



ANGOLA! ANGOLA! ANGOLA!

“MA-LA-WA-SA-LAM! MA-LA-WA-SA-LAM! MA-LA-WA-SA-LAM!” That was the chant PUMAFootball was yelling at the top of its voice last night as we jumped around in the back of a packed pickup truck. Don’t ask us what it means or whether we’ve got it right, but it made perfect sense yesterday after Angola beat Malawi 2-0 and Lubango exploded into a frenzied and impromptu street party.

It was impossible not to get caught up in the euphoria of the wild celebrations which remixed the raucous horn blowing and flag waving of a Brazilian street carnival with the white knuckle rush of a rollercoaster. In a chaotic procession through the city centre, we saw one daredevil dangling off the bottom of a packed lorry and another bouncing up and down on his scooter, but nothing quite tops the genius jiggling around in his underpants crashing saucepan lids together like cymbals.

One group of kids tumbled onto PUMAFootball’s moving van and together we bellowed their catchy but indecipherable mantra over the din of car horns. As our driver navigated the bumpy roads, we danced, high-fived strangers and repeatedly came close to tumbling on to the tarmac.

Infectious as the Angolans joy was, however, we can’t help thinking their partying is a bit premature. Like PUMAFootball getting the first four lottery numbers correct and rushing out to buy a yacht before hearing the rest of the news. Let’s not forget, the host nation hasn’t qualified for the knockout stages yet; the crunch game on 18 January is against Algeria – a side good enough to qualify for the World Cup, and their star striker, the Crazy Frog lookalike Flavio, could be out with injury.

Perhaps last night’s volcanic release of emotion can be explained by Angola’s kamikaze start against the Malians. The fans were denied the chance to celebrate that night after their team threw away a 4-0 lead, so now it seems they’re determined to make up for it. But maybe there are more deep-seated reasons for this very public outpouring. After having to endure so many years of civil war, government oppression and poverty, the Angolan people could certainly do with something to cheer. And boy, they do it with style. So for the good of this tournament and the people of Angola, PUMAFootball hopes the Black Antelopes go much, much further.