Dear NYT Designers,

I am writing to congratulate you for your visualization for 2010 World Cup Rankings which can be found at http://www.nytimes.com/interactive-sports/soccer/2010-world-cup-team-rankings.html and offer some improvements about it. I liked your visualization in general. It is quite informative in the way that you can see multiple statistics of your team in one screen by just clicking on it. Data also looks neat since statistics are organized into categories such as Touches, Possession. In addition, it is designed in a way that users can’t do critical errors (They might click on a wrong team which can easily be fixed by clicking on the right team next time). I believe this will encourage users to examine the program a lot which might make them learn the interface quicker. Reversal of actions is not necessary since only action is selecting a team. Control is also on user’s hand meaning that user is the one that makes actions and system responds not vice versa.

However, some medium and small level errors exist which I believe can easily be improved. First of all, tables are informative but they show too much information to process in a short amount of time. Users might get stuck in details. When user wants to compare two teams, it will be better to show necessary portion of the table by compressing the other parts which can be widened by user. For instance, the visualization at http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/02/10/sports/olympics/goldmedals.html organized the categories nicely. In addition, teams keep being eliminated day by day so showing teams that are already eliminated in the compressed portion will also reduce the amount of unnecessary information user sees. The table might have also been specialized and made shorter by showing each user’s specific favourite teams.

Little inconsistencies on names of the countries might be a problem for novice users. All statistics except the first one shows the abbreviation for each country. In addition, some abbreviations might be tough to be understood by users such as Spain-Esp. This problem can easily be fixed by either not using abbreviation at all or using abbreviation everywhere with a little explanation on the side for countries with unexpected abbreviations such Spain-Esp.

In addition, program might let advanced users to add shortcuts such as selecting a specified subset of statistics among all statistics. If more statistics have been added in the future, grouping statistics in a categorical hierarchical fashion (At first there is only ”Touches” which can be expanded by user) will be better to follow the required ones at the same time. It will also be better to add operation mode options which are either examining a single team or comparing two teams. When visualization is being used for comparison purposes, It will be better the change the color of selected team to a brighter one instead of
gray which may easily be confused with light blue color that is assigned to uneliminated teams.

Sincerely,

Emre Sefer