

Praising a boring soccer match

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Soccer's ability to mobilize feelings of nationalism and bring together large crowds around a single slogan is perhaps related to this sport's ability to reflect societal character. For example, in basketball, the sole determining factor is the quality of the trainer and the players.

But in soccer it is as if there is an additional element not under anybody's control at work. Certain states of mind and attitudes that we cannot fully name but know nonetheless, that belong to us, that can almost be named as the common culture of this land we live on, seem to make up the essential material of soccer. Our soccer-loving dreamers perhaps hoped for a soccer feat ahead of the Turkey-Armenia game, remembering the soccer Turkey played in Germany and Armenia's defeat of Poland. However, that social state of mind embedded in soccer says that the said games are special situations that can only occur at certain times. Just like the very rare shake-up moments of common sense these societies have had in their history.

Honestly, my expectation was to see both teams play in accordance with their own characters and for Turkey to win by two or three points thanks to purely accidental goals. Armenia's chances of scoring were very low, so the best they could do was end a game without any goals. Of course, this was the first game of the group and we had to consider that both teams had not yet been fully settled.

However, I never thought that the political and historical burden would be an element affecting the game. In order for someone to understand this, a trip to Anatolia and Armenia should be enough. Both societies have long moved beyond a certain psychological threshold and have been in search of normalization and ordinariness. Every person from Turkey traveling to Armenia was like a carrier of Armenians' good memories of the past from Turkey. These were meetings that enabled both those who went to Armenia and those who greeted them to remember each other in the same common past.

In that sense, it was obvious that this game would not be experienced in the way people have been expecting. We watched a game in which a normalizing step toward friendship was taken, but one that was very boring. The first period was spent with a couple of opportunities Turkey caught by chance and Armenia running around with its utmost effort. The second period, which appeared to be even more boring, came with a goal. After that first goal all was left to Turkey's opportunism, and the game was so mediocre that the second goal was only scored due to a defense error on the part of Armenia.

Almost none of my friends watching the game with me were interested in it any longer after the first minutes of the final quarter. "This is too much normalizing," I thought, but really there was nothing to be surprised about. There were two societies on the field that didn't talk to each other, that did not see each other but knew each other very well intuitively.

Turkey was as it usually is: A team with big abilities but underdeveloped utilization of those abilities. Armenia was as it usually is, too: A team of good faith and hard work, but with energy that has yet to bear complete fruit. They are both like Turkish and Armenian societies.

When the game was over, I was not happy with the match as an avid soccer follower. But later on I started thinking maybe this boring game was played the way it was supposed to be. A game with no surprises, no deceiving, reflecting the truth as it is, usual and simple. What more could we want? Wasn't it exactly the one we needed?

Sources

Source : TDZ, 08-09-2008