

World Cup Oil Spill Awards



By LUKE SIMPSON, Associate Editor

FIFA's quadrennial World Cup soccer tournament came to a close Sunday with Spain beating the Netherlands 1-0 in a yawn-fest of a final. The only goal came near the end of extra time and I celebrated not because I think Spain deserved it (I did), but because it meant that the world champion would not be decided by a penalty shootout — the soccer equivalent of flipping a coin.

The month-long tournament was filled with amazing moments, from the lowest ranking team in the world (North Korea) scoring against the highest ranking team (Brazil), to Ghana losing in the quarter final after a Uruguayan defender blocked a goal with his hand, to the epic goals from Forlan, Maicon and Van Bronckhorst.

But the self-destruction of some of the world's biggest teams were the most memorable parts of the tournament for me, with the French team imploding and being sent back to France in disgrace ([and in the economy cabin](#) [1]), the defending champions Italy not progressing past the group stage, and England — possibly the best team on paper — barely able to win a game.

Our affinity for the underdog combines with the drama of a powerful team falling from the top to create a spectacle that we find irresistible — and it's not a phenomenon that only applies to soccer.

You know what I'm talking about: Tiger Woods, Toyota and, of course, BP.

I've restrained myself from writing about BP because I'd simply be adding to the atmosphere of frustration that we are all feeling. Once the leak from the well is permanently stopped, I think we can properly reflect on the role played by not only BP, but also the government, TransOcean and Halliburton.

World Cup Oil Spill Awards

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

That said, it feels like we are getting close to the end: The relief wells are agonizingly close and the new containment cap looks like it will be able to significantly limit the amount of oil spilling into the Gulf. So, in the spirit of the world cup, I'd like to nominate the oil-spill players whose actions have made this tragedy so memorable.

In the World Cup version, awards are given for most valuable player (Golden Ball), most goals (Golden Boot) and best goal keeper (Golden Glove). My awards will be for worst leadership (Oily Mouth), worst containment technique (Oily Brain) and best cleanup solution (Oily Rag):

- **Oily Mouth:** You guessed it, Tony Hayward. Even before he complained about wanting his life back, Tony showed us that he had no intention of handling this situation in the manner necessary to ensure that the environmental and economic impact of this disaster was minimized. By playing down the situation and keeping BP's interests as the number one priority, it was weeks before the magnitude of the situation was evident. The fact that he was so willing to use very large amounts of dispersant to keep some of the spill out of the public eye was proof that this guy didn't have the public's interest at heart.
- **Oily Brain:** Who didn't laugh when they first heard about the "junk shot?" Pieces of shredded tire and golf balls — were these guys even serious? The lack of technology available for well blow-out containment has been well documented in the last two months, and the fact that BP relied on such a primitive technique highlighted the severe lack of effective disaster response strategies available to all the oil companies involved in deepwater drilling. It's horrifying to think that this technique was also used unsuccessfully in the Ixtoc oil-well blowout in the Gulf 31 years ago. For a sobering comparison of the events occurring today and in 1979, [check this video out](#) [2].
- **Oily Rag:** I'd love to give the award to Kevin Costner for his oil-water centrifuge — which [wasn't a bad idea at all](#) [3] — or the overall-clad employees from CW Roberts who gained a cult following (and [over a million views on YouTube](#) [4]) for their blue-collar approach to the problem, but the team behind the [World's Largest Water-Oil Separator](#) [5] get my vote. Not only did the C.I.Agent Solutions team have over 5 miles of separators in place to protect islands off the coast of Alabama by early June, but they also developed a polymer solidifier to reduce the manpower needed to clean up the oil.

Please don't confuse my frustration and outrage with contempt for the situation. I only hope that, by pointing out some of the mistakes that were made during the response, we can help ensure that this environmental disaster and the 11 workers who tragically lost their lives in the initial explosion on the Deepwater Horizon are not forgotten — like the Ixtoc incident was — and that regulators are given a mandate to ensure that this never happens again.

If you can think of better recipients for the Oily Mouth, Oily Brain or Oily Rag, drop

World Cup Oil Spill Awards

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

me a line at luke.simpson@advantagemedia.com [6] or add them in the comments section below.

Source URL (retrieved on 09/18/2014 - 10:36pm):

<http://www.chem.info/blogs/2010/07/world-cup-oil-spill-awards>

Links:

[1] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/worldcup2010/article-1288764/WORLD-CUP-2010-France-team-sent-home-South-Africa-economy-class.html>

[2] <http://www.wimp.com/oilspills/>

[3] <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/greenspace/2010/06/gulf-oil-spill-costner-solution-has-green-light-but-no-green.html>

[4] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5SxX2EntEo>

[5] <http://chem.info/Multimedia/Video/2010/05/Environmental-Controls-Cotton-Polymer-Filter-for-Oil-Spill-Cleanup/>

[6] <mailto:luke.simpson@advantagemedia.com>