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Germany vs. Argentina will be battle

By Joe Soehn
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Daniel Garcia/AFP/Getty Images

What will the dapper Diego Maradona of Argentina wear on Saturday?

They're two football giants, having won five World Cups between them. Yet, with the U.S. team now out of the picture, there may be a tendency for stateside residents to overlook Saturday's quarterfinal match between three-time champ Germany and two-time winner Argentina. But don't you dare. Here's why:

- 1. It's a World Cup rivalry with street cred.** Let's get caught up: Both teams have knocked out the other in a World Cup final (1986, 1990) and they're coming off an '06 quarterfinal shootout that ended with some hot-tempered players and managers mixing it up on the field. Neither side is underestimating the other. Both are seeing red.
- 2. Breakfast at Cape Town wins out over Breakfast at Wimbledon.** Forget the strawberries and cream. Get out the grill. This sizzling matchup at Cape Town's Green Point Stadium calls for a spread of German bratwurst and Argentinean steak.
- 3. Messi vs. Mesut.** With his achievements at club level (FC Barcelona), Argentine superstar striker Lionel Messi has a powerful cache. But German wunderkind Mesut Özil has been stealing the spotlight in South Africa. Let's just say it's a juicy duel.
- 4. Diego "Armani" Maradona.** The Argentine coach, who's now suiting up a la Pat Riley circa 1985, fires up the Albiceleste with his animated coaching. But the big question for the postgame news conference: "Diego, who are you wearing?"
- 5. Messi vs. Maradona.** No, Maradona is not thinking about taking Messi's spot in the lineup. But last week, Messi bet Maradona he would score against Mexico. Didn't happen. Now, Messi says it's double or nothing.
- 6. Slick teamwork.** Argentine playmakers Messi, Juan Sebastian Veron and Carlos Tevez will show some nifty team play, but Germany is all about precision with Bastian Schweinsteiger & Co. The official Argentina-Germany pinball machine is just waiting to happen.
- 7. Germany, determination defined.** Like the sun coming up in the morning, you can always count on Die Mannschaft to give a concentrated 110 Prozent effort each time out on the pitch. Coach Joachim Löw has preserved Germany's trademark all-in, never-say-die mindset with this young team.
- 8. Bad blood?** After Germany finished off Argentina on penalty kicks in their 2006 quarterfinal meeting, players and officials from both teams got into a heated scuffle on the field, with one Argentine player (Leandro Cufre) even getting red-carded. Water under the bridge? Magic 8 Ball says: "Sorry, No."
- 9. The Shootout, Part II?** The epic 2006 shootout in Berlin may have a sequel in Cape Town. Four years ago, German goalkeeper Jens Lehmann said he was able to make key stops in the lightning round against Argentina by checking crib notes he compiled on the other team's shooters. This time around, Argentina keeper Sergio Romero said careful study of opposing shooters' tendencies will have him prepared. Forget the crib notes, isn't there an app for that now?
- 10. Is Paul The Octopus the next Jimmy The Greek?** An octopus at a German aquarium correctly picked the outcome of all of Germany's World Cup games to date. A Sea Life Aquarium spokeswoman said it took some time before Paul finally picked Germany to win Saturday's game, which the representative interpreted as a prediction for a close match.

Joe Soehn is a freelance writer for Sports Media Exchange, a national freelance writing network.

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9:59 AM ET

Spain and Netherlands are fighting over this

by [Joe Soehn](#)[Email](#) [Print](#) [Comments](#) 8

It doesn't have the party animal reputation of the Stanley Cup, but the FIFA World Cup Trophy -- the golden statuette up for grabs Sunday at the 2010 World Cup final between the Netherlands and Spain -- is something special in its own right.

Since the trophy made its ceremonial debut at the 1974 World Cup, heroes like Franz Beckenbauer and Ronaldo have triumphantly hoisted it. It's been kissed, hugged and paraded around World Cup final venues by dozens of victorious players.

Credit Italian artist Silvio Gazzaniga for the trophy's creation. Weighing in at just over 13 pounds and measuring 14.5 inches high, it's made of 18-karat gold highlighted by two sculpted figures rising up from the base to symbolize athletes in the moment of victory. That green-colored mineral forming the base? It's malachite. On the bottom is an engraved listing of all World Cup-winning teams since 1974.

Now if you're looking for tabloid-worthy stories, you'll have to turn the page back to the predecessor, the Jules Rimet Trophy. It was awarded to the World Cup winner from the competition's inception in 1930 through 1970, when it was given to Brazil for winning the tournament for the third time.

Originally titled Victory and re-named in 1946 after the creator of the World Cup, the Jules Rimet Trophy was said to be hidden under a FIFA vice president's bed during World War II to prevent its seizure by occupying troops. Later, it was notoriously nabbed while on display in England in 1966, but a dog named Pickles, while on a walk with his owner, recovered it in a garden.

Then, in 1983, 13 years after Brazil took it home for good, it was stolen in Rio de Janeiro and presumed to have been melted down by thieves. (A replacement was later presented to Brazil.) Nowadays, teams don't get to take the trophy home; FIFA retains possession while a gold-plated replica goes to the victors for keeps.



AP Photo/Ibrahim Usta

Spain and the Netherlands will be vying for this trophy on Sunday.

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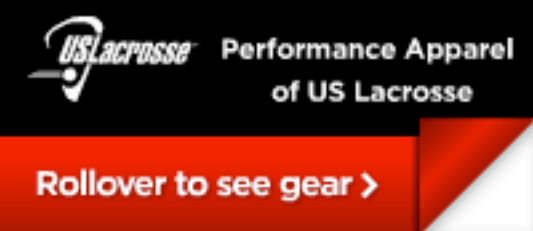
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Creativity is king at sandcastle event

By Joe Soehn
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Jill R. Dorson

More than 400,000 people came out for the U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition.

IMPERIAL BEACH, Calif. -- What do you get when you mix water, feather dusters, trowels and beach sand? The 30th annual U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition.

On a wide, flat beach south of San Diego in early August, dozens of teams built impressive sand sculptures in the likenesses of everything from SpongeBob SquarePants to famous monuments. Some even made a political statement, like Masters "A" Division winner I.B. Posse, whose sculpture titled "Got Oil?" depicted dying marine life in the wake of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The five-hour sandcastle-building event is the centerpiece of an annual weekend beach party that also features food, games, music and more than 400,000 spectators. The event, which was inspired by a similar competition in White Rock, British Columbia, began in 1980, and is a grass-roots effort run by volunteers.

"The buzz around the competition this year has been growing for some time now," said Debbie Longley, U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition chairwoman. "I know we have something great, but I think it surpassed even my own expectations this year. It was truly incredible."

The championship has evolved from a small, local event into a premiere regional attraction. Castle-building teams come from Mexico, Southern California and beyond. Teams are as unique as their creations. A group of students from Platt College in San Diego thought participating would be a good way to spend the weekend. I.B. Posse is a decades-old group that has roots in Imperial Beach. And Archisand is a group of professional architects.

"I've been competing since I was 10 years old, so I've been doing this for 25 years," said I.B. Posse captain Leonard Gonzales. "The team started with a good family friend and my father, and we progressed through the amateur categories and now we're competing in the professionals."

The 40 teams were divided into two "Masters" and five amateur categories and \$21,000 in prizes was at stake.

Using water containers, wheelbarrows, shovels and a diverse collection of other smaller tools, including utility knives and spray bottles, competitors moved tons of water and sand to create multiple formations within their 30- by 30-foot construction zones.

Some team members softly blew air through straws to enhance minute lines and ridges, while others were in preservation mode, spraying water on the sculptures to prevent drying and crumbling.

As time wound down, a variety of themes were revealed, including "Chicks in Bikinis," an installation featuring sun-worshipping poultry, "Merlin's Magic Water Castle," a captivating new take on a traditional theme, and "It's a Small World," a collection of mini world monuments like the Statue of Liberty and the Eiffel Tower.

"Merlin" by Archisand was second in the Masters "A" Division while "Chicks in Bikinis" by the Sand Squirrels was third.

But it was I.B. Posse's composition of oil spewing from a blown-out well and its aftereffects on marine life that took first place. The team has won three times and finished second at least as many times.

I.B. Posse's work is also on display at Padres games, where it builds a sculpture in the sandbox beyond Petco Park's center-field fence each summer.

If all this has you contemplating a comeback to the playing field, er, sand, there are some important things to consider first.

"It definitely takes some creativity and patience. I think having the right tools and some manpower helps," Gonzales said. "Sunscreen and water doesn't hurt, either."

Gonzales advised to "have a drawing and a plan on how you're going to pull it off and then have fun."

Though some teams spend months getting ready for the event, others prefer a spur-of-the-moment approach, like Phillip Benham, whose team, the Benham Brigade, finished third in the "Best Replica" division.

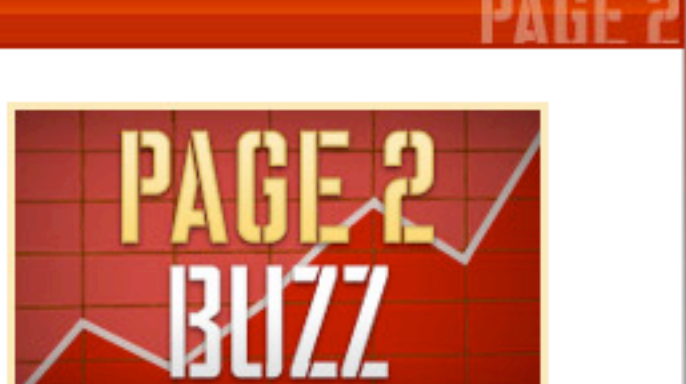
"We never know what we're going to do until the night before," said Benham, 52, a pilot and engineer from Imperial Beach. His team produced "Love The Plug," a tribute to the saving qualities of a good, functioning oil well stopper in the Gulf of Mexico. "We'll get together and throw out ideas over pasta and wine. Our M.O. is always to do something current."

Joe Soehn is a freelance writer for Sports Media Exchange, a national freelance writing network.

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Jill Dorson
Jillian Oliver of the Silicate Based Life Forms team puts detail onto the Eiffel Tower.



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