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US soccer struggles against tiny Martinique

A wobbly 3-2 win over minnow

By **FRED GOODALL**
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Jordan Morris put the United States back on track in the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Morris' second goal of the game broke a tie in the 76th minute, and the U.S. edged tiny Martinique 3-2 Wednesday night after wasting a two-goal lead against a team that is not even a member of FIFA.

That hardly mattered to Jordan and his teammates, though, who rebounded from a disappointing 1-1 tie against Panama in their tournament opener last weekend.

"It's all about team, all about the three points," Morris said after the Americans improved to 31-1-4 during the Gold Cup group stage.

Martinique "made it very tough for us," Morris added. "It was a battle all night."

Failing to break through in the first half, the U.S. built a 2-0 lead on goals by Omar Gonzalez in the 53rd minute and Morris in the 64th.

But Martinique, a French overseas department, tied the score on a pair of goals by Kevin Parsemain in the 66th and 74th minutes. The first was a shot from the edge of the arc that took a bounce and went in off goalkeeper Brad Guzan's left arm. The second was a shot by Johan Audel that hit a leg of Parsemain, who was down on the field, and deflected in over Guzan, who had stopped Parsemain's initial attempt.

Morris got his fourth international goal just 98 seconds later. He spotted Gyasi Zardes streaking in on the left side, and Zardes laid the ball back for the 22-year-old forward, who scored with a right-footed shot from just past the penalty spot.

"They didn't stop running, didn't stop playing," Gonzalez said. "We need to be smarter, more focused throughout the entire game."

Wood Bat Tournament starts today

The Daily Astorian

Seaside's annual Wood Bat Tournament gets underway today at Broadway Field, with eight teams taking part in the three-day tournament.

The Junior Baseball (17-and-under) action begins this morning, with Scappoose vs. Warrenton at 10 a.m., followed by: Churchill vs. St. Helens, 12:30 p.m.; Central vs. Madison, 3 p.m.; and Baker vs. Seaside, 5:30 p.m.

Consolation and championship bracket action continues Friday and Saturday, beginning at 10 a.m. each day.



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren
Seattle Mariners' Nelson Cruz is greeted in the dugout after he hit a three-run home run during the eighth inning of the team's baseball game against the Oakland Athletics in Seattle in July. Cruz is leading the American League in RBIs with 70 at the break despite playing through leg injuries during big chunks of the first half.

Mariners in awkward spot entering 2nd half of season

Is Seattle a wild card contender or also-ran?

By **TIM BOOTH**
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Trying to define who the Seattle Mariners are heading into the second half of the season is going to be a challenge that leaves the club in a difficult spot. The team only has a short time in July to decide how to move forward for the final two months.

Are they in position to be wild card contenders in the American League? Or would they be better served by punting on an injury-filled season and building for the future prior to the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline?

In the view of general manager Jerry Dipoto, those questions are one and the same with the Mariners four games back in the wild card standings following the All-Star break.

"We are playing in a league of 15 teams, I believe 12 are within five-ish games of a playoff spot. We're one of them and we have as much talent as anybody else on that board," Dipoto said before the break. "We've seen what this team can do when they're clicking on all cylinders, so as we move forward, whether it be for the second half of 2017 or 2018 and beyond, our goal is to continue to build onto the core of this team."

Seattle could have made the situation far simpler for Dipoto if not for an awful two weeks prior to the break when the Mariners failed to take advantage of a favorable schedule. In the final 14 games before the break, the Mariners went 4-10 just as they were finally getting closer to full health after patching together a lineup, rotation and bullpen since opening day.

Most puzzling was that the slump came after a promising period during which the Mariners appeared ready to be contenders.

"We have underperformed, truly," Dipoto said. "Particularly over the course of the last couple of weeks. We just haven't played well,



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren
Seattle Mariners pitcher Felix Hernandez, who at this time in May was on the disabled list, sits in the dugout during a baseball game against the Colorado Rockies in Seattle. Trying to define who the Seattle Mariners are heading into the second half of the season is a challenge and leaves the club in a difficult spot of only having a short time in July to decide how to move forward for the final two months of the season.

UP NEXT: MARINERS

- Seattle Mariners (43-47)
- at Chicago White Sox (38-49)
- Friday, 5:10 p.m. TV: RTNW

and we are at probably our most, the longest stretch of positive health that we've had since opening day, and we've played perhaps as poorly as we've played all year long."

Inconsistency has defined most of Seattle's season. The Mariners have been sloppy at times, making careless mistakes. The offense has disappeared for stretches or the bullpen has failed to close out winnable games. During other stretches, the Mariners have

shown the punch to be the playoff contender that most believed them to be before the season began.

Sitting at 43-47 is probably where Seattle deserves to be. But are they markedly better or worse? That's the unknown.

"We have most of the guys healthy. We just have to be consistent. That's been the issue," slugger Nelson Cruz said.

THE GOOD: Cruz is leading the American League in RBIs with 70 at the break despite playing through leg injuries during big chunks of the first half. When healthy, Jean Segura has been the best hitter in the AL and Seattle may have figured out its outfield of the future between Mitch Haniger, Guillermo Heredia and Ben Gamel, who was hitting .323 at the break.

On the pitching side, Ariel Miranda wasn't supposed to be in the rotation at the start of the season but injuries made him the ace for much of the first half. He went 7-4 with a 4.15 ERA. James Paxton, when healthy, showed signs of being at the top of Seattle's rotation going forward.

THE BAD: Injuries. Paxton, Cruz, Segura, Haniger, Robinson Cano, Felix Hernandez and Hisashi Iwakuma all missed time with injuries and while all but Iwakuma have returned, the impact of their absences may ultimately be too much to overcome. Kyle Seager finished the first half hitting just .248. Mike Zunino had a huge June but was that an anomaly or can that become the norm? Seattle's bullpen has been overused due to the injuries and that led to inconsistency.

WHAT'S AHEAD: Seattle's schedule makes the first two weeks after the All-Star break critical in determining where the Mariners go. After a six-game road trip, the Mariners return home for 10 games against both New York teams and Boston. If facing the top two teams in the AL East isn't difficult enough, it's just the precursor to an awful August where Seattle plays just seven games at home and has road trips of nine and 12 games.

Westbrook, Biles win athlete of year honors at The ESPYS

Manning mocks his reputation for control

By **BETH HARRIS**
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Russell Westbrook won best male athlete at The ESPYS, while Olympic gymnast Simone Biles earned best female athlete honors Wednesday night.

The 25th annual show honoring the past year's top athletes and sports moments was hosted by Peyton Manning, who humorously mocked his reputation as a control freak and an overexposed commercial pitcher in the retired NFL quarterback's opening monologue.

Westbrook was the NBA MVP, led the league in scoring and set a record

for most triple-doubles in a season with 42. The Oklahoma City Thunder star won the trophy over Kris Bryant of the Chicago Cubs, Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins and Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps.

"It's been an unbelievable journey for me," said Westbrook, a fashion fiend who adjusted his black shirt and green pants with wide white stripes before he spoke. "I want to make sure I look good first."

Biles became the most decorated U.S. Olympic gymnast at the Rio de Janeiro Games, winning five medals, including four golds and a bronze. She beat out Olympic swimmer Katie Ledecky, WNBA star Candace Parker and Serena Williams for the honor.

"Ever since Rio it has been an

amazing year," Biles said. "I want to thank you all for believing in me."

She was one of three double winners. Biles also won best female Olympic athlete.

Phelps won record-setting performance for extending his record Olympic medal haul and as best male Olympic athlete.

Aaron Rodgers won best NFL player and shared best play with then-Green Bay Packers teammate Jared Cook. Another Packer, Jordy Nelson, earned best comeback honors.

The biggest ovation of the night belonged to former first lady Michelle Obama, who posthumously honored Eunice Kennedy Shriver with the Arthur Ashe Courage Award for championing the rights and acceptance of people

with intellectual disabilities through her founding of Special Olympics. Her son, Tim Shriver, accepted the trophy.

"Once a great first lady, still a great first lady," Shriver told Obama as the crowd roared its approval.

The Patriots and Falcons shared the best-game award for the Super Bowl, won in a furious comeback by New England.

LeBron James, a five-time winner last year, was named best NBA player. Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels won best MLB player, while Crosby won best NHL player.

The show's most bizarre bit involved Bill Murray accepting the best moment award for the Chicago Cubs' World Series victory that ended a 108-year championship drought.



Chris Pizzello/Invision

Host Peyton Manning appears on stage at the conclusion of the ESPYS at the Microsoft Theater on Wednesday in Los Angeles.