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Stian Jordalen

The University of Montana

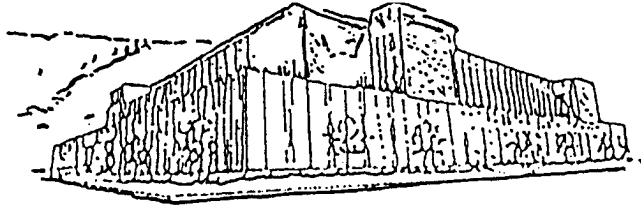
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**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF MAJOR
LEAGUE SOCCER, AND SOCCER AS A SPORT IN THE USA**

by

Stian Jordalen

B.A., Maryville College, 1994

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Business Administration.

The University of Montana

1999

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An Investigation of The Long Term Viability of Major League Soccer, and Soccer as a Sport in the USA (79 pp.)

Chairperson: Dr. Nader H. Shooshtari *Nader H. Shooshtari*

Soccer has grown tremendously in the U.S. the last fifteen years. Annually about 18 million people play at various levels. The professional aspect of the game has not been as successful as the recreational. In 1996, after the North American Soccer League collapsed in 1984, the first attempt of starting a major league for soccer came in the form of Major League Soccer, or MLS.

Soccer, as we think of it today, was first introduced in Britain, and it was the British who were mainly responsible for spreading the game around the world. In the U.S. the sport became popular in the late nineteenth century. Soccer experienced a golden decade in the 1920s, but from the 1930s till the 1960s, the game was sparsely played. The North American Soccer League, was established in the 1960s, and survived until 1984

The United States had the honor of staging the soccer World Cup, arguably the world's biggest sporting event, in 1994. This fueled the demand for professional soccer. MLS was scheduled to begin play immediately after the World Cup, but was not introduced until 1996. In the inaugural season there were ten teams. Two expansion teams were added in year three. MLS is built on a single entity concept. This means that teams are owned, but not operated, by the MLS organization. Player contracts are also owned by the central organization. This differs considerably from the more common franchise models. The single entity concept creates a "controlled" environment which has been heavily scrutinized. The league has experienced great successes in several areas, however, there still remain some key issues to be resolved before the term "major league" really apply. The main area of concern is the lack of a big revenue generating broadcasting deal.

Even though soccer appears to be stronger in the U.S. at present than at any other time the last seventy years, many uncertainties still exist. The chance of soccer falling into complete oblivion does not appear to be present, but whether MLS will establish soccer amongst the NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL still remains to be seen.

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Soccer is not a matter of life and death...
It's more important than that

Billy Shankly, Liverpool manager

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Topic

The purpose of this paper is to assess the viability of Major League Soccer (MLS) and soccer as a sport in the USA.

Soccer has grown to become the second largest recreational team sport, only surpassed by basketball, in the USA. Over two million youngsters were playing the game in 1994. The total number of participants is hard to establish; however, it is estimated that as many as 18.2 million people played the game in the US at one time or another during 1994. In the same study the number of frequent participants were said to be 7.6 million (Gardner, 1996). The MLS completed its inaugural season in 1996, surpassing what even the most optimistic soccer supporters had dared dream. Attendance and fan support were overwhelming. The long functioning US Soccer Federation arranged the very first World Cup on North-American soil in 1994 to rave reviews. American college and high school soccer are both increasing in popularity. Even with all this progress the sport can not be said to have reached the status of other big sports in this country. Major League Baseball, the National Football League, and the National Basketball Association are all vastly more popular than the MLS in terms of media coverage and attendance.

Attempts have been made to answer the questions concerning soccer's failure to establish itself among these other "big-time" sports. It appears that these attempts have been more concerned with pointing fingers than performing in depth analyses of facts.

The research presented here attempts to give an unbiased picture of the current situation for soccer in the USA, and how it got to this point. With this information as a

backdrop possible limitations and opportunities regarding the sport's viability of succeeding at the professional level in the USA will be discussed. Suggestions and recommendations as to what could be done in order to increase the sports viability will be presented.

The Scope

The purpose of this study is to assess the viability of the MLS, along with the general viability of soccer as a major sport in the USA. The MLS is chosen, as it is the most recent start-up, as well as the only league with the potential of becoming a true major league at this time. The history of the game is covered in some depth to give the reader a greater understanding of the material.

It is not the purpose of this paper to attempt to cover every aspect of US soccer. Some of the limitations are addressed below.

There are currently several professional, semi-professional, and amateur leagues in place in the USA. It is clearly beyond the scope of this study to assess the viability of all of these leagues. This paper will not attempt to inform the reader in any depth about soccer tactics, and the different ways the game is being played, beyond what is needed to give an understanding of the historical aspects of the game. The fact that secondary data is the main source presents another limitation to the study. The data are collected mainly from articles, books, and reports. One disadvantage associated with secondary data is the fact that it relies on the correctness of other people's work. Another is the timeliness issue; the information is not always as up-to-date as desired. However, it is the most practical way of getting data for this study.

This paper does not, in any way, set out to be all-inclusive.

The Methodology

The study will primarily rely on secondary data. Major sources of data will be Soccer America, Soccer Digest, Sports Illustrated, Soccer Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, NCAA Literature, as well as Internet sites with connection to the topic. The United States Soccer Federation's and MLS's web pages have been much used sources. Published literature in the field will serve as the main source for the historical aspects of the paper. The University of Montana Library, the World Wide Web, and various other sources will provide the information needed.

CHAPTER 2

The History of the World's Game

The Ancient Times

China, 1697 B.C.: *Huo ji men, yi qi qu ti qiu ba.* (Hey! Let's go and play some soccer dudes). Maybe they did not say those exact words, but the rest is probably fairly accurate. It was emperor Huang-Ti who is credited with the invention of *tsu-chu* (kickball) which many believe is the first form of soccer ever to be played (Gardner, 1996). A similar version of the game appeared a millenium later in Japan. The game was known as *kemari*. The Chinese and the Japanese might well have competed against each other in this sport as far back as 50 B.C. (Howard, 1994). The Greeks had their *episkiros* and the Romans their *harpastum* games. The latter of these two was introduced into England during the Roman occupation, which started in 43 A.D and lasted until 409 A.D. (Gardner, 1996).

The British Get Going

There are those, like Professor Gardiner, who do not consider the similarities of these ancient games to the modern game to be significant (Rote, 1978). The game was known to be slightly more barbaric and brutal at that time than what it is today. An example of this can be the tale of a game played in Derby, England in 276 A.D. where the towns-people beat a team of legionaries. The game was probably rough enough to begin with; however, the added touch of using a skull, from one of the losers of the pre-game warm-up (where the legionaries had "repelled" some Danish invaders), as a "game-ball" would certainly seem to qualify the game as a rather grotesque display (Smits, 1968).

The British game developed in all aspects over the next 1400, or so years despite attempts to ban it. Bans were imposed by Edward II in 1314, by Edward III in 1349, by Richard III in 1389, and even Queen Elisabeth banned the game in 1572 (Smits, 1968). All through these bans, which were mostly imposed due to the sport's lack of rules and gentlemanly conduct, the sport maintained its appeal with the general population. As Ted Smits put it in "the Game of Soccer" (1968) "That they [monarchs] had to keep on thundering [football] might indicate that kicking a ball can no more be legislated away than sex" It has to be said that the sport took on many different forms, most of which could be traced to various geographical regions. There were few, if any rules. It could be 80 versus 80 players, and the "field" could consist of a "city-block" or a busy street. Physical contact was often more a part of the game than a result of it. The game was not for the upper classes at this time, but rather for *men* of the middle and lower classes (Radnedge, 1994).

Football or soccer, as most of the world know it today, might never have seen the light of day had it not been for the British school system's adoption of the game. It was the status-saturated public schools, known as private schools in America, that picked up on the sport in the 1850's. Suddenly the game caught recognition and was accepted as a quite proper past-time activity amongst the upper classes. How was this turn-around possible? The underlying cause seems to be the change in religious values, and specifically what Smits refers to as "muscular Christianity" (Smits, 1968). With the schools/universities, like Oxford, Cambridge, Harrows, Eton and Rugby, came the rules. Up until the universities' interest in the sport not much effort had been made to establish a common set of rules for the game. Actually, there was not even agreement upon what to

call the game. Some of the names used were “hurling” and “campyngge” (Radnedge, 1994). The biggest problem was that most of the universities did not agree on one set of rules. Some of the universities allowed hacking (kicking at the legs below the knees), some allowed handling the ball, some played with 11 players on each side while others used 15 players (Rote, 1978 p.19). The one thing all agreed upon was that it was not allowed to carry the ball while running (one could catch the ball with the hands only to put it at their feet).

The first “tangible” impact the universities had on the game can be traced to the year 1823 when William Webb Ellis of the Rugby School did the unthinkable and, “with a fine disregard for the rules of football”, picked up the ball and ran with it during a match (Rote, 1978). This event is recognized as the beginning of Rugby Football. However, some scholars point to the fact that the first *combined* set of rules were set up in 1846 by alumni (‘old boys’) from the Salopian and Etonian schools (Murray, 1996).

The need for a common set of rules became ever more clear, and in 1848 H. C. Malden, H. D Winton, and J. C. Thring organized a meeting at Cambridge (Trinity College). Representatives from the “public schools” wrote down the rules used at their own institutions. From this collection of rules came the famous Cambridge Rules. Even though, J C. Thring in 1862 wrote up the ten fundamental rules of modern soccer, or as he phrased it “The Simplest Game”, **Association football** was born during a meeting in London, at the Freemason’s Tavern on **October 26, 1863** (five more meetings followed). Once again it was alumni of the “public schools” who set the stage. The new Association Rules were largely based on the Cambridge meeting (Murray, 1996, Smits, 1978, Radnedge, 1994). ‘Association football’ led to the obvious name of ‘football’, and the

not so obvious 'soccer' (from association) (Wagg, 1995). As a curiosity it can be mentioned that the term football originally covered any sport practiced on foot as opposed to on horseback. The horseback games were referred to as equestrian games. The Football Association (FA) was also established during the meetings at Freemason's Tavern. The Rugby Football Union was not formed until 1871 by those who felt that association football was not manly enough. The Rugby rules allowed for the handling of "both ball and opponents" (Wagg, 1996). The Rugby vs. Association Football argument was, as Gardner (1996) puts it, really "between those who wanted soccer to be a game of skill and those who wanted it to include a hefty dose of sheer brute force".

Why did all this happen in Britain, during the nineteenth century, one might ask. Surely they played ball games in the rest of the world as well. The industrial revolution arrived early in Britain, which drew many people to cities and towns. The need for physical exercise, and belonging were greater than at previous times. With the industrial revolution came a better infrastructure. Travel between cities now made it easier to play against teams from different geographical areas. The presence of the universities and their newfound interest in football games provided the leaders that were needed in order to carry the games to a higher level. To make them more than just "a devilistic pastime with brawling, murder, homicide and a great effusion of blood, as experience daily teacheth" as P. Stubbes put it in his *Anatomie of Abuses* which appeared in 1583 (Rote, 1978). The fact that national rules had already been drawn up for horse-racing, golf, and cricket in the period from 1750 till 1788, and that by 1888 mountaineering, track and field, swimming, sailing, cycling, ice skating, rowing, boxing, hockey, and lawn tennis were all governed by national associations (Murray, 1996) as well as football and rugby,

goes to show that Britain was truly a front-runner on the sports-scene. The university players naturally wanted to measure their strength on the football pitch against the “neighbouring-schools”. The game was in place, the infrastructure was in place, the little money it took was available, what remained was to agree upon the rules.

Spreading the Game

In Britain, football and rugby had reached separate organizational forms by 1871, and both forms (handling/non-handling) had been played since Mr Ellis picked up the ball in 1823. Around the world the sport was also catching on. The British loved their favorite pastime activity so much that wherever they went they seemed to find a way of setting up fields and creating enough interest to play the game. Usually they would only play between themselves, but whenever they lacked players they would invite locals to join in.

Without exception, countries that had close contact with Britain were first to adopt the game. Naturally the British colonies were of the first to experience the Brits' love for the game. This is most evident in South America, where Uruguay and Argentina were early to take to the game as opposed to their neighboring countries that had much less contact with the British. The situation was much the same in Europe. Denmark and Switzerland were the first to be swept by the Brits' interest in the game, followed by the rest of the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Belgium, with France and Germany soon to follow (Murray, 1994). Prague, Vienna, and Budapest became the strongholds in Eastern Europe. The modern soccer giants of Italy, Spain, Russia, and Brazil were relatively slow in picking up on the game.

However, by the twentieth century, nearly the entire modern world had adopted the British game called association football, and almost without exception it had become the most popular game wherever it was played. In a few places, like the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand the rugby version of the game seemed to be at least as popular. It is interesting to note that these are all English speaking countries. One could look at this in another way and simply say that the handling versions (the more brutal ones) did not make it in the non-English speaking world. The reasons for this could be the grounds of an entire study in itself.

So how and why did the British do it? The later part of this question is obvious to anyone who has ever played the game; they simply loved playing it. The growth in popularity of the game in Britain had been tremendous. Already in 1885, the English FA Challenge Cup, that was staged every year, was drawing close to 10,000 spectators. By the 1890s the annual games between Scotland and England (continued up till 1989) would have over 50,000 attending. In 1901 the FA Cup had reached a crowd of 110,820 (Murray, 1996). The FA had attempted to keep professionalism out of the game, but was forced to give up its stance in 1885. This, combined with the adoption of a league system built upon the baseball league in the USA, led to even greater interest in the game (Gardner, 1996). Soccer also benefited from a newfound interest from the church, and various industries. The church used soccer in spreading the word of God and both industry and the church clearly saw the benefits of soccer over Rugby. Rugby was by far the more brutal game, and surely many a worker could not do his job the day following a match (Wagg, 1995). Many of the big clubs were indeed started by the church, and by big industry. Southampton, still today known as the Saints, Aston Villa, and Everton are

among the most famous 'church' teams (all in the English top division in 1999).

Sheffield United, West Ham, and Arsenal were all started as 'factory' teams (Arsenal winning the top division in the 1997/98 season) (Wagg, 1995).

When asking the question of why the British would spread the game it would appear to be a government plan to impose British culture upon others. However, that was not the case. The fact that it was seen as a British game, in some instances actually had a negative effect (Murray, 1996). Nor can it be said that the game was played to practice any useful and desirable skill like those associated with hunting and military activities (Murray, 1996). Students, workers, government officials, businessmen, and sailors alike spread the game. The fact that the British traveled extensively compared to most other peoples of the time helped ensure the spread of the game.¹

The impact of traveling teams, most notably the Corinthians, an amateur team from England, on the spread of the game should not be understated. These teams traveled to all corners of the world creating excitement for the game. They set the standard of how well the game could be played, and brought the aspect of earnings to the

¹ In most cases the game would enter by these British visitors, and in some cases, natives who had visited England for various purposes, such as studying. This later example is how the game was introduced to Brazil (Gardner, 1996). Although some forms of soccer had been played in Brazil at the beginning of the nineteenth century this had been quite effectively held down by the government who only saw the game as a wild and disturbing activity. In 1894, however, a young student returned to his homeland of Brazil, where he had been born in 1874 to English parents. The young man was Charles Miller. He brought with him two soccerballs from England, and introduced the game to a local British cricket club (Sao Paulo Cricket Club). Within a few years soccer was the main activity of the club, and by 1902 the interest for the game had spread enough to see the introduction of the Sao Paulo League. In the beginning it was a game only for the rich Europeans, and "the sons of the well-to-do Brazilians" (Gardner, 1996). As time went by the game spread to all layers of society. In China the game was re-introduced by visitors with various backgrounds, but it is interesting to note the fact that it was used as a means for "Christian missionaries, particularly through the YMCA, ...to win the 'heathens' over to the 'true god'" (Murray, 1996).

game. Visiting teams with the quality of the Corinthians or Southampton would assure decent gate receipts, and thus businessmen began to promote games.

and so goes the tale of how the game was spread around the world.

The International Society Embrace the Game

Although the game was spreading rapidly around the world the fact was that, as the twentieth century came about, soccer remained mainly a British game. The British teams were still the best, and the administration of the game was still very much in British hands. The FA had set up the **British International Board** as the official administrator of the world game. The Board was in charge of updating the rules of the game, etc. What made the Board international was simply that it consisted of representatives from Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and England (two each).²

The Board, and the FA, which still remained a purely amateur body, had guided the game forward in a convincing manner. There was, in England, a 36 team professional league in existence by the fall of 1888. There was also an annual tournament that crowned the British International Champion, the first staged as early as 1884. The British did not deem it necessary to take part in the meetings that took place in **Paris**, in **1904** to establish a world governing body for soccer. The meeting was attended by Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, with an outcome that had significant impact on the development of soccer. This meeting was to be the birth of the **Federation Internationale de Football Association**, or **FIFA**. (In English International Federation of Association Football) (Gardner, 1996).

² The most noticeable rule change to take place at this time was the total emission of the use of hands by field players. Earlier, players had been allowed to catch the ball with their hands, only to put it at their feet.

By 1914 FIFA counted 24 member countries, including the USA and Britain, who all had one vote each (Gardner, 1996, Murray, 1996). According to Gardner (1996) FIFA had two main objectives: 1) Establish one set of rules that would be used everywhere the game was played, i.e. do what the FA had done in Britain; and 2) see to it that the game would spread to new countries and to help these to develop into healthy soccer nations. Murray (1996) points out that FIFA also aimed at staging international competitions, and the idea for a world cup tournament was born in that early stage of FIFA existence. For twenty years the British would resign and rejoin their membership several times, however, "... from the 1920s into the 1930s the working class took up soccer, transforming the game from an amateur³ pursuit of the middle class to a professional game that appealed to all". Up till now Britain had had the best players, the best teams, and the greatest administration, but this change in the 1920s "marked the beginning of the end of British dominance" (Murray, 1996).

The World Cup

More books and articles have been written about the FIFA World Cup than any other soccer event. It may well be more covered than the Olympics. The thought of having a tournament to crown the true champion of the world, rather than Britain, was brought into FIFA when it was first established. In 1905 the first attempt was made at staging a tournament, but no one joined (Duarte, 1994). The Olympic soccer tournament, still considered an amateur event, was the closest one came to decide the champion of the world. This tournament was staged every four years. England was the only champion

³ The English had certain aspects of professionalism as early as in 1885.

before World War I broke out. The World Cup remained nothing but a thought. In 1920 FIFA elected a new Board that consisted of "a few good men". A Dutchman named Wilhelm Hirshmann was appointed as honorary secretary. This was the same Hirshmann who had written up the set of rules that in fact created FIFA. It was also "Hirshmann, who, ..at his own expense, kept the FIFA flame alive" (Duarte, 1994) during, and immediately following WWI. The newly elected president was no less a figure, **Jules Rimet, the father of the World Cup**. "With Jules Rimet a new soccer era began. . . When Rimet left FIFA in 1954, there were 85 members. . . there had only been 20 members when Rimet took office" (Duarte, 1994). Jules Rimet, however, will be remembered mainly for putting on the World Cup in 1930.

Countless attempts had been made to get the tournament established, but it was not until Jules Rimet decided to push it through that it actually came about. It was decided to stage the very first World Cup in Uruguay since Uruguay had won the Olympic tournaments in both 1924 and 1928 (Radnedge, 1994). Also a factor was that the Uruguayans offered to pay all the travel expenses for the European visitors, as well as build a new 100,000 capacity stadium. The Uruguayans wanted to host the Cup in 1930, which marked their hundredth anniversary of independence (Gardner, 1996). The special FIFA congress that worked on the World Cup issue drew up the lines of the tournament, most of which are still intact today. The tournament was to be played every four years, beginning in 1930. The first tournament consisted of 13 national teams, with Belgium, France, Romania, and Yugoslavia being the European contenders. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay represented the

Americas. Uruguay beat Argentina 4-2 in the final, but most important the Cup had actually been staged.

The World Cup was only to be staged two more times before the outbreak of World War II. In 1934 it was staged in Italy, and in 1938 it was held in France. The first post-war tournament was staged in Brazil in 1950. The tournament has been staged every four years since then, with Europe and South-America sharing the host-responsibility

In 1994 FIFA were finally ready to let the USA host the Cup, which was a great success. This Cup will be covered some in the next chapter. The most recent Cup was staged in France, 1998. The Cup became a showcase for the French who won the tournament by beating Brazil 3-0 in the final. This was the biggest margin of victory in 28 years. The tournament received worldwide coverage, and was such a success that some forces within FIFA are now trying to push for the World Cup to become a biannual tournament. For more World Cup history see Appendix 1.

The Worlds Game Today

In 1998 the game is being played everywhere, and FIFA has 203 member countries, which is more than the UN (185). Leagues exist in virtually every country in the world, and international club and national team tournaments are staged all the time. The best known competitions⁴ include the Champions League, and the Copa

⁴ Europe: *The Champions League*, a league for the winners of the domestic leagues in Europe. *The Cup Winners Cup*, a cup for the winners of the domestic cups in Europe. *The UEFA Cup*, a cup tournament that enables the best teams from each country in Europe (minus the league and the cup winners) to compete for honor and glory, and money. *The UEFA European Cup for national teams*, a tournament that is staged every four years (opposite of the World Cup). In South America they have similar tournaments including: *The Copa Libertadores*, a club cup between the domestic cup winners. *The Copa America*, a tournament to crown the best national team. Each of the continents has their own versions. (cont.)

Libertadores.

The tournaments exist due to the great interest in the game, but they are certainly fueled by the fact that there is money to be made. As a matter of fact the greatest changes taking place in international soccer over the last decade are those relating to money. Players are bought and sold for as much as \$30 million,⁵ whereas only ten years ago \$10 million would nearly be a record. Many of the biggest clubs have made public stock offerings, and are traded freely on the world markets. Clubs such as Manchester United of England, and Barcelona of Spain, have become large business units. Manchester United alone sold \$35 million in merchandise in 1995, as opposed to \$3 million in 1990. The Champions League has brought the top teams in Europe enormous amounts of money as the stadiums are virtually packed for every game, and the television rights are being sold for millions. The television deals being made today seem unreal as compared to the ones made just a short decade ago. In 1987 FIFA agreed to sell the rights of the 1990, 1994, and 1998 World Cup for a combined sum of \$228 million. When the bidding for the 2002 games started in 1995, the \$1 billion mark appeared (Gardner, 1996). Money is also being made at the gates with average crowds of 33,000 in Italy where ticket prices range from \$20 - \$145, and 24,000 turning out to pay between \$12 - \$60 in England (1995 league games figures). Considering that an English Premier

Some of the tournaments reach across the continents, such as the *World Club Cup*, or *Intercontinental Cup* as it is more commonly referred to. The cup is really only one game that is played in Tokyo every year, between the winners of the Copa Libertadores and the Champions League. *The Inter American Cup* has the South American club champions playing the champion of the CONCACAF (Central and Northern America). The *Olympic soccer tournament* is still one of the biggest ones, but the teams are all U-23s (under 23 years of age). FIFA also stage an *Under-17 World Championship*, as well as, an *Under-20 World Championship*. The *Women's World Cup* also became a reality in 1991. There seem to be an endless number of annual, biannual, and random tournaments in place as we approach year 2000.

⁵ Brazilian, Denilson was signed by Real Betis of the Spanish top league for £21.5 million.

League (20 teams) team could end up playing a total of fifty-plus games a year the gate receipts account for a lot of money. The increase in wages has increased simultaneously with the increase in club revenue. Players in England and Italy can receive weekly paychecks exceeding \$30,000. Although it seems that the clubs mostly buy players from as far away as possible, they have also started to look at younger and younger talents. Players are being scouted before turning ten years old.

In total, FIFA estimates show that soccer generated an annual turnover in excess of \$200 billion as we entered the 1990s. The growth has since continued at a rapid pace. However, the money aspects are not the only ones that have grown. "The number of players throughout the world registered with FIFA rose from 18 million in 1976 to 88 million in 1993" (Gardner, 1996).⁶ Although, FIFA numbers seem to contradict themselves at times, it is estimated that there are some 150 million registered players, with only 32,000, or less than 1%, being professional.

This stands in contrast to the situation less than 100 years ago, as Jules Rimet had to struggle to get enough interest to create the tournament known as the World Cup.

⁶ Huge increases occurred with China joining FIFA in 1979. The administration-improvements that took place in Africa allowed the counting of previously unregistered players.

CHAPTER 3

The History of the U.S. Game

The Beginning

There seem to have been so many beginnings for soccer in the U.S. To stretch it way back one can point to the fact that the natives were playing some version of a kicking game resembling soccer already when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts (Radnedge, 1994).

On november 6, 1869 Rutgers beat Princeton 6-4 in a game that is considered to be the first American football game. The truth is that it was a game played to the rules of soccer. So how come American football, and not soccer is being watched by millions each fall in the U.S. as we are approaching the 21st century? Soccer was being played in the U.S., as it was in the rest of the world, from the 1820s or so (Smits, 1968) in various forms. According to Smits it was "touch and go after the Civil War whether soccer would become the dominant American collegiate sport, or whether it would be Rugby which could expand into American football." Harvard University was to decide the fate of soccer versus rugby when it refused to take part in a meeting that was held in New York on October 19, 1873. The outcome of the meeting was the American Intercollegiate Football Association (AIFA). AIFA based its rules on those of the London Football Association. Representatives from Columbia, Princeton, Rutgers, and Yale were all present at the meeting. Harvard, refused the rules of AIFA, and chose to remain loyal to its own game, "the Boston game", which was based on the rules of Rugby. Somehow Harvard managed to get the other schools to convert to their rugby-

styled game, and in 1876, after only three years of existence, "soccer was banished from the prestigious top level of American education,..." (Smits, 1968).

Soccer continued to grow in the US, but at a slow pace. In 1885, however, the American Football Association (AFA) was formed in New Jersey. In 1890 a second organization was formed, the American Amateur Football Association (AAFA). The Oneidas of Boston team was established in 1862 (Radnedge, 1994). In Saint Louis the Kensingtons team "...were founded in 1890 as the first all-U.S.-born team,.." (Murray, 1996).

Soccer got its first big boost in 1905, when the British team the Pilgrims visited the U.S. for a 23 game tour. The tour was a success with 21 victories and only 2 losses. More important, however, was the fact that "the high standard of soccer displayed gave American soccer a much needed jolt" (Rote, 1978). As a result of the newfound interest the Intercollegiate Association Football League was formed the same year. This time Harvard joined with Columbia, Cornell, Haverford, and Pennsylvania to establish the league. In 1906 another English amateur team visited with equal success. This time it was the famous Corinthians who came and conquered both opponents, and spectators alike.

In 1912 both the AFA and the AAFA courted for FIFA approval. "FIFA sensibly told the two associations to compose their differences and come back as one unit" (Smits, 1968). The AAFA created the United States Football Association (USFA) on June 21, 1913. The AFA realized they were not going to win the battle and merged into the USFA. "On August 15, FIFA gave the USFA temporary membership and on **June 27, 1914** permanent membership" (Rote, 1978). In 1916, while World War I was going on,

an "All-American" team visited Scandinavia to mark the first visit by an American team to Europe (Radnedge, 1994).

The Golden Age

The 1920s stand out as the "Golden Age" in American soccer. Due to the great number of teams located on the East Coast a professional league was established in 1921. The league, known as the ASL (American Soccer League), "played continuously, in various shapes and forms and with differing degrees of success, through 1984" (Radnedge, 1994). The German-American Soccer League was formed two years later. It survived into the 1980s as well (Murray, 1996). In 1884 the American Challenge Cup was established to crown the U.S. champion, and was retired in 1917 as it was duplicated by the National Challenge Cup, or the Dewar Cup, (Rote, 1978), which had been introduced in 1914. The Bethlehem team, put together by Charles M. Schwab, the president of Bethlehem Steel, won the Dewar Cup the first two times it played. They also won the American Challenge Cup in 1916 "thus completing the first and only time 'the double' in American soccer" (Rote, 1978) in the pre-MLS era.¹ Over the next two decades the Bethlehem team, along with the Fall River team were to dominate the U.S. soccer scene. Cup finals at that time were interesting, with 10,000 spectators turning out to watch the event. In the 1916 Dewar Cup final a "miniriote" broke out after the game, "as players and spectators fought each other--...the real reason for the mayhem was the intense rivalry growing between these two top American teams" (Rote, 1978). Rote goes on to point out that this was a problem that would become "only too familiar in American soccer in the next fifty years".

¹ D.C. United won the double in 1996, and in 1998 the Chicago Fire became the third team to ever do it.

The American Soccer League established soccer as a big sport. Big money backed the league, and Edgar Lewis of Bethlehem Steel played an important role in facilitating the league. The league was relatively high paying, which drew players from Europe. Attendance averaged 8,000 to 10,000 for the top teams (Rote, 1978). From 1925 to 1930 several great teams visited the U.S., and the Uruguayan national team, the Sparta Club of Prague, and the Hakoah club of Vienna all suffered losses to American opponents. The crowds were also present, with a record 36,000 turning out to see the stars of the Hakoah club. Soccer was now finally accepted as a sport. This was reflected by "Virtually every eastern newspaper in the '20s and '30s had a soccer columnist and reported daily on the sport" (Wagg, 1995). In 1924 Thomas Cahill, the Secretary of the United States Football Association suggested that "Soccer is making great progress and in the not too distant future will rank only second to baseball as the leading pro game" (Rote Jr., 1978)

The Golden Age ended on a high note as the US entered the 1930 World Cup in Uruguay as a top seed. Thirteen countries were present, and the U.S. easily went on to the second stage where they lost out to the eventual runners-up, Argentina, but the U.S. placed third ahead of such countries as Brazil and France. The U.S. team consisted mainly of former English professionals, six in all. In 1931 an equally impressive feat was accomplished when the mighty Glasgow Celtic, arguably the best team in the world at the time (Wagg, 1995) visited the states to play Fall River, who was about to make a short term move to New York and had thus changed their name to the New York Yankees. The game proved the high level of play in the U.S., as the Yankees pulled away with a 4-3 victory.

Instead of marking the beginnings of great things to come these two events marked the end of the Golden Age. U S. soccer was not to stage another upset before the 1950 World Cup, although it participated in the 1934 World Cup with a dismal 7-1 loss to Italy.

Depression and War

Kyle Rote Jr. believes that "The great Depression of the early '30s hit American professional soccer harder than any other sport" (1978). The problems had started appearing at the end of the 1920s with a restructuring of the ASL, and the appearance of several "outlaw" leagues (Murray, 1996). With the organisational and financial problems piling up some of the biggest supporters of the game pulled out. With the Wall Street crash came a severe blow to most soccer communities which were still centered around the mill towns and heavy industry (Murray, 1996). The teams could no longer afford to pay the high salaries of the professionals, and soon semiprofessionals were in their place. The facilities were not kept up. All this hurt the level of play, and inevitably attendance decreased.

In 1941 only eight registered soccer clubs remained of the 200 in 1930 (Wagg, 1995). The United States Soccer Football Association (USSFA), having added the word Soccer in 1945 to its title, was by now almost defunct. Soccer survived in the places with a high contingency of "foreigners", or first generation Americans, such as Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Saint Louis. From the 1930s til the 1970s the game was known as the "immigrant sport".

New Optimism

Like many others before him, Bill Jeffrey, coach of the U.S. World Cup team that beat England 1-0 in the 1950 World Cup believed "This is all we need to make the game go over in the States". That was a great victory, and may well be the biggest upset the world has ever seen in soccer. England entered its first World Cup generally recognized as the best team in the world. The term "part-timers" suited the U.S. national team at the time. The result was heralded throughout the soccer world, but barely made the U.S. newspapers. The U.S. lost its two other first round matches and did not make it into the second round of the tournament. The U.S. would not qualify for another World Cup in forty years.

The Return of Professional Soccer

In the 1960s, growth in public interest brought a return of professional soccer to the U.S. The College game had grown more popular, and when Saint Louis University won the first ever championship tournament for colleges in 1958 (Radnedge, 1996) it was an important step for soccer's long term viability. The first attempt to make a new professional league appeared in 1960, when Bill Cox formed the International Soccer League. Mr. Cox was a sports promoter and the owner of the "defunct Brooklyn Dodgers professional football [soccer] team" (Murray, 1996). The league consisted of one U.S. all-star team and eleven European and South-American teams. The USSFA, the ruling body for the sport in the U.S. did not believe the league was the best for the evolution of soccer in the U.S., and "canceled" the league in 1965 (Murray, 1996). The league, drawing crowds of sometimes 20,000 a game, plus a television deal, showed there was potential for soccer. The business aspect of the game had also been changed. As Stephen

Wagg phrased it, soccer "had changed its composition from a working-class sport played by immigrants to an upper-middle class and suburban recreational activity, played almost entirely by the young" (1995). The game was still played by immigrants, it was just that there were fewer of them, but Wagg certainly is correct when stating that it was no longer a game sponsored by factories and mills, but rather a game that was being played in exclusive high schools and colleges. The new "soccer people" had more financial resources than their predecessors. In 1965 the USSFA found itself in an unexpected situation. Three separate business-groupings staked claims for creating the biggest, and best pro league in the US (Radnedge, 1996). The best known of the backers of these leagues were Bill Cox (National Professional Soccer League) and Jack Kent Cooke (United Soccer Association). Mr. Cooke, known as the owner of the Los Angeles Lakers, brought some business-experience to the sport . It ended in chaos, with little success both on or off the field. A 1967 merger brought about the first real professional soccer league, the North American Soccer League (NASL). It consisted of 17 teams from the U.S. and Canada. A year later only five of those original teams were still functioning. New teams were set up to fill the vacancies.

The timing of the NASL was good and bad. The World Cup, to be held in England in 1966, was to be televised in the US, and was good. Some researchers credit the 1966 World Cup for the "boom" that took place in U.S. soccer (Murray, 1995). However, it is important to note that soccer's growth at the grassroots level was also impacted by students and peace corps members who returned from abroad having grown fond of the game. The state of professional soccer at this time, however, was one of defensive tactics and low scoring games. Kyle Rote Jr. pointed out that, during the first

seasons of NASL play "Even the more riot-prone soccer fans found it difficult at times to stay awake" (1978). The NASL landed a deal with CBS, and in 1968 and 1969 the American public could watch professional soccer on their TV every Saturday afternoon (Murray 1995). The NASL was still not making money, however, and CBS pulled out, but the 1970s found interest for the game on the rise.

The game had not really made it big, however, until the arrival of a "retired" player named Pele. When the New York Cosmos signed the Great One no one really understood what was going on. Pele had visited the US twice in 1966 and 1967 to play exhibition games in the Yankee Stadium in New York with tremendous success. At the time Pele's name was arguably the best known in the world. Clive Toye, the man in charge of the New York Cosmos organization was banking that Pele could still fill the stadiums. Toye was right. In 1974 the Cosmos were averaging 3,600 spectators per game. In 1975, after the arrival of Pele, crowds of ten times that were not unusual. In 1978, at the peak of their popularity the average attendance was close to 50,000 per game. Even though many famous foreign stars followed in the footsteps of Pele over the next few years, the unescapable problem is well stated by Wagg: "In the end, the main problem was simply that Pele could not play forever" (1995). Pele's farewell game, at the end of the 1977 season, was attended by 77,202 fans.

1978-79 were the peak years of the NASL with high attendance and many (former) international stars. Few could have predicted that the league would fold within five-six years. In 1978 there were 24 teams in place, and attendance was relatively stable topping out at an average of around 15,000 in 1979. In its last season, 1984, there were only nine teams left. The league had a slow start, then picked up momentum by bringing

on aging foreign stars, before the league collapsed. The failure of the league must have been a tremendous disappointment to all who supported U.S. soccer. The United States Soccer Association (having dropped "football" from its name in 1974) had once again been unsuccessful in making the game a big time sport, or had they?

When the first league was formed in 1960 there was a great vacuum to be filled. Soccer had been "dead" for at least twenty years. ". . .by the end of the 1960s it was the fastest-growing sport in the country" (Rote Jr., 1978). Hundreds of thousands, not to say millions, had been exposed to the game, and the spectators had shown that they would come as long as the product was good enough. The sport was embraced by children and teenagers. This interest led to involvement from parents who started playing on the pure recreational level. The vacuum was being filled.

It is also interesting to note that the NASL had made some rule-changes that made the games more exciting such as giving points, not only for winning a game, but also extra points for scoring goals. These kinds of changes were not always appreciated by FIFA, but it made for more entertaining soccer in a time that tended to favor defensive play. The NASL had also established an indoor league, known as the Major Indoor Soccer League (MISL) which continued with some success until 1992. The MISL attempted to Americanize the game even further, by playing it indoors, making it faster, having higher scoring, and adding a whole lot of show to the total package. The league might well be part of the reason for the failure of the NASL's outdoor league, as they seemed to compete more than complement each other.

Reasons for Failure

Upon entering the last decade of the twentieth century it would be correct to say that all attempts of making soccer a long term viable "big time" sport in the U S. had failed. Looking at the recreational aspects of the sport it had been much more of a success, however. Why all these failures on the professional side? Why so little apparent progress? Some of the answers to these questions seem to vary with time. Some, however, appear to remain the same. For a long time the game was seen as an unamerican activity, its origins were British, the rule-making committee was firmly rooted in England, and the biggest advocates of the game were foreigners. It was also an unamerican event in that it was not as masculine as American football. The idea of "gentlemanly conduct" was not in line with the rugged ideals of America. This problem was present in the early days, as well as in the late 1950s and 1960s when the exclusive high schools and colleges² took to the game.

On the other side the spectators seemed to embrace violence, which in turn repelled many from watching the game. The internal disputes over rules and leagues seem to have been ever present. In England the English had set up the rules and leagues; in Germany the Germans set up the rules and leagues; in Italy the Italians had set up the rules and leagues and so forth. In those countries geographical distances were not so great so central "power" could be ensured. In the U.S. the immigrants from England, Germany, Holland, Scotland and so forth established the rules and regulations of the game, and this in a country that was geographically larger than all of Europe. This was not a simple task. The models used for the sport elsewhere in the world, based on

² It resembles the scenario in England a century earlier.

promotion and relegation³ of teams every year in leagues that consisted of several divisions, never seemed possible in the U.S. "Sam Foulds, a US Soccer historian who played, coached, and administered the game for the better part of the twentieth century, [believes that] soccer in the United States, like any other sport, is primarily a business and second a sport - the reverse of the rest of the world" (Wagg, 1995). Foulds goes on to state that the system of promotion and relegation would never work in the U.S. as the owners of the teams would never allow their teams, or investments to be relegated. In most of the world this system is at the core of soccer. This very system makes the last match of the season exciting even if, or maybe especially if, it is between two of the lowest placed teams in the league. Perhaps what enabled this in Europe was the fact that many of the teams started out as amateur teams, or at best semi-pro. The fans of the clubs often supported their team in financial ways far beyond what could be expected. In other parts of the world teams did not move about like they did in the U.S. When building a loyal base of fans it seemed unwise to move from city to city as some U.S. teams did. The ingredient of passion, such a vital part of the world's game seemed to be missing in much of the U.S. game.

The lack of media coverage clearly is one of the most obvious problems the sport has been facing. The 1920s and early 1930s, and parts of the NASL-era set aside, U.S. soccer hardly ever made it into the media. The lack of knowledge of the game, and the biased attitude of several of the big sports magazines, newspapers, and broadcasting companies are a big reason for this. Another reason is the lack of marketing knowledge

³ The system of promotion and relegation refers a system where, f. ex., the two best teams of the second division will move up (promoted) to the first division, while the two lowest placed teams in the first division will move down (relegated) to the second division.

on behalf of the leagues. The problems actually seem to stem from a lack of soccer knowledge combined with a lackluster attitude on the part of the media. A typical example of this would be when Commissioner Logan, after meeting with Sports Illustrated executives, believed he was getting a four-page pre-season preview and "what they got was one lousy column, featuring the usual snide SI [Sports Illustrated] anti-soccer attitude" (Gardner, April 21, 1997).

Perhaps the most obvious reason, but also the one that is easiest to overlook, is the strong competition for consumer dollars in the U.S. There are several other "big time" sports that present quality entertainment. The U.S. has always offered a myriad of pastime activities. In Europe often soccer had little competition from other team sports. It would also seem obvious that backers of other "big time" sports in the U.S. would not celebrate the arrival of a potential competitor the size of soccer. It might be harsh to judge the leaders of such establishments as the MLB, NFL, NBA, and NHL to work against soccer. However, as Foulds put it, in the U.S. soccer and other sports are first businesses and then sports.

Knowing how many have played the sport, and continue to be involved with it, it might not be that the sport of soccer failed, but rather the business of soccer failed.

The Recent History 1985 - 1996

The situation for U.S. soccer in the mid-1980s could possibly seem like the start of another dark era where a vacuum would be created. However, soccer was the second biggest sport in the U.S. in terms of young recreational players (Gardner, 1996). The game was being played in colleges and high schools like never before (actual numbers follow), and it was being played by Americans. The number of students coming out of

college having played soccer was increasing, but there was no big league for the best of these to join. What happened was that the many regional leagues, such as the United States Interregional Soccer League (USISL), were fueled with more talent and enthusiasm, while some of the best players who wanted more went south of the border, or across the Atlantic. With U.S. players playing at the highest level in countries such as Holland, England, Germany, and Mexico, the elite group of players managed to reach a higher level than before. In 1990, for the first time since the 1950 World Cup, the U.S. national team qualified for the greatest sporting event in the world, the World Cup. This was also a result of a commitment by the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) (having dropped "Association" for "Federation") to focus on the national team.

The U.S. had shown that they were worthy of staging the World Cup in 1994, a tournament they had been granted by FIFA in 1988. The U.S. had been granted the tournament partly due to the great success of the Olympic soccer tournament that was staged in the U.S. in 1984. The final game of the Olympic tournament, played in the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California was attended by 101,799 fans, the highest ever for an Olympic soccer match according to Trecker (1998). The two semifinal matches also attracted crowds of approximately 100,000.

Another reason why the U.S. had been granted the tournament was to help establish a major league for soccer. For the World Cup to come to the states the USSF had to guarantee that a professional league would be in place, ready to kick off as soon as the World Cup was over. FIFA, having to answer to criticism of having awarded the Cup to the U.S. only for financial purposes, used the the argument that the "idea was to

'promote the game of association football,' exactly as the FIFA statutes require" (Gardner, 1996). The establishment of a major professional league was seen as a part of this.

The World Cup 1994 organization was headed by Allan Rothenberg, a lawyer who knew how to get things done. Rothenberg had played a crucial role in the organization of the 1984 Olympics. It was not Rothenberg who was at the helm of the USSF in 1987 when the bid was made, however. It was Werner Fricker. Fricker had done a thorough job and presented a bid to host the game that was hard to refuse (Gardner, 1996). Fricker, falling out of favor with FIFA found himself sidelined, as FIFA pushed Alan Rothenberg into the presidency of the USSF in August, 1990. Rothenberg proved to be a good organizer once again. In the aftermath of the tournament, however, many questions of his position in U.S. soccer were asked. Rothenberg somehow ended up with \$7 million from his five year leadership of the World Cup. Rothenberg was also partner in the law firm that the USSF used in its dealings, raking up a lot more money. It is the same Rothenberg who was also awarded the permit to set up the new professional league MLS. The MLS structure is built on the single entity concept which calls for a lot of central power, and ...yes, Allan Rothenberg is at the top of the organization. Rothenberg remained president of the USSF until 1998, when Dr. S. Robert Contiguglia was elected.

The 1994 World Cup turned out to be an unprecedented success, as more than 3,578,000 attended the 52 games, and the average record attendance, held by Italy 1990, of 48,411 was shattered with the new record being 68,102. Souvenir sales surpassed \$20 million at the venues, and gross revenues were reported to exceed \$1 billion. The final

game wherein Brazil defeated Italy was attended by 94,194 fans, "netting gate receipts of \$43.5 million -- reportedly a record for any single sporting event" (Radnedge, 1994). Around the world an estimated 2 billion people watched the final, as it was broadcast on television to 180 countries. Just as important was the fact that the streets were filled with soccer fans, both foreign and American, and the U.S. media covered the game of soccer in a way they had never done before. Perhaps the biggest reason for this was the fact that the U.S. team fared well, and with the enthusiastic backing of Sam's Army (the most hard core fans) it made it into the second round of the tournament where it eventually lost 1-0 against the Brazilians who ended up winning the Cup, and thus the team was not able to do what the womens' team had done in 1991; win the World Champion title. The 1994 World Cup is estimated to have had an economic impact of some \$4 billion.

The U.S. also hosted the Olympics in 1996, and once again soccer proved to be popular as it was the event with most tickets sold at over 1.2 million, and it created the third most revenue.

The High School and College Game (NCAA)

Women's soccer really took off in the 1980s and the national team's strong results were greatly due to the strength of the college game. The growth of both women's and men's programs in high schools and colleges alike over the past forty years have enabled the soccer 'revolution' of the nineties. These changes are depicted in the tables below

Table 3.1(High School and College Participation)

Year	Women		Men	
	Participants in High School	Participants in College	Participants in High School	Participants in College
1957	0	0		5, 075
1971	0	313	49, 593	12, 024
1981	26, 716	1, 855	133, 649	12, 957
1995	166, 173	10, 909	255, 538	15, 409

The table shows the tremendous growth that soccer has experienced in the last four decades. The next table is meant to show the relative growth of the men's game on the college level by comparing it to those sports that are being considered major league at the professional level.

Table 3.2 (Men's College Soccer Relative to Other Major Sports)

Year	American Football	Baseball	Basketball	Ice Hockey	Soccer
1957	23, 520	13, 884	12, 232	1, 630	5, 075
1967	36, 799	17, 101	15, 247	2, 360	10, 370
1982	40, 733	17, 229	11, 578	3, 589	12, 957
1995	50, 956	22, 419	14, 349	3, 605	15, 409

Soccer ranked third amongst men's team sports in U.S. colleges in 1995. The next table compares the situation of women's soccer relative to some of the other big women's sports.

Table 3.3 (Women's College Soccer Relative to Other Major Sports)

Year	Volleyball	Softball	Basketball	Soccer
1957				0
1967	2, 178	1, 366	4, 253	0
1982	8, 418	7, 465	9, 624	1, 855
1995	10, 868	11, 212	12, 656	10, 909

Soccer ranked third amongst women's team sports in 1995.

When combining women's and men's team sports, soccer comes in right behind basketball in number of participants, while American football is still by far the largest in terms of number of people involved. When counting number of programs (women's plus men's) basketball comes out on top with over 1,700, soccer is next with over 1,100, followed by volleyball (888) and American football (566). Womens' sports in general have had by far the most new programs installed. Much of this can be seen as a direct cause of NCAA policy

The NCAA have spent much energy on title IX, which calls for gender equity in college sports. This is certainly one reason why many colleges and universities have picked up the soccer. It is a relatively low cost sport, with a nice squad size. Title IX has some other aspects that might not be apparent at first. Title IX calls for a school to offer as many sports for women as they do for men. There are two ways this can be accomplished, 1) by adding womens teams (like soccer), or 2) dropping men's teams. Many schools have opted to drop programs and men's soccer has suffered from this. It is also a fact that many schools have opted not to establish men's soccer teams due to the

same reasons. When looking at high school statistics there is also a question of whether there are enough women to fill the teams needed in order to comply with title IX. Certain college sports (American football) are great revenue makers at many schools, and what it comes down to in the end is money

The Current Role of the USSF

The USSF's role in the U.S. today is "to promote soccer in the United States of America", and it does so through various levels of involvement. The most obvious involvements include those of organizing and financing the U.S. national teams, as well as overlooking all international games played in the U.S. The USSF also performs lesser known tasks, such as staging thirteen national cup competitions,⁴ serving as a final arbitor in the event of club disputes, and conducting courses for coaches and referees. The USSF also attempts to make the rules uniform throughout the U.S. which is not an easy task considering all the various leagues, especially in the colleges and high schools.

MLS did not get off the ground in 1994, but rather in 1996. The league consisted of 10 teams. The opening match was watched by over 30,000 fans, and before the season was over crowds of more than 90,000 had witnessed the emergence of the new professional soccer era in the U.S. The MLS will be at the focus of Chapter 5.

⁴ Men's open, Amateur, and over-30; women's open and over-30; plus under-19, under-18, under-17, and under-16 for both boys and girls.

CHAPTER 4

The "Big Time" Sports

The Major Leagues

Success of a sport would imply that a sport has reached a high level of acceptance in terms of the numbers of spectators, general knowledge of the game and its star players, and a high generation of revenue. Considering these factors, it would be agreed that American football (NFL), baseball (MLB), basketball (NBA), and ice-hockey (NHL) are the most successful sports in the U.S., alongside some of the individual sports such as golf (PGA, LPGA, SPGA), tennis (ATP), and car racing (NASCAR).

A sports popularity is reflected in the amount of media coverage, and advertising sponsorship it receives, as well as the number of spectators at the gate.

Baseball

There can be no doubt that baseball *was* America's game. Baseball can trace its roots to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Alexander Cartwright, who is generally accepted as the founder of the game,¹ was responsible for setting up the first set of rules in 1845. The game caught on quickly and by 1858 the first league was in place, known as the National Association of Base Ball Players. Over the next forty years many leagues were to appear, most experiencing short lives. The National Association created in 1871 is the first account of a professional baseball league.² The team that had paved the way for this change toward professionalism was the Cincinnati Red Stockings, the same team that holds that name today.

¹ Some argue that Abner Doubleday invented the game in 1839. Doubleday later became a Civil War hero and was thus the kind of man many would like to associate with the invention of America's favorite sport.

² Is it perhaps the first professional sports league in the world?

Baseball continued to gain popularity, and the two leagues that emerged from the bewildering array of leagues³ proved to be strong. The National League (NL) of 1876, and the American League (AL) of 1901 found ways of working side-by-side. The 1920s proved to be a golden age also for baseball, and the two eight-team leagues, concentrated in the northeast were thriving.

Entering the 1960s, and forced by the threat of rival leagues entering the south, the two leagues agreed to expand to a 24-team league. Expansion in the big leagues proved successful. Baseball continued to prosper, especially economically. Gate receipts, and television and radio revenues made the owners of the franchised teams wealthy. The players, however, did not see much of this money. The players brought in expert union help to attempt to do what big industry unions had done so successfully; get a bigger piece of the pie. The players won not only the right to higher wages, but more importantly more control over their own careers. Up to this point players were merely property of the franchises, with very little say as to contract matters. In 1976 the process of giving players more control was furthered by a court ruling that led to the creation of "free agents"

In the 1980s and 1990s baseball, more than any other sport, was plagued by disagreements between franchise operators/the leagues, and the players/unions. There were numerous lock-outs and strikes, which received more attention than the game itself. In 1994 the premiere event of baseball, the World Series, was cancelled for the first time in 92 years. Major League Baseball suffered from this ongoing battle. Baseball was

³ The following is a list of leagues considered "Major Leagues". There has also been a multitude of smaller leagues. American Association (AA 1882 - 1891), American League (AL 1901 -), Federal League (FL 1914 - 1915), NA (1871 - 1880), National League (NL 1876 -), Players League (1890), Union Association (UA 1884).

surpassed by American football, presented through the NFL, as the most popular spectator sport in the USA during the 1970s.

The sport today seems to be rebounding, due in large part to its stars. There are currently several household-name players in the league, and the MLB and their franchises promote these names whenever possible. T-shirts, posters, and shoes with player signatures are everywhere. The "home-run race" of the 1998 season was also a blessing for the League. Media coverage was intense, and even people who cared nothing about baseball got caught up in it.

Major League Baseball is made up of thirty franchises which are owned and run by separate business entities. These franchises are associated through the league which serves as a facilitator. Although separate businesses, the teams share in broadcasting, gate receipts, and licensing revenue. MLB sales totaled \$2.2 billion in 1997, which represented a 19.97% increase over the previous year

Baseball is still popular as a high school and college sport. There is also a well developed farm league system in place, counting 180 teams. The farm leagues are interesting not so much as a training ground for new comers, but rather because they bring baseball to a large number of smaller cities and towns. By doing this baseball ensures its place with the fans all over the country, and it gives children a chance to have local heroes. It is also important to note the impact it can have on a community when one of "their own" makes it into the big league. The game tends to become more personal at that stage.

American Football

American football has not always been the obvious choice as the spectators favorite sport in the U.S. Although the game was being played at the "Ivy league" schools concurrently with soccer at the end of the nineteenth century, and the first written rules were set up at the Massasoit convention in 1876,⁴ American football did not get its first major league until 1920. In 1920 the American Professional Football Association (APFA) was established, and to consider it a major league is actually a bit of a stretch. The league held an annual convention, but the teams were free to make up their own schedules, and teams often ended up playing non-league teams. The league, renamed the National Football League (NFL) in 1922, kept no statistics in its first twelve years. It is also interesting to note that the big newspapers of the time "covered many sports, but crowded pro football into a short column" (www.nflhistory.com). Only two of the franchises that originally made up the fourteen team league, the Arizona Cardinals and the Chicago Bears, still exist. The NFL has proven strong, and five rival leagues have been forced to fold while two have been "swallowed". The American Football League entered the stage in 1960, and became a big rival to the NFL, but in 1966 the two leagues agreed to a merger, and the Super Bowl was created as a competition of the best in the respective leagues. In 1970 they formally merged, making it a league of 26 teams. The merger proved successful, and through the 1970s football overtook baseball's position as the favorite spectator sport in the U.S.

By 1990 the NFL counted thirty teams, and the average attendance for regular season games (230) surpassed 62,000. This is probably the highest average attendance

⁴ Walter Camp (Yale), known as the 'father' of the game, was responsible for setting up those first rules.

for any sports league in the world. Merchandise sales and gate receipts reached new heights in 1998 when the NFL saw revenues of over \$2.4 billion, which constituted a five per cent increase over the previous year. The NFL also recently signed a world record broadcasting deal worth nearly \$18 billion. The players have shown that they want their share of the money, and labor disputes have become a part of everyday life.

The high-school, college, and recreational aspects of the game are not as high (proportionately) as previously, with soccer and basketball gaining popularity along with newer sports such as snowboarding, in-line hockey, and various forms of extreme sports.

The farm league system is not as developed as that of baseball. There is the Euro-league however, which is actually made up of American teams traveling to Europe to play games, much like the International Soccer League in 1960.

Basketball

Dr. James Naismith is credited with the invention of basketball in 1891. The first international federation did not come around until 1932, with the U.S. joining in 1934. Today FIBA (the equivalent of soccer's FIFA) counts 201 members.

The National Basketball Association (NBA) is a relatively young league, created in 1968. In its inaugural season in 1968/69 the league consisted of fourteen teams that played 574 games. The average crowd numbered almost 6,500.⁵ By 1997/98 there were 29 teams that drew a total of 21.8 million spectators, averaging just over 17,000. Games are broadcast to 190 countries. Sales for the league almost reached \$1.9 billion in 1998. This represented a 12.62% increase over the previous year.

⁵ 1968/69 - 14 teams - 574 games - 6,484 avg. attd. / 1978/79 - 22 - 902 - 10,822 / 1988/89 - 25 - 1025 - 15,088 / 1997/98 - 29 - 1189 - 17,135.

The NBA is split into an Eastern and a Western division. It is a multifaceted business which is involved in consumer products, network television, and new media products (www.nba.com). The NBA also operates the Womens NBA (WNBA).

The 1998/99 season *did not start out* as hoped for. There was a six month lock out, caused by salary issue disagreements.

Basketball is very popular as a year round recreational sport, and it is being embraced at the high-schol and college level by both girls/women and boys/men. One might argue that basketball is indeed the healthiest of sports in the U.S. in many aspects.

Ice Hockey

Ice Hockey as a major sport (National Hockey League), although established in 1917, is the newest of the major sports. The National Hockey League (NHL) was founded with four teams, and over the next 53 years (til 1970) the number varied between four and twelve. Around 1970 the league picked up and by 1981 the Eastern and Western divisions counted a total of twenty-one teams. At present there are twenty-seven teams (in the U.S. and Canada), and the league has a goal of reaching thirty teams by the 2000/01 season. The league had sales of \$1.34 billion in 1998, with an average attendance of 16,548. This number was a 3.5% increase over the previous season. The increase at the gate is small relative to the tremendous increase in TV audience. The latest (1999) figures show an increase of 37% over the previous season.

Not all is a walk in the garden for the NHL, however. As recently as the 1994/95 season 468 games were cancelled due to a lock-out caused by a salary dispute. On-going problems persist. Although average attendance is up, some teams are experiencing

difficulties and some games have drawn fewer than 6,000 spectators. There is only one team that has averaged over 20,000 at the gate.

Perhaps the biggest feat of the NHL, and where soccer can learn the most, is the way it has penetrated into untraditional markets. Twenty years ago, one would never have imagined strong hockey franchises in places like Southern Florida and Texas. The NHL also has a well developed farm league/cooperation with the other hockey leagues (American Hockey League, and the International Hockey League). The recreational aspects of the game are greatly restricted to the availability of ice hockey rinks. Other forms of hockey (in-line, land, etc.) are quite common.

The J-League

The ten-team J-League in Japan kicked off enthusiastically in 1993. Soccer had been played in various semi-professional leagues for a long time, but there had not been any real major league attempts. The best teams had been owned by big companies, and the players were "regular" employees of the firms. As soccer grew more popular this form of team organization made it difficult to improve. That is, since the players were considered employees of the companies they could not very easily be traded, fired, or sold.

The league was centered around ten former company teams that turned professional.⁶ Several foreign star players were brought in, with the Brazilians being the most sought after. Many of the stars did not quite fit in as they were simply too good. The first season however, was a great success, and the league continued to gain momentum for several seasons. By 1997 however, attendance was declining, and

⁶ One team was actually already considered to be a professional team.

speculation has been made as to the future of the league had Japan not qualified at the last minute, for the 1998 World Cup. With the participation in World Cup '98, and the co-hosting of the World Cup in 2002⁷ interest around soccer seemed secure. It is also important to note that the J-league focused on "creating" Japanese stars to a great extent. The J-League grew to eighteen teams in the 1998 season, and for the 1999 season a new era will begin. The league has chosen to adopt, for the 1999 season, the European system of relegation and promotion. The first division J-league will consist of sixteen teams while the second division will start with eleven teams, with room for expansion. In such a system the two best second division teams will be promoted into the first division while the two last place finishers from the first division will be relegated into the second division. There are also several amateur divisions below these two.

Soccer in Japan is faced with competition from the vastly popular professional baseball league (considered very American), and the national sport of sumo wrestling. The J-League also started a womens league which was able to draw some of the finest talent from around the world, but due to low attendance and little interest in general, the league is now struggling for its survival.

The Common Factors

Do the successful sports have anything in common? When looking for common factors it is necessary to look, not only for those of a positive, but also of a negative nature. The most obvious factor is that all these leagues (NFL, MBL, NBA, NHL) are based on franchise models. All the leagues seem to have experienced difficulties in

⁷ South Korea and Japan will host the Cup together.

establishing themselves as *the* top league for their game. The anti-trust laws in the U.S. have made it difficult for any one organization to become the ruling body for any sport.

Another issue is the heavy reliance on creating superstars, which they promote heavily. The stars have always been there, in the form of Babe Ruth, Doug Flutie, and Wilt Chamberlain, however, in the past fifteen years this focus on stars has reached new heights. One reason may be the efforts of Nike and other name brands, that decided to move their marketing efforts away from mass-sponsorship (sponsoring 500 good athletes), to sponsorship of one or two mega stars. This hype around a few players makes stars appear bigger than life. Michael Jordan is perhaps the greatest example of this. Undoubtedly a magnificent basketball player, Jordan's name has become one of the strongest trademarks around today. Jordan has his name on a diverse range of products from the most natural (shoes) to the more absurd (cologne and watches).

Another common factor is that the sports mainly appear to be American. Baseball was basically created in the U.S., American football is likewise an American version of a game, and ice-hockey has different rules in the U.S. and Canada than the rest of the world, and most would agree that basketball is most at home in the U.S. With the possible exception of ice-hockey, all these sports remain mostly American to this day, even though basketball is considered a relatively popular sport in many countries, and baseball is big in a few other countries. The U.S. is also the best in these sports. Although ice-hockey offers a world championship tournament, and a grand Olympic tournament, the Stanley Cup (the NHL final) is considered to be the true world championship by people in this country. Likewise the national (U.S. and Canada) baseball championship is referred to as the World Series (much like the British did with their soccer tournament in

the late 1800s). The American football Super Bowl is referred to as the greatest sporting event in the world, and if you ask most Americans they truly believe that the Super Bowl is the most watched television event in the world. It would also be correct to assume that the U.S. has the best leagues in the world for all these major league sports.

With the lack of lower divisions, with lower quality play, the U.S. spectators appear to be unwilling to watch "mediocre" performances of any kind, nor does it appear that enough players participate at this level. Baseball and hockey farm leagues are exceptions to this, but these seem to be in place primarily to assist the major league clubs in attaining their goals.

It appears that the volunteer spirit that has enabled so many teams in the lower divisions of sports around the world to be viable does not prevail in the U.S. In this country, perhaps more than anywhere else, time is money, and for someone to use vast amounts of time on any activity, money is required. In return, one could hope that this level of professionalism would give the U.S. an edge as there should be more qualified and professional people involved. However, it must be considered a negative common factor that the volunteer spirit in sports is lacking.

Another common factor is that the successful leagues all have the strong influence of business-oriented leadership. This has enabled the leagues and the teams to utilize their brand name value to create revenue far beyond gate receipts and the sale of broadcasting rights. The use of league logos, through licensing agreements, on everything from toothbrushes to coffee-mugs are creative ways of creating revenue. The sale of these products are also great ways of advertising for the leagues. It can be assumed that many people from around the world have purchased Chicago Bulls

sweatshirts without ever having seen the Bulls play a game. Similarly, you will find people in other countries, who do not know that the Dallas Cowboys are a football team, wearing caps with the Dallas logo simply because they liked the way it looked. The important thing for Dallas is that they still made some money from the sale of that cap (as long as it was not a "fake").

Another common factor of the successful leagues is the fact that the players in these leagues do not have many obligations to a national team. In American football there is no national team (the sport is not big enough to be represented in the Olympics), in basketball the national team is usually only assembled for the Olympics, in baseball the Olympics became a reality only in 1992 and so far only amateurs have been allowed.⁸ While in hockey there are several outings for the national side, most of the NHL players are not involved in this. In soccer more international games are being played than ever, and the national team is as important as the club team.

The successful leagues have all encountered difficulties relating to owner versus player issues involving salaries and employment rights. However, all the leagues also have experienced a golden decade in the 1990's with attendance and revenues hitting new heights. It is similar to the stock market, and no one can quite see an end to it, but chances are there will be fluctuations in the future just as in the past.

All in all there can be said to be many similarities among the successful major leagues. Most importantly, they provide entertainment people are willing to pay for

⁸ This might well change for the 2000 Olympics, but the U.S. do not expect to field more than a few pro-players, as the pendant race is considered more important.

CHAPTER 5

The Viability of Soccer / Major League Soccer in the U.S.

The Structure of the MLS

To further be able to determine the future of Major League Soccer and the sport of soccer in the U.S., it is necessary to look at the structure of the league. The MLS is a summer (March - November) league where the twelve teams each play thirty-two regular season games. The league has an Eastern and a Western division. The four best teams from each division participate in a post-season tournament to crown the MLS champion.

Major League Soccer is a single entity business. This makes the MLS the only major league not to be a confederation of individual franchise owned teams. This means that "each team operator owns a stake in the league, not just their individual team" (www.mlsnet.com). In this concept it is also of great importance that players sign a contract with the league as opposed to with the individual teams.

The MLS administration claims five distinct advantages of the single entity concept over the more traditional franchise model. These are: 1) Limit the financial disparities between large and small markets. 2) Offer commercial affiliates an integrated sponsorship and licensing program. 3) Decrease the opportunity for sponsorship ambush. 4) Gain economies of scale in purchasing power and cost control, and 5) make decisions in the best interest of the entire league rather than just one team (www.mlsnet.com). It also implies that the teams will get to operate autonomously in their respective markets. All of these advantages, as listed by the MLS organisation, seem to be not directly concerned with sporting issues; they all pertain to economic advantages.¹

¹ "Centralization"...and..."interest of the entire league" does this sound like a well known political system?

One of the problems one clearly aims at steering away from with this approach is that of a "death spiral" effect on teams that are experiencing economic and on-the-field difficulties. When a team faces problems on the field this often results in lower gate revenue and a loss in marketing value, which often leads to economic despair. A team will often opt for one of two solutions. 1) Cut the payroll, and earn some revenue by selling of some off their most valued players, or 2) Purchase (a few) quality players to attempt to get a winning team, and thus increase the popularity of the team. Both these scenarios can pay off well for a team, or they can prove fatal. To cut the payroll, teams often have to part with their best, and most popular, players. This does not tend to increase gate revenue, nor marketing dollars. The team can easily find itself in deeper and deeper financial problems, and in the end reach the bottom of the death spiral. A scenario that is perhaps even more common is when a team, facing the previous mentioned problems of low gates etc., attempts to buy its way to success. The idea is that by bringing in a few star players (usually not cheap) they will be able "to turn things around". The gates may well show a favorable change, but often a few new players will not change a losing team into a winning one. The revenue might well increase, but the cost of buying, and paying star-rated-salaries, will often offset this. Often teams will have spent more than they really could afford, and hence if things do not improve dramatically they are doomed. This last scenario could well be referred to as gambling.

Both the previous examples could lead a team to the bottom of the "death spiral" After committing to one strategy, it seem difficult to switch. One bad decision often forces the next. By centralizing the league one clearly aims to stop this problem before it starts. Hats off to the MLS for at least acknowledging the problem.

The investors in the league represent a crucial aspect of its plausibility. The MLS can show some of the most successful and influential business leaders in the U.S. and the U.K.. Among the investors/team-operators are such giants as Philip Anschutz, the owner of the NHLs Los Angeles Kings (operates: L.A. Galaxy, Chicago Fire, and Colorado Rapids), Lamar Hunt and his two sons Clark and Lamar Jr.. Hunt Sr is the owner of the Kansas City Chiefs, as well as the founder of the American Football League (AFL) (operates: Columbus Crew, and Kansas City Wizards), and the Kraft family, the owners of the New England Patriots of the NFL (operates: New England Revolution, and San Jose Clash). The founder and chairman of the MLS, Allan I. Rothenberg, is also an investor in the league, although he does not operate a team.

The daily operation of the league is done by a central management team which consists of Commissioner Doug Logan, and until recently deputy Commissioner Sunil Gulati. Alan I Rothenberg serves as the Chairman of the organization. Doug Logan had little experience with the administrative aspects of soccer. He had experienced soccer as a child growing up in Cuba and had played some in his teens. This lack of knowledge of the game of football and its history has been used against Mr. Logan, but it seems his knowledge of the business aspects has made up for at least some of his faults. Sunil Gulati is recognized as the man who got the league up and running. He personally set up most of the deals in order to fill up the ten rosters, and he managed to do so with a mere \$15 million. Mr. Gulati has been referred to as the "player czar" (www.soccerspot.com) of the MLS. Ironically it was this that seemingly led to his recent ouster by the league in February 1999. Some team owners felt Gulati abused his power in player allocation dealings, as he failed to inform a team owner/operator of the allocation of a \$250,000

player. Ivan Gazidids, the MLS Vice President for Player Relations & Operations took over the duties of Mr. Gulati.

The organization is rather top heavy. With such an organization it would be expected that players would form a union and raise questions as to how the league should be run. The fact that it happened in the first season was unexpected. The organizers behind this "up-roar" challenged the legalities of the way the league was run. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the challenge was that it was orchestrated by John Kerr of the National Football League Players Association. Commissioner Logan was not pleased with the situation. When asked about the situation Logan replied: ". . . John Kerr, who has danced on the graves of two leagues out there, as a self-described leader of this group of players... I'll be damned if he dances on mine" (Gardner, 1997). Mr. Rothenberg who expressed that "we assumed that at some point the players would be organized and we'd be faced with a lawsuit or strike. ", called the timing of it "foolhardy" (Mahoney, 1997). Rothenberg also made it clear that he believes soccer is not embraced by all the members of the biggest major leagues. "I don't think it's an [sic] coincidence that the people agitating are from the NFL Players' Association and a law firm that represents the NBA, NFL, NHL and Major League Baseball. I don't think these people have the interest of soccer at all in their mind" (Mahoney, 1997).

Mike Woitalla, of the newspaper Soccer America, commented on opposition to the single-entity concept in the following manner. "Detractors have accused this system [single-entity] of fostering poor labor conditions and putting too much power in the hands of an individual. These critics prefer a freer market that puts power in a few more people's hands and creates the kind of harmony we found in the NASL" (Woitalla, March

24, 1997). The last part of the comment refers to the many disagreements that existed within the NASL. Woitalla seemed to have a strong case.

The First Three Years

The inaugural MLS season went well, and the 160 games were seen by almost 2.8 million spectators. The Los Angeles Galaxy was the most watched team as over 460,000 turned up at the gate. The Colorado Rapids had almost 300,000 fewer, and was thus the least watched team. The average per-game attendance of the entire league at 17,406 was well above the forecasts and the budgeted break even point. Compared with the inaugural years of other major league sports these figures are respectable. The NBA had an average of 6,484 in their inaugural season, and now thirty years later they are averaging just over 17,000. The NHL has no records of spectator numbers in its first seasons, but is currently averaging 16,548.

D.C. United won the first ever MLS Cup (play-off final) with a 3 - 2 victory over the L.A. Galaxy, and 34,000 fans attended the final match which was played in the rain. Carlos Valderama, a foreigner, of the Tampa Bay Mutiny captured the first ever MVP award. The much coveted top scorer title was earned by Raul Diaz Arce, also a foreigner, playing for D.C. United. Average attendance for the playoffs was 17,673

Optimism was high for the 1997 season and when Commissioner Logan was asked whether he feared the dreaded "sophomore slump" he answered "We've worked very hard in the offseason to keep that from happening...I'm feeling confident we're going to reach the 20,000 [average per game] goal" (Gardner, March 24, 1997).

The second year proved tougher on the league than expected and average attendance dropped to 14,619 (16%). Much of this was caused by lower attendance for

the first games of the season as the "hype-factor" from the first-ever season was not present. All in all it was a disappointment. The MLS Cup proved a success, however, as 57,431 turned out in a rain storm to see D.C. United clinch their second title with a 2 - 1 win over the Colorado Rapids. It was also assuring to see someone with an American passport² Preki, of the Kansas City Wizards, take home the MVP award. The average attendance of the second MLS playoffs was 16,015

The third (1998) year saw more of a moderate optimism, but still the feeling was that attendance should climb somewhat over the previous year. As often is the case in Europe and South-America, interest for club football drops a little in World Cup years. This is due to the fact that most soccer fans watch huge amounts of soccer on TV during the tournament and get their appetite filled by this. MLS decided to run a regular schedule while the World Cup was taking place. This decision does not seem to have been in the best interest of soccer in the U.S., nor for some of the clubs. The MLS teams that had several players participating in the World Cup for their national teams were hurt. It also seems strange to take interest away from the biggest showcase the game has to offer in order to keep the league rolling. It is indeed no wonder the 1998 season saw average attendance decline to 14,312 (2%). Not a drastic setback, but one would have hoped that with the two expansion teams installed in Miami and Chicago, one could have increased the average attendance. The Chicago Fire brought a lot of excitement, however, and managed to win the MLS Cup in its first season, (a feat not often seen) beating three-time finalist D.C. United by a score of 2 - 0. Once again a foreigner won the MVP honor, as Marco Etchevery of D.C. United had a stellar season. The final game

² Preki was born in Yugoslavia, but became a U.S. citizen in 1996.

drew a record 51,350 fans, as the organizers finally were blessed with decent weather. Average attendance for the playoffs was also a record, as 17,855 people attended the games. The following table summarizes some of the vital information of the first three years.

Table 5.1 (Vital Information about MLS: 1996, 1997, 1998)

Year	# of Teams	Avg. Attds.	Avg. Play-off Attds.	Champion	MVP
1996	10	17,406	17,673	D.C. United	Valderama
1997	10	14,619	16,015	D.C. United	Preki
1998	12	14,312	17,855	Chicago Fire	Etchevery

Some changes have been made along the way, and for the 1999 season, which is just getting underway, the salary limit per team has been increased to \$1.7 million. The number of international players allowed on each roster has been cut to four, as opposed to five. As of April 3, 1999, attendance figures showed that the average was almost 15,000 after 15 of the 192 games had been played,

The Underlying Factors for Success

Several things have been changed from the scenario that was faced by the professional leagues that started up in the sixties, at least five of which represent major underlying basic factors that can contribute to greater success for the MLS than its predecessors.

(1) The biggest difference between the scenario faced by professional leagues in the 1960's and today is to be found at the grass-roots level. Never before have so many people been involved with soccer in the U.S. Soccer has become much more a part of

everyday-life, as is seen in the papers, on tv, and even in the general language. A good example of the way soccer has worked its way into the American language would be President Bill Clinton's statement that "Soccer Moms don't like hatchet men" (Woitalla, January 27, 1997). Such a statement would not be likely only ten years ago.

(2) A major "reason" for the decline of the NASL was the state of the facilities/stadiums in which the games were being played, as well as the size of some of these. It is obviously hard to create a good atmosphere for 15,000 fans in a stadium which has a capacity of 80,000. This is why MLS has been focusing on the need for soccer specific stadiums ever since the start up. 1999 will see the opening of the first all-soccer arena in the U.S., located in Columbus, Ohio, and several other regions are planning soccer stadiums as well. Just as importantly, all the arenas are required to be in very good shape, and set up to suit the size of crowds expected. This implies that stadiums such as the 77,000 capacity Giants stadium in New Jersey has to be "somewhat rearranged". All the stadium areas also include a soccer theme park. This is supposed to create a family oriented atmosphere, and increase the entertainment value. MLS apparently realizes that it is competing with the entertainment industry.

(3) Another underlying factor which should not be underestimated is the fact that the World Cup has become more of an institution in the U.S. over the last decade. This has been caused, not only by the staging of the Cup in 1994, but also due to the fact that the U.S. has made it to the final stages of the last three tournaments. Knowing that all through the '60s, '70s, and '80s the U.S. team did not qualify for the final stages once, this is an impressive feat.

(4) Perhaps the most important underlying factor for success is the idea of thinking in the long term. Project 2010 serves as a good example of the long-term goal oriented work of the USSF. The project is a "plan" to make the U.S. win the World Cup in the year 2010. Whether they will reach this goal or not is not the crucial part of the project, as it proves aspirations to compete at the highest level.

The United Soccer League Connection

(5) Perhaps the best argument for a viable pro league in the U.S. is the The United Soccer League (USL)³ which was established in 1986 by Commissioner Francisco Marcos as a five team regional indoor league. The league has developed tremendously and can now boast 135 teams spread around 41 states. Commenting on the incredible growth over the last five years Commissioner Marcos holds that it has been "... fueled by steady interest from individuals and groups who want smaller market, community-based, professional and amateur soccer teams that compete for national championships" (www.usisl.com). The growth of the league has not come through the acquisition of expensive foreign players, giant marketing, nor from pure business motives. It has grown through a pull-demand strategy. The demand for soccer-teams has led to the growth. The fact that the league is approaching the size of long-running minor league baseball is a credit to the sensible approach the league has taken regarding the business aspects. The league still includes amateur/semi-pro teams, and thus makes it possible for a team to be situated in the smallest markets. The USL currently operates the following leagues:

- A-League (Division II professional standing by FIFA) 30 teams
- D3 Pro League (Division III professional standing by FIFA) 28 teams
- Premier Development League (National amateur) 39 teams
- W-League (National women's open) 36 teams
- Y-League (National elite youth) new in 1999

In 1998 an agreement was signed between the MLS and the USL which links the two, and enables MLS teams to utilize USL teams as "farm teams". Within these two organizations there are more than seventy professional teams, with approximately 1,400 players.⁴ This has to be considered a sign of strength as the professional aspects of these organizations have been around for less than ten years.

SWOT Analysis Results

Some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats have already been discussed above. In this section a summary of these and some new ones will be addressed in order to come to a conclusion as to the viability of the professional aspects of the game of soccer in the U.S.

Strengths:

- ❖ Experience from previous failures
 - ◆ It is good to have the information and the experience from previous attempts to start out professional soccer leagues, as well as some experiences of other sports. No doubt this experience helped prepare the League in its dealings with the lawsuit that the players brought on at such an early stage. It has also helped the League to find the best markets to enter.
- ❖ Big corporate sponsors.

³ The United Soccer League (USL) was known as the United Systems of Independent Soccer Leagues (USISL) when work started on this chapter.

⁴ These are not the only professional soccer leagues, as there are a few independent leagues.

- ◆ MLS has an impressive list of sponsors: (Official Sponsors) All Sport Body Quencher, AT&T, BIC, Budweiser, Honda, Mastercard, Pepsi, SNICKERS, and YAHOO! (Corporate Partners) BestFoods, Breathe Right, Kellog's, Mitre, NAYA, and TSI Soccer. (Official Suppliers) Adidas, Kappa, Nike, Reebok, and Umbro. (Suppliers) Allsport Photography, and Kwik Goal.
- ❖ Three seasons have passed with no team folding.
 - ◆ This is clearly a sign of strength that many might not consider. To introduce a major league sport into ten markets at one time is no easy task, and to ensure the viability of all those teams is likewise difficult. MLS has managed this feat which few, if any, other professional leagues have accomplished.
- ❖ Cooperation with USSF and USL.
 - ◆ MLS works closely with the USSF, commonly referred to as US Soccer, on several levels. Project 40 is perhaps the best example of this. It is a project that attempts to identify the best talent in the country, and give this group of players the best matching available.
 - ◆ Several key members of the MLS also serve on positions in US Soccer.
- ❖ FIFA support.
 - ◆ The fact that FIFA has decided to support MLS, is important in terms of international recognition and reputation. This enables MLS teams to enter into competitions that are under the FIFA umbrella, and it means that FIFA, and its member associations (CONCACAF) will consider the wishes of the league when making decisions.
- ❖ A low break even point.

- ◆ The budgeted break-even figure requires a 12,000 gate average. The important thing is that costs are kept low so that there is not too much at stake financially. By keeping initial investment low, the organizers of the league do not run a high risk of investors getting jumpy if the money does not start to flow immediately.
- ❖ Attendance figures are greater than what they have been for other leagues during the start-up, and greater than expected at the outset.
- ❖ Strong grass-roots involvement.
 - ◆ Soccer is currently bigger, and stronger at the grass-roots level than ever before. The fact that approximately 18 million people are believed to play soccer during a year, shows that people are aware of the sport. The growing demand for soccer teams around the nation also supports this notion.
- ❖ Level of play has been increasing steadily.
 - ◆ It is obvious that the general level of play has been improving over the first three years. The level is still not as high as it is in the best leagues in the world; however, it is not as far behind as many seem to think. This was shown when D.C. United beat the Brazilian champions Vasco da Gama, to claim the Interamerican cup.
 - ◆ Several of the players in the MLS have experience from playing in various prestigious leagues around the world. They also seem to support that the level of play in MLS is getting better. "The best MLS teams could compete in Mexico's first division" (Marcelo Balboa), "I think it would be a toss-up as to who would win if the best MLS team played the best Japanese team" (Dan Calichman), "I think the best MLS teams could probably hold their own in the Spanish second

division" (Tab Ramos) (All quotes: Borg, 1997). Ramos, one of the best players in the league, goes on to state what seem to be the players general opinion of the league: "...there's no doubt this league has exceeded my expectations in every way The stadiums, the organization, the standard of play, everything" (Borg, 1997).

❖ Broadcasting deal with ABC/ESPN.

- ◆ A six year (long-term strategy) deal was signed with ESPN in 1998. It guarantees that a minimum of 50 games will be broadcast on either ESPN, ESPN2 or ABC. ABC will cover a minimum of two of these (All-star and final matches). The agreement is set up to become a revenue generator during each year.
- ◆ ESPN International will air matches that reach over 90 million homes outside the U.S.
- ◆ MLS/ESPN Shootout is a subscription program through DirecTV which shows nearly 95% of all the matches not aired on ESPN, ESPN2, or ABC.
- ◆ Univision holds the exclusive rights for all broadcasts in Spanish, and broadcasts an additional 16-18 Sunday matches.
- ◆ Several local stations, such as Fox Sports Ohio, broadcast games involving teams from their region.
- ◆ 90% percent of all MLS games are broadcast in one way or another
- ◆ The ratings for the three first seasons have been positive, as ESPN2 figures show that MLS games ranked on a par with college basketball and NHL games. Univision figures list MLS games on a par with their Mexican First Division soccer games.

- ❖ The successful hosting of the 1994 World Cup, and the 1996 Olympics in the U.S.
 - ◆ The U.S. showed the world that they are capable of embracing soccer ,and arranging big tournaments. This not only enhances the possibility of being a future host, but also makes it easier for MLS teams to bring in foreign talent.
- ❖ A great ability to find new talent.
 - ◆ MLS teams have shown a great ability to find young talent. Several young players have made their mark on the league and have gotten their chance with the national side.
 - ◆ Britain's biggest monthly soccer magazine, Four-Four-Two in an otherwise negative article, entitled Stars and Gripes, applauded the way in which the MLS has been able to scout young talent. It was stated that "The tight budgets within which the clubs must operate have forced them to scout carefully, and that has resulted in the emergence of some truly outstanding young players. " (Ferguson, December 1998).
- ❖ The U.S. is an attractive country for many foreign players.
 - ◆ The U.S. is in many ways still considered the 'land of opportunity', and many players that have 'seen it all' are compelled to end their professional careers in the U.S. Players such as Walter Zenga (Italy), Richard Gough (Scotland), and Anders Limpar (Sweden) all have impressive international careers behind them and have chosen to play in the MLS.
- ❖ The administrative team seems to be very aware that changes will have to take place as the league develops.

- ◆ This is perhaps the most important positive quality of the administration. If, or when, the time comes where changes need to be made, the administration seems to be ready to do so. Even issues such as the single-entity concept might well be addressed at some point. Issues relating to the rules are always discussed, and some of the rules, such as the highly debated shootout rule (all tied games go to a shootout so that there will always be a winner and a loser) are very likely to be changed as the League settles in. Commissioner Logan, after stating that the shootout seems to entertain new viewers, said that he is not 'totally comfortable' with it in the long run. "The path I've got to walk is deciding at the right time to remove it" (Ferguson, Nov/Dec 1998).
- ❖ SoccerTV.com™
 - ◆ This web site might well be the best marketing the MLS could ever hope for, as it enables soccer fans to have up to date information on every soccer broadcast on every channel in the U.S. It is a most helpful site as soccer on TV does not have any set times, unlike Monday night football, etc. The site was created by Oliver Tse, and is entirely independent.
- ❖ MLS teams are reaching out to multiple ethnicities.
 - ◆ Hispanic fans made up about 40% of total crowds during the 1998 season. It should be considered, though, that most MLS teams are located in regions where Hispanics make up a much greater part of the population than in the average U.S. community
- ❖ Great support for the national team.

- ◆ There is probably not a country in the world that gets the kind of support that the U.S. national team gets for "meaningless" international scrimages. U S. soccer fans do not seem to discriminate against games that have no major importance. One good example of this can be the 1996 doubleheader where a world all-star team took on the Brazilian national team, followed by the MLS all-star game. The games were attended by over 78,000 fans and marked the attendance record for Giants stadium. An all-star game would not be likely to draw more than 25,000 spectators in any European country.

- ❖ Good www sites.

- ◆ MLS has developed very user friendly and good internet sites for both central MLS and each of the teams. The internet serves an increasingly important role as the source for sports information, as opposed to printed matter.

Weaknesses:

- ❖ History is not happy reading.

- ◆ It should be obvious from reading chapter two that MLS has to face up to many ghosts from the past. There have been numerous attempts to bring the sport into the big time, and they all failed in the long run. Many are those who have asked why it should be any different this time around.

- ❖ Media coverage is still not comparable to that received by other major sports.

- ◆ There are still very few games aired on any of the 'big three' channels.
- ◆ The biggest sporting magazines, like Sports Illustrated give little attention to soccer, as is true of the biggest newspapers. USA Today seems to be an exception, as soccer finds its way into their sports section on a regular basis.

- ◆ The other major sports all receive a lot more attention on their 'finals' The Super Bowl, World Series, Stanley Cup, and NBA Playoffs are all vastly better covered than the MLS Cup.
- ❖ There is a general lack of "soccer friendly" stadiums.
 - ◆ Although MLS listed the presence, or the planning, of a soccer specific stadium as a pre-requisite for a city to 'earn' an MLS team, there are still not many around.
- ❖ Lack of knowledge of game by broadcasting crews.
 - ◆ The level of coverage has improved, however, the quality of coverage could be greatly improved with broadcasting crews who are more knowledgeable about soccer
- ❖ Lack of a cash-cow broadcasting deal.
 - ◆ Perhaps the single biggest weakness of the league is that, even after three years, no big profitable broadcasting deal has been assured. Yes, the agreement with ESPN, ESPN2, and ABC ensures that a great number of games will be aired over the next five years.

It does not, however, bring a lot of much needed dollars to the league. This is the biggest difference between the MLS and the other major leagues, as well as the big leagues around the world. In the aforementioned article Star and Gripes, it is indeed pointed out that "Perhaps the biggest loss is the absence of the big-money television deal, the golden cash cow of post modern professional sport". The article goes on to state that the league actually pays to have its games aired on ABC, which is not entirely in line with the information released by the MLS.
- ❖ Twelve teams are not enough to enter the major league circle.

- ◆ A league consisting of only twelve teams in a country as geographically large as the U.S. will find it hard to compete for broadcasting deals and high paying sponsors in competition with the existing major leagues. MLS has stated that sixteen teams would be ideal, and this is what they are aiming for within the next three years. With the other major leagues averaging twenty-nine teams, a league of sixteen is likely to find it hard to compete for advertising dollars, etc.
- ❖ The salary cap.
 - ◆ The salary cap in effect limits the ability to purchase and/or hold on to the best players in the league. Even if a world star like Ronaldo, of Brazil, would want to play in MLS chances are he would not be seen here as long as the salary cap is where it is today. With a \$250,000 salary cap for the best paid players Ronaldo would have to take a drop in pay equivalent to what Bill Gates would face if he quit Microsoft and started managing a McDonald's restaurant in rural Montana.
- ❖ The design of team-logos and names.
 - ◆ The logos and designs that the 'experts' came up with for MLS made many wonder in what field these people were experts. Most of the designs did not make it any easier to market products such as t-shirts and sweatshirts with team logos. As time passes the importance of the logos is not as big, but at the start-up, good logos can most certainly have a positive impact. Regarding the names, one fan stated his opinion that "'Mutiny,' 'Clash,' 'Burn'--it all sounds like an accident that *did* happen" (Leiker, 1996). The name receiving the most negative attention was the Kansas City Wizzards, which was later changed to the Wizz.

- ◆ The league has also, as part of their create-a-star plan, picked a group of twenty players and given them nicknames such as Cobi "The Missile" Jones and Jason "The Retaliator" Kreiss. One might have to agree with Mr. Gardner when writing "Wouldn't it have been hilarious to sit in on the meeting of soccer-ignorant marketing sophomores.. as they earned their megabucks coming up with this lot?" (Gardner, Apr 21, 1997). Indeed these names have not caught on.
- ❖ Decreasing average attendance for each of the first three seasons.
 - ◆ It has to be disappointing and a cause for worry to see attendance figures decline every season. Revenues are not increasing while expenses have gone up as salaries has risen, etc. The decline should not be over-dramatized however, as there have only been three seasons total. With an anticipated increase in 1999 things might look much brighter. It is also important to remember that the prediction for the league was an average attendance of 10-12,000 in its first years.
- ❖ Fans think they have to act European or South-American.
 - ◆ There is still not a true American soccer culture and style. The fans seem to be looking to Europe and South-America in an attempt to find the 'right way' of cheering on their teams. Although there is nothing wrong with this, the U.S. needs to find its own style (there is no European style, cheering in England is greatly different from cheering in Norway, etc.). A style can only come with passion and passion can only come with time. The culture is slowly building and this problem seems to be taking care of itself.

Opportunities:

- ❖ Media coverage is on the rise and is likely to get better as more experience is gained.

- ◆ There is certainly more soccer both on the screen and in the newspapers today than there was just two-three years ago.
- ◆ The real opportunity for definitely breaking into the real majors lays in getting a better broadcasting agreement.
- ❖ The growth of the USL, and the expansion of the MLS.
 - ◆ MLS expects to add four more teams over the next three years.
 - ◆ The USL continues to grow.
- ❖ American stars are emerging.
 - ◆ With the emergence of American stars such as Brian McBride, Ben Olsen, and Eddie Pope the sport takes on more of an American look.
 - ◆ Players like Eric Wynalda, Jon Harkes, and Kasey Keller have been stars for a long time and continue to shine, not only in the U.S., but also in Europe where all three players have played/are playing.
- ❖ The womens aspect of the game.
 - ◆ The U.S. is hosting the third ever women's World Cup in the summer of 1999, and they enter the tournament as favorites. This is a great opportunity to capture new fans of the game. The women's game is growing at a rapid pace around the world, and the established teams, such as the U.S., Germany, and Norway, are being joined by the Brazilians, the English and many more. The U.S. is at a great advantage with its highly developed college league. Many of the best female players in the world are looking to the U.S. as the ultimate place to play, as there is still not much money to be made for women players in Europe or elsewhere. Faye White of the English national team says that playing in the U.S. would be

great, and "It'd be nice to get that sort of recognition" (Jeffery, 1999), referring to the status U.S. players carry. Similarly "Women's head coach at Lock Haven University Liz Driscoll explains that she could not go back to the UK because women players enjoy so much more respect in the US" (Prasad, 1998).

- ◆ Sepp Blatter, the general secretary of FIFA and regarded as the second most powerful man in soccer, holds that "the future of football would [will] be feminine" and "in 10 years, I feel we will have as many participants among the women as we do with men" (Lewis, 1996). The U.S. is very well positioned in the women's game, something that might well culminate in a full sized Womens Major League Soccer.
- ❖ The chances for hosting the men's World Cup.
 - ◆ Due to the successful hosting of the World Cup in 1994 the chance for hosting the Cup in the not-too-distant future is good.
- ❖ New soccer-only stadiums will likely heighten the enjoyment of the fans.
 - ◆ In addition to the soccer-specific stadium opening up in Ohio, other stadiums are under planning. This shows long-term commitment, and is likely to give a greater sense of pride and belonging.
- ❖ Project 2010.
 - ◆ The USSF aims for the U.S. mens team to win the World Cup by the year 2010.
- ❖ Project 40.
 - ◆ The USSF aims to give the forty greatest youth talents in the country the best backing possible.

Threats:

- ❖ The big broadcasting deals are volatile, as seen in the past.
 - ◆ The NASL lost its broadcasting deal in the late sixties due to low ratings. This might well happen again if ratings drop.
- ❖ Business is seemingly always put first.
 - ◆ How will the big sponsors and investors deal with a possible lack of interest, and lack of profit in the long run?
- ❖ Players might opt for better money in other leagues.
 - ◆ This could become a serious problem if the money-strong leagues around the world realize that there is a great pool of talent in the MLS which can be bought relatively cheaply. The MLS can in no way match the wages of these leagues. It will be up to the MLS to price their players (they hold the contracts) in a sensible way.
- ❖ Other sports, new and old, can grow in popularity.
 - ◆ Sports such as in-line hockey, and roller-blading, though small, are increasing in popularity. No one knows what may come around the corner.
- ❖ Another professional soccer league might start up.
 - ◆ Chances are that this will not happen as the market is not likely to sustain it, however, with only twelve teams in place there are still many markets out there vying for a team.
 - ◆ The anti-trust laws are unclear, and one has to consider the possibilities.
- ❖ Fans dislike of MLS rule changes to make the games more "attractive".

- ◆ So called 'true' soccer fans have shown strong opposition to some of the rules established by the MLS, most notably the tie-breaker shootout. Many fans frown on this, and the league risks losing credibility with this group of fans. The expected benefits from creating interest amongst 'untraditional' fans, must be balanced with the potential loss of self proclaimed 'true' soccer fans. Most long-time followers of the game seem to dislike the shootout, but might still see the need for it as it encourages teams to take more risks and not settle for a draw
- ❖ Internal disagreements.
 - ◆ Disagreement between team operators and the league. This is the kind of agreement that led to the ousting of Mr Gulati.
 - ◆ Disagreement between the players and the league/operators over salary issues etc. This kind of disagreement led to the lawsuit brought on by Mr. Kerr and a group of players.
- ❖ The possibility of a Super-League with teams from South, Central and North-America.
 - ◆ There are rumours that such a league will be a part of the future soccer-scene in the Americas. Based on the success of the Champions league in Europe, a Super-League of European teams have long been discussed. Teams that compete in the Super-League would only compete there, and not in the regular domestic leagues. A Super-League could hurt MLS by moving into some of the most soccer friendly cities, and in all reality take over entire MLS teams. D.C. United would seem a prime candidate for such a league.

- ❖ Foreign players have raised questions as to the atmosphere, or rather the lack of atmosphere at MLS games.
 - ◆ It can be hard for players who are used to playing in front of 40-60,000 fans to get used to playing in front of 14-16,000 fans. It might well become somewhat of an anti-climax.

Conclusion and More Suggestions

To assess the viability of the MLS is certainly not an easy task. The only thing that seems certain is that there will be changes in the coming years.

A central component for success is increasing the level of knowledge of the media, tv-commentators and newspaper journalists. This will result in more and better coverage of the game. This should be a viable goal through lobbying and various other means.

It is also of crucial importance that MLS continue its long term strategy, and refrain from taking a "now or never" approach. It takes time to build a true major league, and the proof of this is clearly set forth in chapter four when considering the NFL, NBA, etc.

MLS needs to appreciate the Open Cup more, and together with the USSF make it into a truly great event. So far the MLS have done nothing to promote and help the Open Cup's position. The Open Cup is important as it enables, not only MLS teams, but also USL teams to compete for a national championship.

The grass roots movement needs to get its share of the financial profit when/if it becomes a reality. Local clubs are in need of money to make the sport affordable for all.

In many areas this represents a major obstacle today, as talented youngsters opt to stay away from travel teams, etc. due to the costs.

The performance of the U.S. national team is very important as it is the national team that can catch the attention of the average person in the street who does not usually watch soccer. Next to the national team it is important to have a few dominant club sides. This is something that MLS has to consider in its "family oriented" structure where every team is supposed to be given what it takes to be successful. In the European and South American countries, whenever soccer has been doing well (on a high wave if you like) in any given country, there has been a dominant club side. In England it was Liverpool in the eighties, in Italy it was Milan in the late eighties and early nineties, these days Manchester United rules in England, Boca Juniors have had their spells in Argentina, as has San Paulo in Brasil. It is these great teams that get people to unite, and feel good about their leagues. It is also these teams that manage to bring in top players from other countries. D.C. United seems to have taken the leading role in MLS so far MLS must hope that D.C. will remain in the top for several seasons.

MLS has been somewhat successful in thinking in new ways. Some rule changes have been tried successfully. However, it is important that MLS also looks back at the historical aspects of the game, and what has made it big all over the world. In looking back one also needs to look to the experiences of the other major leagues. This is a must in order to learn something about some of the problems that are most likely to come about. Labor disputes have been mentioned. The threat of rival leagues, the need for getting/creating new stars, and the need for a positive bottom line are all issues one can draw information about from the experiences of other leagues.

The best advice I can give to MLS is to keep it a long term commitment and not ever think in too large terms. MLS does not have to become the biggest league in the U.S., and it does not need to be the best league in the world, but it needs to be big, and it needs to be good...and yeah, by the way get a television deal that enables us to see at least one game a week on a syndicated station.

In conclusion, it can be said that the organizers of MLS have done a great job in many aspects. The league was set up at a minimum cost, the level of play has exceeded expectations, attendance has been relatively stable, and games are being aired through a major broadcasting deal. However, now it must be up to the league to take a more aggressive stand with the media, and the television-media in particular. There is no need or place for a now-or-never attitude, but MLS has proven its strength and should be able to go back to the negotiating table and demand something more. It might not be such a bad idea for the commissioner and his troops to get some outside help from people that have been involved with soccer in the U.S. for a long time, someone who is both an expert and a fan. Maybe Paul Gardner should follow along the next time the commissioner meets with the ABC executives, and why not bring along the top representatives of Adidas and Nike as well? They are more than likely to support soccer's case and let ABC know how great the demand for soccer is, just as they would like to see the demand grow to double, and triple, and ...

The MLS may fold in two years from now. At the same time one can be assured that professional soccer has never before held a stronger and more stable position in the U.S. than what it does in 1999.

It is tempting to give Carol Slezak, associate editor of Soccer Digest, the last word. She said upon the opening of the league "...it's time for soccer enthusiasts to put up--or shut up... Support MLS. It's as simple as that" (Slezak, 1996), but when talking about soccer in the U S. it is hard not to give the last word to Mr. Alan Rothenberg "If we can't make it based on soccer fans, we're in big trouble" (Mahoney, April 14 1997).

APPENDIX 1

The World Cup was staged in Italy 1934 (Italy won), and in France 1938 (Italy won). The tournaments became more popular each time.¹ By 1938 Europe was in turmoil, and to stage a tournament with 14 teams was certainly a sign of strength (Radnedge, 1994). The tournament was not to be played again until 1950.

The English did not appear in any of the World Cup's before World War II. They were still believed to be the best in the world, however. The 1950 tournament could not be played in Europe, as the rebuilding was still going on, and, as Gardner phrased it, "soccer stadiums were not high on the priority list" (1996). Another problem was the lack of trust between Eastern and Western Europe. On the other side of the world, however, the Brazilians were busy building the largest stadium in the World. The Maracana, in Rio de Janeiro, with a capacity of 175,000 spectators,² was to be the stage for the opening match of the 1950 World Cup. FIFA rules called for 16 participating countries, only 13 actually made it to the tournament. The return of England, or "*i maestri*, the masters, as the Italians called them" (Gardner, 1996) was the big story. The English had recently beaten the Italians by the score of 9-0 in Turin, and had won 14, tied 3, and lost only 1 game between 1946 - 1950, so they might well have deserved to be considered a favorite (Rote Jr., 1978). However, England, having lost two matches and won only one, returned to England without having reached the final round. England was beaten at their own game. The case was argued by many that the British teams had not developed nearly as much as had the rest of the soccer world over the last twenty years. The British were first to realize in 1953, when the Hungarians visited Wembley and

¹ There had been 13 contestants in 1930, by 1934 it was 16, and in 1938 there were 14.

² There were actually 199,850 fans at the final (Rote Jr., 1978)

trashed the host by a score of 6-3, that something was wrong. When the English sought their revenge the following year in Hungary they got an even worse result, 7-1. But, the men of FIFA could be pleased about the 1950 tournament, and the fact that the public attendance totaled more than 1.3 million. This was more than the three previous World Cups had in combined attendance (Duarte, 1994).

The 1954 World Cup was held in Switzerland. Hungary, or the 'Magic Magyars' as they were called, were favorites, but their biggest star Ference Puskas was injured after less than 30 minutes of the opening game. Hungary still made it to the final, where Puskas tried a comeback, but the Germans proved too strong and won the match 3-2.

Edson Arantes do Nascimento, or simply **Pele** entered the world stage in 1958. The 1958 World Cup staged in Sweden introduced the world to who was to become arguably the most famous sports-personality of all time. To this very day Pele remains the greatest name in soccer. In 1958, at age 17 Pele became the youngest ever to win the World Cup. It was the way he did it that was so astonishing. He was a star alongside stars, and scored two goals in the final against Sweden. The Brazilians won the game 5-2. The other big star of the tournament was France's Just Fontaine, scoring 13 goals in 5 games, a record to this day.

The 1962 games in Chile became known for physical and foul play. Pele was injured in the second match and did not re-enter the tournament, but Brazil was still good enough to beat the Czech's 3-1 in the final.

If the 1962 games had been a slight let down, the 1966 games were to be memorable. Perhaps most of the games were not so well played, and the tournament came to be known as the "World Cup of Fouls" (Duarte, 1994), but it did have drama,

and lots of it. England finally got the chance to host the World Cup. By that time it was not easy to get into the actual World Cup final tournament. Besides the host country, and the current World Cup holders, who both received automatic bids, 51 countries entered into preliminary contests on five continents to compete for the remaining 14 places (Duarte, 1994). The preliminary contests served a much greater purpose than one might have imagined. The games enabled the game to flourish even in those countries that never had a chance of making it to the actual tournament. It ensured that the fans of the smaller soccer nations got the chance to see the biggest international stars play. The 1966 tournament had it all, drama, star players, major surprises (North Korea beat Italy for a quarterfinal spot), record attendance (over 1.6 million), and a tremendous final game to decide the outcome. After extra time the score read: England 4-West Germany 2.

Mexico hosted the World Cup in 1970. The tournament is widely recognized as one of the best ever (Duarte, 1994). It marked the return of the Brazilians, who had been sent packing after the first round of play in England four years earlier. Pele was still the great player everyone talked about, but it was perhaps just as much Jairzinho who made the Brazilians so unstoppable. Jairzinho scored in all of the six games (Radnedge, 1994). The Brazilians went on to beat Italy 4-1 in the final, which was the first World Cup match "to receive live worldwide TV coverage" (Duarte, 1994). This was the third time the Brazilians won the title, and the trophy was brought back to Brazil on a permanent basis. This was to be Pele's last World Cup, and he left a legacy that will hardly ever be matched. When former Brazil manager, Joao Saldano said "Pele is to Brazilian football what Shakespeare is to English literature" (Radnedge, 1994) he might well have switched Brazilian and English with World.

The 1974 Cup was played in West Germany. The European countries dominated, and the final stood between West Germany and a Holland team that was led by the "total football player" Johan Cruyff. The West Germans came out on top with a 2-1 victory.

In 1978 the World Cup was back in South America. Argentina was host and put on a good and exciting tournament. Holland had continued the great play that nearly made them world champions four years earlier, and made it to the final again. Argentina, cheered on by their fanatical supporters, and a goal-scoring machine named Mario Kempes, also reached the final. The Argentine crowd got what it wanted, as the home team won 3-1. The Holland team had made it to two consecutive finals by playing beautiful soccer, but did not manage to win a title.

For the 1982 World Cup the field of finalists was enlarged from 16 to 24 teams. This increase was made to "creating more berths for Africa, Asia, and the emerging soccer regions of the world" (Duarte, 1994). The 1982 Cup set many records. A total of 107 national teams signed up, 315 qualifying matches were played, and over 2 million attended the games. It was a great tournament that saw four European countries through to the semi finals. The Italians proved they were up to the task and won their third ever World Cup, beating West Germany 3-1 in the final.

The 1986 World Cup was supposed to be played in Columbia, but due to economic crisis, the government had to pull their bid for staging the Cup. Many alternatives were suggested, but Mexico received the go-ahead. FIFA nearly had to look for another host country as an earthquake hit Mexico in the fall of 1985 (Duarte, 1994). The finals were played in Mexico, however, and they turned out to be a success. The

world was able to see an Argentinean team poised for success, with a new hero almost the stature of Pele. Diego Armando Maradona, or simply Maradona, became a worldwide hero due to his incredible skill. Maradona might well be the greatest ball-artist to ever have played the game. His Argentina team beat West Germany in a thriller that ended 3-2.³

The 1990 World Cup was destined to be a great one. The football crazy Italians were hosts, and were the favorites. In the end the tournament ended up as one of the worst, not because of some scandal, or horrible incident, but simply because of the defensive playing style of nearly every team. Cameroon had put on a good show, however, and helped get recognition for the African game. West-Germany, in what would be their last World Cup before reuniting with East-Germany, won the final on a penalty-kick. West-Germany 1 - Argentina 0. The tournament proved that good players and enthusiastic crowds are not the only ingredients of staging a successful World Cup. It also takes goals and "attractive" soccer.

³ The tournament also featured one of the best World Cup matches ever to be played. It was a quarter final between France and Brazil. It is known as the game that no one wanted to end. It ended with a shoot-out victory to France, as the score had been tied up at 1-1 after regulation time and extra time. That game serves as an example of how incredible the game of soccer can be.

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www.espn.go.com/soccer (General soccer news).

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www.sams-army.com (This site is dedicated to the U.S. national team).

www.soccer.org (American Youth Soccer Association (AYSO) official pages).

www.socceramerica.com (Web version of the newspaper).

www.soccerhall.org (The site of the Soccer Hall of Fame - good history section).

www.soccerspot.com/soccerhistory (Much U.S. soccer history).

www.us-soccer.com (The official web-site of the USSF).