



Sports

by Jerry Keys

"We know what we are, but know not what we may be" - William Shakespeare

Over the last four World Cup competitions, the United States has seemed to pull off a "rise and fall" performance". The U.S. soccer team received an automatic bid in 1994 (obtained by being the host country for Cup play) and was expected to just show up. By advancing to the Round of 16, millions of American citizens were re-introduced to soccer.

After their underdog showing in 1994, the 1998 Cup brought high expectations. Those expectations were dashed when the U.S. failed to advance past the first round. They were unable to win or draw any of the three matches and managed to score only one goal.

Apprehensions were more subdued for the 2002 Cup, after the 1998 debacle. The U.S. team not only advanced to the Round of 16, they also upset Mexico to advance to the Round of 8. Again presumptions were riding high for 2006. As was the 1998 Cup, the 2006 edition was also very disheartening. The U.S. collected one draw and two losses while scoring only two goals. Although their elimination was not solidified until their final Group E match against Ghana.

A victory over Ghana would have advanced the U.S. to the Round of 16. Had the U.S. advanced, Brazil would have ended their quest for the Cup in the next round. Therefore will the American's outcome in World Cup 2010 follow the similar pattern?

There will be 32 teams selected for Cup competition, hosted by South

Africa. South Africa is given an automatic bid for being the host country. The separation of teams will be akin to the 2006 format; eight groups and four teams in each group. Cup play is scheduled to start on June 11th and to conclude on July 11th.

The current preliminaries (each group has its own round by round system, 204 teams qualified for the beginning prelims) have countries grouped into six



Freddie Adu should play larger role in 2010

categories: Asia, Africa, Europe, South America, Oceania, and North/Central America and the Caribbean. Each category sends different numbers of teams to Cup play. Europe will send thirteen and Oceania may not send any.

Europe's preliminary rounds have countries separated into nine groups. Eight groups consist of six teams and one group with five. The winner of each

group will advance to Cup play. Each second place team will take part in a tournament and the top four will also advance to the Cup.

Africa's preliminaries are set up in five groups containing four teams. The victor of each group will advance to Cup play. The other four groups have play-off implications to be determined at a future date.

Oceania contained only four teams with New Zealand victorious. New Zealand is not guaranteed a berth in Cup play though.

They have to face the fifth seeded team from Asia. If the 5th seed from Asia wins, Asia will send five teams; if New Zealand wins, Asia will send four teams. Asia currently consists of two groups with five teams each. The winner and runner-up of each will qualify for Cup action. The higher ranking #3 team from the two groups will face off with New Zealand for a spot in Cup competition.

The North/Central America and Caribbean countries are currently in the 4th round of play, with six teams remaining. The top three teams will advance to South Africa and the 4th seed will square off against the 5th seed from South America for the right to see '10 Cup play. South America has one group with ten teams. The top four teams

enjoy a Cup berth, whereas the 5th seed is pitted against the 4th seed from North/Central America and Caribbean. The winner clinches a Cup spot.

Wasn't that easy to follow!

Considering who will

for European powerhouses: Northern Ireland, Germany, Spain, England, France, Italy, and Netherlands. South American juggernauts Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil are primed for a Cup run.

and defeated Barbados 8-0 and 1-0 in round two. Round three saw the U.S. in a four team group (with Trinidad and Tobago, Guatemala, and Cuba) with the top two advancing. The U.S. posted an impressive 5-1 mark in the home-and-home series with the three teams. They swept Guatemala 1-0 and 2-0, and Cuba 1-0 and 6-1; while splitting the two with Trinidad and Tobago 3-0 (at Bridgeview) and 1-2 (at Port of Spain).

The U.S. and Trinidad and Tobago advanced to round four along with the top two finishers of the other two groups of round three: Honduras, Mexico, Costa Rica, and El Salvador. The six teams will participate in a home-and-home with each opponent. Currently the U.S. has two wins, one draw, and no losses. They hosted and defeated Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago and earned a draw at El Salvador. Their remaining seven games are as follows:

June 3 @ Costa Rica, June 6 Honduras, August 12 @ Mexico, September 5 El Salvador, September 9 @ Trinidad and Tobago, October 10 @ Honduras, and October 14 Costa Rica.

Look for the U.S., Mexico, and Costa Rica to claim the three automatic bids. El Salvador should place 4th and face off against 5th place Argentina, with Argentina advancing to the Cup.

World Cup 2010



Team Captain Carlos Bocanegra

qualify for Cup action is somewhat similar to who will win the NCAA college football championship. Of the 31 countries which will qualify, a part-time soccer viewer could easily review the last three or four Cup participants and name eighteen to twenty of them for next year's tournament. The "New York Yankees" of soccer are again warming up for a serious Cup run. Spots are quite secure

If you are wondering why I am only mentioning those two categories it is because all eighteen World Cup winners are from them. Nine of the winners are from South America (Brazil has won five, Argentina and Uruguay two each), nine from Europe (Italy has won four, (West) Germany three, and England and France one each).

The U.S. received a bye for round one competition

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ROD MILLER, ATTORNEY AT LAW

473-7400 rodlaw@bellsouth.net

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