

Greatest soccer Marketing day in U. S. history

By David Caetano

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After this day of tremendous games and exciting soccer that fans or non fans could enjoy and become emotionally involved in watching the USA's impressive tie with Italy. This fabulous game of sportsmanship, intensity, high level mental focus, and both tactical/technical excellence by the US made me want to write.

Today at 2:00pm Portugal qualified with a 2-0 win over Iran. This is the 1st time Portugal has advanced to the next round in 40 years. My opinion on Portugal doing well is that now the team has organization. I believe it is about organization and I said this when I moved to Portugal two years ago. Portugal's coach Felipe Scolari is Brazilian and was world champion with Brazil. He organizes and conducts all decisions based on his interpretation of creating a winning team without outside interference. In the past there has been influences from the administrators of the top teams in the Portuguese league put on the national team coaches. Scolari at the European coach's symposium held in Portugal after Euro 2004 championships that I attended gave a speech on how he prepared Portugal for this one month tournament. Euro 2004 is to Europe what the world cup is to the world. He had various fun games including bike riding when the players were in camp. He also had little electric cars that players could race against each other. This was "to make the players like kids". This is part of my coaching style that I have always maintained. This benefits the players and team in many ways. One way is to attain their max concentration when the time is appropriate for competition. We as humans will block out or minimize our thoughts and ability to think when we are angry or under too much pressure. This prevents us from being able to reach our max capacity to be creative, and allow for a wider range of thinking in making better decisions under pressure.

Portugal came into this game with a different line up and the team looked coordinated and confident. Although, I noticed when Maniche was substituted and as he was coming off the field, he had a displeased look on his face. Well, this is what starts a bad team feeling if other players begin to follow with similar reactions. I believe Scolari will have a talk with Maniche to be sure he is focusing on winning with all 23 players and all the team staff working as a group.

The next game was Czech Republic vs. Ghana. Ghana came away from this hard fought game with a 2-0 win. This was an incredibly exciting attacking game with lots of movement and scoring chances. The team from Ghana was showing a great deal of intensity and attacked the whole game even when winning 2-0. With a two goal lead most teams would start playing defensively which turns the game less exciting. These results are making the standings of this E group with Italy, USA, Czech Rep., and Ghana very close.

The last game in the evening here in Portugal and USA time 3:00pm kickoff was the most important game for the USA against the world power Italy.

The 1st USA game on the 12th there was me and probably 20 thousand fans in the stadium supporting the red, white, and blue in a very disappointing USA 3-0 loss to Czech Republic. This loss made today's USA 1 vs. Italy 1 game even more interesting. Interesting it was.

The game was an emotional rollercoaster all the way through. We put on a fabulous performance having quite a few chances to score and dominating a large part of the game. At one point when Beasley scored for the USA I jumped up out of my seat feeling like I use to when watching the old NY Cosmos as a teenager. The linesman (assistant referee) rose his flag and the goal was called back, no goal. Italy came on strong at the end while they dominated, overpowered and had close scoring chances against the nine US players for about 10 minutes. The game was an emotional game all the way through. This is how the fans become more passionate about soccer. As this was a hectic fast moving game that ended in a tie against the team that invented the catenaccio defense (solid defense that opponents have a very difficult time scoring). The US surprised the world of soccer. As I remember, I did have an espresso bet with our condos security doorman that the US would win 1-0.

This game will be talked about in a positive fashion in the USA on radio, TV, newspapers and in the soccer community. President Bush also called the team prior to the game and wished the players luck. Not sure though, if this helped the team.

The TV ratings in the USA have been excellent. According to the Associated Press, the USA's 3-0 loss to the Czech Republic was watched by 2.14 million households, the most to see a soccer game on ESPN2. The match received a 2.4 cable rating, the most-watched program on the network this year.

Today all three games were on US TV. The games on ABC were Portugal vs Iran and USA vs Italy. Then ESPN2 had the Ghana vs Czech Republic. The US fans got to see three fabulous games and more importantly a US team that demonstrated exciting soccer against a world power. This game will be on the minds of all youth players who go out and practice and play in games with their teams. It will give these players more of a meaning to why they are running around competing in this game called soccer, football, futbol, etc. The greatest soccer marketing day has now increased the passionate fans passion and brought on board new soccer fans.