

Be part of the world in watching the World Cup matches

by Aaron Rowden

Although the United States has sadly been eliminated from the Group of 16, the FIFA World Cup Finals are still being played. If the previous sentence made sense to you, congratulations, you have managed to keep up with the biggest televised event in the world. For those of you who are still living in 1929, please allow me to explain: the FIFA World Cup is the ultimate national soccer (a.k.a. football) world championship. Since 1930, it is played every four years by the national teams of the 32 countries who qualify throughout the three years between tournaments and the winner is the undisputed champion of the world.

American interest in the tournament should be quite high as the tournament matches, particularly the final match, are the most watched television events on the planet. To give perspective, 715.1 million people, or 11 percent of the world's population, watched the 2006 World Cup final match and the combined audience of all 2006 World Cup matches was 26.3 billion people, slightly more than three times the population of Earth; whereas the 2008 summer Olympics managed a meager 4.7 billion viewers, not even enough to overpopulate one planet, for all events. Yeah, the World Cup is kind of a big deal.

My love of World Cup soccer started in 2006 when I became one of the 26.3 billion viewers while living in Oxford, UK, during a year abroad. I watched England's opening match against Paraguay at my college's t.v. lounge. It was a mild game, ending in a 1-0 victory for England, but it was also my first opportunity to see how seriously the rest of the world takes the Cup. As I ventured to the college, I was met with the eerie sight of Oxford, a city of 150,000 people, looking completely abandoned as though I had wandered into the set of some post apocalyptic thriller

film. There were dogs running free in the street, litter was floating on the breeze, and the only person I saw was being ejected from a pub, only to quickly



scramble into the one next door. The entire nation seemed to have stopped and was waiting for the results of the soccer game. I became hooked on World Cup soccer that day.

Four years later I found myself trying to find a place to watch the opening match pitting host nation South Africa against Mexico. I approached a waitress at a Mexican restaurant to ask if the match would be shown there. The conversation was jarring.

"Excuse me, will you be showing the World Cup match tomorrow?"

"The what?"
"The World Cup match. Biggest sporting event in the world?"

"I don't know what you are talking about."

I was confused and saddened. In actuality, they were showing the match, and the next day I showed up to watch it. I was the only person who did. This was definitely different than watching matches in a country that lived and died with every goal. I was beginning to despair that 2010 would be another World Cup ignored by the people of the United States, another lost opportunity to show some solidarity with the rest of the planet and unite around a common pastime.

But this despair was premature.

Soon the United States was getting ties against better ranked teams, U.S. fans were emerging, people seemed genuinely outraged at the awful off-sides call against the U.S. in the match against Slovenia, and Landon Donovan's last minute goal against Algeria became the shot heard round the world, signalling the beginning of an American era for international soccer.

The American era lasted three days. Likely before Donovan could even get a picture taken for a Wheaties box, the U.S. lost 1-2 in extra time to the aggressive and indefatigable Ghana. It was a grueling three hours of sport and it proved that no amount of money poured into a side can overcome 80 years of national neglect of a sport. The lesson was heartbreaking, but also hopeful. The American players are all very good, but they need support even when they are not in the higher stages of tournament play to become a competitive force. Americans are shockingly good at supporting our national athletes, and we are great at watching television, the two key elements to becoming a real World Cup competitive country. If the U.S. devoted even half the effort to supporting our soccer team that we do our Olympic snowboarding teams, we would be imposing competition in the one sport everyone cares about.

But it is not enough just to like the idea of the U.S. winning a tournament. If we want to become competitive, Americans have to discover a true love of soccer like that seen in most other countries. To that end, I encourage my fellow citizens to watch the remaining World Cup matches. Choose from the remaining teams and root for one. Be part of the world and watch the final match. If you need some further encouragement, consider the fact that the quarter finals are shaping up to be for the most part matches pitting South American nations against traditional colonial pow-

Sebasticook Regional Land Trust to hold annual membership gathering

All are welcome to attend the Sebasticook Regional Land Trust's (formerly Friends of Unity Wetlands) annual Membership Gathering on Saturday, July 17, from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. The event will take place at the China Schools on Route 202/9 in China.

The gathering will kick off at 11 a.m., with a tour of the China School Forest led by fourth-grade teacher Anita Smith. The China School Forest is an "outdoor classroom" with trails and learning stations to teach about the Maine forest in a real-life, hands-on setting. The 50-acre working forest has numerous learning stations set up throughout it and many years of care and forest management.

After the tour, participants will gather in the pavilion for a potluck lunch followed by a chance to make homemade ice cream with local cream and milk. A brief annual meeting will take place focusing on the success achieved by this regional land trust in its first five years, approaching 2,000 acres of permanently conserved farm, forest

and wild lands, more than 300 participants in its children and



The Reading Tree located in the China School Forest.

Contributed photo

family programs, and more than four miles of public access trails constructed and maintained.

The SRLT Board of Directors and Executive Director Jennifer Irving are excited to look to the future in capturing the conservation potential of the Sebasticook Watershed.

The Sebasticook River begins in Dexter and flows approximately 50 miles to Winslow, where it joins the Kennebec. This vast watershed extends into 43 towns in five counties, providing economic, recreational and aesthetic benefit to the residents of Central Maine. The largest tributary of the Kennebec River, the Sebasticook has an important role to play in fisheries restoration in the Kennebec basin and the Gulf of Maine ecosystem.

For more information about the annual meeting and/or to RSVP, please call the SRLT office at 948-3766 or email info@sebasticookrlt.org.

ers. You can root for the Monroe Doctrine while enjoying some of the greatest soccer ever played.

Soccer is a fast paced, exciting game and there is no reason people who enjoy sports would not enjoy soccer. So please, support soccer to support America and the world we live in. Who knows maybe by 2014 there will be vuvuzela blowing Americans!

Aaron Rowden is a soccer enthusiast. If you are interested in forming a band of American soccer hooligans to cheer on the World Cup Final email him at aaron.rowden@gmail.com.

GHM INSURANCE AGENCY

Local Independent Agent

AUGUSTA 620-8878 1-866-298-0894	WATERVILLE 873-5101 1-800-244-9046
--	---

Call & Compare Today

- Auto
- Home
- Boats, RVs
- Motorcycles
- Snowmobiles
- Life & Health
- All Types of Business Insurance

Martha Wentworth, Agent

Hemphill's, Inc.

NORTH VASSALBORO, MAINE 04962

GARAGE SALE

Boots & Clothes
30% to 50% OFF

BLUE SEAL®

GREAT SELECTION OF USED TACK

Turkey Grower Pellets 50 lb \$11.50

Broiler Crumbles 50 lb \$13.40

Fat 'n Finish 50 lb \$11.50

QUANTITY PRICES AVAILABLE

872-7964 • Mon. thru Sat. 8 am - 5:30 pm • Fri. 8 to 8 pm

Empire Research Group was commissioned by Sullivan Wealth Management, LLC to study

the 5 Biggest Challenges Investors Face Today!

To review that study call

KEVIN SULLIVAN

Registered Principal

at

Sullivan

Wealth Management, LLC

Your Financial Symphony

207-660-6637

Sullivan Wealth Management, LLC is an independent firm located at 112 Clinton Ave., Winslow ME. Securities offered through Raymond James Financial Services Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC

Events Planning Guide

WEDDINGS ■ BANQUETS PARTIES

Plan your winter wedding & events

VISIONS

Flowers & Bridal Designs

~ Pine Acres Mall ~
895 KMD, Oakland, ME 04963

~ FULL SERVICE FLORIST ~
~ WE DELIVER ~

www.visionsflowers.com
207-465-8200

To be included in this section, contact

Marlene at 692-3040 or

Diane at 615-9007

THE VILLAGE JEWELER

Full Service Jeweler

582-6676

MANY WEDDING ITEMS

On Site Goldsmith

Service persons:
Barry Bolduc and Daniel Lane
221 Water St., Gardiner
Mon-Sat 9-5 and Fri 9-7

Waterville Elks

Banquet and Conference Center

Customized Weddings and Events

Full Service Bar • Anniversaries
Family Reunions • Retirements • Business Meetings
Funeral Receptions • Trade Shows

SEATING 50 to 410

76 Industrial St., Waterville • 873-4235 • banquet905@wildblue.net