《禁欲无理！公开禁止性行为的球队均被淘汰》

As a sex researcher, I've been thinking about how much the World Cup players have been thinking about having sex – even if they aren't supposed to be participating in sexual activity.

The team-by-team rules governing players' sexual behavior during competition this year are varied, and the "evidence" that those rules matter is weak. But the round of 16 is nearly complete, and while no managers have sanctioned sex on the field, it would seem those countries that allow scoring off the field ... are still advancing in the tournament:

Costa Rica won again – after its players were allowed to have sex upon reaching the second round.

France (whose players can have sex, just not all night) just beat Nigeria (wife OK; girlfriend, not OK).

Brazil (no acrobatics, please) pulled out that miracle win over Chile (no sex allowed).

Germany (unlimited sex except the night before) had a big comeback victory over Algeria (sex rules unknown).

So, Team USA and England were allowed to go for unrestricted sexual goals, and we know those teams are going in opposite directions. But all the teams with public anti-sex policies at the World Cup have been knocked out. Much of whatever coaches think they know about the relationship between sexual release and athletic performance, however, is myth. What little actual scientific research has been done suggests that sexual activity the night before a game may be helpful if it results in relaxation and a good night's sleep, but there has been far too little research. Indeed, there is no evidence whatsoever that being in a sexually deprived state will help athletic performance.

Ultimately, it matters little whether players can engage in sex during the World Cup – or hook up all over the Olympic village – but the motley mixture of rules provides a microcosm of what can happen in the absence of solid data. When myths and stereotypes are more influential than research findings, misconceptions get perpetuated. A man who believes he is supposed to be thinking about sex constantly might feel there is something wrong with him if he doesn't. An athlete who believes his team will lose if he engages in sexual activity could become a victim of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Why not attempt to address these everyday (and night) issues by funding and supporting more and better empirical research on sexuality? It would be a big score – not just for athletes and sex research but an important goal for anyone who believes that sex is a healthy part of life. And there would certainly be no shortage of volunteers to participate in the research.

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