

What is a consolation goal? Analysis of language in a football match report of England versus Iran

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Abstract. This brief paper reviews language and presentation in a match report by Oliver Yew, senior football journalist for Sky Sports. I praise the bullet point summary, I note inconsistency in tenses used, and I ask after the definition of a consolation goal, presenting my own understanding.

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“Be seaten

And note: Iran, England have beaten”

I did not watch the England World Cup football match today but I went online and I read some reports. As someone who did not watch and wanted to quickly know what happened, the best of the reports I read was by Oliver Yew, senior football journalist at Sky Sports. But I only read two. I read up to the end of the bullet point summary of big moments in the game, a summary which I valued, assuming it is reliable. But I noticed that the present tense is used for describing events at a given minute, except for in the last bullet point: “Taremi added his second of the game...” Why the switch of tenses? “I’m only human”?

Also towards the beginning of the report, it says “Taremi scored two consolation goals for Iran.” My conception of a consolation goal is that, when the opponent is winning by a large margin, one scores a goal towards the end without preventing the inevitable heavy defeat. At best, the heaviness is slightly reduced. More fully:

(Consolation goal definition) A goal was a consolation goal for a certain football team if and only if:

- (i) The opposition were winning by a large margin, at a point where it is rational to assume a victory for them.
- (ii) After this point, the football team nevertheless scored against this opposition.
- (iii) The game ended in a victory by a large margin to the opposition.

In a 6-2 victory, a goal early on by the side which scored only 2 is not a consolation goal then. And a 65 minute goal by Mehdi Taremi for Iran when England are winning 4-0 is perhaps not either. But there can be more than one consolation goal, given this definition, such as if the opposition have scored 10 and 2 are pulled back. But perhaps my usage is out of step with standard usage. Someone else is probably scrutinizing your language like this, by the way!

Reference

Yew, O. 2022. England 6-2 Iran: Gareth Southgate's side make flying start in Qatar World Cup. *Sky Sports*.

Available at: <https://www.skysports.com/football/england-vs-iran/report/462961>