

Wishes for the New Year

The year 2007 was a good one for soccer fans. There were some outstanding matches and tremendous performances in the men's, women's and youth leagues. Soccer continues to grow in popularity (although you'd never know that if you relied on newspapers for soccer coverage).

But, of course, there's no reason to think 2008 won't be even better. To play it safe, I took out the magic soccer ball, rubbed it a few times (unfortunately, Barbara Eden in her prime did not pop out, alas!) and wished...

...that the New York Red Bulls of the MLS get their act together; that they hire a real general manager who hires a good coach who implements an exciting brand of soccer with a formation that features Juan Pablo Angel, the best player in the league...

...that the new women's professional league does indeed come to fruition in 2009 and that the league officials demand all teams play in small facilities, like on college campuses; and that there is a team located in the central New Jersey area with Rutgers or Princeton or The College of New Jersey as the home field...

...that Arsenal win the EPL...

...that Manchester United do not win the EPL...

...that David Beckham is healthy enough to go the full 90 a few times...

...that the U.S. Women return to their glory days and play free-flowing soccer...

...that Inter Milan win Serie A...

...that A.C. Milan do not win Serie A...

...that Bob Bradley realizes Freddy Adu and Jozy Altidore are worth a spot in the National squad...

...that the MLS allows teams to have 3 major international stars...

...that FIFA adds a fourth field official to every game...

...that FIFA goes to Golden Goal in overtimes...

...that Arsenal run away with the EPL...

...that Manchester United go on an 8-game losing streak to end the EPL campaign...

...that Jaime Moreno continues to be a force on the pitch for DC United...

...that Inter Milan run away with Serie A...

...that A.C. Milan go on an 8-game losing streak to end the Serie A campaign...

...that Steve Ralston plays another year for the Revolution and leads the MLS in assists one more time...

...that Kaka gets an offer he can't refuse from Real Madrid and leaves A.C. Milan...

...that the Italian government and Serie A officials finally figure out a way to end all the violence that has made Serie A undesirable for international stars...

...that the Red Bulls do not bring Ronaldo to the states and instead go after a true number 10 who will get the ball to Juan Pablo Angel...

...that the Red Bulls get a healthy Claudio Reyna for the full campaign and move him to center back...

...that sports writers in the United States realize how stupid they sound when, in the same breath, tell you a 2-0 baseball game that takes more than 3 hours to play is more exciting than a 1-0 soccer game that is complete within 2 hours (with no commercials if it is on TV!)...

...that the MLS plays its championship game in a warm weather site such as The Home Depot Center...

...that U.S. Soccer hires Mia Hamm-Garciaparra and let her market the game...

...that Kristine Lilly keeps on playing...

...that Julie Foudy keeps on talking soccer...

...that Eric Wynalda remains as the analyst on ABC-TV games...

...that Luis Figo ends his brilliant career here in the States playing in MLS...

...that one major international star still in his prime or about to enter his prime shocks the soccer world and signs on with an MLS team (did someone say Thierry Henry?)...

...that Fox Soccer Channel never --EVER-- goes off the air...

...that soccer moms and soccer dads learn the rules before shouting at the referee...

...that you learn the term is "OFFSIDE" not "OFFSIDES"...

...that soccer moms and soccer dads take time off from their valuable lives and take their daughters and sons to the local high school or college or pro game...

...that high school soccer in New Jersey at least goes to a 3-man referee system...

...that you do yourself a favor and read "A Fever Pitch" and then rent the movie (no, not the idiotic snooze-fest film with Jimmy Fallon and Drew Barrymore)...

...that you watch the movie "Victory" and realize that if Sylvester Stallone played goalie for your son's team they probably would not win too many matches!...

...that after reading "A Fever Pitch" you read "A Season With Verona" by Tim Parks...

...that soccer moms and soccer dads all over the country realize that such stars as Tom Hanks, Drew Carey, Snoop Dog, Jon Stewart, Anthony LaPaglia, Kevin Garnett, Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan, et al, are huge soccer fans...

...that youth coaches every now and again forget about drills and running laps and just let the kids play...

...that kids continue to play soccer...

...that kids play "unorganized" soccer -- no coaches, no parents, just kids...

...that, finally, above all else, Arsenal win the EPL!...

...oh, and that Inter Milan win Serie A!...

Have a Happy and Safe New Year!