The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about soccer

隊 = team. 軍隊 (jun dui = army-team) = armed forces. 足球隊 (zu qiu dui = soccer-team) = football club (zu qiu hui = foot-ball-society = soccer club), e.g. 曼聯 (man lian = “Man”-transliterated-union = Manchester United).

Each team consists of 隊長 (dui zhang = team-leader = captain), 前鋒 (qian feng = front-sharp-head = forwards), 中衛 (zhong wei = middle-defend = midfielders), 後衛 (hou wei = back-defend = fullbacks), 龍門 (long men = dragon-door/gate = goalkeeper/goalie). 強隊 (qiang dui = strong-teams) easily defeat 弱隊 (ruo dui = weak-teams).

校隊 (xiao dui) = school/college team. 國家隊 (guo jia dui = state/country-team) = national team. 啦啦隊 (la la dui = “La-La”-team) = cheerleading team.

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