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SOCCER

U.S. Has Coveted Rematch Vs. Brazil

World Cup Loss Still Stings a Bit

By Israel Gutierrez McClatchy Newspapers

BEIJING — In a commercial for a Dodge SUV that has aired for several months, members of the U.S. women's soccer team take a fictitious road trip to South America and find the Brazilian national team in the middle of a training session.

That's when Abby Wambach yells, in Portuguese, "We want a rematch."

Wambach and her broken leg won't be a part of it, but the Americans will get their chance to avenge last September's embarrassing 4-0 loss to Brazil in the World Cup semifinals on a large stage.

The U.S. and Brazil will face off in the gold medal match Thursday after both teams put up four goals in semifinal wins. The U.S. beat Japan 4-2 at Worker's Stadium behind two goals from midfielder Angela Hucles. The Brazilians, in their own revenge game, defeated defending World Cup champs Germany 4-1. The Germans beat Brazil in the World Cup final.

But that game didn't have nearly the ripple effect that the U.S. loss to Brazil did. It was after the semifinal loss that goalkeeper Hope Solo criticized then-head coach Greg Ryan for starting Briana Scurry in net despite the younger Solo having been established as the regular starter.

Solo said she would've made the saves that Scurry didn't. Despite releasing an apology for her comments, Solo was not allowed to play in the thirdplace match. The disappointing finish combined with the Solo scandal led to Ryan's firing less than a month later.

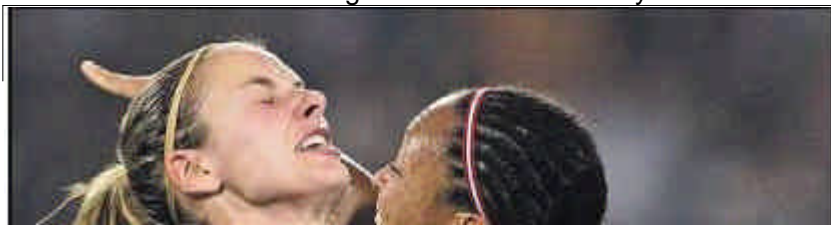
Solo was randomly selected for doping tests Monday and didn't learn of Brazil's win until well after the result.

"Then I found out it was Brazil and I was cheering in the doping control room," said Solo, who will finally get her chance to back up her claim. "It'll be nice to get some revenge, I guess."

Solo will undoubtedly receive a lot of the individual attention during the match against Brazil and talented striker Marta, who scored two goals in beating the U.S. last September.

"We're so thrilled to see them," O'Reilly said. "I think it's going to be a battle. We both know each other's styles quite well. But I think that we're prepared and we have such a strong unit. I don't think there's any break in us.

"We haven't lost that feeling of what it felt like last year in the semifinals."





PETR DAVID JOSEK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS Angela Hucles, right, and Lindsay Tarpley of the U.S. celebrate a win over Japan that sets up a gold medal meeting with Brazil.