

Avoiding World Cup Widowhood ***A Worksheet for the Uninitiated***

Allying Yourself:

Limiting your cheers to the US is only guaranteed to prevent widowhood for a mere 360 minutes. It behooves you, then, to adopt two other nations as additional recipients of your newfound (or affected) fervor. And, no, you can't choose Brazil. Siding with the perennial and overwhelming favorite is no fun. Unless you're Brazilian yourself, married to one, or a frequent visitor to the country, Brazil is off limits.

Instead, pick one team from Column A; these countries could challenge Brazil for the title. Pick a second team from Column B. These teams really have no chance in hell of winning, but they – and their fans – have spunk and personality in spades. At the very least, they'll implode spectacularly.

Column A	Column B
England Argentina Italy Spain	Togo Trinidad and Tobago South Korea Ivory Coast

Picking Your Player

Fair medieval maidens had it right: jousts to the death are far more interesting when you have a noble knight to root for individually. Thankfully, soccer players run the gamut of appearance, intellect, and personal history so that, no matter what your taste, there's someone for you to love. Pick, Google, and cheer.

If you like...

Smolderingly Handsome Fellows:

- David Beckham (England)
- Thierry Henry (France)
- Luca Toni (Italy)
- Rafael Marquez (Mexico)

Hardworkers Who Beat Odds:

- Brian Ching (US)
- Jimmy Conrad (US)
- Ben Olsen (US)
- Pablo Maestroni (US)

Goofballs Who Happen to be Extraordinarily Talented:

- Ronaldinho (Brazil)
- Peter Crouch (England)
- Robinho (Brazil)
- Jan Koller (Czech Republic)

Brooding Intellectuals:

- Juan Roman Riquelme (Argentina)
- Francesco Totti (Italy)
- Zidane (France)

What To Say:

It actually won't hurt you to remain quiet for the next month. Soccer lacks the awkward pauses of most American sports, so conversational skill is relatively unnecessary. But for those who must speak, use this handy, tiered comment-creation system.

Oh, and never, under any circumstances, are you, the novice soccer fan, allowed to scream, "SHOOT!"

Level 1: Good Things Just Happened

- "Well played!"
- "Good ball!"
- "Great touch!"

Level 2: Bad Things Just Happened and Were Not Called

- The Hairless Wonder would have caught that.

Level 3: Personalized Peter Crouch Cheer

(should only be attempted after several pints of Newcastle)

- He's big! He's red! His feet stick out the bed! Peter Crouch, Peter Crouch!

Level 4: Fill in the Blanks

- Wow, _____ is really keeping it clear in the back for _____.
 - Puyol; Spain
 - Terry; England
 - Onyewu; United States
 - Toure; Ivory Coast
- It's a shame that _____ is injured; that really hurts _____'s chances.
 - Wayne Rooney; England
 - Smicer; Czech Republic
 - Van Bronkhorst; the Netherlands
 - Messi; Argentina
 - Shevchenko; Ukraine

Level 5: Disparaging Remarks About American Commentators

- John O'Brien needs a new edition of Men's National Team trivia.
- Eric Wynalda. All leg, no brain.
- Who let Alexi Lalas talk again?
- Balboa should stick to Pantene ProV commercials.

Level 6: Tommy Smythe Quotes

(not for the faint of heart; must be executed with self-deprecating awareness)

- He just lampooned that into the net!
- He has beautiful, beautiful eyes like a fly!
- That was an absolute howitzer!
- And it's another bulge in the ol' onion bag!