

I am sending a supplement to my previous article on the Nigeria-USA game. I hope work hasn't gotten in the way of your watching. If it has you have the quarterfinals tomorrow. USA v Nigeria After the Fact

Of course I had to watch the US v Nigeria match to see how well I could predict the future. Certainly I didn't do as well as I had hoped. Nigeria had a new coach, the game was played in heavy rain and the US was far from their best. Plus Nigeria is a much improved team. And at this Women's World Cup the officiating is vastly improved. In terms of getting desirable results these referees were at least as good as their male counterparts.

I saw Nigeria play Sweden with Nigeria tying it at 1-1 near the end. Sweden had more of the play but Nigeria stayed in the game. If a team can achieve a favorable result they will be less likely to hack. With this factor and a good referee the game was without bad fouls. In the game with North Korea Nigeria was behind 2-0 most of the way and seemed to have little chance to catch up.

There were two very bad fouls in that game that could have been sent off but were both cautioned. While the second was no worse than the first many referees would have used the red card for that one. It appeared a pattern was developing and it also looked as if the caution was not bringing results. As it turned out the nasty play ended with the second caution. It seems this team understood that referee was serious about controlling bad fouls and that the next card would be red. The referee may have said that.

Perhaps the referee was reluctant to send off in such an important match. We can all understand that feeling but we must also keep in mind that games like this should be decided by fair play. There are teams at all levels that will try to hurt opponents if it furthers their cause. Referees need to stop this from happening.

The bottom line is that this match was well controlled. The referee had a big part in that and the attitude of the teams was a major factor.

Al Baer