

NEW ENGLAND NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

# The Standard-Times

SERVING THE SOUTHCOAST COMMUNITY

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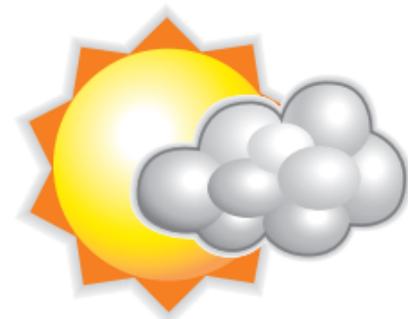
SATURDAY, JULY 12, 2014

New Bedford



Massachusetts

Newsstand: \$1.00



HIGH

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LOW

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YOUR VIEW

## Build a caring community; become 'un-stuck'

I am the CEO and founder of the SouthCoast volunteer organization, GiftsToGive, I speak only for myself.

My personal context is simple: I am a son of the greatest generation. I am an original baby boomer. I was a corporate manager, then serial entrepreneur. Now in my encore career, I am a social entrepreneur and a philanthropist. I find myself at 65 years old, embarrassed for the legacy of my generation.

**JAMES P. STEVENS**

James P. Stevens is CEO and founder of GiftsToGive Inc.

Our social context is not as simple: We're "stuck."

What is going on? Who are we as a people? Who are we as a nation?

Who are we as a community? Where are we going as a society?

Climate change, pandemics, narco-trafficking, human slavery, species loss, human rights, demographics and terrorism. Plus of course; our political system, Wall Street, our food supplies, our energy supplies, our health care, corporations that pay no taxes, and the silent elephant in the room — child poverty, to name but a few.

In America, over 24 million children live in poverty, another 24 million children live in low-income households. These numbers are staggering! They translate to — in America, one of every two children (50 percent) live in poverty or low-income households. In the developed world, the United States of America has the second highest percentage of child poverty — right behind Romania! I cannot get my mind around 48 million American children being at-risk.

On the SouthCoast, from Newport to the Upper-Cape, over 25,000 children live in poverty, and 25,000 live in low-income households. What did these 50,000 children do wrong?

I've become convinced that the solution for child poverty is public education and healthy families. In a perfect world it's a no brainer. In the world we currently live in, generations of poverty have created a dynamic that has totally collapsed what a healthy family looks like and has wreaked havoc on public education.

I see New Bedford as a city on a hill, a place where there are tens of thousands of loving and caring people — ultimately a place that has all the ingredients needed to redefine and to ultimately define a more caring community.

Our differences are important but our common humanity matters more. These problems that we face, we must solve ourselves. The solution is us. It's obviously easier said than done and on the face of it — it's overwhelming! How do we impact child poverty? How do we build healthy families?

How do we support public education and on a much simpler level how do we support our teachers?

With all the turmoil in the public schools, what I worry the most about are the students and the teachers. While all this dysfunction, polarization, positioning, re-positioning and change is going on — the students and the teachers are at ground-zero, every single day. Who are their champions, their advocates, their partners?

A majority of an urban teacher's time is taken up by remedial and behavioral issues. I've also come to understand that generations of child poverty have created seriously dysfunctional families. We've got thousands of children living in upside-down families, where they are not really held to any serious expectations and when they come to school they're nowhere close to being ready to learn.

What can we do to help teachers? What can we do to rebuild PTO's? How do we support building healthier families?

We're committed at GiftsToGive to initiate several events in the new school year to honor teachers and to start to rebuild PTO's. We're actively recruiting retired teachers and para-professionals to help us lead and organize this effort.

We must begin now and it does not need to be daunting. We do lots of simple, small things first. Supporting adult volunteers in early literacy initiatives is critical, so is volunteer tutoring and mentoring. We have the people we need to make the change.

I think we owe everyone a certain presumption of respect until they do something to forfeit it and we should all be listening. Then we should start acting/volunteering.

There are dozens of places to volunteer, if you need help getting started visit [www.giftstogive.org](http://www.giftstogive.org).

## VOCES AMERICANAE

"The vision of a champion is someone bent over, drenched in sweat, to a point of exhaustion, when no one else is watching."

**ANSON DORRANCE**  
American women's soccer coach

## PRO & CON - SOCCER IN AMERICA

CROISSANTS ARE EVERYWHERE! THE COUNTRY'S CRAWLING WITH MINI COOPERS AND FIATS! AND OUR PRESIDENT IS A SOCIALIST!



WE'RE TURNING INTO EUROPE ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME. IT MAKES ME SICK.



PIZZA SIMMONS © THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR 2014 CAGLE CARTONS.COM

AND NOW GAZILLIONS OF AMERICANS ARE WATCHING WHAT? THE WORLD CUP! \*G!\* SOCCER!



CAN I HAVE A SIP OF YOUR FRAPPE?



# Will USA's performance make soccer a major sport in America?

### Americans gave 'beautiful game' a long look and loved it

Unbelievably, World Cup soccer has become the topic of conversation around the water cooler at work.

In recent weeks television ratings for the sport have soared, with games involving Team USA equaling the recent NBA finals and surpassing baseball's World Series. "Watch Parties" drew tens of thousands nationwide and huge crowds at AT&T Stadium in Dallas and Soldier Field in Chicago.

This time around America embraced the "beautiful game" of stunning goals and incomprehensible offsides, joyous nationalism and comic-looking flops due to several key reasons:

**Convenient starting times:** First-round group games from Brazil began at noon, with another contest to follow and the finale at early evening on the East Coast. They soon became a great reason for an early slide from work.

**Short durations:** The games take two and a half hours to play. Without timeouts, except for an occasional water break due to the jungle heat, you can set your watch by soccer. Less than three hours to watch a sporting event? That's been downright delightful and makes you realize what time-vampires baseball, football and even college basketball have become with their commercial breaks and incessant timeout during the stretch.

**Shaky goaltenders:** With the exception of Mexico's Guillermo Ochoa and the USA's Tim Howard, few keepers demonstrated they could single-handedly

steal a game for their side. Any shot became a good shot in Brazil. That's quite different from hockey's Stanley Cup playoffs, for example, where you sometimes wonder if anybody is going to score.

**Upsets galore:** After the dust settled in Week One, reigning champion Spain and perennial power England had already been eliminated. That left the door open for such countries as Colombia, Costa Rica, Algeria and Chile to show their stuff.

"USA, USA:" Despite being placed in the same division with such heavyweights as Germany, Ghana and Portugal, the Americans made it out of the so-called "Group of Death" and took Belgium to overtime before being eliminated.

To his credit, American coach Jurgen Klinsmann urged his team to go toe-to-toe with the traditional soccer powers and thanks to scoring star Clint Dempsey and such youngsters as DeAndre Yedlin (20 years old) and Julian Green (19) that often happened. No more siege mentality for this crew, and that's a far cry from former American squads in the World Cup.

"We are all very, very proud of this team," Klinsmann said. "They made their country proud with this performance and also their entire performance in this World Cup."

Team USA may be out of this year's tournament, but it didn't go quietly into the night. If anything it left the world stage with some attitude, even defiance. That could make all the difference in the years ahead.

For decades, kids in this country, as in the rest of the world, have grown up playing soccer. Drive through suburbia on the weekends, and you'll see fields upon fields of tykes chasing a speckled ball.

Until now, that's where the infatuation has ended. Once kid stopped playing the game, they fell into the more traditional viewing habits of college football on Saturdays, the National Football League on Sundays, with a baseball and college basketball game when there was more at stake.

Yet this time around more Americans checked out the World Cup than ever before and they often enjoyed what they saw. For once you give the beautiful game a long look, as the rest of the world knows, it's difficult to turn away. Especially when you're cheering a team that refuses to back down.

### America's faster-paced sports run rings around soccer

Soccer is easy to mock. In what other sport can we compile a scorecard of the number of ersatz "injuries" or the time the supposedly injured players spent writhing on the ground.

Or in which "injured" players are regularly carried off on stretchers - when's the last time you saw that in any American sport? - only to return to the game seconds later.

But I am not here to mock. I've tried to like soccer. It seemed like the open-minded thing to do.

Let me set the stage: it is the summer of 1994 and I am a graduate student living in London. Each summer, the dormitory in which I lived had an influx of Italian students who, in a gratifying example of international outreach, insisted that I watch the World Cup with them.

I did so, game in and game out, as an ambassador of sportsmanship and good will. And, to the joy of my newfound compatriots, Italy progressed all the way to the final against mighty Brazil.

And so we watched what I was told would be the pinnacle of sporting endeavor. For 90 minutes we watched. And no one scored. We watched through extra time. And still no one scored.

At last the game was settled through a shootout, in which the goalie guesses at which side of the goal the opposing player will kick the ball and dives in that general direction. Italy's goalie guessed wrong and Brazil walked off the World Cup champions. A coin flip might have been slightly less dramatic, but the effect was pretty much the same.

This helps explain why soccer may be the world's sport, but not yet America's. I don't begrudge my foreign friends' love of soccer. And I am honest enough to admit that baseball is pretty dull.

But while soccer is a fine game, American football and basketball are a battle, based on deception, initiative and the repeated attack on the opponent's weaknesses.

When a football or basketball coach isolates a gap in the opposing team's strategy or a mismatch of players, he will exploit that weakness again and again. And his team will score points a result.

The level of teamwork and coordination demanded of athletes, and strategic thinking of coaches, is simply far higher in American sports. And a strategic error by coaches or a substantial playing mistake by athletes on the field will almost always cost that team at the scoreboard.

Sure, a basketball or American football game can be decided by a lucky play or a bad call, if it's very close. But the relative ease by which teams can score in the most popular U.S. sports makes it very unlikely that the better team will lose the game. Not so in soccer, which is replete with fine plays that go unrewarded and terrible errors that go unpunished.

Or simply consider basic statistics such as time of possession, which measures which team controls the ball throughout the game.

Controlling the ball is a basic measure of a team's dominance, and in American football the team that wins the battle for ball-control wins the game around two-thirds of the time. In soccer, by contrast, time of possession appears to be unrelated to victory. American sports are famously buried in statistics, but all these stats are meaningful in understanding who won and why.

At the end of the day, sports are entertainment - not a matter of life or death, unless you're the Colombian defender who was murdered after scoring an own-goal in that same 1994 World Cup by deflecting a U.S. shot past his own goalie. He would have been 47 this year.

If millions of people want to watch a bunch of men kick a ball around for 90-plus minutes only to end in a scoreless tie, that's OK by me.

**The Standard-Times**  
SERVING THE SOUTHCOAST COMMUNITY

**Peter Meyer**  
President and Publisher

**Bob Unger**  
Editor and Associate Publisher

**James DeArruda**  
Editorial Page Editor

**Andy Tomolonis**  
Managing Editor/New Media

**CONTACT US:** 25 Elm St., New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740  
(508) 997-7411 [letters@s-t.com](mailto:letters@s-t.com)