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Soccer 102

By FR Penn

Welcome to Soccer 102. In Soccer 101, we learned a bit of history surrounding soccer, the rules of the game and some important things about the upcoming 2006 FIFA World Cup. This time around we'll focus on a little more of the history involving the epic tournament and we'll get a "how to" lesson on wagering on soccer, on teams, on pool (group) formations, on predictions and on odds. The World Cup is the largest sporting event on the planet. More people in the USA are getting up to speed on the World Cup. One of the reasons for this could be that many Americans haven't been educated about this thrilling and time-tested sport.

By the twelfth century, the game of soccer had become an extremely violent sport resembling a sort of riot. The free-for-all version was subsequently banned by the governing royalty of the age. Despite the illegal status, soccer in this form continued to grow in popularity. The current, formal rules of today's game have evolved throughout the years, and they continue to be tweaked annually by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA).

Formed in 1904, the FIFA originated from seven separate European soccer associations. Destined to be the world's governing soccer body, the annual FIFA Congress originally focused on international competition and a possible international tournament. However, with the start of World War I, all plans for an immense tournament were put on hold until 1930 when the first FIFA sponsored global tournament was held in Uruguay. The host nation won the contest by defeating Argentina in the finals. However, global travel was extremely time-consuming and slow at that time and many European nations declined to play due to the thirty-day float across the big pond.

Up until this point, the Olympic Games represented the highest level of competition in soccer, even though at that time Olympic participation was restricted to amateur athletes. The World Cup offered a new professional level of international competition. It immediately became popular in many countries; however it took some time for the European soccer faction to get completely on board.

The second World Cup was held in Italy, and the location of the event went a long way to bolstering European support. Benito Mussolini was at the helm of the Italian government, and his fascist regime used the tournament to gain popularity for their agenda. Once again the host nation was the champion

in 1934.

Many European soccer enthusiasts had succumbed to the governing FIFA, although there were still some strong holdouts. The British Isles – England, Scotland and Wales – still refused to participate partly due to political differences with Italy and partly due to just plain stubbornness. In 1938 for the third world Cup, 36 nations entered the competition, and for the first time preliminary games were played to reduce the field to 16 teams. The British Isles were still a no-show, despite the fact that the tournament was held in France, where diplomatic relations with Great Britain laid in a somewhat benign stasis. Italy repeated as World Champions.

The twelve years that followed saw the world in a horrendous World War and consequently, the World Cup was put on hold. When it resumed, the FIFA World Cup was undisputedly the highest level of international tournament competition in soccer.

Since 1958, the tournament locations have alternated between Europe and the Americas. That is, until 2002, when Korea and Japan were selected to co-host the event. In 2006, the event is being held in Germany. Even though the tournament is in Europe, the odds-on-favorite is Brazil at ~3/1.

If you are thinking of laying down a bet or two on the World Cup, there are some things you might want to consider. First of all, consider that the make-up of the pools or groups is extremely relevant.

Group A; Germany, Costa Rica, Poland and Ecuador. Group B; England, Paraguay, Trinidad–Tobago and Sweden. Group C; Argentina, Ivory Coast, Serbia–Montenegro and the Netherlands. Group D; Mexico, Iran, Angola and Portugal. Group E; Italy, Ghana, United States and the Czech Republic. Group F; Brazil, Croatia, Australia and Japan. Group G; France, Switzerland, South Korea and Togo. Group H; Spain, Ukraine, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia.

Typical wagers on soccer usually involve picking the winner. Remember that the odds are set for a reason. The experts have supreme confidence in their ability to loosely predict the outcomes.

Currently, the favorites in the FIFA World Cup are Brazil (odds to win it all ~ 3/1), Germany (~ 7/1), England, Italy and Argentina (~ 8/1), France (~12/1), and Spain and Holland (Netherlands) (~ 14/1). Odds change frequently and vary depending on the sportsbook you use.

If you want to get some high odds on possible history making and non-traditional winners, bet on Trinidad–Tobago (~1000/1) or Saudi Arabia (~750/1). Iran, Costa Rica and Togo are also long-shots at about 500/1. If you feel uneasy about wagering on underdogs, you may want to stay with the teams near the middle of the field – Portugal, Sweden, Mexico, Ukraine and the USA. There are countless other ways to lay bets on this titanic tournament. Wagering on a team to place or show, group winner, group qualifying, head-to-head match, final pair, and most goals are just a few of the opportunities for bettors.

Wagering is a mix of luck, art and statistics. There are a number of ways to "parlay", or combine your bets, within one sport or through a combination of various sports. These types of bets are a great way to increase your possible payoff, but they are often difficult to hit because of the way the combinations are often presented. If you know what you are doing, or you just have a gut feeling about two or more

match-ups, parlaying your wagers into one can offer a bigger payday than just a straight bet.

In World Cup wagering, you can also get campaign wagering on particular nations. The Australian and the England campaign are two of the most popular. A bettor predicts at what phase of the tournament either of these clubs will exit, or even if they will go on to win it all. Wagering within the groups is another popular form of betting in the early rounds. Any big upsets at this stage can produce an adequate return on your investment and these are generally much easier to predict than which teams will win, place or show in the tournament.

I like Germany to win it all. They are playing as the host country and the home team has won six of 17 tournaments. Plus, they are loaded with talent, making them an authentic threat to beat any team on any given day. I also like England's chances. They are in the same group as Sweden, which has traditionally been a problem for them, but I know the English want to put an end to that long losing streak. Thirty-seven years is a long time to go without a win against a team like Sweden. The English appear to be on a mission to put this controversy to rest. Brazil probably has the best and most talented team in the entire field. Just like any other tournament, it isn't necessarily the best team that will emerge victorious; it is the team that builds the most momentum through confidence and emotion to perform at their peak potential.

The 2006 FIFA World Cup is an event unlike any other. With all its adversity, triumph and tragedy, it is the defining international event for the soccer world. It is on a scale like no other; pitting nation against nation and culture versus culture as the pride of an entire continent hangs in the balance. From the 9th of June to the 9th of July 2006, this epic contest will be fought on German soil and just about the entire world will be watching.

By FR Penn sponsored by

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Soccer Team Logo And Gear

By Dana Bradley

Soccer is one of the famous sports played in the United States, hence it is very demanded among every one who is the fan of Soccer. One of the exciting news is that people no longer have to spend a lot of money for the team logo and gear. Soccer team logo and Gear has many team logo and gear such as, Brandy Chastain, Galaxy, Pele, Freddy Adu, and Mia Hamm etc.

Soccer team logo and Gear are very famous around the Globe. It is said that the demand for soccer wear is much higher in the U.K when compared to other countries. Soccer team logo and gear are often used as gifted items to the loved ones, who are the lovers of Soccer.

The Young generation is crazy after the team logo and gear of Soccer. Some of the best sold Team logo and gear are:

2005 upper deck Major League Soccer Trading cards priced at \$65.00 (This is a game for those interested)

Brandi Chastain on knees 8x10 photograph priced at \$76.00 (Brandi Chastain is known to be one of the best athletes of today)

Brazil vs Italy 1994 World cup Soccer at the Rose Bowl Framed unsigned Panoramic photograph priced at \$125.00 (the measurements for the Panoramic are 16 ½ x 42 ½) MLS Soccer Ball bag priced at \$24.00

(it is a best soccer bag to carry soccer ball to the field) Soccer 12 oz Wheaties box (Display case) priced at \$49.00 (Manufactured in U.S.A) Soccer 18 oz Wheaties box (Display case) priced at \$50.00(Manufactured in U.S.A) Soccer 22 oz Wheaties box (Display case) priced at \$56.00(Manufactured in U.S.A) Soccer cleats Display case up to size 13 priced at \$84.00

(Case accommodates size 13 shoe, Manufactured in U.S.A) Soccer cleats Display case up to size 17 priced at \$85.00 (Case accommodates size 17 shoe, Manufactured in U.S.A) Soccer cleats Display case up to size 23 priced at \$110.00 (Case accommodates size 23 shoe, Manufactured in U.S.A)

Above mentioned are some of the famous sold team logo gear products. Approximate sizes and brief description is explained to help to buy these products easily. Best of all, these products are available on the Internet. It's great being a fan of soccer or even knowing how to play the game with family and friends. But it is even greater when one can celebrate this exciting sport by wearing the latest clothing and gear available.

Dana Bradley writes about

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