

# Americans' Attitude Toward Soccer



Read the following article. Pay special attention to the words in bold.

Almost everyone in the world calls it "football." Americans call it soccer. Whatever you call it, it is by far the most popular sport in the world. In many countries, top international soccer players are as well-known as rock stars or actors—but not in the United States.

In 1999, when the Women's World Cup was played in the United States, there was **more excitement** about soccer than ever before. It seemed as if the United States might start to become **more interested** in this international sport. But in 2014, when the World Cup was held in Brazil, only seven percent of Americans had plans to watch it. Eighty-six percent of Americans said they knew nothing or only a little about the World Cup. Two-thirds of Americans said they didn't know that Brazil was the host nation.

Some statistics show that interest in soccer is **higher** than before. Certainly, during the World Cup, there is a **larger** audience for soccer than at other times. But soccer is still much **less popular** in the United States than in the rest of the world.

Experts believe that to increase interest in soccer, professional teams have to produce **better** players—and they have to capture kids' interest at a **younger** age. Many American parents enroll their kids in soccer programs because they consider soccer **safer** than other sports, such as football or hockey. Between 1990 and 2010, the number of young players doubled. While **more** American kids are playing soccer than ever before, European and Latin American youth soccer programs are **more demanding**. Youngsters there who show talent in soccer are encouraged to go into even **more rigorous**<sup>6</sup> training.

European and Latin American young athletes dream of becoming the next Lionel Messi. American kids want to grow up to be the next LeBron James. Will this change? Only time will tell.

<sup>6</sup> *rigorous*: difficult; having high standards

U.S. player Lauren Holiday moments before scoring a goal against Japan during the Women's World Cup 2015.

