

# A Conflict of Interest

- Becky Twaalfhoven

When watching the world cup, most people have one or maybe two favorite teams to root for, usually because of homeland nationalism. Watching your team play can spark immense pride, and the result often feels intensely personal. The other team is irrelevant – if your team loses, the opposition must have been cheating; and if your team wins, who cares who they played? Imagine, for a moment, that you supported two teams. Twice as much investment in the games, and twice as many relevant games to watch, right? But what if the two teams go head-to-head? Victory for one means heartbreak for the other. Where do you stand? Now, picture yourself with one family member of the nationality of one team, and another family member of the opposition's nationality. Impossible? Not for my family.

The match: England vs. Uruguay, Thursday, June 19, 2014

The stakes: My mother, an intensely proud Englishwoman with strong opinions on what “real” football is; and my brother-in-law and his family, who don't hesitate to make known their loyalties to their home country, Uruguay.

The match: the whistle blows, and the match begins, with fairly even possession and no clear dominance at the beginning. Family members trickle in and out of the room as the first half continues, all the while avoiding the inevitability of a goal with such talented players on the field. With the first half drawing to a close, Luis Suarez delivers the first goal for Uruguay with a header. The irony of the goal scorer is not lost on the family, and my mother especially feels betrayed that a man who plays in England in the regular-season would DARE score against them. It's impossible for me to decide whether to celebrate the goal under close scrutiny. Having left the room to avoid the tension, I return only when I hear a shout; and, rushing in, find that Wayne Rooney has restored some pride into England. The score is level again – “as it should be”, according to my mom. Just 10 minutes later, though, Suarez delivers the fatal blow: a beautiful goal that slams the back of the net and punctures a hole in England's confidence.

The result: Uruguay 2, England 1

It's difficult to tell how I feel about this game. On the one hand, Suarez is arguably one of the most dangerous strikers in the world right now, and returned from recent knee surgery against all odds to deliver for his home country. On the other hand, I have to live in the same house as my mother; and she would have loved to boast of her country's accomplishments in “their sport”. Either way, the game served to prove to me a very valuable lesson: in a multicultural family like mine, when it comes to the world cup, stay out of it!