



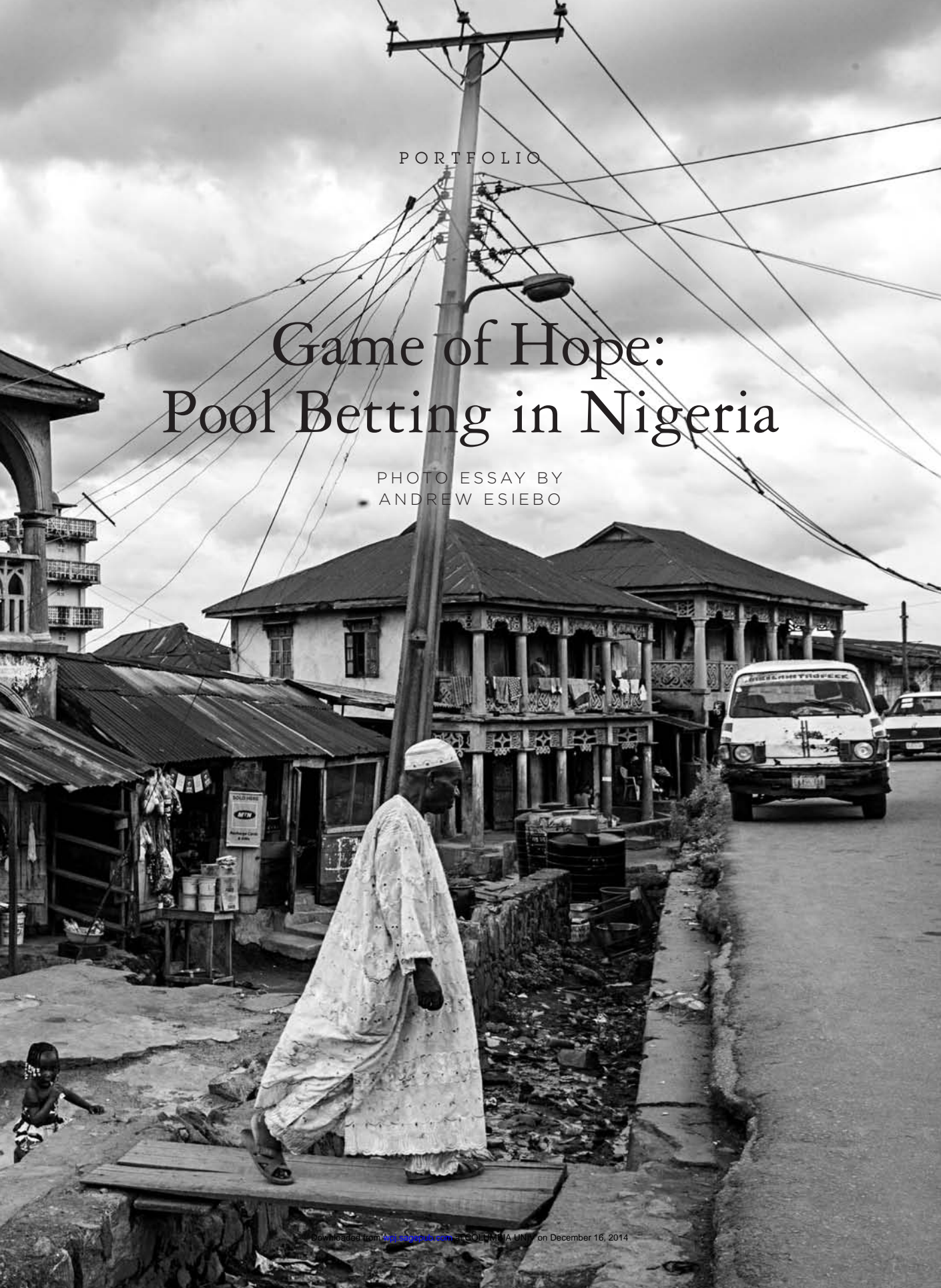
OJE POOL HOUSE

Local betters hang out around Oje Pool House in Ibadan, Nigeria.

PORTFOLIO

Game of Hope: Pool Betting in Nigeria

PHOTO ESSAY BY
ANDREW ESIEBO





A bettor buys his coupon for the week's game.

IBADAN—An aging Nigerian man, who has never left his home town, describes the operations of the British football's Premier League in vivid detail. A blind man smiles as he holds a crackling transistor radio to his ear, the commentary of a live game blaring into the room. A local driver, a retired construction worker, a desperate breadwinner—these are just some of the characters who cluster around the Oje Pool House in Ibadan. This city of nearly 2 million, Nigeria's third largest, where the savannah and the jungle meet, is just 90 miles inland from the sprawling port of Lagos.

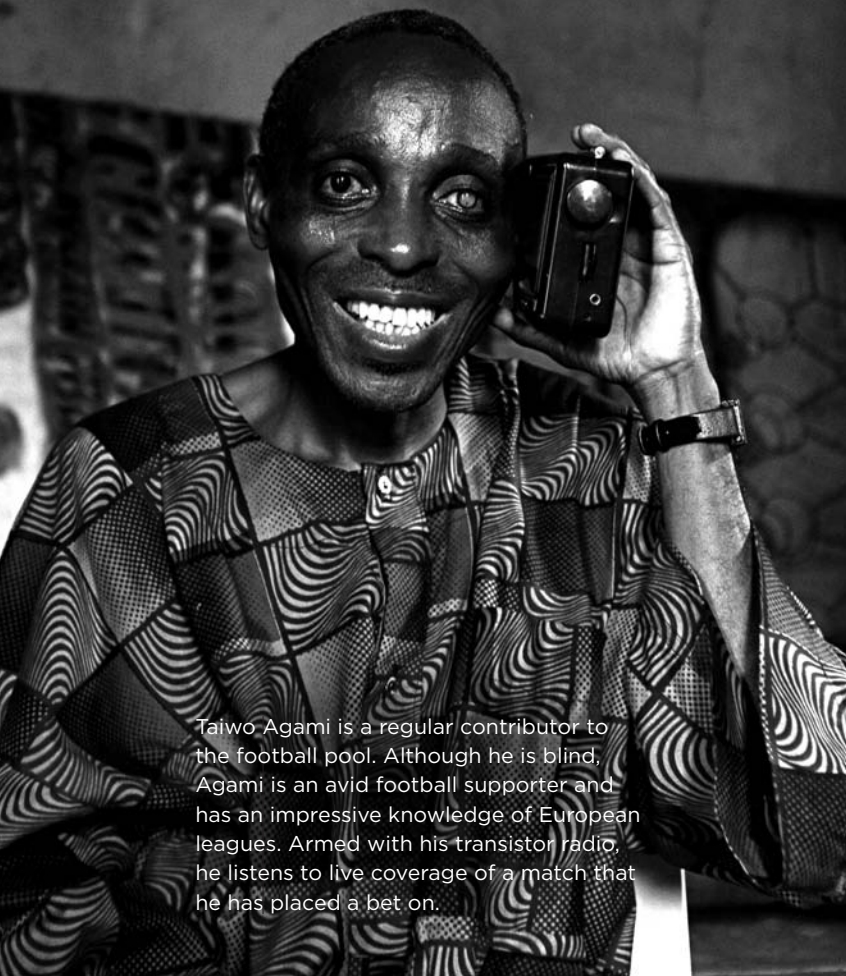
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Andrew Esiebo is a Lagos-based photographer who has chronicled the rapid development of urban Nigeria. Selected for the Road to Twenty Ten Project to form an All-Africa Dream Team, providing alternative stories from the South Africa World Cup, he is also co-organizer of "My Eye, My World," a photography workshop for children in Nigeria.

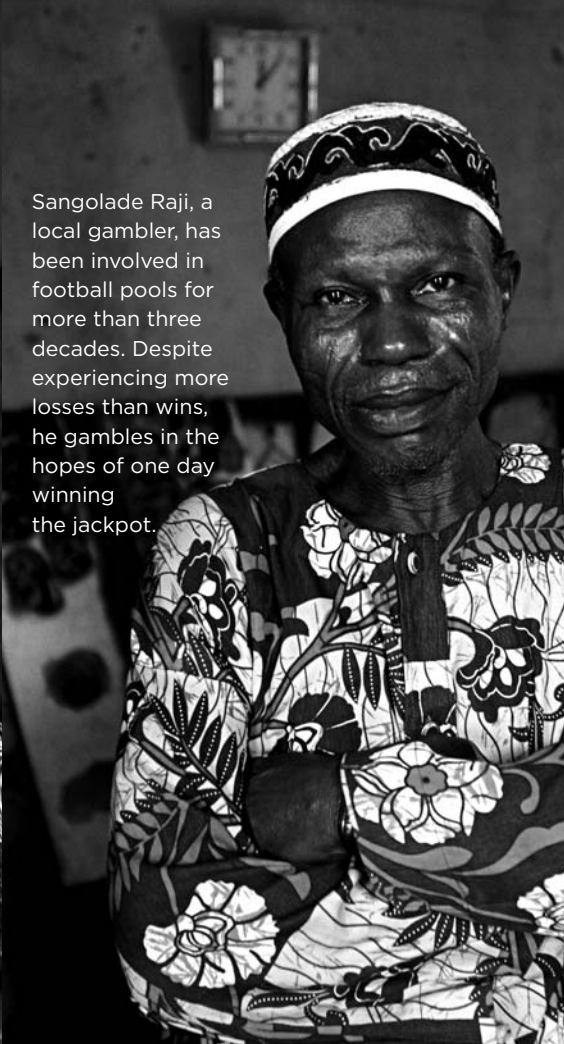


Pool agent Akinode Adekole cross checks the results of the previous day's matches.





Taiwo Agami is a regular contributor to the football pool. Although he is blind, Agami is an avid football supporter and has an impressive knowledge of European leagues. Armed with his transistor radio, he listens to live coverage of a match that he has placed a bet on.



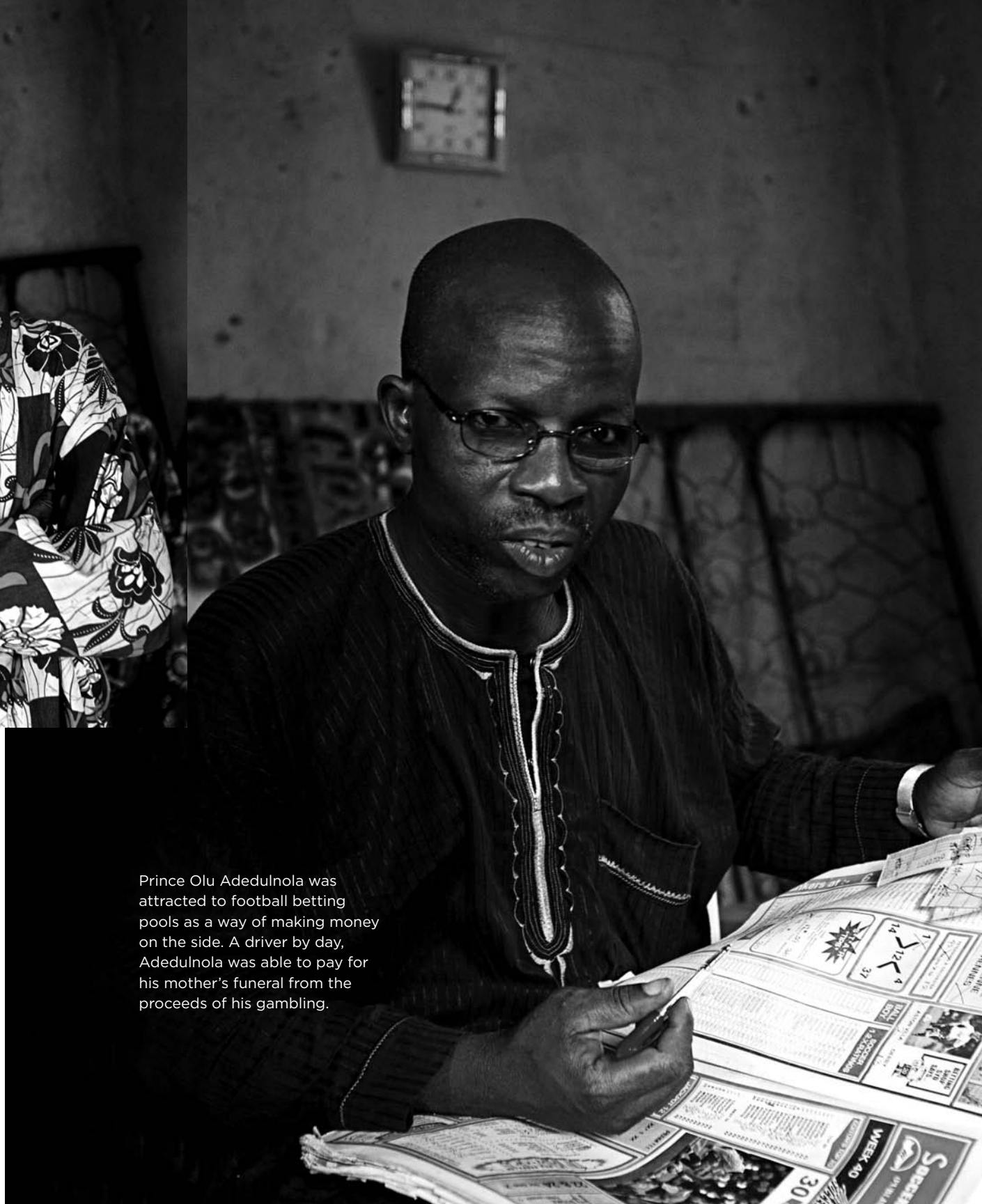
Sangolade Raji, a local gambler, has been involved in football pools for more than three decades. Despite experiencing more losses than wins, he gambles in the hopes of one day winning the jackpot.

Football betting pools, a cultural import from 1920s Britain, are popular among Nigeria's elderly, retired workers, and the unemployed. Gamblers risk their money on their ability to forecast the results of 49 league matches played across all divisions of the English Football League. The matches are detailed on coupon sheets. The promoters of these football pools are mostly Lebanese or Syrian immigrants who operate with licenses issued by the Nigerian federal government. Pool agents are the link between the promoters and bettors. They are always Nigerian.

Pool houses can be found everywhere in Nigeria. Gamblers arrive at the crack of dawn and often stay until dark, in the hope of winning the jackpot of up to 400,000

Naira (\$2,515)—the equivalent of the average annual wage among workers in Nigeria. "Pool is a business of luck," says one pool agent, Akinode Adikole. "When you win, you rejoice; when you lose, you are sad and you accept your fate." Adikole, quite a successful businessman, has had his fair share of luck, allowing him to rent a house and buy a TV, sound system, and various other trappings of the high life.

Others, like Sangolade Raji, a local gambler, have been wagering in football pools for more than three decades. Though racking up more losses than winnings, Raji gambles in the hopes of one day winning the jackpot. Indeed, most wagerers walk away empty handed and console themselves in the company of friends who gather at the




Prince Olu Adedunola was attracted to football betting pools as a way of making money on the side. A driver by day, Adedunola was able to pay for his mother's funeral from the proceeds of his gambling.

pool houses to play card games, draughts, and Ayo (a Yoruba board game).

The government has made no efforts to curb, or really even police, these activities, reasoning that they provide licensing revenue to the federal government and give hope to thousands that their meager wages might suddenly be supplemented with a stroke of good fortune. Betting pools have very much become an integral part of the Nigerian lifestyle and economy, where there is little understanding of how addictive and corrosive it can be. ●





This satellite dish—outside the pool hall—is used to pick up all the European League games.

OYO STATE POOLS PROMOTERS ASSOCIATION

ADJUSTMENT OF FIXED ODDS RULES

As from week No. 33, Matches played on Saturday 7th March 2009,
Our Fixed Odds RULES to Oyo State would be adjusted as follows.

CONDITIONS:-	1 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 15	16 DRAWS & OVER
3 - DRAWS	N40 - N1=	N20 - N1=	N10 - N1=	N4 - N1=
4 - DRAWS	N72 - N1=	N36 - N1=	N18 - N1=	N6 - N1=
5 - DRAWS	N120 - N1=	N60 - N1=	N30 - N1=	N10 - N1=
6 - DRAWS	N200 - N1=	N100 - N1=	N50 - N1=	N12 - N1=

Please, friends brothers
and customers to eating inside
this shop is not allowed again
because the table inside
this shop is for forecasting
paper only.

Please and please do not
eat on the table again to
avoid disgrace.

by Manager
[Signature]
25/3/2009.

Mo fi asiko yin so
fun eyin Oyo, Egbon ati eyin
Olubara mi wape. O ti di.
Ewajun fun Emkari lati jẹwọ
lori patako ti a fi nse
fokasi nti wape patako yin
na fun eti fokasi ayo nikan
ki ise ile jẹwọ. Ki a ma
bi dọyọ ara wa e ma
deun nibe ma ram.
Oduke, iwe yin
[Signature]

Results are posted on a board in the local betting hall at the end of every week.

GAME OF HOPE



Pool agent Akinode Adekola, reads his winning coupon while other wagers queue to claim their winnings from gambling on the football matches they will never see half a world away.





Gbenga, 50, is counting his winnings of his week of pool betting. He has been a pool better since the 1970s and is still awaiting the day he lands a jackpot.

