

U.S. vs Wales

The game started 10 pm their time--temp in the low 70s--what can I say?, we even had Rocky Balboa (Stallone) rooting for us. Before a 43,000+ capacity crowd, which sounded like a pro-U.S. cheering crowd, the first half the U.S. played fantastic. Overall, Tyler Adams, Tim Weah, Tim Ream and Matt Turner were exceptional. In the first 42 mins, the U.S. had a nice 58% possession ratio to only 28% for the foe.

Our speed was no surprise to me. Our speedsters attacked and defended well in a 4-3-3 but Pulisik was pushed around a lot; not necessarily fouled 100% but it messed up his timing. Our goalie Turner made some fine saves, especially against a point blank header shot by Davies 18 mins into the 2nd half.

The last time anybody scored against Wales in World Cup was by **Pele** some 60 years ago. **Weah scored** like 36 mins into the game, after Sargent deflected his pass into Pulisik who then did a superb precise pass toward Weah who was being charged by Welshman Hennessey, as mean as a bull! Weah's reaction was an excellent cool flick. (His dad George was voted world player of the year almost 25 years ago.) The United States did not see Gio Reyna, Jesus Ferreira, Miles Robinson, Chris Richards, and Matthew **Hoppe** play--sorry, the last three are out with injuries.

America had Wales pinned down the first half, however, most remaining game attacks--when the U.S. found a way to penetrate into the foe's box--were fruitless. You do not chance everything on the hope of centering a cross and hope to nod in a header, not against a taller back line.

That chances everything on going against the odds. Soccer is like chess, as Pele used to say. The foe had a tall back defensive line, and the odds were in their favor, and time after time I saw what Wales showed what they could do. They stopped us. Although at the final whistle it showed that the U.S. still had a ball possession 58% of the time, Wales jumped to 42%, **AND** all U.S. crosses to our guys in their box went cold zilch for us--this was no Concacaf game against chaparitos of Guatemala! Europeans are tall suckers. The second half we were outplayed in the chess match.

The second half, the Welsh team did what they really didn't do the first half, they played beautiful triangular passing. They also sent in a very tall Kieffer Moore, significantly tall at 6'5. As time wore on, it gave them confidence and even then we held the line that would not have hurt, had not one critical penalty take down by our defender allow them to tie us. #3 Zimmermann did a challenge that knocked down the foe, #11. #11 Gareth Bale had his back to the goal, and his chess move was totally against him to do anything dazzling, but inexperienced played out and Zimmermann brought him down, that he will remember for a long time. I give full credit to the veteran player who scored his 41st International goal and who had been playing for Wales since he was 16; now 33. Incidentally, Bale scored a goal in

the MLS Cup a month ago to help LAFC win the national title.

Luckily for us, the Welsh forward lines lacked shots that were accurate. In the 99th min, however, Kevin Acosta did a sneaky play that probably prevented their #11 from scoring again. With the game almost over and most Americans pressing on the attack, a crafty Welsh defender near his box kicked a long ball past midfield so that our goalie ran like crazy to intercept it, got his head on it and headed it away. Turner was way near the middle of the pitch. But it landed at the feet of their #11, who saw Turner far, far away from his net and was setting to take a long accurate shot at our goal as Turner was running like crazy back to his goal. What happened next was incredible. Acosta did a foul that saved the game. #11 was brought down. Our goalie was still some 20 yards out of his goal. #23 Acosta got a yellow card but our goalie was able to be back in front of his net to stop anything Wales launched, and the game ended. Funny world, both Acosta and Bale are teammates on 2022 champion L.A. Football Club (LAFC).

It is unfortunate that when this game ended, however, players like McKennie Yedlin, Musah, Dest, Acosta, and Ream received yellow cards, and they have to be careful. Remember another yellow forces you to miss the following game ie. 2 yellows = an expulsion for the next game. I wonder if ref Abdul Al Jassim was paid?

One more note to keep in mind, and this is not just for Berhalter's team of 2022. In the past, when the USA has had a lead, 1st half or even into a 2nd half, they don't seem to know how to kill the time to their advantage. For the past 20 years, even in non-World Cups, like when they took the leads against powerhouses like Germany or Brazil and it looked like a dream could come true, America never changed tactics. In the future, that has to come from the coach and his staff or else you go home. Look over the last 20 years; in fact, you could even count some from the 1990s. They would have the lead, but could not hold on and something fluky always showed up and the dream slipped away. In World Cup play, the best Europeans and best So. Americans are not just crafty, they have some tall dudes that are extremely fast and give no second chances when it comes to passing. But, like I said, this World Cup is being played in Nov. and anything can happen.

We secured not a loss, but a tie, kind of like the first game of that wonderful squad of 2002 when the U.S. did not loose against powerful Portugal, although we won it. In 2002, after 2 games, USA had one win and one tie. Only a miracle can keep America from loosing to England next Fri. (England murdered Iran in their first match 6-2.) The game of 2022 was almost half in everything. In 2002, the U.S. scored at least 2 goals; here 1. Then one more in 2002. In 2002, we made a big blunder and made a goal for Portugal. In 2022, we made a giant foul blunder that ended up them scoring. In 2002, America played spectacular the whole game, here only the first half.

Back in 2014, the last time the U.S. played in the World Cup, in thier first two games, America beat Ghana 2-1 and tied Portugal 2-2--they had a commanding lead, but blew it and could not hold on (like I related above). In both 2002 and 2014, our defense was no push over. And, in 2014, we advanced out of group play, just like in 2002, but fell to Belgium 2-1. We mainly messed up with a penalty against Wales today.

A crummy ref also gave us all kinds of yellow cards while at first nothing against Wales. What I also noticed today is that after we charged with tremendous attacks from our midfield, we too often when we got closer to their box, we slowed down in our tactics before we tried

something. Look at the games when Landon Donovan scored in the past, the passing attack was great, but there was no pause given for the enemy to react when Donovan zeroed in. The U.S. guys are a bunch of guys with great speed, talent and can be very accurate. The U.S. had 6 shots, but only one on goal. Wales had 7 with 3 on goal, yet none penetrated our defense. They got their tie via a penalty kick. AND remember, all World Cup winners need luck. Of the starting eleven, Sargent, McKennie, Musah, Weah (who went out in the 87th min) and Dest were replaced. That is a lot of substituting without the luck. The subs were Wright, Yedlin, Aaronson (who got mugged in the 89th min but the ref didn't even call a yellow), Dest, and Morris. There was 9 mins added to the game, but they too placed their bets on cracking the tall Welsh defensive line with center crosses in the box to no avail.