

Editor's Note

Getting Soccer America's editors to agree on just about anything isn't easy.

Case in point: "My winning team," our look at the U.S. XI that will qualify for the World Cup finals (see Pages 10-11).

The editors are split on the winning formation: Four go with a 4-4-2; four go with a 3-5-2.

Only four players are unanimous picks: Kasey Keller, Carlos Llamasa, Claudio Reyna and Chris Armas.

How do we stack up with your winning team?

Paul

Paul Kennedy
Managing Editor

WORLD CUP 2002

The world's biggest ticket lottery

One of the biggest ticket lotteries in the history of sports began Feb. 15 when FIFA announced plans for the sale of tickets to the 2002 World Cup for fans in South Korea, Japan and overseas.

Around 260,000 tickets will be put on sale for the general public outside Japan and South Korea.

There will be two categories of tickets, and fans must choose one.

One category is for a desired team and applies only for the matches in which that team will play. The other is for a particular venue and applies for matches to be played there.

The application deadline is April 30, and a lottery will be held on May 15.

In addition to the 260,000 tickets, a second round of overseas ticket sales is expected later this year, although the number of tickets available is still unknown.

In Japan, which is hosting for the first time what many believe is the world's top sporting event, the hype has already begun.

Japanese media have dubbed the World Cup tickets the most coveted in Japanese sports history.



edited by
Paul
Kennedy

Upfront

After deducting tickets allotted to official sponsors, Japanese organizers are offering around 504,000 tickets for sale to the Japanese public.

MAN.UNITED-YANKEES

Who's the winner in big deal?

The much-publicized marketing deal between Manchester United and YankeeNets, the New York Yankees' parent company, may turn out to be much ado about nothing.

Who's the winner in the deal?

Surely, not American soccer. The principals said nothing about how American soccer would benefit, except to note that United plans on touring the United States in 2003.

The deal calls for developing marketing programs via the Web and selling products from all involved franchises — YankeeNets is also the parent of the NBA's New Jersey Nets, NHL's New Jersey Devils and has a marketing partner of the NFL's New York Giants — in individual team stores.

British analysts expressed skepticism about any immediate benefits Manchester United will reap.

"In the short term, there is probably more downside in that the expectations of the players — of players' wages — will go up," said Paul Wedge of brokerage firm Collins Stewart.

That the Yankees have limited marketing rights beyond New York City could impact United's plans to reach the untapped U.S. market.

It is not expected that the Yankees

will sell many replica uniforms at Old Trafford, but United offers the Yankees a valuable entree into Asia, where it is very popular.

Complicating matters: United (Nike) and the Yankees (adidas) have competing sponsors.

The clubs are remarkably similar.

Both recovered from unpromising starts to become the major powers, enjoying their golden years in the two decades after World War II.

Both have had celebrity stars.

The Yankees had Babe Ruth, the great Bambino, and later Joe DiMaggio, celebrated in prose by Ernest Hemingway, in song by Paul Simon and briefly married to Marilyn Monroe.

United had George Best, the first soccer pop star who epitomized England's Swinging '60s.

More recently, they have generated great wealth through television revenues.

The Yankees have won four of the last five World Series. United has won four of the last five Premier League titles.

They aren't without their detractors.

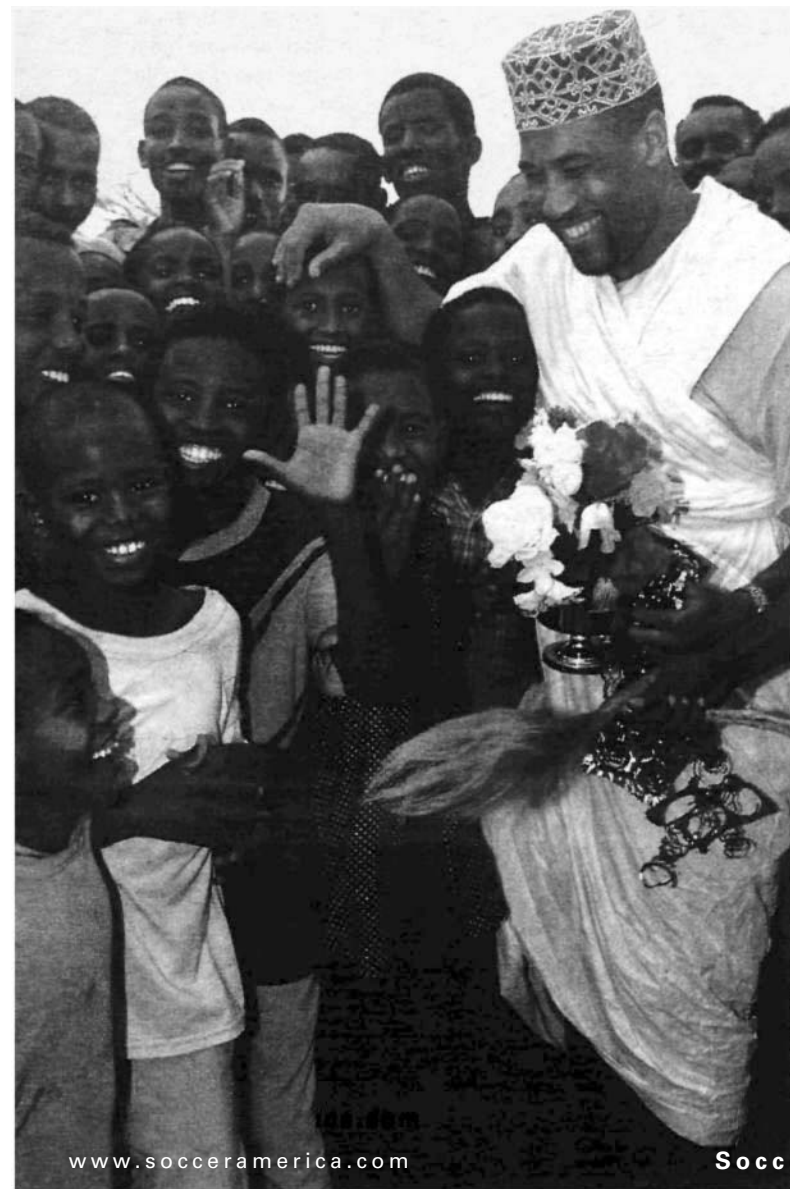
Yankee haters are legendary. United is detested in many parts of England.

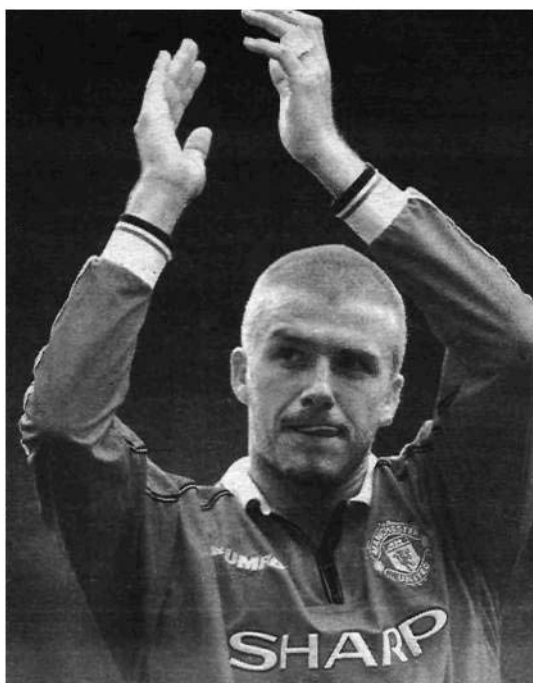
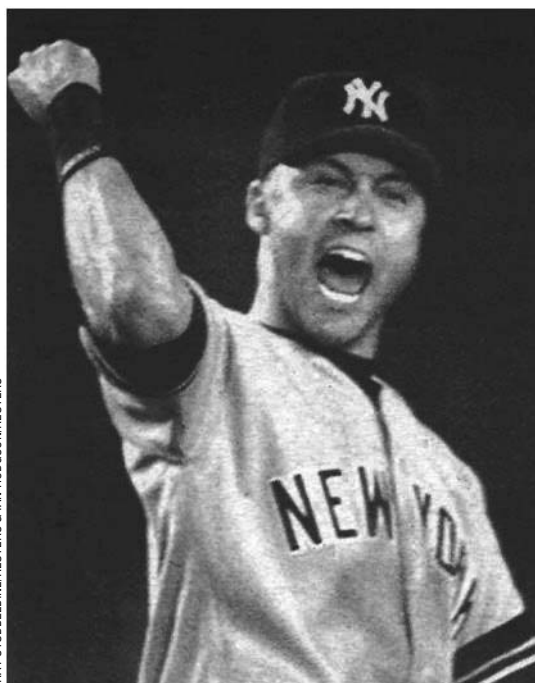
The news of the deal didn't sit well with United's rivals in England.

Former NASL star Rodney Marsh, who played for Manchester City and is now a TV commentator in England, says the deal will make Manchester United untouchable in England, where it won last season's title by 18 points and leads this year's race by 13 points with 11 games to go.

Former English star John Barnes had a short stint in soccer management last year. Now he's taken on a greater cause. He's welcomed by children in Kenya, where he is working to raise awareness for the Save the Children Fund. Hundreds of thousands of people depend on relief food after two years of drought in northeastern Kenya.

ANTHONY INJUNIA/REUTERS





How will Yankee shortstop Derek Jeter (left) go over at Old Trafford? The same as Manchester United's David Beckham in the Bronx?

"You can kiss goodbye to any idea of a challenge in the Premiership," Marsh said. "No one can even get to close to United now."

PASSPORT SCANDAL

Tentacles of suspicion are spreading

As if coping with the introduction of a new transfer system wasn't enough, the men who run European soccer have another huge problem on their hands — fake passports.

Players the world over, eager to gain entry into the lucrative European game, are claiming to be all sorts of nationalities they are not.

The scandal, which began when a Polish immigration officer didn't like the look of a Portuguese passport a Brazilian playing for an Italian club was carrying last October, has grown into a major scandal. As many as 1,000 players around the continent could be implicated.

And the tentacles of suspicion are spreading.

The scandal, which began in Italy and France, is spreading.

English clubs have been given a two-week deadline to ensure they are not fielding players with false passports.

The Football Association says they are responsible for verifying passports carried by

players from outside the EU.

In Spain, suspicions have arisen about the authenticity of Italian passports players are carrying after an investigation by Italian authorities into the alleged falsification of documents of some leading players in Serie A.

There are 27 players from South America who play for teams in the Spanish First Division with Italian passports.

Spanish media highlighted a Web site that offers what it claimed to be genuine EU passports for \$38,000.

FIFA is asking leagues to crack down on the problem, which isn't easy to control.

Leagues in Europe have different rules governing the eligibility of players from outside the European Union. Some countries demand work permits; others limit the number of non-EU players each club is allowed to have on its roster or on the field.

Skillful players from outside the 15-nation EU face a struggle for acceptance, so clubs are tempted to turn a blind eye to documentation that is less than perfect.

Then there's the matter of punishment.

The passport scandal has been a nightmare for French soccer.

The First Division standings have been changed three times this winter to account for forfeits.

Few believe it's the last time.