

U.S. success to give soccer a lift

THE OCHNER HAS BEEN reached. And soon — within a year I expect — it will be founded.

There's no cause for over-anticipation. Not yet. Because there's still a long way to go before Team USA can be considered anything but a pitifully minor player among the world's soccer powers.

Yes, I was every bit as thrilled as almost every soccer nut — and, as has been proven over and over in the last few months, there are quite a few in the O&E area — when our national team whupped Trinidad and Tobago 1-0 Sunday, in Trinidad's home field, to earn a spot in the World Cup.

I really didn't expect it. Not after the debacle a couple of weeks before in St. Louis, when all the U.S. team had to do was knock off a weak El Salvador team to qualify for the Cup. El Salvador was already out of the competition for a

1990 berth, but our guys still couldn't beat 'em.

I PERSONALLY found it disgusting. By that I mean, it was there, in St. Louis, at the park, trying to cheer our team in a clinching victory over those Salvadorans. When they failed — and believe me, they had enough chances, including some they never even took — I gave up hope.

Winning on the road in World Cup competition would be like our Lions posting a winning record — damn near impossible. Remember, you may think the Super Bowl is a big deal, but on Trinidad Sunday there were 35,000 people crammed into their stadium, and the rest of the islanders were waiting for the game to clinch win or tie that would mean a national holiday Monday.

Such long odds, and the U.S. team still without its brightest star, midfielder Hugo Perez, who was hampered by an injured groin.



C.J. Risak

BUT THEY came through, thanks to Paul Caligiuri's magnificent placed, left-footed shot. And now Team USA is one of 24 finalists, vying for worldwide honor and glory.

Enough already. That's the pie-in-the-sky, we-can-conquer-the-world view. It's great cinematic fantasy.

But don't expect it to hold up next year in Italy.

All the problems the U.S. had in qualifying for the Cup, in what became the weakest zone in the world once Mexico was disqualified, does not bode well for our guys. After

all, you can't expect the competition to get easier next year.

Then there's all this stuff about our "best" player, Perez. I have absolutely no problem with him holding such status, particularly since he deserves it. After all, he can score goals, and few other Americans have proven they can.

WHAT DOES perturb me is Perez's international status. He plays in France's second division.

Now it's true, European teams can have only a few foreign players on their rosters. But you'd think our "best" guy could land a spot on a first division team somewhere.

When your team only has a couple of players who good enough to compete in second division European soccer, and the teams you will face consist entirely of first division players, well, don't expect too much.

At least not this year. Of course, the U.S. is hosting the World Cup in 1994. By then, who knows? With all the Eastern European borders opening, maybe we can recruit a few stars.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm hoping we get a couple of ties next year. If we can actually win a game, I'll be ecstatic.

BUT I'M NOT expecting the U.S. team to accomplish anything internationally until the turn of the century — about 2002. By then, I really think we'll be up to challenging the top teams in the world.

How far soccer's come in the last few years in this country cements my confidence. Here's just a couple

of local examples, both from this fall:

- Livonia Stevenson draws more than twice as many kids to his soccer program than it does for football, an indication that today's youth would rather kick a ball than carry one;
- Oakland University plays its first home night game ever, on a Friday — a day usually reserved for, and dominated by, high school football — and the Pioneers attract a crowd of more than 4,000 to Rochester;
- Now, if just a few of those outstanding coaches from the recently liberated Communist countries decide to emigrate, we'd be set. Of course, such a move could result in the biggest worldwide talent scramble since all those German rocket scientists turned up after World War II.

Just what we need. Another Cold War.

OU sports

Spikers miss out on tourney berth

What had seemed imminent slipped away from Oakland University.

The Pioneers were in position to land an NCAA Division II volleyball berth entering their last weekend of play. Unfortunately, they didn't get it.

OU's road trip north resulted in a split: the Pioneers defeated Northern Michigan Friday 15-4, 15-6, 15-16 in Marquette, but on Saturday they let their match at Michigan Tech slip away, losing in five games 9-15, 15-13, 13-15, 15-11, 15-12.

The loss was a heartbreaking one. It cost OU a share of the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference title — Ferris State won it with a 14-2 mark, while the Pioneers finished 13-3 — and it ended the team's season, with no NCAA II playoff berth in spite of a 26-7 overall record.

In the loss to Tech, OU led 13-8 in the second game before losing and had a 12-7 advantage in the last game but blew it. Missy Ward finished with 12 service aces, 10 kills (a 122 kill percentage) and 11 digs. Jennifer Zielinski finished with 13 kills (171), one solo block and 5 block assists. Holly Hatcher added six block assists and 12 kills (151).

In Friday's win over Northern, the Pioneers were much sharper. Henry had seven kills (313), Ward collected six (580) and Melissa Holman totaled five (364).

OU'S MENS BASKETBALL team got on track after a slow start Monday at Manchester College in Indiana. Trailing 21-6 after seven minutes, the Pioneers rallied to pull to within 33-31 at the half and went on to knock off Manchester 74-60.

Eric Taylor's career-best 25 points paced OU. Andrew and Connor led 14 coming in the second half. Brian Gregory had 13 points, 12 assists and six steals, and Stacy Davis collected 10 points and seven rebounds.

Rickey Miller, who played at OU as a freshman, was best for Man-

chester with 16 points.

There was bad news, however. Dave Hantz re-injured his left knee and will be lost for two-to-three weeks.

Last weekend, OU traveled to Northern Kentucky University to compete in the Huntington Bank-Lions Club Tournament. The Pioneers' performance was mixed; they lost to Taylor University 63-54 Friday, committing 20 turnovers. Davis' 16 points and nine boards was best for OU. Eric Taylor had 15 and Bond netted 11.

On Saturday, the Pioneers redeemed themselves with an easy 69-49 triumph over DePauw College (Indiana). OU limited its foes to 30 percent field goal shooting (15-of-50) as it pulled away to a 41-24 lead at the half. Taylor scored 18 points, Gregory had 13 points and seven assists and Davis finished with 10 points and six rebounds.

Taylor U. went on to defeat Northern Kentucky for the tourney title. Eric Taylor was named to the all-tournament team for OU, and Davis was chosen best defensive player.

OU'S WOMENS BASKETBALL team hosted Aquinas College, Tri-State (of Indiana) and Calvin College in their opener last weekend, and the Pioneers came away with a pair of triumphs. They knocked off Tri-State in Friday's opener 81-67, then whupped Calvin 76-59 Saturday.

Jennifer Golen, from Rochester, was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. The sophomore guard scored 16 points against Tri-State and 10 more against Calvin.

Davis was a double-figure in scoring against Tri-State were: Shawn Brown, 15 points (on five three-pointers); Debbie Delie, with 14 points (and 10 rebounds); and Kim Powell, with 10 points. Ann Serra dished out nine assists.

Tracy Graces scored 14 for Tri-State.

The win over Calvin was never in doubt. OU led 37-25 at the half and coasted to the victory, the Pioneers second without a loss.

sports shorts

By Mike DeWilling
staff writer

Take one look at Central Michigan University soccer player Stewart Whitney and you would hardly think he resembled a Division I athlete.

At 5-foot-9, 160 pounds, Whitney is hardly a physical specimen. And by his own admission, he's not blessed with blazing speed.

But take a look at what Whitney has done on the soccer field and it's obvious he can take on the big boys.

Whitney, a 1988 graduate of Troy Athens, recently finished his collegiate career third on Central's all-time assist list with 14, and 10th on the all-time goals list with 11.

If he doesn't beat people with his physical strength or speed, how does Whitney do it? The Central soccer media guide offers a clue. Whitney, it says, "leads the team in endurance runs."

In short, Whitney made his opponents work in Italy.

"If I HAD had to do a scouting report on myself, I'd say I have good endurance," said Whitney, shortly after Oakland University beat the Chippewas, 3-0, in Whitney's final game. "I just ran and run and run. I'm pretty good with my back to the net and I distribute the ball well."

Distribute the ball well might be a slight understatement. Whitney finished the season with eight assists, the third highest single-season total in CMU history. When he wasn't busy setting up his own teammates, Whitney showed he could find the back of the net on his own.

After the Chippewas suffered through an early-season scoring drought, head coach Jim Hornak and assistant Rick Trainor moved Whitney from midfield to striker, where he went on a scoring spree, notching five goals in a six-game stretch.

The scoring spree couldn't have started at a more opportune time for the Chippewas. They were in the

first round of defending their Loyola Lakefront Invitational championship when Whitney notched his first goal of the season.

The Chippewas benefitted in the long run as they were able to finish with an 11-9-2 overall record.

"I hadn't scored a goal or had an assist all season," Whitney said. "When I was moved to striker, I had a goal and an assist in our first game of the tournament and we went on to win it. My confidence grew. I felt like I could take anyone one-on-one."

WHITNEY FINISHED with impressive stats in his college career, despite getting off to a slow start. After leading Athens to two state championships in high school, big things were expected of Whitney when he arrived in Mount Pleasant.

But the adjustment to college soccer took some time as he managed to score just five goals in his first three seasons.

But the Central coaches were more than pleased by Whitney's development.

"Stewart does what it takes to win," Trainor said. "We moved him to midfield, and although he wasn't scoring, he was still playing well for us."

Whitney took the lack of scoring in stride.

"As a freshman, I played forward for the first few games, but I just wasn't big enough or experienced enough at first," Whitney said. "They moved me to midfield and I was playing more of a defensive position."

Without the scoring opportunities, Whitney developed into a leadership role to help Central win. Whitney was a tri-captain this past fall.

"Stewart has done an excellent job for us as a captain this season," Trainor said. "It wasn't a natural role for him, but he worked hard to become a good leader. He was probably our most valuable player over the last few weeks."

outdoors calendar

- IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS**
- Nov. 30 — Firearm deer season ends statewide.
 - Nov. 30 — Resident bear season ends in Zone 1.
 - Dec 1 — Ruffed grouse season reopens.
 - Dec. 1-10 — Muzzelloading deer season open in the Upper Peninsula.
 - Dec. 5-12 — Elk season is open in portions of Zone II.
 - Dec. 6-17 — Muzzelloading deer season is open in the Lower Peninsula.
 - Through Jan. 1 — Squirrel season is open statewide.
 - Through Jan. 31 — Raccoon season is open statewide.
 - Through March 1 — Gray and red fox season is open statewide.
 - Through March 31 — Rabbit season is open statewide.
- METROPARKS**
- Cornhusk Flower Workshop, an opportunity for participants to learn how to use corn husks and other natural material to make flowers, will be offered at 12:30 p.m. Saturday at Stony Creek. There is a \$2 charge.
 - People and Plants, a slide program providing a historical perspective of the entwined lives of people and plants, will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday at Kensington.
 - Grapevine Wreaths, a workshop for participants to learn how to

identify, collect and wind grapevines into wreaths, will be held at 12:30 p.m. Sunday at Stony Creek. Participants should bring pruning shears and ribbons.

- Woodland Wanderer, a naturalist-led hike to explore the sights, sounds and smell of the woods in fall, will be offered at 2 p.m. Sunday. Participants should bring binoculars.
- Travels with a Naturalist, the third in a series of slide presentations featuring Costa Rican plants and animals and nature culture, will be offered at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 21, at Stony Creek.
- Most Metropark programs are free of charge, but require advanced registration. All programs require a vehicle entry permit. For additional information on all the Metropark programs, call 1-800-24-PARKS.

OAKLAND COUNTY PARKS

- Fowl Play, a nature program in which participants will explore the world of pheasants, grouse, quail and turkey, will be offered at 1 p.m. Saturday at Independence Oaks.
- Birds of a Feather, a nature program in which children ages 6-8 will explore the world of birds, will be offered at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 2, at Independence Oaks.
- Most Oakland County Parks programs require advanced registration. Call the Nature Center at 625-6473 for more information.

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