



Maracana Stadium

Introduction

I have a dream.

I'm standing in Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the year 2014, with a band of close friends and coaches from the States. Surrounding us are 95,000 screaming soccer enthusiasts eagerly anticipating the United States' first World Cup Final appearance against the host nation, five-time World Cup winners Brazil.

The stadium pulsates in a sea of yellow and blue – the colors of Brazil – punctuated by tiny bands of the red, white and blue of American fans. The throbbing, rhythmic

beat of samba drums surrounds us as Brazilian fans sing passionately, trying to weave a magic spell calling for victory for their heroes.

Brazilian fans believe God is a Brazilian fan and there is no option but winning. Our Brazilian hosts laugh and sing with us in the pubs but politely remind us the suggestion Brazil could lose to the U.S. is absurdly ridiculous and completely unacceptable.

They say Americans don't deserve to win the Cup. To them, we can't understand soccer, lacking the passion and love for the game that only a Brazilian could understand.

Allowing the arrogant Americans to win the World Cup would be too much for Brazil to bear. The odds makers agree, favoring Brazil to win 3-0, fueling a sense of resignation that lingers over many of the American supporters.

A few privately admit pessimistically the best they hope for is avoiding embarrassment. For them, losing only 1-0 or in penalty kicks to Brazil would constitute a moral victory of epic proportions. No reasonable people truly believe they could beat Brazil, the heart and soul of soccer.

Brazil starts the game brilliantly, passing the ball around the first two minutes without the U.S. getting a single touch of the ball. The crowd roars its approval at Brazil's superior technical skills. Their confidence borders on arrogance and they start playing to the crowd, more