitement in Italian fans, including himself.

"I am definitely a soccer fan," he says. "When you are from Europe, you are a soccer fan. I think it's going to be a great



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Bradford's biggest Dutch soccer fans Adriana Vink and her daughter Sandra.

game between two great teams.

Definitely in stark contrast is Adriana Vink, who is a red-hot Holland fan. She lives and breathes the colours of her favourite team.

Vink of Bradford, even has toilet paper from Holland.

Her home is the scene of a variety of Dutch articles, all of which she will trot out when The Netherlands beats Italy.

They include umbrellas, glasses, orange bow ties and a scarf.

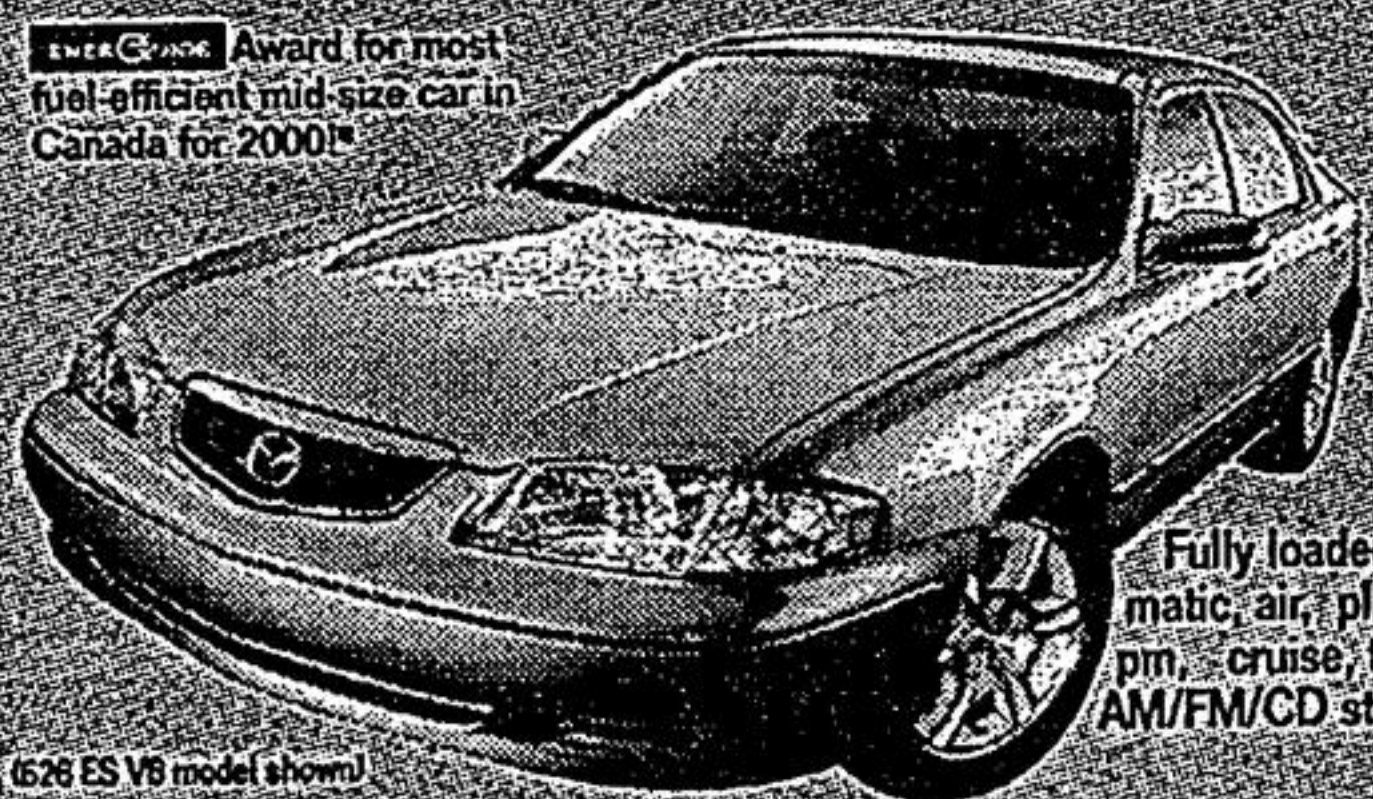
"I'm the biggest fan," she says. "Whenever there's a big game, my boss knows I won't be in. I always book myself off."

"If we reach the finals, I'll even buy orange plates for us to eat off."

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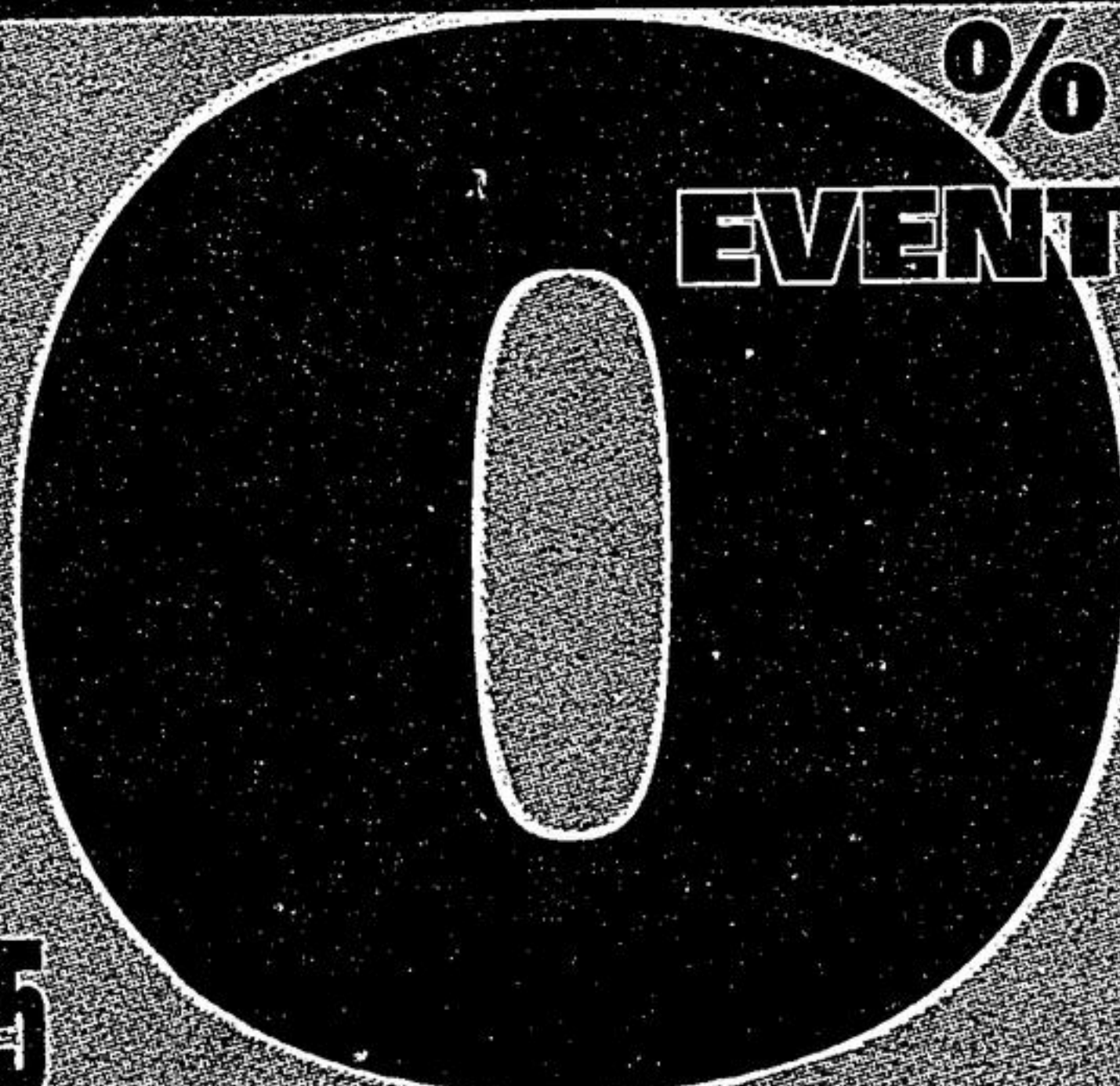
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