## Now is a very good time to be a soccer fan

By Andrew Robinson

DEC. 2,2010 might go
down as the most impo tant day in the history of
ited States United States
soccer. soccer.
Thursday after noon in Switzerland,
FIFA, the wor governing body of soccer, will decid
which nations which nations
will host the 2018 and 2022 World
Cups. The United States, along with Australia, Japan, South Korea and Qatar are bidding to
host the e2022 event.
Simply put, if FIFA chooses the Simply put, if FIFA chooses the
U.S., the sport of soccer as we U.S., the sport of soccer as we
know it on our shores will change know on our shores whe chan the men, though. The U.S. women's team learned its. draw Monday for this summer's Women's World Cup. After defeat be the last team in the 16-team field, the U.S. earned a seed atop a group composed of North
Major League Soccer, you
know it as the MLS, has already done its share to help appease Garber has announced considera tion toward changing the MLS' current March-November schedule to match the August-May for-
mat used by all of Europe Why would this matter? Well, the World Cup is played in

June and July, right in the middle $\quad$ out of Japan and South Korea's
of the MLS season, and the entire
arguments, but also Australia of the MLS season, and the entire arguments, but also Australia, as
league went on a two-week hiatus both nations are in the same time 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 that U.S. soccer would want to use to host World Cup games
would be available, and it would
belt help the legitimacy of the MLS.
While the MLS might want to While the MLS might want to
figure out a better time to air its gure out a better time to air its
championship game (8 p.m. on a Sunday in the middle of NFL sea-
son isn't too good for ratings) the son isn't the good for ratings), the
league's level of play is going up. 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 34-game schedule and hopefully
get more than a sprained get more than a sprained knee
from Thierry Henry.
Along with Henry and England Along with Henry and England
midfielder David Beckham, the 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-com-
ing homegrown talent including centre backs Tim Ream and Omar Gonzalez and forward Jua Agudelo, the first member of the Academy to appear for the senio national team, have made their mark in the MLS. Looking at the bid nations for
2022, the US is of the list. Japan and South Kor 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 also voiced interest in the 2026
bid. which not only takes steam
both nations are in the same tim That leaves Qatar. While Qatar's flowing riches are more than appeaing, there's also the
fact that it's about four billion degrees (exaggerated) there at the height of day, which has
raised health concerns. raised health concerrns.
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 hounds in
recent decades, evidenced by th recent decades, evidenced by the rise of players like Landon Clint Dempsey from those and The MLS is increasing the rank. of each team's roster from 24 to
30 players, meaning there's a bet ter chance for college players to ter chance for college players to
get their shot. Also, the MLS is re-introducing its reserve league
where young players will have an 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, soc
cer around the world is fantastic this year.
In England the Premier In England. the Premier League is as close as it's been in Manchester United and Arsenal are still comfortably atop the tables. there are numerous sur
prises. Newcastle United and prises. Newcastle United and
Blackpool have scored major

Wanderers and US midfielder Wanderers and U.S. midifielder Stuart Holden are playing some soccer and fighting for positionging near the upper end of the tables.
The Champions Leage the Thernational competition between Europe's best clubs, is nearing the end of group play and
the early matches have catapult ed Tottenham winger Gareth Bale to the highest levels of stardom. Of course, there's Spain and
 super-teams Barcelona and Real address is adr5079@psu.edu.
 Italy forward Patrizia Panico (left) kichs the ball as UUIS defender
Rachel Buenhler Iooks on during a Women's World Cup qualifying playoff
soccer game in Illinoison Saturday. The S won 1-0.

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