

# American idea of 'football' pales to British version



**TWO MINUTES FOR CROSSCHECKING**

**PETER HOCKADAY**

Did anybody see the United States take down Mexico, 2-0, in a World Cup Qualifier last night on ESPN2?

Did anybody see the United States beat one of the world's most storied teams, in "the world's game?"

Did anybody care?

Mexicans did, and so did British people.

"Football," to an American, means helmets with decals, Ray Lewis and the Super Bowl. To a

British person, it means "life." British people track every World Cup Qualifier, every Serie A (that's Italy's premier league) game, and of course every English team — all 90 of them.

English soccer is like the NBA, NFL, MLB and NHL all rolled into one. It starts at the top with Carling Premier League teams such as Manchester United and Arsenal — both with huge fan bases and payrolls over £15 million (almost \$22 million) — and ends in Division Three, with teams such as Chesterfield and Kidderminster.

But the non-Premiership leagues aren't minor in any sense of the word. The best feature of English soccer is that at the end of each season, the top team from each league moves up, and the bottom team moves down a league. "Promotion" and "relegation" are two terms that, when used in English

soccer, can mean the world to a team.

Just imagine if the NFL could get rid of the Bengals and replace them with a European Football League team — say, the London Monarchs. The Clippers would have been long gone from the NBA, replaced by some Argentinian basketball team.

Back to Great Britain, where even the best Premier League team moves up and gets a chance to play in the Champions League — where the winners of each league in Europe compete against each other.

Then there's the FA Cup, by far the best tournament in all of sports, in which all English soccer teams compete. Think of March Madness with a 90-team field. Think of the NBA playoffs 10 times over. There is no overtime in the later rounds of the FA

Cup, only "replays" when two teams tie. If you know anything about soccer, you know that happens a lot. Sometimes, even the final is played again and again until the two teams produce a victor.

There are rewards for winning the FA Cup as well. The team left standing after the weeks of competition plays in the European Cup Winners' Cup, which is akin to the Champions League.

The pinnacle of English soccer is "the treble," when a team wins the Premiership, the FA Cup and the Cup Winners' Cup in the same year. That's like the Lakers having the best record in the league, winning the NBA Championship and then the Olympics, all in the space of a couple months.

So, not sold on British soccer yet?

Just take a look at the English

fans. If you want drunk and rowdy, go to a Raiders game. If you want hooliganism and fans that would die for their team, go to a Manchester United game. Most fans don't sit — they stand in weather conditions more brutal than Minnesota in January.

Have you ever seen somebody die at a baseball game? Didn't think so. Not that dying at sporting events is necessarily a good thing, just that British fans have more passion than anybody in the world.

In the end, English soccer captures the essence of sport: A loyal, passionate fan base, tradition and a postseason that truly leaves a champion.

Ahh, if only American sports could be that ... well, British.

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## Stanford, UCLA survive to set up Saturday showdown

LOS ANGELES — Casey Jacobsen scored 22 points, three big ones in the final 1:30, as top-ranked Stanford blew most of a 16-point lead before beating Southern California 70-68 Thursday night.

The game went down to the final second, with USC's Brandon Granville futilely throwing up an air ball as the clock ran out for the Trojans, who haven't beaten a No. 1 team in 31 years.

The Trojans (18-9, 8-7) trailed 41-34 at halftime and were behind by as much as 53-37 early in the second half before rallying to close to 65-62 with 1:52 remaining.

Ryan Mendez, who had 16 points for the Cardinal, provided the difference when he made both free throws on a one-and-one for a 70-66 lead with 13.8 seconds remaining.

Sam Clancy scored on a dunk for USC with 7.2 seconds left, then Jacobsen missed the first of a one-and-one with 6.3 seconds left. The Trojans brought the ball up but

could not get off a decent shot.

Jacobsen scored on a drive to give the Cardinal a 67-62 lead with 1:33 remaining, then made one of two free throws for a 68-64 lead with 31 seconds left.

Clancy led USC with 16 points and Brian Scalabrino had 11.

Stanford moves on to Pauley Pavilion, where the Cardinal will play UCLA (No. 18 ESPN/USA Today, No. 12 AP) on Saturday and try to avenge its only loss of the season. The Bruins knocked the Cardinal out of the No. 1 spot for a while with a 79-73 victory at Stanford on Feb. 3.

Meanwhile, the Trojans have lost five of their last eight as they struggle to try to earn an NCAA playoff berth.

Jason Collins had eight points in the last seven minutes of the first half as the Cardinal opened its seven-point lead.

Jacobsen had 11 points in the first 20 minutes, while Clancy and

Scalabrino kept USC close with eight points each in the half.

USC played Stanford tough in their earlier meeting this season, Feb. 1 at Maples Center. The Trojans led 57-54 with 7:05 left and were behind by only a point in the final two minutes before the Cardinal pulled away to win 77-71.

Southern California had spent most of the season ranked in the Top 25, rising as high as 12th early in December. But the Trojans dropped out of the rankings the second week of February and have gone into a slump that included their worst home loss ever, a 105-61 defeat by Arizona.

The Trojans last beat a No. 1 team when they shocked UCLA 87-86 at Pauley Pavilion on March 6, 1970.

### Second-place UCLA edges Cal

LOS ANGELES — Matt Barnes scored 13 points, including the go-ahead basket with 1:03 remaining, as UCLA (No. 18 ESPN/USA Today, No. 12 AP) defeated California 79-75 on Thursday night for its

eighth straight win.

The Bruins (20-6) held onto second place in the Pac-10 at 12-2 and set up a showdown for first place with No. 1 Stanford on Saturday.

UCLA's victory avenged a 29-point loss at Cal a month ago and snapped Cal's four-game road winning streak. The Golden Bears (19-8, 10-5) had won 18 of their previous 22.

Barnes' basket snapped a tie at 74, then Cal was forced to foul Jason Kapono, who made both for a 78-74 lead with 24.8 seconds left.

Shantay Legans made one of two free throws to draw Cal within three. Cal controlled the rebound, but Dennis Gates missed a three-pointer and Barnes was fouled in grabbing the rebound. Barnes made one of two as UCLA used an 18-8 run to close out the game.

Sean Lampley led the Golden Bears (19-8, 10-5) with 19 points and 13 rebounds. Legans added 16 points.

The Bruins trailed by seven in

the second half. They scored eight straight, including four by Earl Watson, to take their first lead, 69-67, since early in the half.

It became a one-point game until Barnes' basket off an assist by Watson put UCLA ahead for good. Watson led the Bruins with 20 points. Kapono and Billy Knight added 14 each. Knight had four of UCLA's eight three-pointers. Dan Gadzuric had 11 points and 11 rebounds, although UCLA was outrebounded 34-27.

Cal opened the second half with a 13-4 run to take a 50-44 lead as UCLA missed its shots and Gadzuric committed two turnovers.

UCLA coach Steve Lavin, on probation by the Pac-10 for the rest of the season because of a tirade against an official Saturday at Oregon State, was noticeably subdued. He clapped his hand over his mouth when the Bruins were called for traveling early in the game.

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