

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

WORLD CUP FISHBOWL



While many sporting tournaments claim to determine true "world champions," soccer's World Cup is perhaps the *only* one that actually does. True, Superbowl, World Series, and NBA Finals champions are no doubt the best at their respective sports in the world in a given year, but each lacks the international competition necessary to produce an honest-to-goodness world champion. The fact that United States' top professional baseball, basketball, and football teams could obliterate their international counterparts is irrelevant. If you want to call yourself world champion, then you compete with the world, whether or not it means inviting, and quickly eliminating if need be, "lesser" teams or not.

World Cup Soccer, which kicks off around the U.S. this month, provides truly international competition between the best teams each country has to offer. While Europe's intense soccer club rivalries are the stuff of diehard fan dreams and hooligan nightmares, when World Cup comes around each country sends only one team. And each country *supports* its team, to say the least. The team is a source of national pride. Ever seen a partisan World Cup Soccer crowd? They're a little frightening. They make Boston Celtics fans look bored and indifferent.

More people watch the World Cup on television than any other event — it makes the Superbowl audience look like that of a Tom Arnold show. From Argentina to Brazil, Bolivia to Bulgaria, Cameroon to Columbia, and all the way down the international alphabet, soccer fans around the world will gather around televisions to watch their teams compete, to yell and cheer in their native tongues.

World Cup competition enjoys an almost religious fervor in many parts of the globe, and you can bet that international viewers will watch every aspect of the games in the U.S. — here for the first time in history — right down to the color of the grass and the roll of the ball. Foxboro Stadium, Soldier Field, the Cotton Bowl, the Pontiac Silverdome, the Rose Bowl, Giants Stadium, the Citrus Bowl, Stanford Stadium, and Robert F. Kennedy Stadium will find themselves in the World Cup "fishbowl." Each of those venues has undergone major preparation for World Cup competition and I believe, from a field quality and playability, the U.S. might just show the world a thing or two about soccer.

Some fairly wild claims have been made about what having a U.S.-hosted World Cup will do for the popularity of soccer in this country. No doubt, it will help, particularly if the U.S. team fares well. But regardless of how the U.S., team performs, regardless of whether or not the World Cup increases soccer's popularity here, the fields and those who prepared them will be among the best in the world.

Matthew Trulio

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JULY

4-8 World Scientific Congress of Golf. St. Andrews, Scotland. Contact the Sports Turf Research Institute/World Congress of Golf at 44/334-75560.

13-16 American Association of Nurserymen Conference. Baltimore, MD. Contact: (202) 789-2900.

19-21 3rd Annual Midwest Grounds Management Conference. Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. Contact: Chuck Scott (309) 438-2032 or fax (309) 438-7955.

24-26 International Lawn Garden and Power Equipment Expo. Louisville, KY. Contact: (502) 473-1992.

24-26 Texas Turfgrass Association Seminar. Arlington, TX. Contact Shirley Duble at (409) 693-1656.

SEPTEMBER

11-13 Golf Europe '94 Munich. Munich, Germany. Contact Jerry Kallman, Jr., Kallman Associates at (201) 652-7070.

18-21 Florida Turfgrass Conference. Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Contact: (407) 898-6721.

OCTOBER

5-6 Southern California Turfgrass Expo. Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa, CA. Contact: (619) 723-0947.

10-13 Northwest Turf Conference. Seaside, OR. Contact: (206) 754-0825.

NOVEMBER

6-9 International Irrigation Exposition. Atlanta GA. Contact: the Irrigation Association (703) 573-3551.

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two months in advance to:
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