



Written by [Eric Egan](#) on July 9, 2010

The World Cup: An Expression of Our Friendship With All

In his inaugural speech as President, Thomas Jefferson entreats us as a people, a nation, and a government to be friends of all nations but to avoid entangling alliances with all. One of the best ways to express our friendship with other nations in a way that requires no treaties, no trade agreements, and no alliances, is through international competition.

Since June 11, what is perhaps the largest international competition in terms of fans and viewers has been taking place in South Africa. This competition is, of course, the World Cup.



The World Cup is the highest honor a national soccer — I dare not call it “football” — team can win. Every four years, 32 countries are represented by 32 national soccer teams in a host country picked by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, more commonly known by their acronym, FIFA. What ensues is, invariably, one month of epic athleticism, sportsmanship, struggle, and controversy. The 2010 World Cup has been no exception.

Just ask our very own Yanks, team USA. Team USA was able to overcome what was one of the most controversial calls of the 2010 World Cup. They had a perfectly good goal erased by a referee in their game against Slovenia, giving the United States a tie rather than a win. The scoring of a game’s outcome in the initial stage of the World Cup meant that it was possible for that tie, and ultimately that erased goal, to be the cause of the USA’s demise in the run for the Cup. Fortunately for that referee, the USA made it out of the first round of competition, meaning that they achieved the best possible outcome for group play, regardless of that call. Unfortunately, they needed no help in impaling any hopes for the Cup this quadrennial on Ghana’s sharp attack and stout defense.

Ask Mexico as well. Their hopes and dreams may have been dashed by a referee’s call. The allowance of a goal by Argentina that should have been disallowed by the referee on the basis that the kick that resulted in the goal was clearly off sides may have played a part in Mexico’s disqualification from the Cup. And lest we forget Britain, a referee took a perfectly good goal from them in their battle of the pitch with Germany. Germany went on to beat the Brits in a four to one massacre but soccer is definitely a game of momentum. There really is no telling what the outcomes of the Mexico and British games would have been if referees had correctly made simple calls.

For those that think the robbing of a perfect game from a pitcher in Major League Baseball is controversial, imagine what that controversy looks like on a truly world stage. Indeed, just as in the Gallaraga baseball controversy, which can be read about [here](#), bad calls in the 2010 World Cup have ignited a debate over whether or not instant replay technology should be used for World Cup games. For at least one sports journalist, FIFA’s determination to stand strong against pressure for instant replay is a [disappointing one](#). Jack Kenny, on the other hand, would be [proud](#).

If this World Cup has been about controversy, it has equally been about the underdog. Indeed, South



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Africa itself was seen as something of an underdog, as its ability to host the World Cup was often questioned before the Cup began. They have proven themselves admirably able to deal with all the issues of hosting a high profile, international event like the World Cup. On the actual pitch, as well, being the underdog has, at times, almost seemed a blessing. This has been apparent from the beginning, when Slovenia led group C and the USA tied with a favored Britain, to the recent, dramatic overthrow of Brazil, a World Cup powerhouse, by none other than the Netherlands.

Indeed, that overthrow of Brazil allowed the Netherlands to oust Uruguay from the tournament, clearing the way for them to meet Spain in the final game of the World Cup on Sunday, July 11. The Netherlands are definitely the underdogs on Sunday but in a World Cup colored by long shots, it is truly anyone's game. It is also fitting that this year, the Cup will go to a team who has not won it before. Indeed, a European team, in spite of hailing from a continent of some pedigree when it comes to soccer, has not won a World Cup when the Cup has been held off the continent of Europe.

The grand finale of the 2010 World Cup will air on Sunday, June 11 on ABC. Coverage will begin at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time and the match itself will begin at 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time. The match can be viewed online for free at espn3.com. And even though it's true that the United States did not move into the finals, Americans should pick a team to root for (e.g. my grandparents were born in Spain or the Netherlands is the underdog) and watch. The first reason is that we will look like sore losers if we do not. The second reason is that Thomas Jefferson would have wanted it that way.

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