

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2011 8:26 AM
To: H
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Subject: FW: Hillary should definitely go to the finals-in Frankfurt on Sunday. d

From my David:

From: David Domenici [mailto:[\[REDACTED\]](mailto:)]
Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2011 8:23 AM
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Subject: Hillary should definitely go to the finals-in Frankfurt on Sunday. d

http://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/with-berth-in-final-us-womens-soccer-steps-into-spotlight/2011/07/13/gIQAum5CDI_story.html?hpid=z4

U.S. women's soccer team takes joy in forging its own identity

By Sally Jenkins, Published: July 13

Pardon any typos; they're the result of sprains from doing an Abby Wambach slide across the living room floor after watching the U.S. women's soccer team make the World Cup final. The American women have at last forged their own identity, those gorgeous toughies, with their bulging shoulders and their sweat-plastered hair and their habit of storming and screaming their way out of trouble.

Bulletin to the spray-on tan crowd: Beat it. The big girls are here.

Is there any question there will be scores of Wambach imitators on the fields of America tomorrow, tall girls running like antelopes and butting soccer balls with their heads, and falling to their knees in exultation? Three days ago it was Wambach's headed goal that saved the U.S. against Brazil in one of the great thrillers ever, regardless of gender. In Wednesday's semifinal against France it was Wambach once again, just as the Americans seemed desperately played out, who hurled her body through space like "a beast in the air," as teammate Megan Rapinoe describes her, to bang the decisive goal into the net with her forehead in the 79th minute.

The Americans now advance to their first World Cup final since 1999, a date they are surely sick of hearing about. Among the many things the American women have been fighting against in Germany at this tournament, from awful officiating to leg-whipped fatigue, is the shadow of the greatest of all American women's sports teams.

The '99 USA squad, led by players like Mia Hamm, Brandi Chastain and Julie Foudy, not only won the World Cup before a sold-out crowd at the Rose Bowl, and a fistful of Olympic medals from 1996-2004, they won hearts. They collected the pay of waitresses, but they made soccer the fastest-growing sport for girls, popularizing it not just in this country but on continents where the game was considered strictly for men. How do you better that?

It's a complicated debt and legacy, made more so by having so many members of that team still hanging around looking over the current team's shoulders, sort of like the ghost of Hamlet's father. There are no fewer than three of them on ESPN's telecasts, with Foudy in the play-by-play booth and Hamm and Chastain at the anchor desk doing commentary.

"They have so much character and personality and the American public hadn't wrapped their arms around them in the same way, and that's what I love about this moment, that they finally got it, got the gutsiness of this group," Foudy said. "We can stop that comparison to the '99 team because that gets annoying."

These American women had frankly struggled with the inheritance, occasionally with visible irritation. At times they seemed freighted, loaded down with pressure. That was the case early in the tournament, when they lost in group play to Sweden.

"We want to write our own story line and we want to write our own destiny," goalie Hope Solo has said. "To be honest we're tired of hearing about '99. It's time for a new team to come in here and make history."

This team can't accomplish the huge cultural shift that the '99 team did, but they still have their own part to play in the ongoing effort to popularize soccer and redefine acceptable female athleticism. They continue to fight for attention compared to their male counterparts and they still get less credit and less pay for better work — the American men's team lost in World Cup round of 16. While these USA women want a World Cup victory for its own sake, they also understand they would take their place on an important continuum. "That's always been our foundation, and you pass it on, player to player," Foudy says.

In the last two games the distinct outline of their character has emerged.

This team is not nearly as decorated as its predecessors, or as financially deprived. Nor are they quite as fast or as technically beautiful as some other teams in the field, including France and Brazil. But they have an indefinable something, a charisma that begins with their physical largeness, personified by Wambach, who at 5 feet 11 has the ability to bully her way through defenses and find the ball. Solo, at 5-9, is a formidable obstacle in the goal, with her combination of swagger and irradiated blue eyes. As a group, they are demonstrably the strongest, fittest team in the world.

Above all, they have a ferocious refusal to be defeated, and that quality has made believers out of elders like Foudy. Their victory over Brazil in the quarterfinals, should they win the Cup against Japan on Sunday, will be the start of their own enduring legacy. For 59 minutes they fought absolute exhaustion and were on the brink of elimination, playing with just 10 players against 11 after a referee issued a questionable ruling and tossed Rachel Buehler for a foul. But then Wambach headed the ball in for the game-tying goal in the 122nd minute, the latest goal in Women's World Cup history. Afterward, Wambach said to Foudy, "Can you believe it?"

Foudy said, "Yeah, I can."

A few minutes later Wambach saw Hamm. "Can you believe it?" she asked again. Hamm said, "Yeah, I can." Then Wambach ran into Chastain. "Can you believe it?" she asked for a third time. "Yeah, of course I can," Chastain said.

It was a case of three-fold validation. Ever since, the American women have exuded certainty. "Losing is unacceptable," Wambach announced. When fatigue could have become a factor against France on Wednesday — all of sudden the Americans threw some fresh players into the game, and surged. "We lost our legs, but we found our heart," was how Coach Pia Sundhage put it. Afterward, asked where their confidence comes from, Solo replied, "From our preparation — and because we know we're damn good."

The rest of us know it now, too.