

U.S.

FRIENDLY

SOCCER

Every so often, various National Soccer teams meet and get matched up in what are considered a "Friendly". A non-league, no points, non-championship game.

Now, to most of us, a "Friendly" would imply something like a game of slow pitch softball with guys from the office or the fellows from church. A few innings, maybe a couple of beers, lay back on the grass and relax. Except I doubt that anyone mentions that to most of the combatants in these games, because "Friendly" isn't the way I would describe some of these matches.

It may not be Tyson versus Spinks, or Ali / Frazier, but that's only because none of these guys are wearing 13-ounce Everlasts!

As much as we (at least in this instance) would like our U.S. Men's Team to be "More like the girls", because in World Cup competition, the score is Ladies = 4 and Men's = 0.

The Ladies generally come in guns blazing, once scoring 4 goals within the first 16 minutes of their World Cup Final against Japan!

Except for a single good chance at a first goal at about 14 minutes of the first half, by Team USA's Ricardo Pepi, the start of the game was mostly backing up under Bosnia-Herzegovina's advancing defense. Which seemed to be in the U.S. squad's face no matter who they passed to.

Neither of the teams seemed to have mastered the style of long and accurate cross-field passes so predominant in the English Premier leagues or UEFA, with both teams leaving attackers at the front corners in the open through the first half, while making short passes back and forth mid-field. At 27 minutes into the first half Jordan Morris, returning to the team after a long injury recovery, took a pass which looked like a sure goal, only to have stepped off a bit too soon and was called off-side.





Photo By Chuck Null



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Bosnia/Herzegovina's leading scorer, Ajdin Nukic seemed to be everywhere, both on offense and defense, but was matched stride for stride by the 18 year old youngster George Bello who frustrated him at every turn. At 29 minutes in the first half, a free kick for Bosnia resulted in a rapid three shots on goal, all denied by the U.S. Squad! A quick turn around a minute later and Jordan Morris made a shot on goal that was turned away by the outstretched leg and swift reactions of Bosnia's goalie Cetkovic. Although Team USA maintained possession for most of the first half, and had 3 corner kicks to Bosnia's 1, "Friendly" or not, it took only 39 minutes before Bosnia was down a man due to a red card for Bosnia – Herzegovina's Amar Begic for an intentional foul / take-down of Team USA's Kellyn Acosta. Advantage USA as it was now 11 to 10 on the field, as a red card means that the offending team plays short for the remainder of the game. After a short mid-game break, it was back to the same back and forth with Bosnia-Herzegovina holding their own, even being a man short.

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It stayed that way until the 66th minute when Team USA's Zimmerman was taken down from behind while going down for a header. It would have been a serious foul, but Zimmerman had had enough and responded with a fist to the face of his attacker which drew a yellow card (caution) Back to the same more or less even play, but at the 75th minute we saw the worst call of the game as Bosnia's Igor Savic intentionally scissor-trapped Roldan's legs and then put on an Academy Award performance to make it appear that he had been fouled! Back and forth until less than 2 minutes in regulation time, and with the match looking like a draw, when Cole Bassett, who had just substituted in a few minutes earlier, was able to re-direct a shot from Jonathan Gomez into the goal, for the first and ONLY score of the game, to put the USA up 1-0. The place erupted, as the victory leaves the Men's team with a 17 win season, a new record, and their best by far. It also gave Team USA's Goalie, Matt Turner with a record 9 game shut out streak. All in all, a last minute (literally!) thriller to cap a record season for Team USA







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