

TONY QUINN/SOCCERPIXUSA



"I am going to assume that the same format will stay in place and that the fourth-place team will play against Asia," he said. "How much easier is it? It is easy if they give us six teams."

— Paul Kennedy

Arena Rehiring

U.S. COACH IS EXCEPTION IN NATIONAL TEAM CIRCLES

Four more years.

Four years doesn't seem a lot to be at one job, but for a national team coach, it's an eternity.

No coach returned with the same national team at the 2002 World Cup.

None of the four England coaches before Sven Goran Eriksson lasted four years.

Through 1998, Germany had six national team coaches. Since then, it has had three.

U.S. national team coach Bruce Arena, who re-upped for four more years, is already the longest-serving coach among those who took teams to the 2002 World Cup. (Argentina's Marcelo Bielsa was hired before Arena but didn't leave his post at Spanish club Espanyol until after Arena took charge of the U.S. national team in October 1998.)

Arena said he thought long and hard before remaining national team coach.

"Once the World Cup ended, I didn't know whether I wanted to continue," said Arena. "Not because I didn't enjoy the job or the challenge, but the question was, 'Do I want to get back into full-time managing

or coaching that you see at the club level?'"

Arena will be well-compensated.

Contract terms weren't revealed when U.S. Soccer President Bob Contiguglia announced Dec. 17 that Arena had agreed to a new four-year deal, but sources told the *Washington Post* that Arena will earn a base salary of around \$600,000

a year. In leading the United States to the quarterfinals of the World Cup, Arena earned approximately \$1 million in 2002, according to the *Post's* same sources.

"I learned a lot the last four years, and I will be much better prepared this time around," Arena said. "I am looking forward to a difficult challenge."

The biggest tests for the United States in 2003 will be the Confederations Cup in France and the Gold Cup here next summer. Arena said he will have until the summer of 2004, when World Cup 2006 qualifying begins, to experiment.

Arena didn't agree that the challenge got slightly easier when FIFA awarded CONCACAF an extra half-slot for the 2006 World Cup.

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