



Sometimes it's nice to see ourselves as others see us.  
Our man in London takes us through the looking glass.

# AN AMERICAN IN WEMBLEY

It's already dark and drizzly at ten to five as I wait in the queue leading into Wembley Stadium's L-Block. The gate is more tightly controlled than the safeguards around Boston's Federal Reserve Bank. Brushed stainless steel, electronically controlled security doors allow me to pass through a metal detector and what seems like watertight doors on a ship. Getting into Wembley entails more scrutiny than board-

ing the Boeing to Heathrow.

Ravenous, I decide to get beer and nosh (Carlsberg lager and fish 'n' chips) after finding my seat, which I finally do after walking what seems the length of the entire circumference of Fenway Park but which is quite clearly only a quarter of the Wembley circle.

Climbing up a few stone steps, I feel the night open above me with a gasp, and very nearly gain a fear of heights.

Wembley is the most vertical stadium I've ever been in, and this does two things. First of all, it turns the nosebleed seats into *great* seats—your perspective is so high up, the players don't block a view of each other. The downside is, it does make you feel you'll quite clearly roll and die horribly if you pitch forward, which doesn't seem to be a problem for any of the other attendees. Who are these English football fans, on holiday from their

# WEREWOLF STADIUM

BY COLIN S. SARGENT



A crowd of 84,000 thronged London's Wembley Stadium October 28 for a bracing night of classic American football.

**FINAL SCORE**  
**Patriots 45 Rams 7**



beloved soccer, as though risen like ghosts from the ground?

An assortment of quickly handed out jersey "colours" among the fans from what looks like every team in the NFL greets me. Although the St. Louis Rams have been assigned as the "home team" away from home and flags passed out, this decision is so apparently of the moment that most of the people around me seem ready to shift their colors to "whomever" wins.

"Shouldn't they be called the New England Traitors?" a young fellow next to me asks his pal in a Green Bay Packer's jersey and a Chicago Bears cap.

Another new fan whacks himself on the side of his head. "Cheerleaders!" he laughs. "We have to ask ourselves why we didn't think of that. Goes to show, not everything Yank is bad. We should get them in real football."

Wembley's seating capacity eclipses even the largest NFL stadium. The only one that even approaches the confirmed tally of 84,004 here is Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas, hosting 80,000 plus 20,000 standing-room-only.

Regular visits at Wembley could bring in a zillion pounds sterling for the NFL; rumor is, the success of its games in London might lead to the relocation of a struggling NFL team to the UK. London Jaguars does have a nice ring to it.

The product hasn't been changed at all to suit British tastes, aside from audience reactions. Shouts of "Well played!" greet narrowly completed Tom Brady passes, caught on the run. During the fourth quarter, when the Rams are down by over 35 points, their attempts to advance the ball meet ironic, cruel cheers of "Wheeeee"—a deadly jeer for struggling teams in European sports, but something I'd never hear at a gridiron game back home in New England, let alone Maine.

I'm thinking lend-lease: the Limeys can try and steal our cheerleader idea for the UK, and Gillette Stadium would be none the worse for having hot, fresh fish and chips. ■