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Striker Bobby Wood performs well in Copa América

By Mike Street
Special to The Asian Reporter

The United States has dominated several international sports, but soccer has never been one of them. A surge of young talent bodes well for the future, however, led by striker Bobby Wood. Wood showed his value at the Copa América last month, both with his presence and absence, as the United States tied its best finish ever in the tournament.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the Copa América, a tournament traditionally held among South American teams plus a handful of invitees. This year, those invitees included the U.S. and Mexico, for a special version of the tournament held in the United States.

On its home turf, the U.S. team hoped to show how far they had come since placing fourth place at the 1995 Copa América, the team's best finish ever at the tournament. Coach Jürgen Klinsmann hoped Bobby Wood would be the star striker the U.S. has often lacked.

Wood was born in Honolulu to an African-American father and a mother with Japanese roots. He played for a California youth league before drawing the attention of TSV 1860 Munich in Germany. He rose through their youth ranks quickly, becoming a starter for the club at the age of 18.

Last season, the 23-year-old played with Berlin Union in the second tier of Germany's Bundesliga, setting a league scoring record for an American-born player. This led to a four-year deal for Wood with Hamburg in the first tier of the world-class Bundesliga.

Since Wood's 2013 debut with the U.S. national team, he has amassed 23 caps and scored six goals. Klinsmann expected Wood to electrify the U.S. attack in the Copa América, though there were few chances in their opening match against Colombia.

Although the U.S. lost 0-2, Wood played his role well, taking the ball deep into enemy territory to set up Clint Dempsey. Wood maintained possession well and held off aggressive defenders to allow his teammates to get open.

In their next match, against Costa Rica, the U.S. needed to win to advance. Wood set up the first goal by drawing a penalty kick when opposing fullback Cristian Gamboa pushed him in the back; Dempsey hammered home the subsequent free kick.

Dempsey fed Jermaine Jones for Team USA's second goal, then notched his second assist of the half by setting up Wood. Wood quickly settled the pass with his back to the goal, then spun and drilled the ball inside the near post. Graham Zusi scored the fourth goal to seal the 4-0 victory.

Needing a win against Paraguay to ensure a quarter-final berth, Wood harassed the defense, drawing both attention and rough challenges. These eventually wore on



Wood, who shoved a Paraguayan player, drawing his first yellow card, one that would come back to haunt him.

Dempsey scored the match's lone goal, and Wood nearly set up a second goal with a great feed to Gyasi Zardes on a breakaway counter, but Zardes couldn't pull the trigger. The U.S. held on for the 1-0 victory, winning the group when Colombia fell to Costa Rica.

In the U.S.'s quarterfinal match against Ecuador, Wood became a constant thorn in the Ecuadorian defense. He held off fullbacks to feed his teammates and drew defensive attention to open up space for runs inside. In the 22nd minute, Wood drew defenders near the corner, freeing up Jones. Jones received Wood's pass and served up a beautiful cross to Dempsey, who headed it home.

Wood repeated this formula in the second half, this time attracting the defense to set up a series of passes between Dempsey and Zardes that led to the squad's second goal. Ecuador responded with a goal and threatened several more times, but the U.S. hung on, 2-1, to advance to the

SENSATIONAL STRIKER. Bobby Wood (#7) of the United States battles Francisco Calvo (#3) of Costa Rica during a Copa América Centenario group A soccer match at Soldier Field in Chicago. Wood, age 23, debuted on the U.S. national team in 2013. (AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast)

semifinal match. Unfortunately, Wood involved himself in a second-half fracas between teammate Alejandro Bedoya and Ecuador's Antonio Valencia. Rushing into the melee earned Wood another yellow card, which disqualified him for the semifinal match against Argentina.

Facing the top team in the world presents a challenge under the best of circumstances, but missing key players makes it nearly impossible. With Wood, Jones, and Bedoya all suspended for penalties, the U.S. team had little chance against Argentina, who prevailed 4-0.

Argentina danced, spun, and passed crisply around and through the American defense, and the U.S. failed to get off a single shot in return. Had the U.S. been at full strength, it's unlikely the outcome would have been different, but it might have been a more competitive match.

After losing to Argentina, the U.S.'s third-place game would be a rematch against Colombia. Wood, Jones, and Bedoya all returned, but fullback John Brooks and defensive midfielder Fabian Johnson were out due to injury. Those defensive changes might have made the difference, as Colombia broke through the right side of the U.S. defense in the 31st minute to score the game's only goal.

Wood and the U.S. offense certainly had their chances to respond. Dempsey sent a brilliant free kick curving to the upper right hand corner of the goal, and only a fantastic save by Colombian keeper David Ospina kept the ball out of the net.

For his part, Wood overcame an aggressive challenge by Colombia's defense that took him to the ground. Incredibly, he maintained possession, got back on his feet, and fired a shot that ricocheted off the right post. On two other occasions, Wood fed passes to Dempsey and Zardes that might have found the goal, but neither player could capitalize.

Though the U.S. only won fourth place at Copa América Centenario, there is still plenty for U.S. fans to be optimistic about. The U.S. only looked foolish against Argentina, but many teams have experienced that same feeling. In every other match, Team USA appeared solid, and its young players offer further hope. In Bobby Wood, the United States may finally have the world-class striker to get them to the next level.

Filipino man charged with stealing the identities of high-profile victims

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — A Filipino man has been charged with stealing the identities of high-profile victims to take money from them.

Federal prosecutors in New Jersey have announced charges against 35-year-old Peter Locsin of Palisay City in the Philippines. He was arrested on unrelated charges in May in the Philippines, where he remains in custody.

Prosecutors say he conspired with others to steal people's

personal information online or through phone calls and then use it to make wire transfers and order credit cards.

Prosecutors said it wasn't known if Locsin had an attorney to comment on his behalf. He faces up to 30 years in prison.

One of the victims was described as a "well-known socialite and entertainer" and another as a "former high-ranking U.S. government official," but prosecutors declined to reveal their identities.



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Talking Story: What we know, after Orlando

Continued from page 6 every daughter and grandchild, whether straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, black, white, or brown as me, is likewise loved by fathers and uncles and grandpas. Guapos just like me.

And that these lovely souls suddenly leaving our achy little earth on such a terrible Saturday night breaks my heart like those sorrowing men's hearts are broken. I know that me not feeling thus, makes me as unlovable as that shooter. So lonely. So Godless. Ampun'illaah.

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7		8				9		2
			4		7			
3	1			7			5	4
	9						1	
5	6			2			7	9
			8		3			
2		6				5		3
		1	9		2	7		

Difficulty level: Easy

#32567

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue's puzzle

Puzzle #51286 (Hard)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

6	5	1	2	7	4	8	3	9
3	8	4	1	6	9	7	5	2
7	9	2	8	3	5	4	6	1
2	1	9	5	8	6	3	7	4
5	6	3	9	4	7	1	2	8
4	7	8	3	1	2	6	9	5
9	4	7	6	5	8	2	1	3
1	2	6	4	9	3	5	8	7
8	3	5	7	2	1	9	4	6