

Women's World Cup diaries, day 2 | A river runs through it

Arlington, Virginia, 22 September 2003, 10:00 a.m. | With **Tom Petty** pounding in my ears and inspired by having seen, earlier in the morning, the South Korean women's team hitting the pavement along the Potomac, I crossed **Memorial Bridge** above the brown river, actually feeling a surge of fitness. This public space is a personal one. The view north makes me consider the past, the distant **Washington National Cathedral**, rising on Mount St. Alban's, the place where I had part of my spiritual upbringing, kneeling on slate and having paper-like wafers, the consecrated host, placed on my tongue. To the right is the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**, where I graduated from high school. Just south of **Theodore Roosevelt Island** is an eddy, concealed today by high water—a choppy part of the Potomac that, riding once with my father and sister in a small motorboat, I was convinced contained a large school of fish. It turned out to be an unmarked gravel shoal that tore off our propeller in one metallic shriek.



View from Memorial Bridge, looking over the turbulent Potomac.

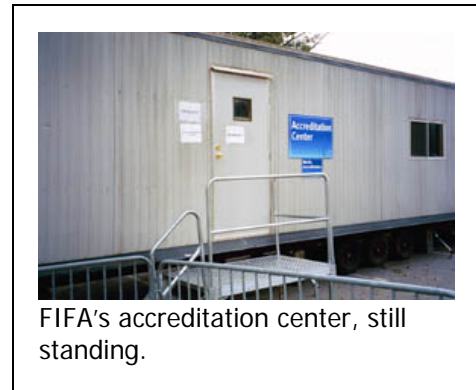
Please pardon these personal thoughts. I'll try to steer now toward football, which is easily done. On this same riverside run I soon approach the **Netherlands Carillon**, adjacent to Arlington Cemetery. The carillon with its 50 bells was a gift from the Dutch to the United States, and it makes me

think of football because I immediately associate the Dutch with Manchester United striker **Ruud van Nistelrooy**, who missed a crucial injury-time penalty against **Arsenal** yesterday, assuring that the Gunners would share points. So I smiled and gave Ruud silent thanks, he and the generous Dutch people.

Today was a day for getting organized and finally retrieving my media credential from a trailer adjacent to **RFK Stadium**. The trailer had been evacuated the previous week, according to media-center staffers **Shannon McQuary** and **Holly Wolff**, when Hurricane **Isabel** threatened with 60-mph winds and slashing rain, three days before the first game at this venue. The little trailer held its ground,

though, and McQuary, Wolff and the others, with the laptops back in place and network up and running, were having a quiet day. I was in and out and five minutes, delayed only slightly by a security official wondering who I was and why I had parked where I wasn't supposed to.

As I mentioned, my wife and I this morning had seen the South Korean team, in blue-and-white training outfits, returning from a morning run along the riverside bike trails. Their hotel is not far from ours in Rosslyn, a high-rise enclave within Arlington. Given the humidity, the players had worked up a good froth, led by **Kim Yoo Mi**, who had picked up a yellow card the previous day against Brazil (and who easily could have received a red). She jauntily led the others toward an intersection as we passed.



FIFA's accreditation center, still standing.

It seemed appropriate, later in the day, to pay tribute to this women's football event in some way. Actually, it was all quite coincidental, but I ended up touring the **Women in Military Service for America Memorial** at Arlington National Cemetery. The memorial opened in 1995, and I recommend a visit. Included in the displays are accounts of **African American** and **Native American** women, bright swatches of native dress draped alongside the drab grays and greens. Especially striking, though, was the Army uniform of **Lori Piestewa**, killed on the fourth day of the Iraq war when her maintenance battalion was ambushed; her family had pulled the uniform from a closet and donated it in her honor. Her fellow Hopi noted the peculiarity of a snowfall that covered the desert immediately after her death in April, interpreted as her spiritual return.

Once again my mind had strayed from football, but I had no doubt that the women participating in this tournament would see kinship with those who had pursued an unconventional calling.