

Soccer

US to miss 2018 World Cup following loss to Trinidad

By RONALD BLUMAP
Associated Press

COUVA, Trinidad (AP) — Twenty-eight years after the United States ended a four-decade World Cup absence with a stunning victory at Trinidad, the Americans' chances for the 2018 tournament in Russia ended on this island nation off the coast of Venezuela in even more astonishing fashion.

Needing only a tie and confident of victory against the world's 99th-ranked team, the U.S. was eliminated from World Cup contention Tuesday night with a 2-1 loss to Trinidad and Tobago that ended a run of seven straight American appearances at soccer's showcase.

"We let down an entire nation today," said defender Omar Gonzalez, whose 17th-minute own goal attempting to clear a cross started the collapse.

Alvin Jones doubled the deal in the 37th minute with a 35-yard strike, and the Americans were unable to rebound. Teenage star Christian Pulisic scored in the 47th and Clint Dempsey, trying to make



United States' Christian Pulisic, (10) is comforted after losing 2-1 against Trinidad and Tobago during a 2018 World Cup qualifying soccer match in Couva, Trinidad.

it to fourth World Cup, was denied by goalkeeper Adrian Foncette's leaping save in the 69th and hit a post from 22 yards in the 77th. Pulisic's shot in the 87th was saved by Foncette.

"If I said disappointment, it would be an understatement," goalkeeper Tim Howard said.

Back in 1989, Trinidad needed merely a tie to reach its first World Cup, but Paul Caligiuri's long-range goal in the 30th minute put the U.S. in the tournament for the first time since 1950.

That game was at National

Stadium in the capital of Port-of-Spain. With Trinidad already eliminated, this one was played before a few hundred fans at Ato Boldon Stadium, 24 miles to the south.

The U.S. entered its final qualifier with a berth uncertain for the first time since 1989. Home losses to Mexico last November and Costa Rica left the Americans little margin for error.

Even a defeat could have earned a berth, but only if Panama and Honduras both lost. And if the U.S. and only one of those rivals lost, the Americans would have finished

fourth and advanced to a playoff next month against Australia.

Panama trailed 1-0 and halftime and Honduras was behind 2-1, but both rallied. Gabriel Torres scored in the 52nd minute on a shot that did not appear to cross the goal line, and Honduras went ahead on Guillermo Ochoa's own goal in the 54th and Romell Quioto's goal in the 60th.

At that point, the 28th-ranked Americans were playoff bound, but Ramon Torres scored in the 88th minute to give Panama a 2-1 win, a third-place finish with 13 points and its first World Cup berth. Honduras finished fourth on goal difference and goes to the playoff. The Americans, who would have qualified with 13 points because of a superior goal difference, instead had 12 and finished fifth in the hexagonal.

"It's a blemish for us," coach Bruce Arena said. "We should not be staying home for this World Cup and take the responsibility for that."

Shocked American players slumped on the bench, and Matt Besler sat on the field after the final whistle as Panama's game ended and then Costa Rica's. At the end, dejected U.S. players filed into their locker rooms with blank looks.

"We foolishly brought Trinidad into the game with the own goal," Arena said. "That was a big goal for Trinidad psychologically. That got them motivated."

Missing the World Cup is a devastating blow to the U.S. Soccer

Federation, which has steadily built the sport in the last quarter-century with the help of sponsors and television partners. It also is a trauma for Fox, which broadcasts the next three World Cups after taking the U.S. rights from ESPN. The USSF hopes to co-host the 2026 tournament with Mexico and Canada, and Morocco is the only other bidder.

"Every time you have a setback you have to look at things, re-evaluate and get better," 38-year-old goalkeeper Tim Howard said. "And as a program we have to get better. This hex proved that. There's some good teams on the up and up and we've got our work cut out for us."

After an 0-2 start in the hexagonal last fall under Jurgen Klinsmann, the USSF replaced him last November with Arena, the American coach from 1998-2006. The team revived with home wins over Honduras and Trinidad last spring and draws at Panama and Mexico. But the 2-0 defeat to Costa Rica in New Jersey at the start of Labor Day weekend proved one hurdle too many to overcome.

USFF President Sunil Gulati said the result felt unreal. The federation will begin the evaluation process Wednesday.

"It's a huge disappointment for everybody: for players, for the staff, for coaches, for the federation," Gulati said. "It's not good enough, obviously. In some sense, 2022 starts tomorrow for us."

College Football

After starting as walk-on, Falk earned way to Pac-12 stardom

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

PULLMAN, Wash. — Luke Falk didn't draw a lot of interest coming out of high school in Logan, Utah.

At one point in his high school career, the quarterback seemed destined for Florida State, only to have that opportunity dissolve. In the end, his choices appeared to be Cornell, maybe Idaho and maybe Wyoming. Falk likely would have headed for the Ivy League if not for head coach Mike Leach's arrival at Washington State.

Even then, there was no guarantee of a scholarship or even an opportunity when Falk arrived in Pullman in 2013 and was seventh on the depth chart as a walk-on.

"The biggest thing is they gave me an equal opportunity," Falk said. "A fair shot to compete with guys on scholarship."

"The stars kind of aligned here at Washington State," he said.

For both Falk and the eighth-ranked Cougars.

Washington State (6-0, 3-0 Pac-12) is on a roll

behind Falk, including a big 30-27 win over Southern California two weeks ago and a 33-10 win over Oregon last weekend that put the Cougars into the Top 10.

Through it all, Falk has continued to raise eyebrows across the college football world. The senior is threatening to break nearly every major passing record in the Pac-12 Conference — surpassing names like Marcus Mariota, Matt Barkley, Jared Goff and Sean Mannion.

Through the first six games of this season, Falk has thrown for 2,000 yards with 19 touchdowns and only two interceptions. He is completing 71.8 percent of his passes. He has thrown for 12,893 yards with 108 touchdowns for his college career, setting school records for career TD passes, passing yardage and total offense. Falk is tied with Jason Gesser as the winningest quarterback in program history with 24 victories.

Falk also already holds Pac-12 records for pass completions and total plays and is the NCAA active



In this Sept. 23, 2017, file photo, Washington State quarterback Luke Falk (4) looks for a receiver during a game against Nevada in Pullman, Wash.

leader in passing yards and touchdowns. He is closing on Pac-12 career touchdown leader Matt Barkley of USC, who threw for 116.

"He's a special talent," Oregon coach Willie Taggart said. "He's a kid who'll be playing on Sunday."

Despite such accolades and ongoing Heisman talk, Falk remains a small-town boy who seems to fit in well in Pullman, which has only 30,000 residents — two-thirds of them Washington State students. He remains humble and

approachable. He pauses to take selfies with fans. He still wears a battered baseball cap he bought his first day on campus.

He credits an embarrassing loss to FCS Portland State in 2015 with lighting a fire under the program.

Falk and the offense went silent during the first game of the 2015 season, and Portland State hung a 24-17 loss on the Cougars at home.

That could have knocked the program off the rails, but it didn't, Falk said. "We reset," Falk said.

"There was nothing we could have done about that game. It was in the past."

The Cougars played at Rutgers next, and Falk threw for 478 yards and four touchdowns in a comeback victory.

Since that loss, the Cougars have gone 23-8.

"We still have rough patches," Falk said. "But we've hit our step and hit our stride and played with confidence."

Falk is the latest in a string of record-setting quarterbacks produced by Leach, an architect of the Air Raid offense.

The Air Raid is well-suited to Falk's strengths, as he fires short passes all over the field. He doesn't run much, he finds the open receiver in a crowd, and he's tough enough to take the inevitable sacks.

He's drawn the admiration of Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll.

"Their quarterback is so good," Carroll said recently. "We've been watching them for years and just watching him pull himself off the carpet so many times after getting pounded, and just

hanging in there. He's a fantastic football player."

Falk follows a long line of great quarterbacks to make their way through Pullman, a list that includes Jack Thompson, Mark Rypien, Drew Bledsoe, Ryan Leaf and Gesser. Yet none of them were asked to run a system as intricate as Leach's, which is why the coach regularly praises his quarterback for his smarts and comprehension.

"He's a constant achiever," Leach said recently.

Falk has also evolved. "He's becoming more of a vocal leader," said running back Jamal Morrow. "He's calm and relaxed."

Falk is now considered a top NFL quarterback prospect for the 2018 draft after passing on a chance to leave after his junior season.

But hints of that long-ago walk-on remain. So don't expect him to give up that sweat-stained Washington State hat anytime soon.

"I take that hat every-where," Falk said. "My mom hates that hat, but I love that hat. It's a good reminder and I like the way it fits me."

BRIEFLY

Pendleton Little League holding annual meeting

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Little League is holding its annual meeting later this month and interested volunteers are asked to attend.

The meeting, which is open to the public, will be held on Oct. 25 at 6:30 p.m. at Blue Mountain Community College's Science & Tech building room ST200. The meeting will comprise of board nominations and elections for the 2018 season, and discussions on the 2018 season.

For more information, visit Pendleton Little League on Facebook.

Eastern Oregon Gymnastics places 4th in Hillsboro

HILLSBORO — Gymnasts from Eastern Oregon Gymnastics in Pendleton traveled to Hillsboro on Saturday for another competition.

The gymnasts teamed up for a fourth place finish out of nine teams with 102.125 total points. In the Level 4 Compulsory class, Pendleton's Grace Chay had the best finish with a second place in vault, while North Powder's Felicia Murphy was third in floor and fourth in both vault and beam.

And in Level 5, Pendleton's Natalie White was the top competitor taking sixth place in vault and floor, and an eighth place finish in beam.

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE MEN'S SOCCER									
Wednesday									
Walla Walla at BMCC, 3:15 p.m.									
Friday									
EQU at Multnomah, 3 p.m.									
Saturday									
Columbia Basin at BMCC, 2:15 p.m.									
EQU at Warner Pacific, 9:45 p.m.									
COLLEGE FOOTBALL									
Saturday									
Southern Oregon at EOU, 6 p.m.									
Baseball									
MLB POSTSEASON									
DIVISION SERIES (Best-of-5; x-if necessary)									
American League									
Houston 3, Boston 1									
Oct. 5: Houston 8, Boston 2									
Oct. 6: Houston 8, Boston 2									
Oct. 8: Houston 10, Houston 3									
Cleveland 2, New York 2									
Monday: Houston 5, Boston 4									
Oct. 5: Cleveland 4, New York 0									
Oct. 6: Cleveland 9, New York 8, 13 innings									
Oct. 8: New York 1, Cleveland 0									
Monday: New York 7, Cleveland 3									
Wednesday: New York (Sabathia 14-5) at Cleveland (Kluber 18-4), 5:08 p.m. (FS1)									
National League									
Chicago 2, Washington 1									
Oct. 6: Chicago 3, Washington 0									
Oct. 7: Washington 6, Chicago 3									
Monday: Chicago 2, Washington 1									
Wednesday: Washington (Roark 13-11) at Chicago (Arrieta 14-10), 2:38 p.m. (TBS)									
x-Thursday, Oct. 12: Chicago at Washington, 2:38 p.m. (TBS)									
Los Angeles 3, Arizona 0									
Oct. 6: Los Angeles 9, Arizona 5									
Oct. 7: Los Angeles 8, Arizona 5									
Monday: Los Angeles 3, Arizona 1									
Football									
NFL									
AMERICAN CONFERENCE									
East									
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA				
Buffalo	3	2	0	.600	89	74			
N.Y. Jets	3	2	0	.600	92	106			
New England	3	2	0	.600	148	142			
Miami	2	2	0	.500	41	67			
South									
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA				
Jacksonville	3	2	0	.600	139	83			
Houston	2	3	0	.400	144	130			
Tennessee	2	3	0	.400	110	142			
Indianapolis	2	3	0	.400	97	159			
North									
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA				
Pittsburgh	3	2	0	.600	99	89			
Baltimore	3	2	0	.600	90	97			
Cincinnati	2	3	0	.400	84	83			
Cleveland	0	5	0	.000	77	124			
West									
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA				
Kansas City	5	0	0	1.000	164	111			
Denver	3	1	0	.750	98	74			
Oakland	2	3	0	.400	108	109			
L.A. Chargers	1	4	0	.200	99	115			
NATIONAL CONFERENCE									
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA				
Philadelphia	4	1	0	.800	137	99			
Washington	2	2	0	.500	91	89			
Dallas	2	3	0	.400	125	132			
N.Y. Giants	0	5	0	.000	82	122			
South									
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA				
Carolina	4	1	0	.800	105	94			
Atlanta	3	1	0	.750	104	89			
New Orleans	2	2	0	.500	93	78			
Tampa Bay	2	2	0	.500	85	83			
North									
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA				
Green Bay	4	1	0	.800	137	112			
Detroit	3	2	0	.600	123	97			
Minnesota	2	2	0	.500	79	76			
Chicago	1	3	0	.250	61	104			
West									
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA				
Seattle	3	2	0	.600	110	87			
L.A. Rams	3	2	0	.600	152	121			
Arizona	2	3	0	.400	81	125			
San Francisco	0	5	0	.000	89	120			
Week 6									
Thursday's Game									
Philadelphia at Carolina, 5:25 p.m.									
Sunday's Games									
Green Bay at Minnesota, 10 a.m.									
Cleveland at Houston, 10 a.m.									
Detroit at New Orleans, 10 a.m.									
Miami at Atlanta, 10 a.m.									
New England at N.Y. Jets, 10 a.m.									
Chicago at Baltimore, 10 a.m.									
San Francisco at Washington, 10 a.m.									
Tampa Bay at Arizona, 1:05 p.m.									
L.A. Rams at Jacksonville, 1:05 p.m.									
L.A. Chargers at Oakland, 1:25 p.m.									
Pittsburgh at Kansas City, 1:25 p.m.									
N.Y. Giants at Denver, 5:30 p.m.									
Open: Buffalo, Dallas, Seattle, Cincinnati									
Monday's Game									
Indianapolis at Tennessee, 5:30 p.m.									
NCAA									
Top 25 Schedule									
Friday									
No. 2 Clemson at Syracuse, 4 p.m. (ESPN)									
No. 8 Washington St. at Cal, 7:30 p.m. (ESPN)									
Saturday									
Arkansas at No. 1 Alabama, 4:15 p.m. (ESPN)									
Missouri at No. 4 Georgia, 4:30 p.m.									
No. 5 Washington at Arizona St., 7:45 p.m. (ESPN)									
No. 6 TCU at Kansas State, 9 a.m. (FS1)									
Purdue at No. 7 Wisconsin, 12:30 p.m.									
No. 9 Ohio State at Nebraska, 4:30 p.m. (FS1)									
No. 10 Auburn at LSU, 12:30 p.m. (CBS)									
Georgia Tech at No. 11 Miami, 12:30 p.m. (ABC)									
Baylor at No. 14 Oklahoma State, 12:30 p.m. (FS1)									
No. 17 Michigan at Indiana, 9 a.m. (ABC)									
Cincinnati at No. 18 South Florida, 4:30 p.m.									
(ESPN)									
Boise State at No. 19 San Diego State, 7:30 p.m. (CBSN)									
No. 20 Nich State at Pittsburgh, 9 a.m.									
No. 21 Michigan State at Minnesota, 5 p.m.									
East Carolina at No. 22 UCF, 4 p.m. (CBSN)									
Oregon at No. 23 Stanford, 8 p.m.									
No. 24 Texas Tech at West Virginia, 9 a.m. (ESPN)									
No. 25 Navy at Memphis, 12:45 p.m. (ESPN)									
Soccer									
MLS									
EASTERN CONFERENCE									
W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA				
Toronto FC	19	5	8	65	71	35			
New York City FC	16	8	8	56	53	39			
Atlanta United FC	15	9	8	53	68	38			
Chicago	15	10	7	52	58	42			
Columbus	15	12	5	50	50	47			
New York	13	12	7	46	51	46			
Philadelphia	10	13	9	39	42	43			
Montreal	11	15	6	39	50	54			
New England	11	15	6	39	48	58			
WESTERN CONFERENCE									
W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA				
Orlando City	10	13	9	39	38	51			
D.C. United	9	18	5	32	30	54			
WESTERN CONFERENCE									
W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA				
Vancouver	15	11	6	51	48	46			
Sporting K.C.	12	7	12	48	38	25			
Seattle	12	9	11	47	45	39			
Portland	13	11	8	47	54	49			
Houston	11	10	10	43	52	44			
FC Dallas	10	9	13	43	43	43			
Real Salt Lake	12	14	6	42	47	53			
San Jose	12	14	6	42	35	57			
Minnesota United									