

Football/Soccer

Every four years I take interest in soccer or what the rest of the world calls football when the quadrennial World Cup of Soccer takes place. This year it is in South Africa where people's favorite musician must be a guy called Johnny One Note. In case you missed it, people in the crowd play indigenous horns called vuvuzelas that basically play one note low annoying note for the entire game. For those of us with Western ears, the charm wears off really fast.

Being in Europe for much of the World Cup was interesting to be sure. Sweden didn't make the 32-team cut, but they were none the less very interested in all the games. England did make the cut, but got creamed by the Germans, which put much of the country into mourning. From my first beer in my first pub on, I got the idea that I could leave my happy face at the door.

As an American who watches a modest amount of our favorite sports which do not include soccer, I find that the sport has a ways to go to get to the 20th century let alone the 21st. They have one main official who runs around like a mad man trying to keep up with the ball during the entire match. With one pair of eyes and one pair of legs he is suppose to see everything and make the right calls. You won't be shocked to learn that on a good day, the best of these guys only make a few serious mistakes that impact the outcome of the game. What's worse is that the state of the art TV coverage with super slow motion replay is able to show the fans at home each bone head mistake seconds after it happens from multiple angles.

The winner in this category was a goal by England in its game against Germany that was not allowed even though the ball bounced two feet inside the goal line. This was shown on all the TV replays and on the cameras that were positioned behind the goal. Unfortunately, none of the two dozen or so cameras behind the goal where there to judge actual goals. Apparently they were there to document bone head mistakes.

When players kick each other as opposed to the ball, they may or may not get the only sanction the harried official can hand out. He can brandish a yellow card, which means you better not get another one if you want to stay in the game. If the offense is really bad, like dancing on an opponents privates or touching the ball with your hand in the penalty box, the official can hold up a red card which means hit the road Jack. Players with one red or two yellow cards in a game shuffle off the field in shame and are not replaced. This means the their team plays the rest of the game with one less player. Hockey fans will no doubt tremble at the thought of a power play that lasts for the rest of the f***ing game.

If this sounds crazy, it gets worse. When you get a red or two yellow cards, even if the yellow cards aren't in the same game, you miss the next game. Can you imagine a bunch of guys with Laker tickets finding out that Kobe Bryant isn't playing tonight because he accumulated yellow cards in two different games? By now my American readers might be wondering if soccer is really a sport. With this level of credibility, they might as well have a keg at midfield and require each player to chug a beer to enter the other side.