

And Just Like That, the World Cup Is Over...

By Armando Cano Anzures

I think it's been obvious that I didn't keep my blog updated during the whole World Cup period, and even for a few weeks afterward. Over the last few weeks, I've been thinking about what the topic of my next post should be, and I'll admit I was tempted to use some analogy related to soccer.

I have to confess that I'm not really a soccer fan. I certainly grew up as one, first as a fan of Club América (when I lived in Mexico City), and later of the Tiburones Rojos of Veracruz, after I moved to my hometown port (my birthplace and the love of my loves).

What did we see during the World Cup? Very humble teams pulling off big upsets (Cabo Verde). Already-famous players showing that fame hasn't gone to their heads (like Erling Haaland), and others showing what it looks like to be a bad loser... I won't say who you already know.

What caught my attention the most? Watching Mexicans celebrate their love of the sport with everyone. It was incredible to see how many people gathered at the fan fests in different cities, when in the weeks before the World Cup there had been so much apathy about it.

Another beautiful thing to watch was the Norwegians' famous "Viking row." A deeply moving celebration, blending their country's history, their roots, and the energy of the moment. Watching row after row replicate the same movement made me think that in Norway, they are truly "aligned," ready for whatever challenge comes next. Once everyone knows where they're headed, all that's left to do is "row."

And you know what I decided? That I really can't sit down and draw analogies between soccer and leadership traits, because I simply don't watch the games. At some point in my adult life, I completely lost my taste for the sport. Maybe it was when my Tiburones Rojos disappeared from the league and I was left without a team. I don't know, it just stopped being appealing to watch.

What took its place? American football and the mighty Steelers. Regardless of my personal preferences, it strikes me as a game with far more planning, strategy, and game management — not to mention the rulebook: from where I stand, American football has many more rules whose sole purpose is to keep every play fair for both sides. There's also something I can't shake from my mind: the moral fabric woven into the game itself. It's not unusual to see players from both teams praying together at the end of a game or praying together for a player who gets injured during the match.

Anyway, as you can see, this week I haven't talked explicitly about leadership, but I have shared my love for American football and the reasons behind it. I'm not going to start writing about the Steelers, because then I'd end up writing an entire book about one of the game's most winning and iconic franchises. I suppose I still have a bit of a sports hangover that needs a few more days to wear off.

What's your favorite sport? Why? Who's your favorite athlete? And, likewise, what are your reasons? Take a moment to think it over and reflect on whether there are leadership lessons you can draw from that pastime.

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