THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

SPORTS

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Now is a very good time to be a soccer fan

By Andrew Robinson

EC. 2, 2010 might go down as the most important day in the history of

United States soccer. Thursday after-

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noon in Switzerland, FIFA, the world's governing body of soccer, will decide which nations

will host the 2018

MY OPINION

and 2022 World Cups. The United States, along with Australia, Japan, South Korea and Qatar are bidding to host the 2022 event.

Simply put, if FIFA chooses the U.S., the sport of soccer as we know it on our shores will change.

That's for the men, though. The U.S. women's team learned its draw Monday for this summer's Women's World Cup. After defeating Italy in a two-game playoff to be the last team in the 16-team field, the U.S. earned a seed atop a group composed of North Korea, Colombia and Sweden.

Major League Soccer, you know it as the MLS, has already done its share to help appease FIFA. League Commissioner Don Garber has announced consideration toward changing the MLS' current March-November schedule to match the August-May format used by all of Europe.

Why would this matter?

June and July, right in the middle of the MLS season, and the entire league went on a two-week hiatus this past year. Moving the schedule ensures any and all stadiums that U.S. soccer would want to use to host World Cup games would be available, and it would help the legitimacy of the MLS.

While the MLS might want to figure out a better time to air its championship game (8 p.m. on a Sunday in the middle of NFL season isn't too good for ratings), the league's level of play is going up. Next year, the MLS will welcome two new teams, and expand to a 34-game schedule and hopefully get more than a sprained knee from Thierry Henry.

Along with Henry and England midfielder David Beckham, the MLS is drawing some big name international players, including Colombian and MLS 2010 MVP David Ferreira. But, a lot of the United States' best up-and-coming homegrown talent, including centre backs Tim Ream and **Omar Gonzalez and forward Juan** Agudelo, the first member of the U.S. Soccer Development Academy to appear for the senior national team, have made their

mark in the MLS. Looking at the bid nations for 2022, the U.S. is clearly at the top of the list. Japan and South Korea co-hosted the Cup in 2002, so it seems unlikely FIFA would send it back there so soon. China has also voiced interest in the 2026 Well, the World Cup is played in bid, which not only takes steam

out of Japan and South Korea's arguments, but also Australia, as both nations are in the same time zone.

That leaves Qatar. While Oatar's flowing riches are more than appealing, there's also the fact that it's about four billion degrees (exaggerated) there at the height of day, which has raised health concerns.

The success the U.S. team had in this year's World Cup sent a message to the rest of the world that we're finally starting to take this game seriously. The youth development programs have improved by leaps and bounds in recent decades, evidenced by the rise of players like Landon Donovan, Michael Bradley and Clint Dempsey from those ranks.

The MLS is increasing the size of each team's roster from 24 to 30 players, meaning there's a better chance for college players to get their shot. Also, the MLS is re-introducing its reserve league, where young players will have an opportunity to not only play, but keep improving and make their case for a first 11 spot.

It's not just America either, soccer around the world is fantastic this year.

In England, the Premier League is as close as it's been in years. But while Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal are still comfortably atop the tables, there are numerous surprises. Newcastle United and Blackpool have scored major

upsets already while the Bolton Wanderers and U.S. midfielder Stuart Holden are playing some of the most visually appealing soccer and fighting for positioning near the upper end of the tables.

The Champions League, the international competition between Europe's best clubs, is nearing the end of group play and the early matches have catapulted Tottenham winger Gareth Bale to the highest levels of stardom. Of course, there's Spain and the continuing battle between super-teams Barcelona and Real

Madrid. Two players discussed as best in the world, Barcelona's Lionel Messi and Real's Cristiano Ronaldo, met in "El Clasico" Monday, the most highly hyped match of the year.

Soccer truly is "El Joga Bonito," the beautiful game, and it's a fantastic time to be a fan of deft passing, backheel flicks and world-class volleys.

Andrew Dbinson is a senior majoring in journalism and is a Collegian men's and women's soccer writer. His e-mail address is adr5079@psu.edu.



Italy forward Patrizia Panico (left) kicks the ball as U.S. defender Rachel Buehler looks on during a Women's World Cup qualifying playoff soccer game in Illinoison Saturday. The H.S. won 1-0



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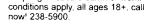
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By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Tuesday, Nov 0, 20 Ju

This year, you often feel as if your nerves are tried. How you handle a personal matter and the choices you make depend on your ability to detach and they. Your network of friends and associates will support you in various ideas, though the cost might not be worth it. If you are sin-gle, you'll meet someone out of the blue. when you least expect it. Spring 2011 attracts a special suitor Romance is intense in 2011 for single and attached Sagittarians. If you are attached, developa stronger triendship as well. LIBRA proves to be a friend through thick and thin

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic, 4-1 3-Average; 2-80-so; 1-Difficult 4-Positive;

ARIES (March 21 April 49)

**** A different energy greets you. A power play or someone in charge creates a situation where you feel you must respond A discussion with this same person demonstrates the different options you might have. Tonight: Detach and relax more. TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★ Understanding the parameters of a situation, whether social or at work, allows you to make the best choice. Stop and talk to various people during the day Sometimes people move too swiftly to be cordial. Tonight: Can you squeeze in ome exercisi

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) **** Someone you have counted on vanishes way too quickly. Allow greater give-and-take in the next few days. Don't cut off someone just because you dis

agree. Evaluate this person's positi-Tonight. Go with a sportaneous adv. CANCER (June 21 July 22)

*** Maintain a low profile no matte where you are or what you are ap to Your ability to relay and be more presen depends on the ability to let 20. Don't try to change anyone. Have a dialocite and express your different views. Tong/a-quiet right at home. LEO (July 23, Aug. 22)

★★★ You might be correct. You used the absolutely sure that you are treat. Nevertheless, your words full or deat. ears, as no one seems to get the local of your message. Try a different mode of communication. Tompht. Meet a triend halfway

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

** Swing into action knowing full your limits and another's needs. V child or a loved one might be pushing the envelope. Recognize this person's need to be in control, and help him or her find it within rather than outside. Tonight Pay bills first. Fay only first.
LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)²
★★★★★ While others seem to be run

ning around, you might feel as it you are in danger of being tripped up or distract ed. Make it your business to stay focused on one issue at a time. Don't overflunk a domestic matter, for now Tonight:

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) *** Maintain a low profile, especially as you seem easily drawn into an argu-ment or sharp discussion. Your ability to relate might feel impaired. It might be that you are in the whirlwind of this per-son's life. Tonight: Do your thing. SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) ★★★★ A take-charge attitude allows

outo have remeater say in what appears to be a created another situation. Remain, tobased knowing what is needed. Others will eventually respond to the conce of canny and samp complet. Where people CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 Jan. 39)

 $\star\star\star$ Your tone seems to draw a stronger reaction than you intended. Ask jourself it you have an issue involving what is going on Could you be giving unred signals? A discussion could add cvolve anto a pransforming situation fomglit. The only answer is yes

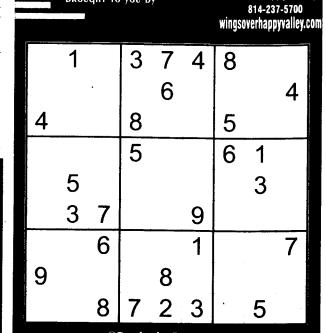
Fortight The only answer is yes: AQUARH S (Jur. 20 Feb. 18) **** Step up to the plate. A challenge trapht not be personal, but it will help you detach in order to understand the complete perspective, as full as your mind allows. A male or very strong-willed friend plays a role that pushes foor both for a bound to up an environment. hard for you. Fought Put on some music on the way home. PISCFS (Feb. 19-March 20)

*** A partner gives you his or her share of advice Will you listen? Do you want to listen? The discussions that revolve around this matter open up a lot at different feelings or ideas. Make it OK not to agree Tonight With a trusted advisor

BORN IODAY Singer Billy Idol (1955), actor Ben Stiller (1965), DJ, TV producer and host Dick Clark (1929)

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