

Laredo Morning Times



By: Zach Smith
Published: April 15, 2015

Morris shines in debut, US beats Mexico by familiar score

SAN ANTONIO — Death. Taxes. Dos a Cero.

It's a score as historic as it is important. Etched in the minds and hearts of every U.S. Soccer fan.

And Wednesday night at the Alamodome in front of a sold out and largely pro-Mexico crowd of more than 65,000 fans, it happened again. The eighth time since 2000 that the U.S. won 2-0, and the first since the American locked up a spot to the World Cup in Columbus in 2013.

"These are special nights, you don't forget these quickly," United States midfielder and captain Michael Bradley said.

Stanford University senior Jordan Morris scored the first goal — and the first goal of his international career — in the 49th minute after Gyasi Zardes slipped him a nifty pass at the top of the box.

Juan Agudelo gave the U.S. the familiar scoreline when he danced around defenders just outside the penalty area before letting loose a screamer that Mexico goalkeeper Cirilo Saucedo didn't come close to. It was his first international goal since 2011.

"It was pretty amazing," U.S. Soccer head coach Jurgen Klinsmann said. "When you're on the winning end of it, it's more enjoyable. It's a huge compliment for their willingness to grind things out and stay on top of their opponent."

Possession had been a problem for the U.S. over the first few games of 2015, but in the first 20 minutes Wednesday night, the Americans had no problems keeping the ball from Mexico. Michael Bradley in a more forward role was able to dictate the pace of play and keep the relatively inexperienced attackers ahead of him in control.

The only extended period when Mexico dominated the possession was at the end of the second half, when striker Erik Torres spun around U.S. defender Omar Gonzalez before sending a shot over the net.

Eduardo Herrera had the best chance of the game for El Tri, when he banged a shot off the near post five minutes before halftime.

The field quality was a talking point for the days leading up to and during the game. The patchy field looked as if it had gone through a tough winter and the snow had just melted. The Mexican team threatened not to play if U.S. Soccer didn't vastly improve the field.

Balls bounced higher than usual and time after time players fell down on the struggling sod. Even Klinsmann admitted on television before the match that it wasn't in the best shape.

Aside from his goal, Morris showed flashes of the potential Klinsmann sees in him. He streaked down the left side of the field, basically running past the entirety of the Mexican defense halfway through the second half. And he was inches away from connecting on a header that would've been the first goal of the game ten minutes before halftime.

Before the match began, Morris missed just about every shot he took. Klinsmann — one of the most elite goal scorers in English and German soccer history — just told him to simply calm down.

"I've been dreaming about this since a little kid, to start. Especially to start against a team like Mexico," Morris said. "To score a big goal in front of so many fans, I kind of blacked out a little bit. It was unbelievable time."

He was replaced by Agudelo in the 65th minute.

Morris was nominated to Man of the Match, but because the award is sponsored by Budweiser and the college student is only 20 years old, he was unable to accept it.

This was the kind of result U.S. Soccer needed. The Americans had just one win in their last six games, and were in desperate need of some confidence before they take on European powers Germany and the Netherlands in early June.

But until those games roll around, the legend of Dos a Cero lives on.

"Everybody was on the same page," Klinsmann said. "We want to get a result and do well. We want to prove a point because we are just a few months away from a huge Gold Cup that will hopefully take us to the Confederations Cup in Russia."