

June 27, 2014 Sewanee, TN to Indianapolis, IN (and back)

A four AM Central time wake up and immediately I'm on the road. No need for freshening up of any type because there's no intention of getting out of the car for at least seven hours. One exception will be necessary, to put precious gasoline in an empty tank so that the quest can continue. Being a fifty year old man with very little consideration given to my personal presentation, I'm blessed with the gift of low maintenance wake ups.

Today's destination is my son's final soccer game with a team he moved all the way to Minnesota to join. Yes, I shipped my son off to a full time soccer academy, but it was his choice before anyone thinks less of me.... Although whatever thoughts may occur, it won't change a thing, so think on! The elite players in US Youth soccer have converged on Indianapolis to decide which few will remain after an intense four day competition. I'm afforded the luxury of knowing my son will be going home with me today because his team has lost both of their first two matches and once today's game is done, he will be my passenger for the return leg.

The World Cup in Brazil is over two weeks old and it has easily been the most exciting that I've seen since I started paying attention. As hard as FIFA tries to fuck things up, this is one product that they can not taint. Once the whistle blows and the players engage in their lifelong dream of representing their country, all external administrative incompetencies disappear.

Speaking of disappearances, I have decisively concluded I will see all the matches from my living room. Just yesterday I watched the American side secure a berth into the round of 16 with a 1-0 defeat to the German machine. Soccer is one of the few sports where a loss is still good enough to advance. We had done the same thing in 2002 when Poland thumped us 4-0 in our final match but the victory and draw from the first two games were enough to advance. The next opponent for the American side, which was supposed to be moribund now because of its drawing in the group of death, will be a very talented and rising star in the international game, the Belgians. Belgium swept through a relatively weak group with three victories and their reward is the scrappy and capable US. I'm convinced we have more than a puncher's chance against the Belgians and if we win, who would we play next in the quarterfinal? A quick google on the I phone and it shows the winner of Argentina and Switzerland. I jump to conclusions and assume a Lionel Messi led albicelestes will be in that QF.

And then it hits me! And I'm not going to Brazil because...? No plausible answer is forthcoming other than I had just finished my season with a team that went far into

their competitions and my son needing a ride home from Indiana. *But that is over today...* It's now a foregone conclusion if the US wins against Belgium, I'm going to Brazil to watch them play Argentina. That would be a game I would have to attend or I could never forgive myself. My epiphanal moment has passed and I arrive at the fields and pull out the ubiquitous lawn chair that is adorned by all parents at US youth soccer matches. My poor boy's team will exit the competition with three defeats. To be fair, they did well to get to this point but their opponents are in no mood for consolation.

So with his team dispatched, we take a quick jaunt to his hotel for him to shower. Did I mention my son is now 6' 5" and plays an aggressive game in the summer heat of the Midwest? So the last thing I want to ride home with is a hulking boy smelling of competitive body odor. He emerges from the hotel refreshed and we are back on a road that had me going in the opposite direction less than three hours earlier. I tell him, "Kyle, I think I'm going to Brazil."

He is wise beyond his years and says, "I was wondering when you were going to say that. Why'd it take this long?"

"Well between my team and getting you home I would have been irresponsible to leave before now."

He laughs and then hammers me, "Why should that matter now? From what I've heard you have picked up and bolted before, now I concede only for World Cups, when there was plenty to be done."

Becoming indignant I give an exasperated, "What are you talking about?"

"Mom says when I was born and you'd moved all our stuff to the beach house in Waveland, you got a wild hair and took off and left her with Nikki and I in diapers and a whole lot of boxes to unload."

I know when it's time to change the subject and do so. "Well me going now isn't the same thing and I can say that my mind is made up- assuming my favorite people will step to the plate for me yet again."

So now I hand him my phone and tell him to text Benefactor- **Just probing, if we play Argentina in Brasilia is there a crumb for me? How's Brasil?**

An hour and a half later the simple answer comes back- **Always.**

My all knowing son's eyes become wide and I give a laugh as I know he's in disbelief of my raw fortune of having such a relationship with the benevolent one. But then a twist in the plot- **Sorry, I had bad info, only QF is Salvador but we do have both Semi's. Will keep you in mind if we do play in Brasilia and something shakes out.**

So now he is not sure what to think, "OK, so you may not get to see us, if we make it, but you can go to the Semi Finals?"

"That's how it reads to me Jr., don't you think?"

And his eyes get even wider if that's possible.

Now it's Uncle Gary's turn. The phone is blue tooth activated to drive hands free, "Dial Uncle Gary," Kyle is able to hear the whole conversation.

We listen to the phone ringing and the click of an answer greets us. The first words out of his mouth has my son laughing, "So what took you so long?" I can only smile because I know that in my zany unpredictability I have become very predictable. Uncle Gary is notifying me that the airlines are "strongly discouraging" any pass riders to Brazil and they also feel there will be little to no success in boarding any plane to a Brazilian City. He sums it up as he begins to undertake the procedure to enlist me as a pass rider, "But I know that's not going to stop you."