Sports

Photo of the Day | Women's Hockey



UConn women's hockey defender True Thompson on the ice. The UConn women's hockey team took on Clarkson University and won in dominant fashion, 4-0.
PHOTO BY BIKRAM BHAGAT, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

LOMBARDI LINEUP:
THE FUTURE OF THE USMNT IS HERE

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Typically, international friendlies don't generate much buzz, but any match between the United States and Mexico is bound to stir up emotions. Especially when it ends in a dominant USA victory and perhaps the biggest statement in the Mauricio Pochettino era.

The two sides faced off on Saturday night, both coming off round of 16 World Cup exits. However, the Americans felt they had more to prove after a deflating 4-1 defeat to Belgium, while Mexico ultimately fell to England in a thriller.

The United States Men's National Team roster looked different than it did over the summer, however, searching for answers about who would take over as the next generation of American soccer. The average age of the current roster is just under 24 years old, leaving off key veterans like Christian Pulisic and Folarin Balogun while they recover from injuries. Bournemouth midfielder Tyler Adams took over the role as captain, looking to lead a new-look squad with a mix of returners and new debutants.

Pochettino needed those young prospects to prove themselves, and that was exactly what we saw in Glendale.

New York Red Bulls standout Julian Hall kicked off the scoring with a goal in the 28th minute from a deflected cross by Giovanni Reyna. That marked his third goal in as many matches to begin his international career after finding the net against Peru and Chile. The 18-year-old striker has been exceptional in the MLS, proving to be one of the country's brightest rising stars after earning an all-star nod this season.

Cavan Sullivan joined in on the action in the second half, taking advantage of a poor pass from the Mexican goalkeeper to chip in the second goal of the match. At 17 years old, he solidified himself as the youngest goal scorer in USMNT history. Sullivan has been dominating the MLS this year, coming off a player of the month award in September after leading the league in goal contributions and assists in four matches.

Sullivan's talent hasn't been a secret, signing the largest homegrown MLS contract at just age 14. He has an official agreement to join English powerhouse Manchester City once he turns 18, a first of its kind deal for American teenagers.

The youth movement wasn't limited to just the front line, as 20-year-old Diego Kochen made his first international start at goalkeeper, securing a clean sheet against a talented Mexican side. He showed off his agility on an impressive diving save in the 58th minute to send a powerful strike from Roberto Alvarado over the crossbar.

Meanwhile, it seemed like nothing went right for the Mexican side, failing to take advantage of numerous chances. It didn't take long before their frustrations boiled over when Mexican defender Mateo Chávez was sent off in the 67th minute with a red card after slapping USMNT midfielder Sebastian Berhalter after a confrontation over a hard wfoul.

With a man advantage, Malik Tillman made sure the newcomers weren't the only ones in the spotlight, sealing the match with an 84th minute goal. The Bayer Leverkusen attacking midfielder continues to impress after a strong World Cup performance, where he picked up two free kick goals and an assist.

Although it was just a friendly, the 3-0 victory over the No. 10 squad in the world marked the highest-ranked win in Pochettino's short career. After taking down a CONCACAF giant with relative ease, this US side should be optimistic going forward, looking to build on this success towards the 2030 World Cup cycle.

After their breakout performances, Hall and Sullivan have likely played themselves into roster spots going forward, quickly shifting from future prospects to legitimate immediate options. While they likely won't unseat the current veteran starters right away, Hall and Sullivan could potentially see late minute substitutions in upcoming competitive matches.

The future looks bright for the United States, as their top young stars seem to be well on their way to becoming pillars of the national team once the next World Cup rolls around.

The USMNT plays Canada on Tuesday night to wrap up the international window before setting sights on the CONCACAF Nations League quarterfinal in November.



USA and Mexico's men's soccer team get into an altercation during their game on Saturday, Oct. 3. USA won the match 3-0.
PHOTO COURTESY OF UNFILTEREDSOCCER ON FACEBOOK

The United States Men's National Team huddle up during a game against Mexico on Saturday. Both teams came into the game off of round 16 World Cup exits.
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