



WORLD CUP /// SOUTH AFRICA

For 31 days, the world is soccer.

» VIEWING PAGE 1

Fans agree: Nothing tops a live broadcast

Wales native Christopher Harris is taking advantage of every available resource to make sure he doesn't miss anything. He runs the soccer website EPLTalk.com from his home in Lake Worth, but he makes his living as marketing director for Weiss Research, a financial publication in Jupiter.

"The first 10 days of the tournament I'm taking vacation time," Harris said. "The last two weeks I'll try to fit it into my work schedule."

By the time he goes back to work June 28, Harris will have seen 52 games. Of the remaining 12 games, eight will be played on weekdays while he's at work.

"I'm a huge gadget guy," he said. "I listen to [ESPNRadio.com] on the drive to work, I watch ESPN3.com, and I've got FLO TV. It has a dedicated World Cup channel, and I've already tested it out. It streams live in the palm of my hand. For me, it's perfect. I can put it on my desk at work and keep an eye on the game. On the weekends, I'll be at the pub."

The pub for Harris will be Wowie's Sports Grill in Boca Raton, where he will host World Cup viewing parties, including for Friday's opener and Saturday's match between England and the United States. For fans in Broward, longtime soccer supporter Kevin Garrity has arranged a U.S.-England party at Buffalo Wings & Rings in Coconut Creek — both free, open to the public and just two of many such gatherings.

If Harris seems extreme, he's not. It's just his way of covering all his World Cup viewing bases while meeting the requirements of work. Harris said he's fortunate because even though his boss doesn't understand the World Cup, she knows it's a big event and respects his interest in it.

"Most people in my company see it that way," Harris said. "They're curious about the World Cup. They don't know much about the sport, but they're open to it."

Immigration attorney Mike Guevara of Sunrise wasn't as lucky four years ago when he took a 2½-hour lunch to watch Germany play Argentina in a quarter-final match that went to penalty kicks.

"I got an earful for that when I got back to work," said Guevara, who has since opened his own office in Plantation.

"When you're a die-hard soccer fan working a 9-to-5 job, you've got to ask someone who is not a fan for time off," he said. "Now I don't have that problem. I'm going to watch every single game that I can. It's my business, I'll do what I want."

Dr. Joe Meeroff of Parkland shares Guevara's love for the World Cup and the flexibility to close shop when it conflicts with his schedule. Meeroff, a gastroenterologist, was born in Argentina and has offices in Fort Lauderdale and Boca Raton. He's also a referee, soccer league organizer and chairman of the coaching committee for U.S. Soccer Region 3.

"I watch, one, as a fan, and two, as a professional," Meeroff said. "I'm a strong supporter of the U.S., and of course, the motherland. Basically, I'm going to watch all the games. When the U.S. and Argentina play, I'll try to watch them live. Those days, I'll cancel my appointments. Everyone knows my [World Cup] schedule because it's posted in my office."

To see each U.S. and Argentina game live, Meeroff will need to step away from his practice at least four times for weekday games, maybe more if either team advances to the knockout round.

"I'll see patients early, then come home to watch," he said. "I'm not going to miss it. I have to see it live. It's a psychological issue. You want know what's happening now. And there's going to be a hundred phone calls, so I'll know who's winning."

Harris and Guevara plan to watch most games at home and the biggest games, like the U.S.



Nicholas R. Von Staden, correspondent

Christopher Harris shows off his FLO TV, which he'll use to keep up on the World Cup, at Wowie's Sports Grill in Boca Raton.

and England, in a pub with others who share their passion.

"The big matches like that I want to be with a soccer crowd, or in an ethnic bar," Guevara said. "If it's Algeria and Slovenia, I'll sit on my couch."

Harris actually solicited Wowie's to become a host site, in part because it's a traditional American bar that caters to sports fans in general.

He'd like to see more Americans get the soccer bug, the same way he did when he watched his first World Cup in 1978.

"For so many, the World Cup is their introduction to the sport," he said. "I picked a place to get American fans to watch the world's game."

He added: "It's so much bigger than a soccer tournament. It's a cultural phenomenon. Most of my soccer experiences have been spent watching in a closet. I rarely go out. But being part of the cul-

tural happening [of the World Cup] is a great way to celebrate being a soccer fan. You may not know who you're sitting with at the beginning, but after a while, it's like you're partying with friends."

If there's one concern about the coming month, Harris said, it's that the advent of social media since the last World Cup may lead to soccer overload. In addition to watching the games, Harris will be posting articles and podcasts at his website.

"It's not like past World Cups where you could pace yourself," he said. "This time there's so much content and info. You'll have six hours of games, plus Twitter, Facebook, blogs, podcasts; ESPN is covering it almost 24-7. I fear that it's so much that I'll be trying to keep myself from burning out."

Somehow, you get the sense he'll find a way to manage.