



SOCCER IN THE UNITED STATES

Fact Sheet

U.S. SOCCER FEDERATION: A member of FIFA since 1913, the United States Soccer Federation celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1988, the year in which the United States was named as host nation for the 1994 FIFA World Cup. Landing the World Cup is something of which Americans are extremely proud, and it is the aim of the U. S. Soccer Federation to ensure that this great event will be an outstanding success.

The Federation, one of the 17 national governing bodies of sport currently headquartered at the U. S. Olympic Complex in Colorado Springs in the state of Colorado, is a non profit volunteer organization administered by a national board of elected representatives.

Some of the Federation's duties include organizing and managing seven national teams that compete worldwide, arranging educational courses for players, coaches and referees, staging international matches and processing international player transfers.

U. S. SOCCER SUCCESSES IN 1989 -- The past 12 months have been the most successful for United States teams in American soccer history. Beginning in January, the U. S. Five-a-Side Team placed third in the 1st FIFA World Championship for Five-a-Side Football. In March, the U. S. Under-20 Team placed fourth in the 5th World Youth Championship for the FIFA/Coca-Cola Cup. The U. S. Under-16 Team qualified for the 3rd U-16 World Tournament in Scotland and recorded a memorable 1-0 victory over Brazil in the first round. And, of course, the United States qualification for the 1990 World Cup marks the first time an American team has participated in this grand event since 1950.

USA SOCCER GROWTH: The popularity of soccer has grown immensely in the United States in the past 15 years. The quality of play has continued to improve to the point where United States teams are now competitive in the world arena.

According to a recent survey released by the Soccer Industry Council of America, 15.5 million Americans over the age of six played soccer at least once during 1988. From approximately 103,000 youth soccer players registered with the Federation in 1974, the total has grown to approximately 1.5 million in 1989. Combining all affiliated and unaffiliated players in the United States, there are more than eight million players under the age of 19, making America's youth soccer program one of the most sophisticated in the world today.

PROFESSIONAL SOCCER: PAST AND PRESENT: Professional soccer has long been a part of the sporting environment in the United States. The American Soccer League, the longest running U. S. professional league, operated from 1921 to 1984. The North American Soccer League provided another colorful chapter to the development of the game in the USA, operating 19 years through 1985.

Despite the NASL's departure, however, professional soccer continues in the USA, and is destined to be on the upswing as we near America's 1994 World Cup. There are four major pro leagues operating in the states. They are the American Soccer League, the Western Soccer League, the American Indoor Soccer Association and the Major Indoor Soccer League.

AMERICA'S MAJOR SOCCER LEAGUES

American Soccer League: Founded in 1987, the ASL operates with a spring-summer season of 20 games. The Ft. Lauderdale Strikers are the defending champions.

Membership: Northern Division -- Albany Capitals, Boston Bolts, Maryland Bays, New Jersey Eagles, Penn-Jersey FC, Washington Stars. Southern Division -- Ft. Lauderdale Strikers, Miami Sharks, Orlando Lions, Tampa Bay Rowdies, Washington Diplomats, Chicago Blaze.

Western Soccer League: Founded in 1985, the WSL has a spring-summer season of 16 games. The San Diego Nomads are the defending champions.

Membership: WSL North -- Seattle Storm, Portland Timbers, Salt Lake Sting, Colorado Foxes, San Francisco Bay Blackhawks. WSL South -- New Mexico Chiles, Real Santa Barbara, L.A. Heat, California Emperors, Arizona Condors, San Diego Nomads.

American Indoor Soccer Association: Founded in 1983, the AISA operates with a winter season of 20 games. The Canton Invaders are the defending champions.

Membership: Atlanta Attack, Canton Invaders, Chicago Power, Dayton Dynamo, Hershey Impact, Indiana Kick, Memphis Rogues, Milwaukee Wave.

Major Indoor Soccer League (Professional): Founded in 1978, the MISL operates with a winter season of 52 games. The San Diego Sockers are the defending champions.

Membership: Baltimore Blast, Cleveland Crunch, Dallas Sidekicks, Kansas City Comets, St. Louis Storm, San Diego Sockers, Tacoma Stars, Wichita Wings.

THE FUTURE OF PRO SOCCER: The U. S. Soccer Federation has developed a plan for the reorganization of professional soccer in the United States. The plan calls for a First, Second and Third Division professional structure, with a system of promotion and relegation that will be unique to American professional sports. Under the new system, any community in America, provided it meets the proper standards, could field a team in the new professional league.

Although there is no specific timetable to the beginning of this new league, the U. S. Soccer Federation is in the process of establishing rigorous membership standards, after which various teams around the United States will have the opportunity to apply for acceptance. The Federation will also be working diligently in the months to come to facilitate the establishment of professional teams in key metropolitan areas.

COLLEGE SOCCER IN THE USA: The popularity of soccer in American colleges and universities has been growing tremendously during the past 15 years. In fact, more institutions of higher learning currently field intercollegiate soccer teams than grid football teams. According to the most recent set of figures from the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, 780 colleges fielded soccer teams while only 686 fielded grid football teams.

College teams participate in sophisticated national playoffs in different categories, according to the size of the school. Many college players graduate to higher level programs in the professional ranks.

YOUTH SOCCER IN THE USA: The foundation for the soccer boom in the states still is a strong and growing national youth program. Most American youngsters learn soccer as their first team sport at an early age. According to figures released by the Soccer Industry Council of America, more than 12.6 million players under the age of 18 played soccer at least once in 1988. Among eight leading youth team sports, soccer ranks third in popularity after basketball and volleyball. Soccer is the second most popular team sport in the nation for players under the age of 12 years.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SUCCESSES: American national youth teams have been among the world's most successful in qualification rounds for world championship events. The U. S. Under-20 Team has appeared in the last two world championship events -- 1989 in Saudi Arabia where it placed fourth, and in the 1987 event in Chile. The U. S. Under-16 Team has appeared in three consecutive world championship events -- 1989 in Scotland, 1987 in Canada and 1985 in China.

MAJOR U. S. CHAMPIONSHIPS -- The U. S. Open Cup, the U. S. Soccer Federation's premier club championship event, has been held every year in the United States since 1914. The first championship was won by the Brooklyn Field Club, which defeated Brooklyn Celtic 2-1 back in 1914. The 1988 Open Cup title was won by Busch Soccer Club of St. Louis, which defeated the San Francisco Greek-Americans 2-1. Other national competitions held by the Federation include the U. S. Amateur Cup and Over-30 Cup for both male and female teams.

NATIONAL TEAM PROGRAM -- The United States fields five men's teams for international competition: the National Team, Five-a-Side Team, Developmental Team, Under-20 Team and Under-16 Team. There are two teams fielded for women's international competition -- the U. S. Women's Team and the Girls' Under-19 Team. Administration of these teams, which includes arranging for various training camps and competitions, is accomplished through the National Teams Office, which is based at U. S. Soccer Federation headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

COACHING -- The sport of soccer enjoys one of the most sophisticated certifications systems in all of American sport. The system, organized and managed by the U. S. Soccer Federation, provides for various levels of coaching licenses. Federation coaching schools are held at regular intervals throughout the year at various national sites. Approximately 5,000 soccer coaches have received coaching licenses through Federation-sponsored programs.

REFEREES -- The United States has one of the highest referee registration totals (more than 40,000) of any FIFA-affiliated country. Referees begin their association with soccer by taking an entry level examination. Referees are categorized into seven national proficiency grades. America's top level FIFA referees have been appointed to top international assignments around the world during 1989.

U. S. HISTORY IN THE WORLD CUP -- This will be the United States fourth appearance in the World Cup. The Americans placed third in the first World Cup played in Uruguay in 1930. American teams also appeared in the 1934 and 1950 tournaments, with the 1950 U. S. squad recording an historic 1-0 victory over England at Belo Horizonte, Brazil.