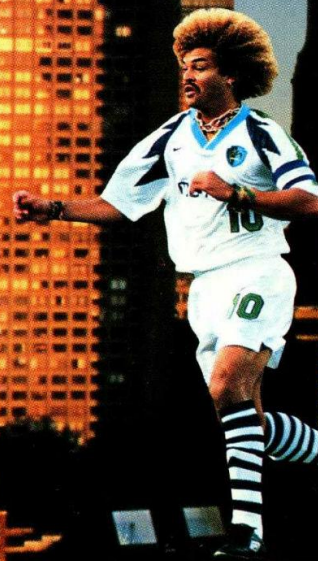
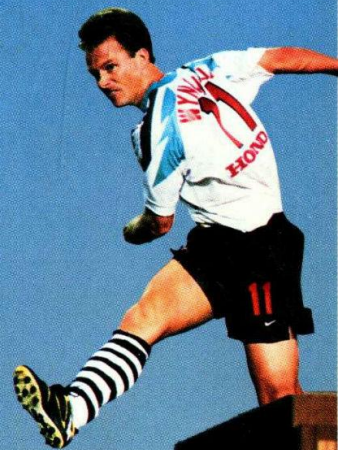
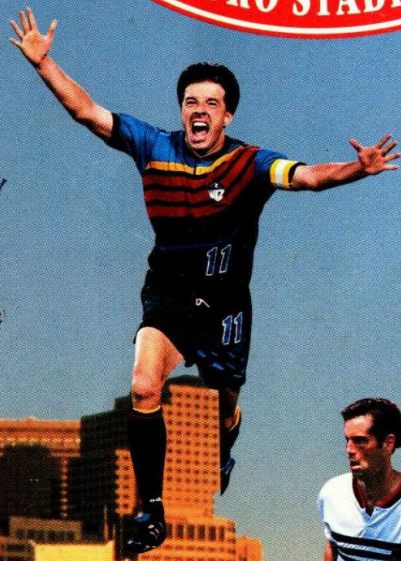


OCTOBER 20, 1996 — FOXBORO STADIUM, FOXBORO, MASS







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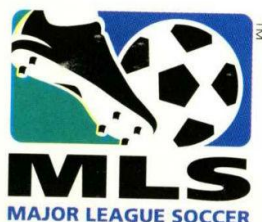
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## MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

OCTOBER 20, 1996

FOXBORO STADIUM, FOXBORO, MASS.





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## **MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP GAME**

**OCTOBER 20, 1996**  
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## A MESSAGE FROM MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

I welcome you to Foxboro Stadium for the first Major League Soccer championship game—MLS Cup '96. This has been a fantastic year for Major League Soccer. All our expectations have been exceeded.

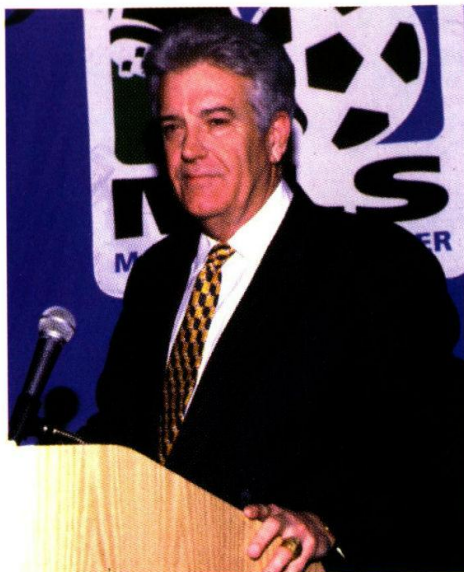
I would especially like to thank the fans that have come out to MLS stadiums and supported us in other ways. I would like to take time to express our gratitude to the sponsors and licensees of MLS. I am also grateful for the fair way our game has been covered by the media.

After the champion is crowned today, the 1997 season begins in earnest for us at MLS. We are already working to bring you more excitement for next season and in the years to come.

I want to congratulate each of the teams participating today because each is already a champion. I look forward to the honor of presenting one of them with the championship trophy.

I hope you enjoy MLS Cup '96. I look forward to sharing many more memorable days like this with you in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Bienvenidos al Estadio Foxboro para el primer juego de campeonato—MLS Copa '96 de Major League Soccer. Este ha sido un año fantástico para Major League Soccer. Hemos excedido todas nuestras expectativas.

Quisiera, especialmente, dar las gracias a los aficionados que han asistido a los estadios de MLS y por su apoyo en otros aspectos. Quiero tomar esta oportunidad para expresar nuestra gratitud a nuestros patrocinadores y vendedores de

mercancía de MLS. También le estoy muy agradecido al medio de comunicación por la manera justa en que ha dado cobertura a nuestros juegos.

Después que el equipo campeón haya sido coronado, daré inicio la temporada de 1997 en serio para MLS. Ya estamos trabajando para traerles mas emoción para la próxima temporada y en los años venideros.

Es mi deseo felicitar a cada uno de los equipos participando hoy, porque cada uno de ellos ya es un campeón.

Espero que disfruten de la MLS Copa '96.

Atentamente,

Douglas G. Logan  
Commissioner  
Major League Soccer

Douglas Logan Mendoza  
Comisionado  
Major League Soccer



## A MESSAGE FROM

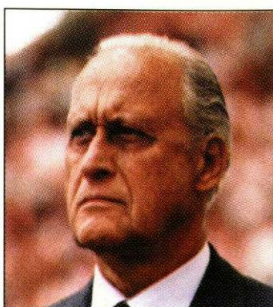
# FIFA

**E**arlier this year, it was our privilege to be present at the inauguration of the first Major League Soccer season, in San Jose. Memories of that day are still fresh, holding the exciting prospects of top-class action in a league that has been under discussion since 1988, when the United States was awarded the 1994 World Cup.

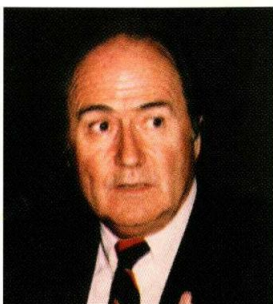
Now we stand at the climax of this inaugural season, with the MLS Cup '96 deciding which team's name will go into the history books as the first champion of Major League Soccer. To win a national championship is every team's ambition, proving as it does the side's strength and consistency over a prolonged period. But to be the very first, on what we all sincerely hope will be a very long list, is a special honor.

But in saluting the first MLS title winners, we must not fail to pay our respects to the other clubs in the new league. For without their competitiveness, the build-up to the finale would have held far less appeal. So our congratulations go to each of the clubs in Major League Soccer.

To the MLS officials, our congratulations also on a remarkable first season. FIFA looks forward to seeing the MLS expand in the years ahead, taking care not to sacrifice quality for quantity, and to seeing the league's roots reach ever deeper into the bedrock of American sport.



Dr. João Havelange



Joseph S. Blatter

**R**ecientemente en este año, tuvimos el privilegio de estar presente en la inauguración de la primera temporada de Major League Soccer, en San José. Los momentos inolvidables de ese día todavía están presentes, manteniendo cautivo las perspectivas emocionantes de un hecho a nivel profesional en una liga que ha estado bajo discusión desde 1988, cuando EEUU fue premiado con la Copa Mundial 1994.

Hoy nos encontramos en la culminación de esta temporada inaugural, la MLS Copa '96 para decidir cual de los equipos inscribir su nombre en el libro de historia como el primer campeón de Major League Soccer. El ganar un campeonato nacional es la ambición de todo equipo, demostrando como siempre su vigor y consistencia sobre un periodo prolongado. Pero para ser el primero en absoluto, en lo que sinceramente esperamos ser una lista muy larga, es un honor especial.

Al saludar a los primeros ganadores del título de MLS, no queremos pasar por alto rendir tributo a los otros clubes dentro de la nueva Liga. Porque sin su competencia el acercamiento hacia el fin hubiera sido de poca atracción. Por lo tanto, queremos felicitar a cada uno de los clubes dentro de Major League Soccer.

Nuestras felicitaciones a todos los funcionarios de MLS. FIFA queda a la expectativa de ver a Major League Soccer expandir en los años por venir.



Dr. João Havelange, President



Dr. João Havelange, Presidente



Joseph S. Blatter, General Secretary



Joseph S. Blatter, Secretario General





## U.S. GOVERNING BODY

# U.S. SOCCER



**Alan I. Rothenberg,**  
President

**T**he United States Soccer Federation, or U.S. Soccer, is the national governing body of soccer in the United States. Headquartered in Chicago, U.S. Soccer served as host federation for World Cup USA 1994, the most successful event in FIFA history.

U.S. Soccer was one of the world's first organizations to be affiliated with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), soccer's world governing body, beginning in 1913. U.S. Soccer has continued to grow and now has the second-largest membership among U.S. Olympic Committee national governing bodies.

Approximately 50 full-time U.S. Soccer employees work to administer and serve a membership located in all 50 states. Known originally as the U.S. Football Association, U.S. Soccer's name was changed to the United States Soccer Football Association in 1945 and then to its present name in 1974. U.S. Soccer is a non-profit, largely volunteer organization, with much of its business administrated by a national council of elected officials representing three administrative arms—approximately three million youth players 19 years of age and under; 300,000 senior players over the age of 19; and the professional division.

U.S. Soccer manages seven full national teams. Men's programs include the National Team, Under-23 (Olympic), Under-20, Under-17, and Five-A-Side (Futsal). Women's teams include the National and Under-20 teams. Three developmental national team programs include Under-18 and Under-16 Boys and Under-16 Girls.

The host national association for the 1996 Olympic soccer matches, U.S. Soccer is proud of its many recent successes. The Women's National

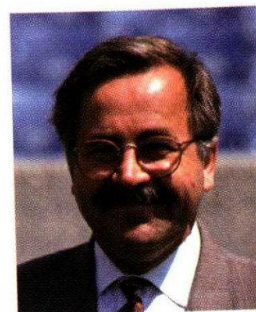
Team produced some of the most significant achievements in U.S. Soccer history, winning the first-ever Gold Medals at both the 1996 Olympics and Women's World Championship in China in 1991. The Women's National Team also captured the 1994 CONCACAF title to qualify for the 1995

world championship tournament in Sweden, where the team placed third, falling to eventual champion Norway 1-0 in the semi-final. The U.S. squad won U.S. Women's Cup '95, exacting a measure of revenge with an overtime victory over Norway in the final match.

The Men's National Team won the U.S. Cup '95 title and advanced to the semi-finals of Copa America before bowing out to the world champion Brazil 1-0. The Men's National Team advanced to the second round of World Cup play in 1994 for the first time in 64 years.

Other recent U.S. Soccer achievements include the Indoor National Team capturing the silver medal at the FIFA Indoor Five-A-Side World Championship in November 1992 in Hong Kong; the Men's National Team being crowned CONCACAF Gold Cup champions in 1991, winning the inaugural U.S. Cup '92 and defeating England 2-0 in U.S. Cup '93; the U-20 team finishing eighth in the 1993 FIFA Youth World Championship in Australia; and the Women's National Team finishing second in the 1993 World University Games in Buffalo, N.Y.

Coaching schools are held regularly throughout the U.S. where interested persons may gain certification at six progressive levels. U.S. Soccer has more than 72,000 certified coaches. The referee program makes up an integral part of the U.S. soccer scene, with approximately 74,000 referees currently registered. ☼



**Hank Steinbrecher,**  
Executive Director





## INTERVIEW

# LOOKING AHEAD

## Questions & Answers with MLS Commissioner Douglas G. Logan

**M**ajor League Soccer Commissioner Douglas G. Logan (right) recently took some time to sit down and discuss his thoughts on the success of MLS during its inaugural season and the future of the new league. An overview of Commissioner Logan's discussion with veteran sports journalist Barry Lorge follows.

**Q:** Can you give an overview of Major League Soccer's inaugural season, from your perspective?

**D.G.L.:** I think we've gotten off to an extraordinarily good start in our quest to bring Division I soccer to this country and maintain a high level of credibility. The product that we have put on the field during the course of a 160-game regular season has been very solid and very exciting. We have had significantly higher goal scoring than what we originally contemplated. We were hoping to get about three goals per game; we have had about 3.4 to 3.5 goals per game. We have achieved parity among the teams on the field, with a particularly close Western Conference race. No one has really been out of the playoff race.

We have had audiences that are about 80 percent higher than our orig-



inal expectations, and the audiences have been knowledgeable. They have enjoyed themselves and had a good time at the games. Our television viewership has been more than satisfactory. We are now enjoying ratings equal to college basketball and NHL regular-season hockey games.

Our original attempt was to put an affordable, honest product on the field, and we certainly have done that, and the fans have responded. The play has been very good, and I'm very, very pleased with how the season has gone.

We knew we had to go out after certain core audiences, which include the young audience and the ethnic audience, and in both regards we have achieved great success.

And finally, we have a game that is

very accessible. Our athletes have signed thousands of autographs. They have made themselves available for picture sessions. They have been involved in online computer chats through the league's worldwide web site. ([www.mlsnet.com](http://www.mlsnet.com)) I think we have taken this great game and, by the outreach of the athletes that play on our teams, have made a great many friends this summer. That is a building block for growth in the years to come.

**Q:** MLS appears to have made a conscious effort to be inclusive and multicultural. Is that part of the overall strategy for making the league work?

**D.G.L.:** It absolutely is. This is clearly an American league. On our 20-man rosters, 16 of the players are Americans. But they may happen to be Americans with Hispanic last names such as Salcedo or perhaps Rodriguez. We think that by bringing the world's game here to this country, we have to characterize it for what it really is: an extraordinarily inclusive game that is played the same way in Namibia as it is in Poland, in Bolivia and Ireland, in China and in Costa Rica. As a consequence, what we celebrate is the rich diversity of what this country symbolizes: a melting pot of



***"As this league grows, its ability to disseminate its product through television, both domestically and internationally, will increase significantly."***

many nationalities and many languages and many nations.

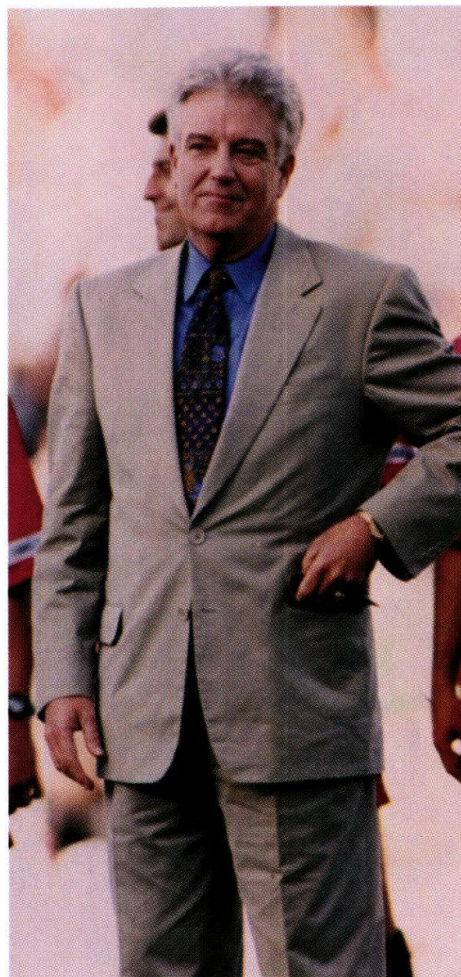
We clearly have embraced first and second-generation ethnic audiences, particularly the Latin audiences that have grown up with soccer as a part of their soul.

**Q:** Although the game is played the same way all over the world, there are styles associated with different geographic areas and different cultures. Do you see a "melting pot" MLS style of play evolving?

**D.G.L.:** I spoke to one of our coaches recently, and he said it is an awful lot of fun to coach an MLS team because you have to gear yourself up for a different style almost every week. There are certain coaches who are playing a possession, ball-control, Latin American style that must be defended in a particular way. You also have coaches whose style is very much akin to the British Isles, which is a much more direct attack which features more of an aerial game. I think, over the course of time, an MLS style will ultimately become homogenized, but one of the fascinating things about this league is that we seem to have a rich variety of styles which has made for some fascinating soccer. I think we will develop a style which will incorporate the athleticism of the American player with the more artistic, soccer-skilled South American style. Fans will see a rather unique style emerge over the next few seasons.

**Q:** You mentioned signing autographs and other player-fan interaction. How much is the league committed to fostering that connection between participants and spectators?

**D.G.L.:** In other high-profile sports,



the connection has been lost, and there has been a severe breaking of the contact between fan and player that has always been the root of the popularity of other sports. We have a very natural advantage over other pro sports in that I consider the MLS player to be the most intelligent, articulate, cosmopolitan and well educated athlete in all of team sports throughout the world, and a wide variety of positive things come out of that. Our players have a clear understanding that establishing that connection and

making themselves worthy of the adulation that naturally takes place between a youngster and a professional athlete is central, and a key to our continued success.

**Q:** What are the league's future television plans?

**D.G.L.:** We have three-year arrangements in both our Univision and our combined ESPN-ESPN2-ABC deals, and 1997 will be the second of our three years. There will be a very critical negotiating period in the course of the next two years which will be important for us in regard to our future direction on TV. I think I can conclude right now that, come our second contract, or in 1999, you are going to see significantly more games over the air, as opposed to strictly on cable. As this league grows, its ability to disseminate its product through television, both domestically and internationally, will increase significantly. We have a real advantage in being one of the few countries that plays the world's game during what is conventionally the off-season in Europe and South America along with other places throughout the world. This arrangement means there is going to be a demand for our product, live, during what is everybody else's off-season.

**Q:** Can you tell us about any plans for off-season exhibition games or foreign tours by MLS teams?

**D.G.L.:** A variety of our teams have been invited to play in many interesting places throughout the world. D.C. United, for example, is going to be playing in some friendly matches, I believe, in Japan in late November. United is also looking at playing in the first tournament that will be hosted by



***"We feel a vital ingredient in our success is the marrying up of young, growing, learning American players with stars from other countries"***

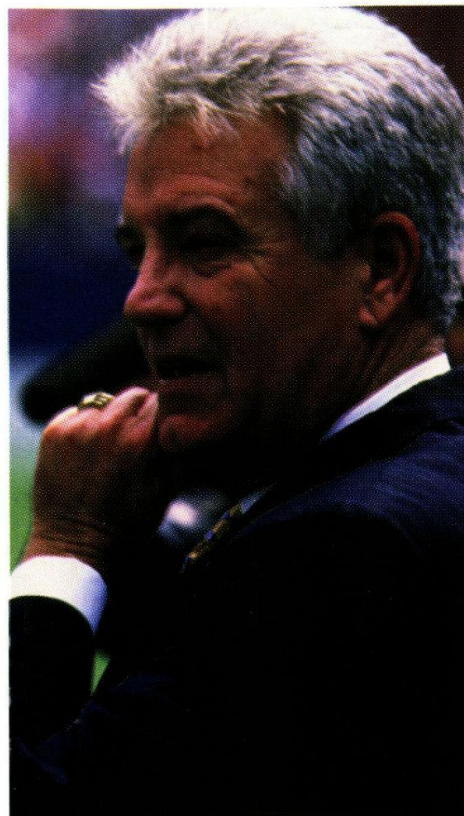
the Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi in the second week of December. The San Jose Clash has been invited to play a series of exhibition matches in Mexico and the MetroStars and a couple of other teams have been extended a few invitations to play some exhibition matches in Europe during the offseason. I would guess that six of our 10 teams are going to be doing some traveling and hopefully representing MLS well throughout the world in both tournament play and in friendly match play.

**Q:** What are your future plans to develop referees?

**D.G.L.:** We're looking to develop administrators in this league, coaches, players and also to develop refereeing. I think we probably made a mistake this year in not investigating perhaps bringing in some foreign referees in an exchange program to get the flavor of refereeing styles from South America and Europe during what is primarily their off-season. I think we will probably bring in and exchange three referees—one Asian, one Latin and one European—during the 1997 season. During the off-season, we are organizing a series of workshops and clinics for our referees and linesman that we think will help us elevate the game from the standpoint of officiating.

**Q:** Some people have expressed the opinion that the future success of MLS is its appeal to "Generation X." Do you agree with that, and if so, how are you appealing to that younger audience?

**D.G.L.:** Los Angeles Galaxy midfielder Cobi Jones hosts a show on MTV and New England's Alexi Lalas is an accomplished musician with two compact discs to his credit. In fact, MTV



recently did a half-hour special on the league. I think that is symbolic of the age that we draw from and appeal to.

We received some healthy criticism over the selection of our team names, logos and uniforms, which are a little cutting edge and avant garde. We have a clear understanding that these teams are very attractive to the audience we are drawing, and the way our merchandise is selling, we believe we made some good choices regarding fabric and design. We definitely think that our future resides in a variety of core audiences—not the least of which is that youth audience which, interestingly, is very well connected to their computers and the Internet. They are on the cutting edge of a lot of cul-

tural and fashion statements, and we are going to appeal to that audience because it has been a very loyal audience in our first year.

**Q:** What improvements would you like to see the league make in 1997?

**D.G.L.:** It's amazing to look back at videos of games that took place in late April and early May, and compare them to the games in August during the run for the playoffs, because the level of play has improved by a multiple. We think there is going to be some very natural improvement in that most of these rosters are going to be kept together during the off-season, and most of the coaches you would presume are coming back, so there won't be that steep a learning curve of players and coaches learning about one another and their styles.

We are going to add another foreign player to each team next season. We have found that during World Cup qualifying and other friendlies, frequently two or three of these stars that we have brought in from other places would be missing from the field of play at any given time. We feel a vital ingredient in our success is the marrying up of young, growing, learning American players with stars from other countries. This blending is what has made our game grow, and we expect it to grow further.

We definitely need to do a better marketing job in several markets—in Denver, Tampa and perhaps even Kansas City—to make the audiences grow in those locations. We have an excellent opportunity to draw more people to our games, to increase our television viewership and to heighten the quality of play on our fields. ☼

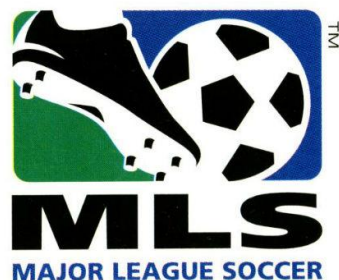


# All Sport Congratulates Both Major League Soccer Champions.

**WESTERN CONFERENCE CHAMPION**



**EASTERN CONFERENCE CHAMPION**



*All Sport is The Official Sport Drink of Major League Soccer*



# GOAL ACCO

## Major League Soccer Has Surpassed Expectations and Looks Forward to a Bright Future

Perhaps the most important moment in the history of American soccer occurred during 1996. Unlike Paul Caligiuri's "Shot Heard Round The World" against Trinidad & Tobago that put the United States in the 1990 World Cup, or Ernie Stewart's goal against Colombia that clinched a trip to the second-round at the 1994 World Cup, or even Eric Wynalda's scoring the first MLS goal, this moment occurred outside the spotlight.

It occurred on a soccer field, or perhaps in a park, some-

where in this vast nation. The moment could have come in Columbus, Ohio, Washington D.C. or even Marietta, Georgia. Anywhere that televisions get ESPN, ESPN2, ABC and Univision, where newspapers and magazines print full-color photos of the Dallas Burn and the Los Angeles Galaxy, where you can buy a Tampa Bay Mutiny T-shirt or trade an Alexi Lalas card for a Jorge Campos.

It occurred when two young soccer players raced across a field chasing a ball. There were no coaches, no referees, no





# MP LISHED

parents. Just children enjoying the game in its purest form.

And then it happened. As one player gained possession of the ball, he yelled at his opponent: "I'm Brian McBride, and I'm going to score on you!"

To which his friend answered: "Well, I'm Alexi Lalas, and you ain't going nowhere!" Their teammates on that day chimed in, claiming the monikers of Tab Ramos, John Harkes, Jason Kreis, Carlos Valderrama and Cobi Jones.

And with that, and other similar

**A Giants Stadium record was set when 78,416 fans packed the stands for the inaugural MLS All-Star Game in July.**



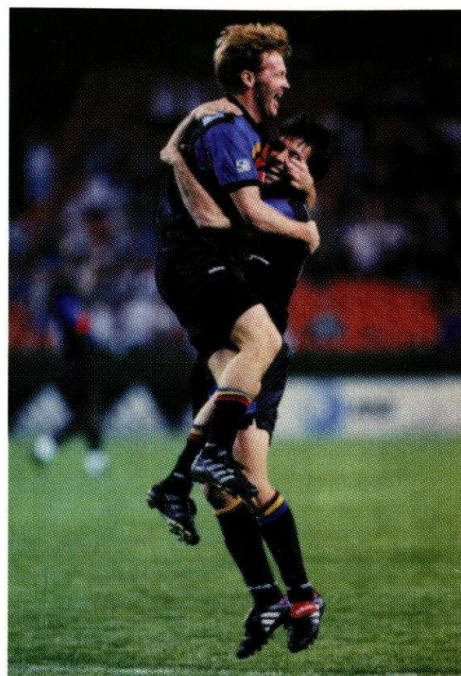
instances, a void in American soccer was filled. MLS has provided heroes for America's soccer youth, and a place for them to play in this country.

These two elements are key to the future of the sport in this country and are so far reaching that the repercussions can only be imagined. By supplying role models for the hundreds of thousands of young boys and girls playing across the country, MLS has brought professional soccer into America's living rooms, into the retail market with everything from apparel to key chains to video games, and most important, into their hearts. MLS has set the table for a soccer feast in the coming years.

Looking back over the 160 regular-season MLS games, the outpouring of fan support was phenomenal, surpassing expectations and filling stadiums with a frenzied soccer environment that most MLS players had previously only dreamt about.

MLS finished the 1996 inaugural season having averaged nearly 17,500 fans per game—shattering the 10-12,000 pre-season expectations of even the optimists, and no doubt shocking the pessimists.

While many inside the sport and out admit there is much room to grow, MLS has been an unqualified success on many levels. Television ratings on ESPN and ESPN2 have been on par with the cable network's college basketball and hockey coverage, while MLS games on Univision have been among its highest rated sports telecasts. The MLS marketing arm has sold \$60 million in sponsorships to some of the most well-respected companies in the world. A broad-based licensing pro-



**Mo Johnston (top) and Preki celebrate yet another goal during the Wiz's exciting 6-4 victory over Columbus in May.**

gram has begun to flourish with projected sales of \$30 million this year, while the media, print and electronic, has embraced soccer as never before.

But while there is rock-solid truth to MLS Commissioner Doug Logan's axiom that "This will not be a successful league if it is not a successful business," the real essence of Major League Soccer to the fans in the stands and others who follow the game. It is the men inside the uniforms, the ones who play *inside* the field boards.

For the players of MLS, this has been a watershed season—a chance to finally play the sport they love, to make a living at the same time, and to do it in their home country, in front of their family, friends and fans. It is an oppor-



*Wynalda's nifty dribble in the left side of the penalty box and clinical finish from a stiff angle set Spartan Stadium on fire and kicked off MLS in style.*



**John Doyle of the San Jose Clash greets Falke Vermer, the 1,000,000th fan in MLS's brief history.**

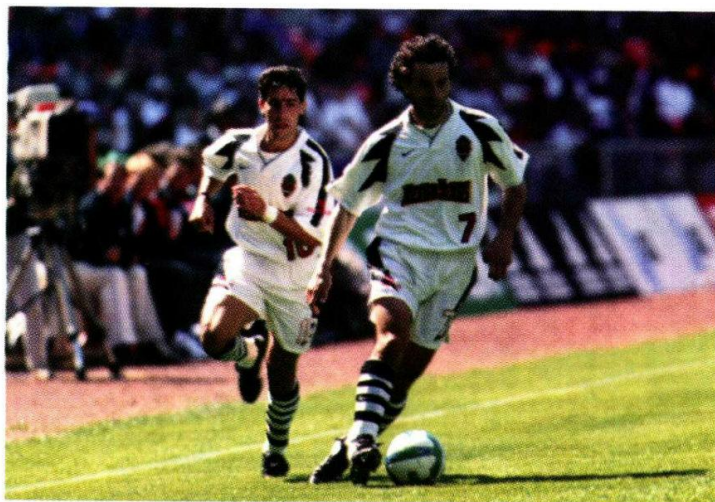
tunity that was absent for so many years, and now is an opportunity that is special for the men of this inaugural season—many of whom have journeyed home from foreign lands to ply their trade in MLS.

"I remember walking onto the field in Giants Stadium for our home opener and realizing that my life-long dream had come true," said MetroStars goalkeeper Tony Meola, who was a ball boy for the New York Cosmos of the NASL. "I could hardly believe that I was standing in the net where I watched my idol [former New York goalkeeper] Hubert Birkenmeier play so many games for the Cosmos. With my family watching, it was a very emotional moment for me."

Goalkeeper Mark Dodd of the Dallas Burn also had an emotional opening day. "After weeks of intense preseason

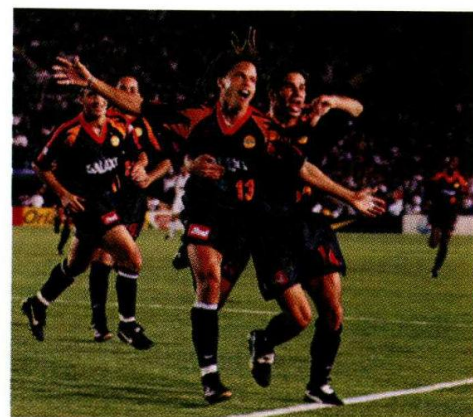
training, it was finally here," said Dodd, a Dallas native. "After all the hype and expectations leading up to MLS' kick-off, there was still the question of how Dallas would take to it. That question was answered with a moment I'll never forget—walking out onto the sun-drenched field at the Cotton Bowl, the stadium packed, the fans screaming with excitement and appreciation for soccer, even before a ball was kicked. And then to win the game in a dramatic shootout and see the response of the people and the media was truly special. It was a day when the players, fans and the city celebrated our passion for the game and set a tone for things to come."

No one set the tone better than Eric Wynalda of the San Jose Clash, whose dramatic 88th-minute goal was the difference in his team's 1-0 victory over



**Once Tab Ramos (left) and Roberto Donadoni were finally in the line-up together, the MetroStars began to roll.**

D.C. United in the MLS Inaugural Game on April 6 at Spartan Stadium. Wynalda's nifty dribble in the left side of



**Cobi Jones and the Galaxy had plenty to celebrate at the start of the season.**

the penalty box and clinical finish from a stiff angle into the right side of the goal, set a sold-out Spartan Stadium on fire and kicked off MLS in style.

"The all-time goal scorer in U.S. Soccer history, before a big hometown crowd in the 88th minute," said MLS Chairman Alan Rothenberg. "I wouldn't have dared write a script with an ending like that."

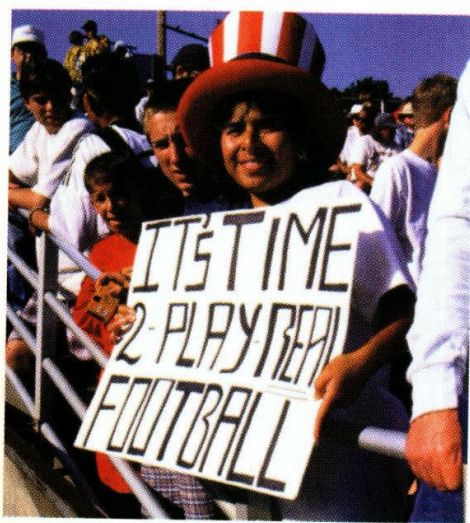
It's safe to say Wynalda would have had no problem penning this one, and likely won an Oscar for best screenwriting, best goal scoring and best celebration.

"It was the best feeling I've ever had in my life," said Wynalda, who pulled his shirt over his head, ran to the Clash bench, slid on his knees and disappeared under a pile of teammates. "I

felt like I had electricity running through my body. The celebration was awesome. The stadium was sold out



*Monster crowds also witnessed numerous regular season games and saw end-to-end soccer that produced an average of 3.4 goals per game.*



The sign held by this fan at the MLS season-opener in San Jose said it all.

with 31,000 people, but it sounded like 100,000, and my teammates were so excited."

In July, a Giants Stadium record crowd of 78,416 fans came to watch the MLS All-Star Game followed by a match featuring the World All-Stars vs. Brazil. On a glorious day for American soccer, the East beat the West, 3-2, on a late goal by Tampa Bay Mutiny defender Steve Pittman, and Brazil stunned the World All-Stars, 2-1.

"The All-Star Game meant a lot to me because it showcased the world-class individuals in this league," said New England Revolution defender Alexi Lalas, who played all 90 minutes for the East. "The actual game itself was the exciting, attacking brand of soccer that we are all trying to develop."

Monster crowds also witnessed numerous regular season games and saw end-to-end soccer that produced an average of 3.4 goals per game. Opening day for the Los Angeles

Galaxy drew 69,255 fans—the Galaxy would win 11 straight games to start the year—and the environment left a lasting impression on MetroStars captain Peter Vermes, who has played professionally in Hungary, Holland and Spain but had seen nothing similar in any of these countries.

"When we walked through the tunnel of the Rose Bowl to play the Galaxy and I saw nearly 70,000 fans in the stands it was like an awesome dream," said Vermes. "I was playing professional soccer in my home country, representing my home state, and wearing the captain's armband. Standing on the field for the National Anthem in that atmosphere is a moment I will never forget."

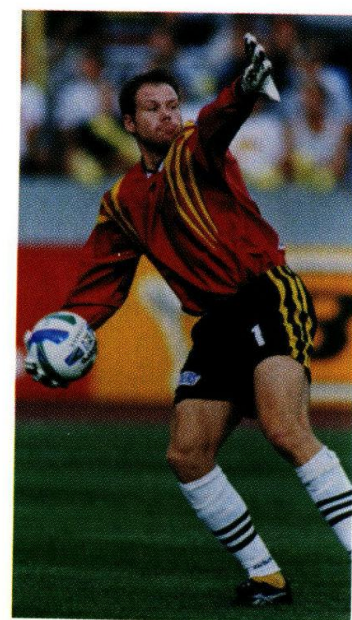
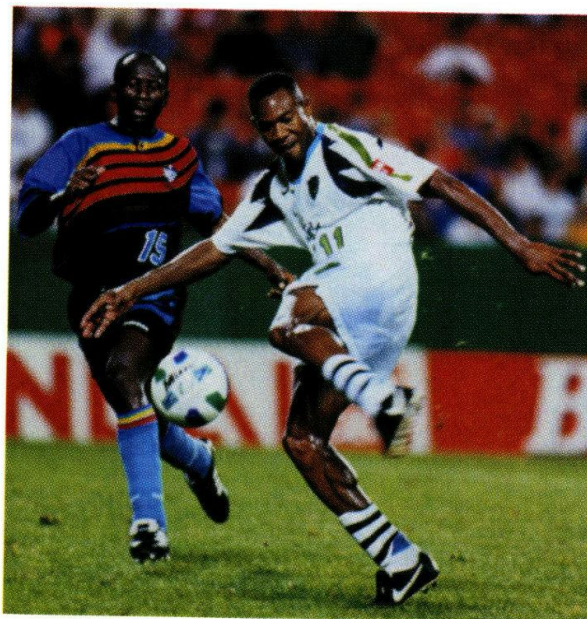
There were many important moments from the first Major League

Soccer season that will last in the minds of all who were involved. Some were on grand scale, played out in front of an audience of thousands. Some were personal. All were poignant. Together, they made up what was a great inaugural season.

And sometimes the most majestic of plans produce the simplest rewards. "After a victory on the Fourth of July, my three-year-old daughter came down onto the field and jumped into my arms," said Dodd. "And she said, 'Yeah, Daddy, you did good!' Even with all the public accolades players get, somehow that smallest, most private one meant the most and makes all of the hard work worthwhile." ☼

*Aaron Heifetz is Major League Soccer's Information Coordinator.*

Two players who had stellar years were Roy Lassiter of the Tampa Bay Mutiny (below left), who finished the season as MLS's top goal-scorer, and Brad Friedel, whose arrival in Columbus made the Crew instant contenders.





# NEVER A DOUBT

## **MLS Chairman and Founder Alan Rothenberg's Vision For U.S. Professional Soccer Comes To Fruition**



During World Cup 1994, Alan Rothenberg (back), MLS Deputy Commissioner Sunil Gulati (center), and future MLS players Alexi Lalas (left) and Marcelo Balboa got together to promote MLS to potential sponsors.

It took more than five years and overcoming more than a press corps of doubters. If the World Cup wasn't a massive flop in the United States, a professional soccer league surely would be.

But for the man who also oversaw the best-attended Olympic soccer tournament, ignoring so-called experts has become rather routine.

Where others saw only a funeral pyre, Alan Rothenberg noticed a phoenix. "The last thing most parents want to do is take their kids somewhere and field questions they can't answer," he

said. "Now, we've got a generation that's grown up with the game. They understand what's going on. They're comfortable explaining it to their kids."

And with that mindset, that soccer was no longer a foreign game to Americans, the 1994 World Cup drew 3.6 million spectators and was the best attended in the 60-year history of the event. It also gave birth to Major League Soccer, which in its first full season pleased America's soccer community, won over skeptics and utterly shocked just about everybody else.

Attendance was nearly 75 percent above the



***"We've tried to take a long-range view of things. We don't expect to catch lightning in a bottle. But we'll take it if it happens." — Alan Rothenberg***

projected average crowd of 10,000 per game. TV ratings were 50 percent above expected.

The level of success achieved succeeded even some of Rothenberg's dreams. "We were hoping for attendance in the 10,000-12,000 range during the regular season and we wound up averaging nearly 17,500. Sponsor interest exceeded our expectations," he said. "I don't know how much more we could ask for."

In August of 1990, when Rothenberg won the U.S. Soccer Federation presidential election over the incumbent Werner Fricker, the crowds MLS was hoping for a year ago was like asking for the moon, stars and even the Starship Enterprise at the start of the decade.

The NASL had died six years before; the U.S. national team was coming off a three-loss-and-out performance at the World Cup, after qualifying for the first time in 40 years; and pro soccer in America was being played either indoors or at small college or high school stadia.

Rothenberg took over the federation and hired Bora Milutinovic as the national team coach. A year later, at FIFA's urging, Rothenberg took over World Cup '94. And earlier this year, the 57-year-old Los Angeles law partner launched MLS.

Taking over when soccer was at a low ebb in this country, many point directly at Rothenberg for the surge in

popularity. "I think he made an impact, not only for the World Cup, but for the MLS," said Tampa Bay Mutiny media relations director Jim Henderson, who worked for the USSF and

longer snicker when the United States is mentioned.

While not a soccer man all his life, the USSF presidency was far from Rothenberg's first brush with the sport. He served as general manager and counselor to the Los Angeles Wolves of the United Soccer Association (one of the forerunners to the NASL). He also owned the NASL's Los Angeles Aztecs from 1977-1980 and served as commissioner of soccer for the 1984 Summer Olympics. It's given him a perspective and experience that has enabled him to chart out soccer's growth, and enjoy it as it unfolded.

"The fortunes of soccer in the U.S. at all levels have been booming. Now comes time for the cherry on the icing of the cake with the successful launch of MLS," Rothenberg said earlier this year. "It's been almost 20 years since the last attempt, the NASL. Soccer has changed in this country. The

development of youth leagues has been phenomenal. There's been a huge explosion of the Hispanic community and their almost religious-like affection for soccer.

"We've tried to take a long-range view of things. We don't expect to catch lightning in a bottle. But we'll take it if it happens."

Alan Rothenberg may not have caught lightning, but he's sure started a storm of his own. ☼

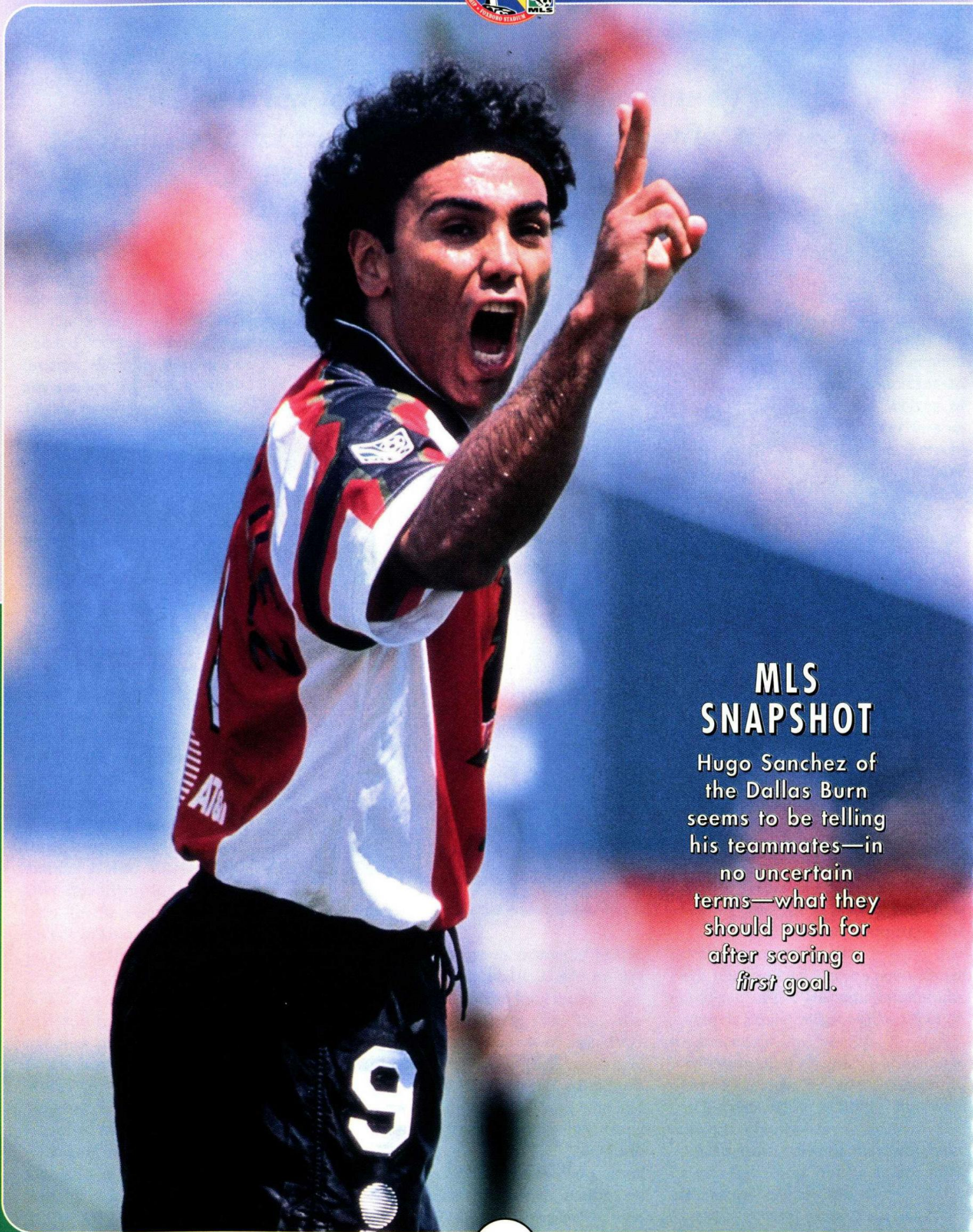


**Alan Rothenberg addresses the crowd at the first MLS game.**

the NASL. "The sport needed a leader. It was fragmented. He came in and solidified that for the long haul."

Under Rothenberg, the U.S. women's national team won the 1991 World Cup and the 1996 Olympic gold medal; the men's team reached the second round of the 1994 World Cup and finished fourth at the 1995 Copa America. In addition, the '94 World Cup was hailed as the most successful ever; and with MLS, foreign nations no





## MLS SNAPSHOT

Hugo Sanchez of the Dallas Burn seems to be telling his teammates—in no uncertain terms—what they should push for after scoring a *first goal*.



PREVIEW



**The ten Major League Soccer clubs played a 160-game schedule in their first season, with eight teams advancing to the playoffs. Now, for MLS Cup '96, the teams have been whittled down to two.**

**In this special section are player photos, names, and roster information.**



# FAST BREAK

## The Los Angeles Galaxy Started Off Strongly En Route to MLS Cup '96, but Stumbled in Mid-Season

**O**n the morning of April 13, the presale of tickets for the Los Angeles Galaxy's season opener that evening against the MetroStars was approaching 11,000. The word was out on the street and in the media throughout the Southland that something was coming, something new and big—but just how big, no one was sure.

Based on the sale of 3,000-4,000 tickets a day in the preceding days, the decision was made by Galaxy Chairman Marc Rapaport and General Manager Danny Villanueva Jr. to remove the downsizing on the east side of the Rose Bowl, to make room for an additional 30,000 fans. *Thirty thousand.*

It was an astute decision, for as kickoff approached that evening, the fans had packed nearly three-quarters of the stadium.

The Galaxy responded to the call, as Cobi Jones opened the scoring with a brilliant goal against Tony Meola, leading L.A. to a 2-1 triumph before 69,255 fans, then the fifth-largest crowd ever to see a professional soccer game in the U.S.

Los Angeles went on to win its next 11 games, for the best start in American professional soccer history.

In the midst of their great run, the Galaxy departed on a three-game, 10-day road trip along the East Coast in early June. Without the services of Ecuadorian forward Eduardo "The



**Striker Eduardo "The Tank" Hurtado** troubled opposing defenses all season.

Tank" Hurtado, who'd departed for his first World Cup '98 Qualifying match, the Galaxy managed to knock off the tough Tampa Bay Mutiny 2-1, then went on to defeat the New England Revolution 2-1 in a shootout. The Galaxy's last stop on their tour was Giants Stadium, for a rematch against the MetroStars. Hoping for revenge against their West Coast rivals, 53,250 fans turned out, but it was not meant to be. Hurtado responded to the sea of flag-waving Ecuadorian fans by exploding for three goals to lead the Galaxy to a 4-0 thumping of the MetroStars.

The Galaxy returned home the following week to host the finals of U.S. Cup '96, a doubleheader at the Rose Bowl between the U.S. National Team and Mexico, and the Galaxy and Tampa Bay Mutiny. A record crowd of 92,216 fans, the largest ever to watch a U.S. professional soccer league game, saw the U.S. tie Mexico 2-2 and the Galaxy defeated the Mutiny 3-2 in a shootout.

The Colorado Rapids snapped the Galaxy's streak on June 30, squeezing out a 2-1 victory in Denver, and somehow the Galaxy went on to lose 12 of its next 16, with losing streaks of four and five straight.

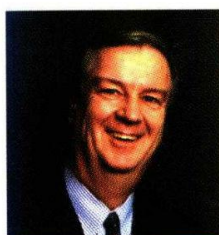
Injuries, losses of players to national team commitments, and a tough schedule compounded the Galaxy's troubles. On local radio shows, fans called for coach Lothar Osiander's resignation, the deportation of Jorge Campos, and any other topic they could find to call attention to the club's woes. But L.A. was not about to roll over and die. Sitting in third place behind Kansas City and Dallas with three games to go and facing the embarrassing possibility of finishing fourth after once leading the Western Conference by 13 points, the Galaxy answered the critics by winning their last three games. They beat the San Jose Clash 4-2, then twice knocked off the Burn 2-1. That was enough to clinch the Conference title and send L.A. on its way to MLS Cup '96. ☼



MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

# GENERAL MANAGERS AND COACHES

GENERAL MANAGERS



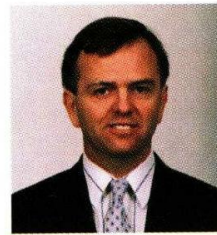
**BOB SANDERMAN**  
Colorado Rapids



**JAMEY ROOTES**  
Columbus Crew



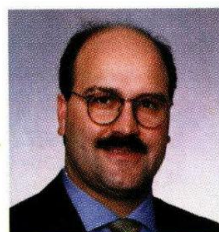
**BILLY HICKS**  
Dallas Burn



**TIM LATTA**  
Kansas City Wiz



**DANNY VILLANUEVA, JR.**  
Los Angeles Galaxy



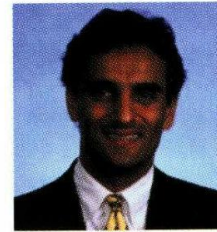
**CHARLIE STILLITANO**  
MetroStars



**BRIAN O'DONOVAN**  
New England Revolution



**PETER BRIDGWATER**  
San Jose Clash



**FARRUKH QURAISHI**  
Tampa Bay Mutiny



**KEVIN PAYNE**  
D.C. United

HEAD COACHES

Note: The coaching positions with the Colorado Rapids and the New England Revolution were vacant at presstime.



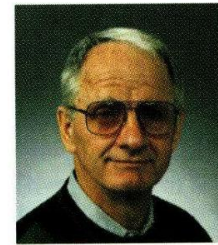
**TOM FITZGERALD**  
Columbus Crew



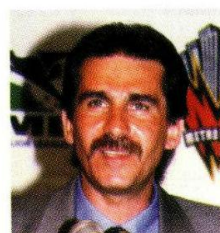
**DAVE DIR**  
Dallas Burn



**RON NEWMAN**  
Kansas City Wiz



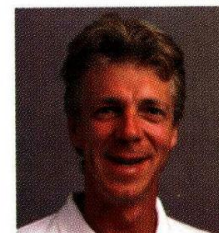
**LOTHAR OSIANDER**  
Los Angeles Galaxy



**CARLOS QUEIROZ**  
MetroStars



**LAURIE CALLOWAY**  
San Jose Clash



**THOMAS RONGEN**  
Tampa Bay Mutiny



**BRUCE ARENA**  
D.C. United



MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

# SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMS

## Major League Soccer Has Taken a Unique Approach to Attracting Its Sponsors

**A**s Major League Soccer concludes its inaugural season, it wants to take time to thank the respected members of the business community who sponsored MLS and believed in its business philosophy.

To date, MLS has inked long-term commercial affiliates totaling more than \$60 million. Because MLS is a single entity, it is able to package rights to the league and its teams into one program. Unlike other pro sports leagues, where promotional rights to league and teams are sold separately, MLS determined that league success is more important than any one of the team's individual success.

Among the benefits of this concept is its effect on MLS's corporate marketing program. In addition to the promotional rights to the league and teams, MLS incorporated field board signage, uniform identification, and advertising opportunities on the 36 broadcasts by ABC, ESPN and ESPN2. "Our goal is to provide sponsors with a marketing opportunity unique to professional sports," said Randy Bernstein, MLS executive vice president. "Because of soccer's vast popularity, we can offer sponsors a variety of demographics—whether they be social, geographic or ethnic."

Budweiser was the first MLS commercial affiliate, becoming the "Official Beer." "The King of Beers" has been a sponsor of the last three World Cups and is a longtime supporter of soccer at the local level. "While our sponsorship package of MLS is consistent with Budweiser's traditional support of soccer in the United States," says Tony Ponturo, Vice President for Corporate Media and Sports Marketing at Anheuser-Busch, Inc., "more importantly it reflects our company's confidence in the future of Major League Soccer."

MLS's other sponsors include:

■ AT&T, the world leader in telecommunications ser-

vices and products, is the "Official Telecommunications Company" of MLS. "We are very pleased to be the exclusive telecommunications sponsor of Major League Soccer, says, "Cathy Ann Martine, AT&T International Consumer Marketing Vice President. "MLS' commitment to provide soccer of the highest caliber in the United States makes it a natural partner for AT&T."

■ Bandai America is the "Official Toy and Video Game Hardware" sponsor and plans to produce MLS games, videos and action figures. "As one of the largest manufacturers of toys



Doctor Khumalo poses with two Columbus Crew fans during Fujifilm Photo Day.

and family entertainment, Bandai is proud to be a participant in this spirited effort to bring the world's most popular sport to the U.S.," says Paul Nojima, President, Bandai America.





*Because MLS is a single entity,  
it is able to package rights to the league  
and its teams into one program.*

■ BIC Corporation, a leading manufacturer of stationery products, lighters and shavers, is the "Official Pens, Lighters and Shavers" of MLS. "We are pleased and proud to be sponsors of this fast-growing, family-oriented sport," says Rick McEttrick, senior vice president of sales and marketing of BIC Corporation. "We are impressed by the grassroots strength of soccer across the country and look forward to growing with this exciting sport."

■ Fujifilm, a worldwide leader in imaging and information products, is the "Official Film." "Over the years, Fujifilm has been a long-time supporter of soccer both here in the U.S. and abroad," says Herb Baer, Marketing Manager, Consumer Markets Division, Fuji Photo Film U.S.A., Inc. "Fujifilm will look to leverage its sponsorship through retail promotions which will provide additional recognition for its products, MLS and the league's 10 teams."

■ American Honda, longtime supporter of soccer in the U.S., serves as the "Official Vehicle." "Our sponsorship of Major League Soccer emphasizes Honda's ongoing support of soccer's growth and potential in the U.S. market," says Eric Conn, National Advertising Manager for American Honda. "We're excited to be part of the MLS family, as we've been pleased with our participation in the World Cup and in the Honda Player of the Year Awards."

■ MasterCard International, a worldwide sponsor of soccer, is the "Official Card" sponsor of MLS. "MasterCard's sponsorship of MLS is another key element of our overall integrated global sponsorship and promotions strategy to reinforce brand image and awareness, generate business-building, card-usage opportunities for our members and merchants, and provide value to our cardholders," says Peter Surace, MasterCard Vice President, Promotions.

■ Snickers, a name synonymous with soccer worldwide, is the "Official Snack Bar" of MLS. "Signing up with Major League Soccer just further expands our portfolio in the sport of soccer," said Pat D'Amato, M&M/Mars spokesperson. "Snickers is very committed to encouraging athletic excellence and helping young people aspire to their full potential. Snickers is our most popular brand and, like soccer, it is enjoyed around the world."

■ Pepsi, earlier this week, became the "Official Soft Drink" of MLS.

■ adidas, Nike, Puma, and Reebok, the recognized leaders in athletic shoes and apparel, outfit the 10 teams in

MLS's inaugural season. Nike equipment is worn by the Dallas Burn, Los Angeles Galaxy, NY/NJ MetroStars, San Jose Clash, and Tampa Bay Mutiny; adidas outfits the Columbus Crew, Kansas City Wiz, and D.C. United; Reebok supplies the New England Revolution, and Puma provides outfitting for the Colorado Rapids.

■ Umbro International supplies referee uniforms

■ Mitre, which produces a top line of soccer equipment, manufactures and supplies the MLS "Official Game Ball."

■ All Sport Body Quencher is the "Official Sports Drink" and provides MLS with coolers, cups and squeeze bottles for all team sidelines.

■ EDS is the "Official Information Technology provider" of MLS.

■ Hewlett-Packard is the "Official Computer."

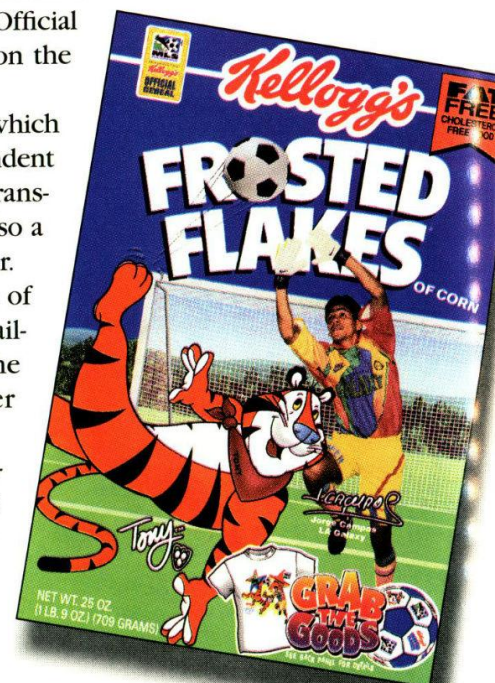
■ Kellogg Company is the "Official Breakfast Cereal" of Major League Soccer, after serving in the same capacity at the 1994 World Cup.

■ NAYA Canadian Natural Spring Water is the "Official Spring Water" and is on the sidelines at all games.

■ Orlandi Valuta, which is the leading independent electronic money transmitter to Mexico, is also a MLS Corporate Partner.

■ TSI Soccer, one of the largest soccer mail-order catalogs, is the "Official Mail Order Catalog."

■ Allsport Photography and Kwik Goal are suppliers to MLS. ☼



Kids can start the day watching Tony trying to score with a bicycle kick over Los Angeles 'keeper Jorge Campos. Kellogg Company is the "Official Breakfast Cereal" of Major League Soccer.



# SPORTS CRAZY

BY RICHARD JOHNSON

## Few things mean more to New Englanders than sports

**T**oday the Boston and New England region will play host to yet another international sports "first" with the inaugural Major League Soccer Championship match being played at Foxboro Stadium. The match, which completes the first momentous season of Major League Soccer, marks a symbolic return of soccer to its spiritual and historic birthplace in America (See "America's First Soccer Team"). It also places the premier event in Major League Soccer history in a region

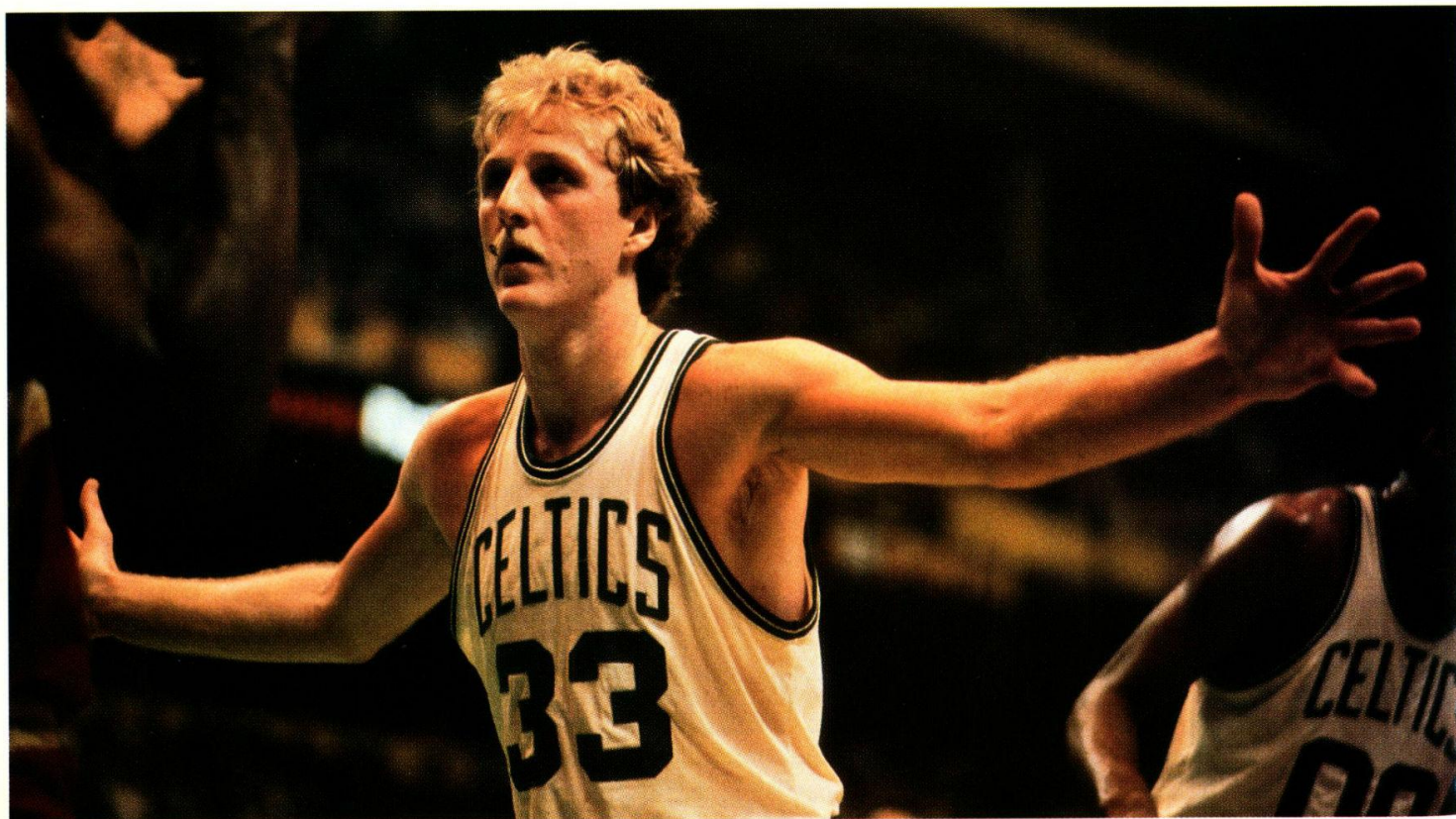
which many have called "the Hollywood of Sports."

New England allows a variety of sports to flourish. Unlike many areas which are limited by climate, here one could hypothetically ski in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, ride the Atlantic surf and take in a Red Sox, Bruins, Celtics, Patriots, or Revolution game on the same day! It has been said that the one aspect of life that unites New Englanders, apart from a passion for politics, is a common love of sports.

The talk around most of the

region's breakfast tables usually centers around last night's game, or in some cases games or incidents from years gone by. If you want to start a conversation in Boston just ask anyone if McNamara was justified in pulling Clemens from Game Six (you need not mention 1986 or the World Series to make your point), or if Flutie was given a fair shot by the Patriots. And poor Johnny Pesky is still asked if he held

**Below: Larry Bird was a familiar sight in Boston Garden for many years.**



Sports Museum of New England



# YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION

## Soccer Players Have Changed the Face of Kicking in American Football, and Foxboro Stadium Has Been Home to a Number of Them

**S**urely even the most casual soccer fans must scoff at the notion of American footballers getting excited at the successful completion of a 30- or 35-yard field goal. After all, they're used to seeing their soccer stars routinely kick the ball more than twice that distance.

And never mind little things such as swirling winds or narrow uprights: A good soccer player can twist a ball around a wall of players and into a goal—and there are no keepers in front of football uprights. (Of course, there is the shape of the ball and the 11 men rushing you while trying to block it, not to mention 45 or 50 teammates, all of them bigger than you, ready to pounce if you fail—but those are other issues.)

Still, it took the National Football League more than four decades to realize there was something to this "other" football game. Actually, the first in on the act were the American Football League's Buffalo Bills, who signed Hungarian native Pete Gogolak in 1964. Gogolak drew more derisive comments from football traditionalists about his soccer-style kicking than Dennis Rodman does for his wardrobe,

but he quieted the critics by making 47 field goals and scoring 217 points in his first two seasons.



**Former Patriots kicker Matt Bahr belonged to a famous U.S. soccer family.**

It didn't take long for other teams to jump on the bandwagon. By the early 1980s, the conventional-style placekicker was virtually extinct. Many had been replaced by foreign-born

players with soccer backgrounds. ("It's about time to tighten the immigration laws," former NFL quarterback and then-Atlanta Falcons head coach Norm Van Brocklin once growled. Of course, Van Brocklin was a curmudgeon by nature and his comment hardly raised the ire of any kickers, who were used to the abuse. Former Detroit Lions defensive tackle Alex Karras, for instance, bristled at the thought of a little guy in a clean uniform trotting onto the field to decide a game's outcome.)

In 1967, the Chiefs signed Jan Stenerud, a Norwegian who attended Montana State on a skiing scholarship. As Stenerud was walking by the football practice field one day, an errant ball bounced his way. He kicked it back. "Who is that guy?" Montana State's football coach bellowed. "Grab him!" So the story goes, apocryphal or not.

A few years later, Stenerud stunned the Minnesota Vikings in Super Bowl IV when he kicked a 48-yard field goal to start a 23-7 rout of the heavily favored Vikes. Minnesota's players were so sure he couldn't kick the ball that far that they prepared for a fake.

Soon after that, Kansas City Chiefs owner Lamar Hunt returned from a trip

S. Holleran/Allsport



to Europe. "I saw guys who can kick the ball even further than Jan," Hunt told coach Hank Stram.

That was all the Chiefs coach needed to hear, and off he went to England for tryouts. One hundred and ten wannabees showed up at the first camp. One kicker booted the ball 70 yards. He lined up again and kicked it 65. But something was different.

"Hold it! Hold it!" Stram barked. "Last time you kicked it with your right foot. You just kicked it left-footed."

Thus Bobby Howfield was signed. Though he never kicked for Stram, who had no reason to be unhappy with Stenerud, Howfield did play seven seasons in the AFL and NFL for the Denver Broncos and the New York Jets—kicking only right-footed.

It is ironic that Major League Soccer's initial championship game is being played here in Foxboro because this stadium has seen former soccer players kicking for the hometown Patriots more often than not over the past quarter-century.

It began tongue-in-cheek, with a local radio station organizing a "Super-foot" search in London, in response to the club's (then the Boston Patriots) kicking woes in 1970: Patriots kickers managed to convert only eight of 22 field goals (two of 14 longer than 29 yards) that season.

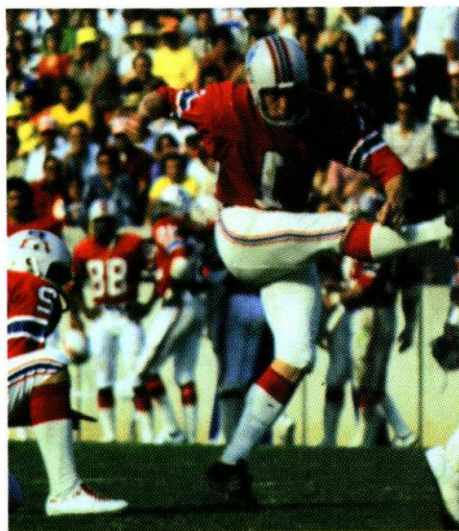
After dozens of regional contests narrowed the search to 12 finalists, a 21-year-old bricklayer (and soccer player, of course) named Michael Walker was declared the winner. Alas, Walker lasted only one season in the NFL, making only two of eight field-goal tries, but that was quite a story to tell the folks back home.

Thus in search of another kicker, the Patriots signed John Smith in 1973. A resident of Southampton, England, Smith was visiting the U.S. as a soccer instructor when he signed up. Though he was traded to and eventually cut by the Steelers in 1973, Smith was back a year later and made the Patriots. He kicked 16 of 22 field goals in 1974 and

finished fourth in the NFL with 90 points. By the time he retired following the 1983 season, he was second only to Gino Cappelletti in Patriots' history with 671 points.

Smith also earned a permanent place in NFL lore when he kicked a 33-yard field goal in the snow to beat Miami 3-0 in 1982. With 4:45 remaining in the fourth quarter and the game scoreless, Smith tried to clear a place in the snow for his field-goal try. Coach Ron Meyer had a better idea.

"I saw John chipping away at the ground," Meyer said, "and I thought



**John Smith kicked for the Patriots from 1973-83, but his first love was soccer.**

"There's a guy on the sideline who can help us."

That guy was on a one-day work-release leave from Norfolk State Prison, and he was sitting on a John Deere tractor. The tractor cleared an area seven yards behind the line of scrimmage and Smith made the winning kick.

Through his 10-year NFL career, Smith never lost his love for soccer. "He would kick on Sundays in Schaefer Stadium [as Foxboro Stadium then was known] and spend the rest of the week hanging around our office," says Vince Casey, now a member of the NFL's communications staff but then public relations director for the NASL's New England Teamen. "He played with

NFL greats like John Hannah and Steve Grogan, but his idols were the British soccer stars."

Nearly a decade later, the Patriots turned to NFL veteran Matt Bahr. Once the captain of Penn State's soccer team, Bahr originally was drafted by the Steelers in 1979. The Pennsylvania native had played soccer for the NASL's Colorado Caribous and the Tulsa Roughnecks and the ASL's Pennsylvania franchise.

"I had always planned on playing professional soccer," says Bahr, whose brother Chris was the NASL rookie of the year while with the Philadelphia Atoms in 1975 and whose father played for the U.S. World Cup team in 1950, assisting on the lone goal in the stunning 1-0 upset of mighty England in Belo Horizonte—still one of the most shocking soccer upsets of all-time. Brother Casey also played for the U.S. team in the 1972 Olympics. "But then I got drafted by the NFL," Matt says. "I never anticipated playing one year in the NFL, let alone 17."

Bahr joined the Patriots in 1993 and kicked through the 1995 season. Last year, aged 39, he was successful on 23 of 33 three-point tries, and kicked a 55-yard field goal, the longest of his career. With 1,422 career points, he ranks ninth on the NFL's all-time scoring list.

But Bahr never will leave behind his soccer roots. He has done color commentary on U.S. national soccer team games, and was an analyst for the New England Revolution's opener this year. He sees a bright future for the MSL. "The potential for this league is there," he says. "It was good to play in the NASL, but the feeling there was that they were not building fan support. With this league, they seemed to have learned from the mistakes of earlier leagues.

"When I was playing most kids didn't see a viable future in pro leagues. You couldn't look forward to playing in major leagues. But now there's a very enthusiastic fan base building. And it's fun to watch." ☼



# GOLDEN GIRLS

BY AARON HEIFETZ

**The U.S. Women's Olympic Soccer Team  
Struck Gold in Atlanta this Summer**



The U.S. claimed the first-ever Olympic women's soccer gold medal with a 2-1 victory over China.

For the 1996 U.S. Women's Olympic Soccer Team, redemption came one game early, and 10 minutes late. But when it did finally come, after the USA had waited more than a year for the moment, the timing seemed absolutely perfect.

Redemption came 10 minutes into sudden-death overtime in the Olympic semi-final match at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia. Shannon MacMillan's slicing run through the Norwegian defense to score from Julie Foudy's pass gave the USA a 2-1 victory and a trip to the first-ever gold medal game. The dramatic goal also earned sweet

revenge for a U.S. team hungry to regain its status as the world's best.

While the U.S. women had initially eyed a match with Norway for the gold medal, their second-place finish in Group E moved up the meeting of the world's top women's soccer powers to the semi-finals. While this classic match-up came a game earlier than most had expected, it lived up to its billing, even if the final act came a little bit late. But first, a little history.

The USA, winners of the first-ever women's soccer world championship, held in China in 1991, had their title ripped away by Norway at



*The USA's theme for the tournament was, "This is the team. Now is the time," and for the last 30 minutes of the semi-final, those words rang true indeed.*

the 1995 FIFA Women's World Championships. The Norwegians, playing close to home, dominated the competition during a cool three weeks in Sweden, defeating the USA 1-0 in the semifinals. The loss was a crushing blow for an American team which dedicated so much time, emotion and sweat to keeping the title. As the final whistle blew in Vasteras, the seemingly potent mixture of veteran and youthful

between that team and the one that walked into Sanford Stadium for the Olympic semi-final match. While only two players in the starting line-up had changed, it was a team filled with increased confidence. Having been educated and toughened through international game experience, the players possessed a collective will that would not let them lose.

There were also several not-so-sub-

jumping for a cross. The blow knocked her unconscious for a split-second and she sprained her knee as she hit the ground. Akers would not play again until the semi-final against Norway, but by then the hobbling striker was not the player that opponents had come to know and fear.

Fast-forward a year to Athens. This time, Akers had come through the tournament relatively unscathed. U.S. head coach Tony DiCicco had changed the USA's formation and Akers' role from Sweden, dropping her from a true center-forward to an attacking midfielder, where her playmaking abilities flourished and her dominance in the air could be more of a factor. As Norway stubbornly launched balls into the U.S. half, Akers and her teammates sent them back the other way, winning the free balls, settling into possession and then attacking with urgency, speed and tremendous sophistication.

While the USA had more of the semi-final game, outshooting Norway 28-8 behind the inspirational play of forward Mia Hamm, the match was filled with drama. Norway's crack striker Linda Medalen snuck through a pulled up U.S. defense to score in the 18th minute, giving Norway a 1-0 lead.

As the second half began, an eerie sense of déjà vu settled over those versed in the history of these two teams. Norway had also scored in the 18th minute of the semi-final in Sweden, and despite a furious U.S. rally at the end, the score had stayed 1-0.

Not this time, as the Americans rallied for two goals to earn a berth in the gold medal match. The USA's theme for the tournament was, "This is the team. Now is the time," and for the last 30



**U.S. forward Mia Hamm battles Cecilia Sandell of Sweden in early-round play.**

talent dropped to the turf, as tears welled and shock set in. Shock that the most dominant team in the history of women's soccer had actually lost such an important game. Shock at actually losing at all. And shock, that they did not play well enough to win.

But there were subtle differences

tle differences, namely the 64,196 flag-waving, screaming American fans who greeted the team, as well as a healthy Michelle Akers.

At the 1995 World Championships, Akers had been felled just minutes into the first game against China, taking a vicious head-butt from behind while



*Fawcett streaked towards the China net, then cut the ball back to a waiting Tiffeny Milbrett, who tapped in the historic goal from five yards out.*

minutes of the semi-final, those words rang true indeed.

A U.S. flurry in front of the Norwegian goal in the 76th minute led to Norway captain Gro Espeseth's handball in the penalty box. Up to that point, referee Sonia Denoncourt had waved off two plays which could have been USA penalty kicks. Denoncourt did not hesitate the final time, pointing immediately to the penalty spot. Appropriately, Akers stepped up, stepped back and drilled her shot into the left corner to tie the game.

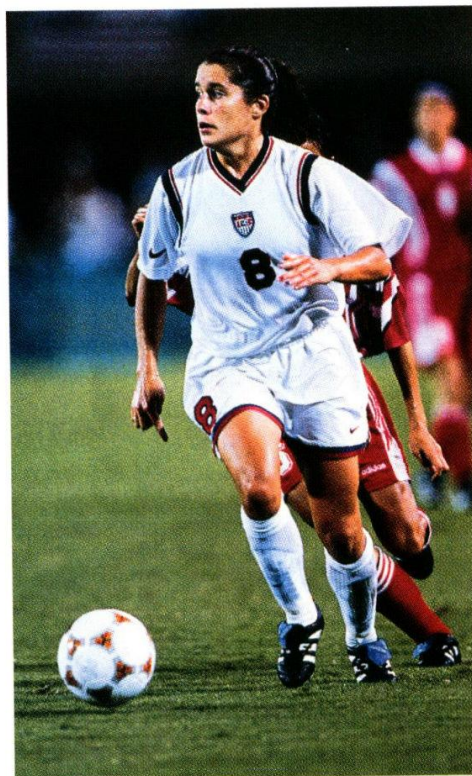
Regulation time ended with the game tied at 1-1, setting up what FIFA calls the "Golden Goal," 30 minutes of sudden-death overtime. The USA needed just 10 minutes.

Six minutes into the overtime, DiCicco, who had replaced MacMillan in the starting line-up with Tiffany Roberts for defensive purposes, inserted the soon-to-be hero. MacMillan, the unanimous College Player of the Year in 1994, had nevertheless struggled early in her National Team career, actually getting cut from the team before receiving a second chance. A second chance that she did not afford Norway, scoring on her first shot in the 100th minute.

The goal relegated Norway to the bronze-medal match, put USA's pain in Sweden to rest, and set up a gold medal battle with China, a 3-2 winner over Brazil in the other semi-final. The USA had defeated China for the bronze medal in Sweden, 2-0, and after the game unfurled a home-made banner reading, "Atlanta 1996—We'll Be Back!"

"We never let down and we knew in our hearts that we were going to win," said midfielder Tisha Venturini, who scored twice in the tournament.

"And we never let that thought out of our minds. We hung in there when it got scary... everywhere you look someone was making a good play and playing with our hearts. That's how we won this game."



**Shannon MacMillan's overtime goal in the semi-final earned the U.S. a measure of revenge against Norway.**

MacMillan, back in the starting line-up for the final, opened the scoring in the 19th minute, finishing a rebound from Hamm's volley that Chinese goalkeeper Hong Goa had pushed off the post. China's Wen Sun evened the score in the 32nd minute, only the second goal allowed to an opposing player by the U.S. defense in the tournament.

DiCicco, who along with his team

had lived a year with the agony of the loss to Norway, gained some vindication with the gold, but was quick to credit to players for all the success.

"Let me make it perfectly clear," said DiCicco. "We won because of my players, because of what they do and what they bring to every practice, every day. It wasn't because of me, it wasn't because of my coaching, it was because my players prepared to win and followed through."

That preparation was a key in the second half as the momentum shifted to the USA and the Americans got the winner in the 68th minute. MacMillan's pass sent Joy Fawcett behind the China defense on the right flank. She streaked towards the China net, then cut the ball back to a waiting Tiffeny Milbrett, who tapped in the historic goal from five yards out.

China's Goa scrambled to get back in position after coming out to challenge Fawcett, but could only get the tip of her right hand on the ball as Milbrett's finish was golden, sending the 76,481 fans into a patriotic frenzy. It was the largest crowd ever to watch a women's soccer game anywhere in the world.

It was the stuff of Olympic dreams. "We as a team have been dreaming about the gold medal for a long time," said Akers after the U.S. flag was raised and Anthem played. "And in particular, since we lost the World Cup last summer. We vowed together as a team that we would be on that podium as the best team in the world, and today, our dream came true." ☼

*Aaron Heifetz is Soccer Information Coordinator for Major League Soccer.*





TELEVISION

# TUNING IN

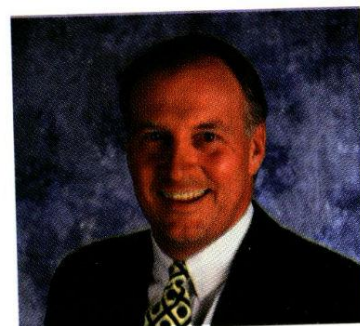
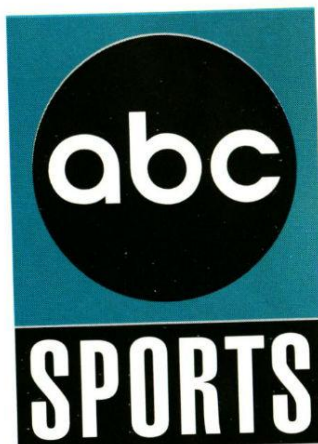
**ABC Sports,  
which televised World Cup 1994,  
is proud to bring the Inaugural MLS Cup  
to network television.**

**ABC** has made a strong commitment to soccer in the United States, televising the MLS Cup, and recently signing a multi-year agreement to televise 10 Men's U.S. National Team games.

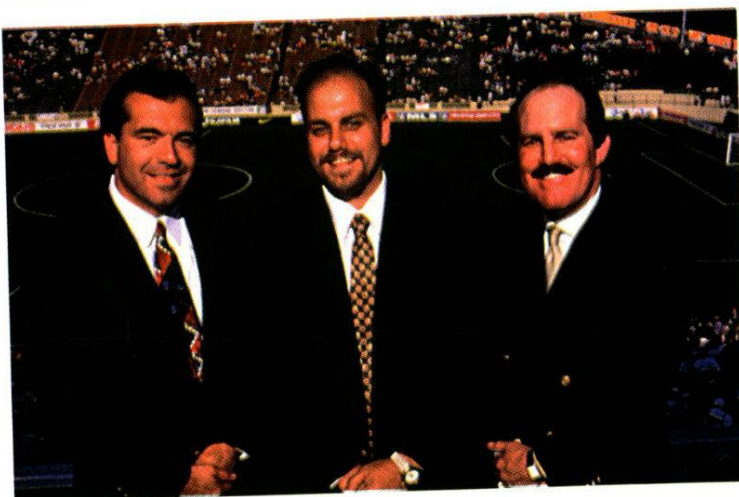
"We are pleased that MLS Cup '96 is being carried by ABC Sports," said Douglas G. Logan, MLS Commissioner. "ABC did a fantastic job during its coverage of World Cup 1994 and it has made a commitment to the sport and MLS."

Calling the action today is Phil Schoen and former Olympian Ty Keough. Bill McDermott will be on the sidelines with regular updates and interviews. This trio served as the ESPN and ESPN2 broadcast crew during coverage of the regular season and playoffs. Roger Twibell is the host of the telecast.

In addition to ABC, ESPN and ESPN, MLS action was also carried on Univision, the nation's largest Hispanic network. MLS would like to take this time to thank everyone involved with each of its broadcasts, as well as those in the local markets.



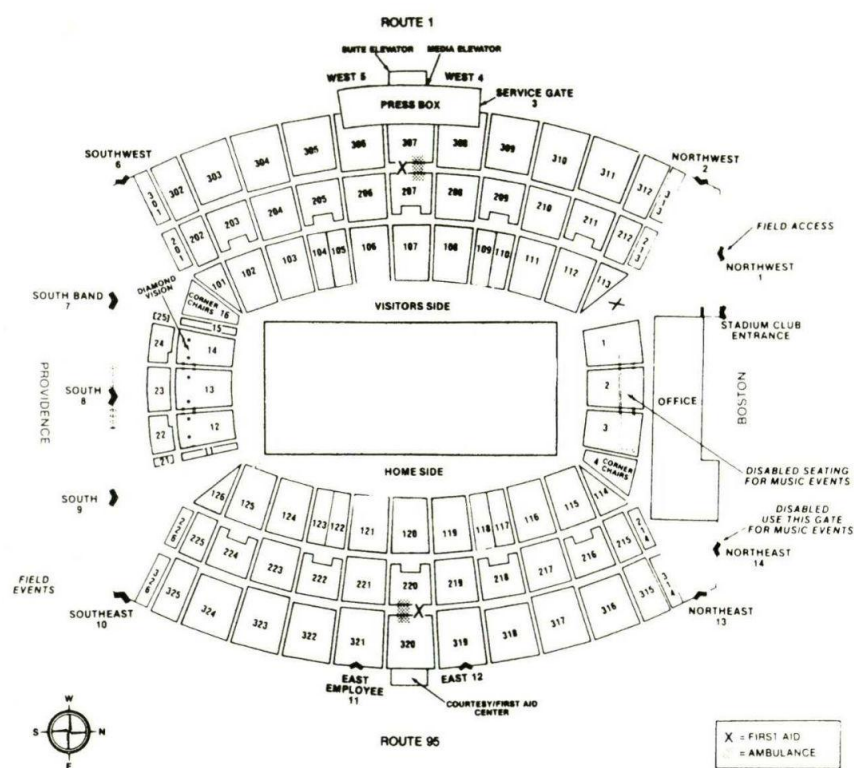
Veteran broadcaster Roger Twibell (above) hosts today's broadcast for ABC Sports.



Phil Schoen (center) calls play-by-play for ABC, while Ty Keough (left) adds analysis. Bill McDermott (right) reports from the sidelines.



# FOXBORO STADIUM



**S**ituated between three of New England's largest cities—Boston, Providence, R.I. and Worcester, Mass.—Foxboro Stadium is host to the first-ever Major League Soccer championship game and home of the New England Revolution.

Official ground breaking ceremonies for the stadium took place on September 3, 1970, and less than 11 months later the first event took place, an exhibition game between the New England Patriots and New York Giants of the National Football League.

The facility is owned by Robert Kraft, an investor in



Foxboro Stadium hosted six matches during World Cup USA 1994.

Major League Soccer and owner of the Patriots. Under Kraft's direction, the facility has hosted nearly three times as many events in the past six years than it did during the first two decades of operation.

The stadium was one of nine sites used for soccer matches during World Cup USA 1994—including a nail-biting quarter-final in which Italy edged Spain by a score of 2-1—and only the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, and Giants Stadium in New York/New Jersey hosted

more than Foxboro's six matches. Foxboro Stadium also has been a venue site for each U.S. Cup since 1992. \*



## MLS SNAPSHOT

Tampa Bay Mutiny  
striker Roy Lassiter  
takes a tumble.







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