# ONSIDE: A RECONSIDERATION OF SOCCER'S CULTURAL FUTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

Samuel R. Dockery

TC 660H
Plan II Honors Program
The University of Texas at Austin

May 8, 2020

---

Matthew T. Bowers, Ph.D.
Department of Kinesiology
Supervising Professor

---

Elizabeth L. Keating, Ph.D.
Department of Anthropology
Second Reader

## ABSTRACT

Author: Samuel Reed Dockery

Title: *Onside: A Reconsideration of Soccer's Cultural Future in the United States*

Supervising Professors: Matthew T. Bowers, Ph.D. Department of Kinesiology
Elizabeth L. Keating, Ph.D. Department of Anthropology

Throughout the course of the 20th century, professional sports have evolved to become a predominant aspect of many societies' popular cultures. Though sports and related physical activities had existed long before 1900, the advent of industrial economies, specifically growing middle classes and ever-improving methods of communication in countries worldwide, have allowed sports to be played and followed by more people than ever before. As a result, certain games have captured the hearts and minds of so many people in such a way that a culture of *following* the particular sport has begun to be emphasized over the act of actually *doing* or performing the sport. One needs to look no further than the hours of football talk shows scheduled weekly on ESPN or the myriad of analytical articles published online and in newspapers daily for evidence of how following and talking about sports has taken on cultural priority over actually playing the sport. Defined as "hegemonic sports cultures" by University of Michigan sociologists Andrei Markovits and Steven Hellerman, these sports are the ones who dominate "a country's emotional attachments rather than merely representing its callisthenic activities."

Soccer is the world's game. This phrase, though oft-repeated to the point of becoming cliché, holds true in the sporting cultures of nearly every country around the globe, with one glaring exception: The United States of America. Indeed, where most countries' cultural "sport spaces" are dominated by two sports, the United States is proud of its "Big Four": American football, basketball, baseball, and ice hockey, represented professionally by the NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL, respectively. Each of these four leagues is regarded as the highest level of competition for its sport in the world, and all four are among the top six sports leagues by revenue worldwide.

How is it, then, that soccer has failed to establish the roots of a hegemonic sports culture in America, a country with such vast sociopolitical influence over the rest of the world for much of the 20th century and one that also takes great cultural pride in athletic accomplishment? The previously mentioned Markovits and Hellerman provide some theories in their 2001 work *Offside: Soccer & American Exceptionalism*, where they argue that in the period from 1870 – 1930, a critical 60-year juncture of sports investment in the West and a time of heightened nativism in America, soccer was essentially crowded-out by the rise of non-European sports: baseball and football, and then basketball and ice hockey later on.

At the time of their writing, Markovits and Hellerman were not very optimistic about the future of soccer in the United States. Using related sociological works about sport, quantitative data from FIFA, and other sources that comment on the evolution of American culture into the 21st century, I plan on painting an updated, optimistic picture of soccer's future in the United States, where I one day believe that it will establish itself as a hegemonic sports culture akin to the Big Four.

## Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction……………………………………………………Page 4

Chapter Two: Hegemonic Sports Cultures……………………………...Page 11

Chapter Three: Historical Context……………………………………....Page 16

Chapter Four: MLS and Stability………………………………………..Page 46

Chapter Five: Further Promising Developments………………………..Page 55

Chapter Six: Christian Pulisic and America's Soccer Roadmap………..Page 67

# Chapter One: Introduction

On the afternoon of June 9th, 2019, I sat down in front of a television, as many other Americans do on Sundays, to watch a sporting contest. Unlike them, however, the football I was watching was not of the American variety. Instead, I was observing the soccer teams for Portugal and the Netherlands, two of the highest-quality national teams in the world, compete against one another in the championship game of the Nations League tournament. This new competition, sponsored by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), only pits European teams against one another, but due to the historical prestige that soccer athletes from these countries have built up over time, the Nations League attracted much interest from soccer fans worldwide in its inaugural season.

As I watched Cristiano Ronaldo, Portugal's venerable superstar and arguably the most recognizable athlete in the world, roll the ball backwards to his teammate from the midfield line to start the championship, my phone buzzed with a notification from ESPN. I looked down and rolled my eyes as I saw that the update concerned the United States men's soccer team's (USMNT) unrelated contest against Venezuela, a country whose athletes are better known for their baseball exploits than those on the soccer pitch. Specifically, my phone wanted to show me that the United States had just been scored on for a third time – still in the first half of the game, nonetheless. In a sport that is known for its usual 1 – 0 or 1 – 1 scores, this was nothing short of a blowout. I sighed, put my phone away, and continued to watch the European superstars on my television compete at the highest level of the sport instead of my lowly countrymen. Shortly later, Portugal's young Gonçalo Guedes scored the lone goal of the game to win 1 – 0. A low-scoring game, but an entertaining one nonetheless.

At surface glance, this anecdote may appear to be a brief look at a day in the life of a stereotypical young, white, American male on a Sunday afternoon. But upon closer analysis, one might see how my story is rife with paradoxical details.

Most egregious, in my opinion, was the fact that I willingly chose to ignore a soccer contest involving my home national team in favor of a foreign competition—and I doubt that I was the only American watching soccer to shun our team that day. Almost surely, this would never occur in a country where soccer is the predominant sport that people follow, which is basically every other industrialized state on Earth besides the United States. According to University of Michigan political analyst and sociologist Andrei Markovits (2001), given that, "…nationalism is without any doubt among the most decisive and ubiquitous factors influencing sports as a cultural phenomenon" (p. 34), this is quite an aberration from the norm in the rest of the world, where support for one's national soccer team may border on militant extremism and national holidays are declared whenever a country's team is competing in a major tournament.

Additionally, the simplest paradox: the fact that I, an American, was watching soccer instead of American football on a Sunday. Though there were surely other Americans watching soccer that day, we form a minority compared to where the rest of our compatriots' sports allegiances lie, and many of us are self-aware of the "outsider" label that being a soccer fan in America carries with it. A badge of contrarian honor for some, I personally notice the most how the nature of my soccer fandom is fundamentally different from that of professional American sports, which I define as American football, basketball, baseball, and ice hockey. Specifically, my soccer fandom is more concerned with the culture of the sport itself whereas my affinity for American sports is heavily rooted in following singular teams, all from my hometown of Dallas, indicating that sports cultures are closely related to one's notions of identity and place in the

world, but to varying extents depending on the individual and his or her unique relationship with the sport in question.

These paradoxes – an American spurning his national soccer team and an American watching soccer instead of football on Sunday – all speak to the unique, transitioning relationship that the United States has with the World's game in 2020. On one hand, soccer still has much catching up to do compared to the Big Four American sports leagues: The National Football League (NFL), The National Basketball Association (NBA), Major League Baseball (MLB), and The National Hockey League (NHL). Indeed, for various sociological and historical-economic reasons at the turn of the 19th century – when soccer was spreading from England to the rest of Europe and Latin America and establishing the roots of the first mass fan cultures in human history – the United States fell in love with other sports instead, particularly baseball and football. In the decades that followed, soccer was pushed to the peripheries of American society while the professional leagues representing the Big Four sports evolved into massive commercial entities, establishing themselves as seemingly immovable vehicles of pop culture. Though American businessmen made attempts over the course of the 1900s to introduce soccer as a legitimate sport worth following, a concomitant combination of weak leadership and insufficient financial backing ensured that a strong professional league was never established until Major League Soccer (MLS) in 1996, nearly a century after the sport had already taken off in countries worldwide.

On the other hand, though it has taken much longer for Americans to begin recognizing the allure of soccer, it is certainly noteworthy, if not a significant development, that steps are finally being taken to improve the United States' familiarity with the sport. Though clichéd, a large part of this is due to globalization, which has helped to liberalize regimes and establish

diversity and cosmopolitanism as accepted norms in much of the world. In this sense, Americans, increasingly aware of the historical stigmas that other countries associate with the United States, are now motivated more than ever to become fluent with global tastes – soccer among them.

New controversies surrounding the Big Four – including the NFL's treatment of head injuries and recent allegations of institutional coaching abuse in the NHL – indicate that some of the traditional American sports leagues are being put under pressure by these forces of globalization and could be headed toward respective cultural reckonings. Put another way: as Millennials and Generation Z members grow up to form the majority of the American population over the next several decades, their preferences for increased social equity are beginning to chip away at some of the "old-school" foundations that the Big Four were built upon. Should participation rates or viewership numbers decline past a critical point for just one of these professional leagues, a cultural space could theoretically open up for soccer to enter the American consciousness en masse. Alternatively, a growing American population and shifting demographics, combined with the country's continental geographic scale, could theoretically pave the way for a fifth cultural space to open up on its own.

All of this begs the question, though: "So what?" Not every person is a sports fan and being an avid follower of a team, regardless of the sport, is an activity that is almost exclusively undertaken by men. Markovits (2010) seeks to answer this by comparing modern sports cultures to languages, "…with their own codes, grammar, dissemination, intelligibility, mastery, elegance, idiosyncrasies, practitioners, and recipients" (p. 45). He continues:

> …these sports, like languages, have uniquely recognizable characteristics that are

> ubiquitously and globally accepted. Indeed, the rules, sanctions, number of players, size of the playing field, the counting of success and failure, the tabulation of individual and collective achievements, winners and losers, rituals and symbols of each sport are the same in every country and differentiate one sport from another. The universal intelligibility of each sport gives each its very identity. (p. 45).

What modern sports *fandoms* do, then, is act as vessels of communication, much like languages. And because of the implicit arbitrariness of mass-followed sports – there is nothing fundamentally "good" or "bad" about them, they basically just exist – their rules and constructs are accepted without question by cultures, nations, communities, and classes the world over – "human collectives that often do not want to understand each other otherwise" (Markovits, 2010, p. 45). Though absolute fluency in sports fandom is essentially impossible – there are just too many teams in too many sports to follow – the context-driven nature of how people digest and discuss a competition amongst themselves gives rise to a socially acceptable spectrum of participation. As a result, the most extreme, maniacal supporter of a team can still communicate with an individual who only has a passing interest in the contest at hand, simply because they share a mutual understanding of the underlying rules, rituals, and themes of the sport. This type of communication fluidity, which ironically does not require either party to actually be one-hundred-percent fluent in the topic at hand, is unique to the languages of sports fans. At a macro level, one could thus say that sports fandoms represent a lower barrier to entry to understanding someone else than wholly learning a foreign language.

So if sports can be thought of as languages – cross-cultural methods of communication – soccer could be considered to be the lingua franca of sports in that it is the most widely understood dialect in the world, but with one glaring exception: The United States. It is a

profound paradox that the preeminent industrialized power on Earth is the only such state that does not treat soccer as its primary athletic medium, much less understand it, especially considering the admiration and deference that Americans tend to bestow on athletic accomplishment in other fields. One need to look no further than the cumulative Olympic medal counts to see how Americans value and excel at athletic feats, even in sports that do not constitute the Big Four. The United States' willful ignorance about soccer during the sport's original proliferation in the late 1800s and early 1900s can be traced to the concept of American Exceptionalism, a mentality that is not usually looked upon favorably by foreign powers. Yes, America put its stamp on the world throughout the 20$^{th}$ century via economic, political, social, and scientific innovations, but the United States also caused much unrest as it acted as one of the world's superpowers from World War II-onwards. Though the Stars and Stripes represents freedom and democracy to many American citizens, the same flag inspires fearful feelings of imperialistic oppression and overt power elsewhere. While globalization has begun to improve the disconnect between America and the rest of the world, there is much cosmopolitanization left for the United States to undergo before it may begin to lose some of the negative associations that others harbor for its culture and leadership.

Soccer thus represents an opportunity for America to become more empathetic with the cultures of other countries, an exercise worth undertaking considering the United States' continued prevalence in world affairs. But in order to really understand the sport of soccer, to become fluent in it, a strong culture surrounding the sport must be established first. Here is where the United States has flailed about for the past hundred years, and where the focus of this work will remain. Specifically: why did soccer fail to establish a hegemonic sports culture in the United States at the same time it was being assimilated into the sporting cultures of other

countries, and how would it be possible for the sport to develop a hegemonic sports culture in the United States from now into the future?

# Chapter Two: Hegemonic Sports Cultures

There is an important distinction to make about the type of sports fandom that needs to develop around soccer in the United States for it to become a mass-followed cultural activity. Key is the word "follow" – hegemonic sports cultures, as defined by Markovits (2001), are those in which the act of *following* an on-field competition achieves a cultural importance that is greater than the actual *performing* that the athletes are doing on the field. Thus, a hegemonic sports culture specifically refers to:

> …what people breathe, read, discuss, analyze, compare, and historicize; what they talk about at length before and after games on sports radio; what they discuss at the office watercooler; and what comprises a significant quantity of barroom (or pub) talk…. [it is] the sports culture that dominates a country's emotional attachments rather than its callisthenic activities. (pp. 9 – 10)

Hegemonic sports cultures are thus defined by the significant amount of time that their followers devote to thinking, reading, and talking about their teams. This is a crucial clarification to make because there are many examples of sports cultures that are not necessarily "hegemonic" by this definition. Fishing, for example, is not a hegemonic sports culture. Though there is certainly a unique culture surrounding the sport and millions of people actively participate in the United States, there is not a considerable enough portion of the public that is constantly reading, digesting, and discussing the moments surrounding fishing's biggest storylines. ESPN does not have daily segments dedicated to fishing, nor do the sports sections of local newspapers write about fishing daily. Instead, these outlets will pump out multiple stories about the same football, basketball, baseball, or hockey teams daily in the United States. The time spent analyzing and

discussing *these* contests amounts to hours out of every day, whereas the actual game clocks for individual matches in these sports are often no more than an hour total. Markovits (2001) concludes:

> These cultures (e.g., of fishing, pool playing, or stamp collecting) are inextricably tied to the activists/practitioners and their immediate entourages, whereas the culture of what we have defined as hegemonic sports is much more diffuse, and elicits passions and interest far beyond those of the participants and their physical space. (p. 11)

Fueled by *mass participation* from spectators, hegemonic sports cultures inherently form an echo chamber around themselves. Because conversations about the contests infiltrate areas of life far from the stadia in which the games are actually played, the sports in question effectively become ingrained in a country's collective pop culture, further spreading salience of the competition to those who might not be dedicated fans in the first place. As a result, in the United States especially, hegemonic sports cultures often spawn related media that is digestible to a larger audience. America's Hollywood is a great example of this, given the plethora of football (*Remember the Titans, The Blind Side, Rudy, Jerry Maguire, Friday Night Lights)*, basketball (*Hoosiers, Space Jam, He Got Game, Coach Carter)*, baseball (*Major League, Bill Durham, The Natural, Moneyball, Field of Dreams*) and hockey (*Miracle, Goon, The Mighty Ducks, Happy Gilmore)*-related films that it has produced over the years. Though their creatives were likely unaware of the fact, these works act to self-reinforce the hegemonic cultures of the sports they represent, subsequently enabling the sport to become intelligible to a wider audience.

Hegemonic sports cultures are also exclusively defined by male consumption habits. Likely originating from the disparate gender expectations that existed when these cultures were

first formed in the mid-1800s, women simply do not allot the same amount of time to digesting sports content that males do. To be accurate, individual exceptions to this generalization certainly exist, but at a macro level, all existing and any new hegemonic sports cultures that appear will be dominated by male participation. Markovits (2010) elaborates on this distinction:

> Just because millions [of participants] produce a sport does not mean that they also will consume it. There is a major chasm between "doing" and "following" a sport—and nowhere is this more pronounced than among women. The way most women and girls relate to team sports must change from the activity of recreation and participation to a culture of spectatorship, following, and affect…to become a truly salient factor in the American sports space. (pp. 200 – 201)

It is also important to note the significance of *team* sports in hegemonic sports cultures. Though individual athletes are capable of achieving pop-culture fame through their feats, team sports mobilize a collective desire to win among their fans that a boxer, swimmer, ice-skater, or tennis player rarely captures at the same scale. To date, no female team sport has ever developed to the degree that it could be considered to constitute a hegemonic sports culture; though women's soccer is arguably close to achieving this in America, the same does not hold in traditional soccer playing countries where males have long dominated the sport's participation rates.

Currently, the United States has four hegemonic sports cultures, one each for the aforementioned Big Four leagues. This is an exception to the rest of the world. Most other countries have two hegemonic sports cultures while some with larger populations have three, but soccer is almost universally far and away the number one hegemonic sports culture in each (Markovits, 2001). Exceptions to this rule include Latvia and Lithuania, whose populations' love for basketball has propelled that sport to the forefront of their national athletic identities. The

Japanese, Koreans, and certain Caribbean nations play more baseball than they do soccer, but each's men's national soccer team is arguably on the level of, if not better, than that of America's. Canada is an exception as well, with ice hockey being much preferred to soccer, but is a unique case because hockey's purely Canadian origin story commands so much patriotic cultural capital that there is hardly room for a second hegemonic sports culture to exist. Latvia and Lithuania still put much stock into their national soccer teams, suggesting that, while relegated to second place, a hegemonic soccer culture still persists.

The factors that determine which sports form hegemonic cultures in which countries is a fascinating comparative exercise in socioeconomic and historical analysis. First of all, the country has to be an advanced industrial society, marked by features such as separation of leisure and work, cheap and efficient methods of transportation, widely available outlets of communication, and a development and emphasis on education. Allen Guttmann, a professor of history and literature at Amherst College, focused on the implications of being such an advanced industrial society in his 1988 work *A Whole New Ballgame: An Interpretation of American Sports*, concluding that industrialization-ignited movements such as increasing secularism, equality of opportunity to compete, role specialization, and increasing prevalence of bureaucratization in institutions steadily transformed unorganized games into monetized professional sports.

Because sports are wholly achievement-based and egalitarian while also being unequal in that there is always a winner and a loser – therefore elitist – they are in some ways a naturally emerging reflection of the paradox that modern capitalist societies represent. But as with the rules that make each specific sport distinct, variations arose between how similarly composed

industrial states evolved into modernity, altering the very nature of their cultures. Anthropologist Niko Besnier elaborates on this point in a 2014 article published in *The Contemporary Pacific:*

> What is particularly interesting about the circulation of sports around the world is that, although the rules of each sport may stay constant, their meanings diverge—people may play soccer football throughout the globalized world today, but they may also have radically different ideas about the game, about who should play it and how, and about how the sport relates to other activities in their lives. (p. 436)

Thus, to understand how which sports came to dominate a particular industrial society's sport space, it is important to understand the historical context behind certain commonalties that these types of countries' cultures share.

## Chapter Three: Historical Context

No conjecture about the future of American soccer culture would make sense without understanding the historical context that led the country's sport space to where it is today: dominated by the Big Four. As previously discussed, this is an aberration compared to other advanced industrial societies across the world, where most such countries have only one, sometimes two, domestic sports leagues that could be said to constitute legitimate hegemonic sports cultures. Not only that, but America's Big Four leagues operate with a level of intersectionality that does not exist anywhere else. Former NBA star Michael Jordan's crossover attempt to play baseball in the MLB presents one of the most striking examples of this type of inter-league interaction, but the same type of mindset generally applies to most American sports followers. Indeed, each of the championships of the Big Four are more or less given the same level of cultural capital by their fans: there are always victory parades for the Super Bowl, World Series, NBA Finals, and Stanley Cup winning teams, as well as invitations to the White House and equally disproportionate amounts of media attention heaped upon star players, regardless of sport.

This form of multi-league following, where Americans often support three or four professional teams in different sports while allotting roughly equal degrees of passion to each, does not exist in countries where soccer forms the nation's primary hegemonic sports culture. Americans have been conditioned to the idea of an "all-around athlete" for quite some time now and children usually play multiple sports growing up. But for a sport with so many more worldwide participants than any other game, soccer is unique in that it has *never* witnessed any

of its superstar players attempt to take their athletic talents to a different professional sports venue.

Furthermore, because soccer is so widespread globally in terms of its participation and following, its premier competitions are collectively prioritized above those of any other type of sport. To help illustrate this point, 3.572 *billion* people watched at least one minute of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, more than half of the world's population (FIFA). Similarly, the British Premier League, which many consider to be the highest quality soccer competition played annually, reached an estimated 3.2 billion viewers over the course of its 2018 – 2019 season (Carp, 2019). Generally, American professional sports leagues do not even bother measuring their broadcast ratings on a global scale, but worldwide viewership figures are released for every Super Bowl. In February 2020, 102.1 *million* people either tuned in to or streamed the Kansas City Chiefs – San Francisco 49'ers Super Bowl (Breech, 2020). For the 2018 World Cup Final, an individual game comparable to the Super Bowl, 1.12 *billion* people tuned in to watch France beat Croatia (FIFA). Soccer's ultimate championship game thus attracts more than ten times the amount of viewers than that of the NFL, which represents the next-highest televised sports contest in the world. And as a final example, only about nine million people in the United Kingdom watched Rugby Super League in 2018, which represents one of Great Britain's other hegemonic sports cultures besides soccer's Premier League (Willacy, 2018). Put simply, soccer commands much more cultural capital on a national scale, when it is a country's *primary* hegemonic sports culture, than any other type of sport that plays in the same space. As opposed to the relatively equitable intersectionality of football, baseball, basketball, and hockey in American culture, soccer is in a league of its own elsewhere.

Again considering that sports cultures represent a type of "language," one could say that the United States is ironically multilingual compared to most of the rest of the world's being monolingual or bilingual. One can see the challenge inherent in overcoming such a language gap, but there is hope that America can eventually become fluent with the additional dialect of soccer. But how did this uniquely American multilingualism come about in the first place, and how did it manage to omit the most important language from its repertoire? One must go all the way back to the 1800s to find the roots of this evolution.

*The Rise of Modern Sports: 19th Century Origins*

University of Michigan's Dr. Andrei Markovits argues that the most important factor that drove soccer's marginalization in contemporary American society is rooted in the historical-sociological trends of the late 19$^{th}$ century that led to the rise of modern sports in the first place (2001). Indeed, as industrialization was sweeping through much of the Western world and igniting mass societal reorganization in Europe and in the United States, the first inklings of modern sports teams began to appear on both sides of the Atlantic. Markovits writes:

> Modern sports everywhere became inextricably linked to the most fundamental aspects of modernization: discipline exacted by regulated industrial life, the strict separation of leisure and work, the necessity of organized and regularized recreation for the masses, cheap and efficient public transport by train, later airplane (intercity) and bus as well as trolley (intracity), prompt and widely available mass communication via the press (introduction of sports pages in newspapers and the establishment of sports journalism) followed by telegrams (crucial for the development and proliferation of betting), radio

> and then television, and the development and rapid expansion of modern education. (p. 13)

In other words, technological developments driven by industrialization made the 19th century Western world more interconnected than it had ever been before, consequently leading to the rise of a larger middle class, an entirely new consumer group with unaddressed needs. The subsequent collective recognition for the "separation of leisure and work," which previously had not existed for many workers in the world, "necessity of organized and regularized recreation for the masses," and the "expansion of modern education" were thus natural responses to the proliferation of bourgeoisie ideals that coincided with mass industrialization and modernization.

Due to drastically different histories, however, the bourgeoisie that rose in America during this period was different in nature from its European counterpart. Though these middle class individuals had similar needs and consumption habits in the New World and the Old, a lack of entrenched social institutions, such as the landed aristocracy and the church in Europe, empowered the American bourgeoisie with more individual agency than elsewhere (Markovits, 2011, p. 8). Additionally, Markovits (2001) writes that America's vast continent allowed for unprecedented geographic mobility, "offering an escape from conflicts that otherwise would have lent themselves to the creation of the collective enmities often expressed in class antagonisms in Europe" (p. 8). The fundamental roles that immigration and slavery played in the United States' history also meant that ethnic identity came to play a more important role in the development of Antebellum America's culture than that of class identity, the opposite of the case in Europe (Markovits, 2001). The 19th-century bourgeoisie in the United States, therefore, was predisposed to conditions that relegated the importance of belonging to a class-bound collective and instead favored individualist pursuits. This distinction between the middle classes of

America and Europe is best exemplified by the concept of American Exceptionalism, which primarily refers to the fact that of all the Western industrial powers of the world, the United States is the only country in which no major socialist party has ever risen to power (Sombart, 1906). The historically rooted disconnect over American individualism vs. European collectivism within its populations would prove to greatly influence the evolution of both continents' hegemonic sports cultures.

*The "People's Games"*

As the middle classes grew in both America and Europe, their prior notions about what previously constituted "sports" began to change. Markovits (2001) writes that in the 1800s:

> …the early American "sporting scene" was of a quasi-aristocratic nature. Besides participatory activities such as hunting or fishing, horse racing was the principal diversion for an American gentleman or would-be gentleman. Other "sporting" activities (that is, usually those open for wagering) included cockfighting and various parlor games, though these were not in very high repute among the well-to-do and those who aspired to upper-class status…. Ball games in general were considered the province of the immature. (p. 55)

Likewise, the sporting scene in Europe consisted of, "…horse racing, golf, boxing, rowing, fencing, and cricket—the sole team sport among these" (Markovits, 2010, p. 51). It is notable that nearly all of the above listed "sports" are played out on an individual level and are therefore not affected by a collective desire to win. Cricket, the one *team* sport that existed during this era, would tellingly go on to play an important role in establishing professional sports clubs in both America and Europe.

Most significantly, however, the common denominator between all of these examples of early Western sports rests in their “quasi-aristocratic nature.” In the early 1800s, people did not understand the health benefits of exercise. Rather, the notion of “sportsmanship” served as the primary driver for athletic participation, precisely because such a trait was seen as indicative of gentlemanliness at the time. Niko Besnier expands on this gentlemanly association, particularly from the English point of view:

> To be sure, they [aristocratic English university students] were convinced of the fact that their invention [organized sports]—rationalized, institutionalized, and quintessentially modern—was yet further proof of their unflinching sense of superiority, as men, as Christians, as white people, and as masters of the then-largest empire on the planet. They were codifying the rules of ball games with the deep conviction that physical activity was in the service of God, country, and empire. Not surprisingly, many of these boys and men were motivated by the doctrine of muscular Christianity, which emphasized asceticism, racial purity, and masculinity. (p. 435)

Ironically, the institutions of exclusivity – being a white, Christian, (preferably British) male – that organized sports were first founded on would quickly give way to the supreme importance of winning, opening the doors for people outside of this conceited original group to begin participating in the same competitions.

Indeed, the subsequent rise and proliferation of bourgeois ideals in the early- and mid-1800s challenged this rigid, aristocratic definition of “sport.” Though Americans still considered ball games to be childish, some from affluent parts of society were beginning to play cricket by the 1830s, primarily out of a desire to be seen as more “gentlemanly” (Markovits*,* 2001). Cricket clubs were soon-after founded in major urban centers such as New York City and Philadelphia in

the 1840s by upper-class citizens, but these organizations were more like social clubs in the vein of their British counterparts; they looked nothing like modern professional teams (Markovits, 2001). By virtue of their members' lofty positions in society, however, these clubs also began to attract the American press to sporting events for the first time. The importance of "gentlemanliness" and an aura of aristocracy continued to define these early cricket clubs, but the establishment of sports-centric organizations in New England was an important first step in building the United States' sports culture.

Inspired by the social esteem that America's early cricket clubs afforded its members, a group of middle-class workers, who all aspired to be gentlemen, founded a club around a related stick-and-ball game in 1845: The New York Knickerbockers baseball club (Markovits, 2001). Though baseball still possessed the stigma of being an unorganized children's game at the time, it started to gain more popular interest as a wave of American nativism swept through the young nation during the 1850s. As pro-America sentiment billowed from the working-class masses, many people, newspaper writers most importantly, began to view cricket as an invasive British export that espoused aristocratic, un-American ideals (Markovits, 2001). Consequently, baseball's popularity took off. Not only was it an alternative to a perceived "foreign" sport, but the very essence of baseball represented something "purely American" to its adherents in that its more egalitarian rules paved the way for more competitive contests. To illustrate: the fact that a batter gets more opportunities to swing at the ball in a game of baseball than in cricket meant that early baseball players were able to hone their batting skills at a faster rate than their cricket-playing counterparts. One can hopefully see how an athlete being enabled to more competitively refine his or her skills at an individual level rather than being constrained by an arbitrary, aristocratically defined rule would have been appealing to the hardy, frontiersman zeitgeist of

mid-19th century America. Baseball, therefore, had something going for it that cricket would never be able to replicate in America: support from the working-class and bourgeoisie, who were widely mobilized by nationalist appeals that rallied against all things Old World at the time. With an eager and sizable audience now established, dozens of other clubs joined the Knickerbockers in New York City during the 1850s, and spectatorship skyrocketed (Markovits, 2001).

Coinciding with the proliferation of baseball's popularity among New York's masses was the diminishing importance of "gentlemanly" virtues to the sport. There are two interrelated reasons for this. First, as more and more spectators came out to watch games, betting on teams became common practice among fans, leading to a stronger collective pressure to win above all else. Secondly, with so many new participants from varying walks of life, some baseball players and fans simply did not aspire to be "gentleman." The resulting atmosphere was an antagonistic one where winning began to be the only thing that mattered. Markovits (2001) writes:

> Reflecting the changing values of the nation, the aristocratic-type milieu of the aspiring sporting ballplayer was quite soon superseded by the new ethics of egalitarian competition with victory as the goal. On the field, sportsmanship gave way to competition, a transition more or less completed by the eve of the Civil War. (p. 57)

Though a drastic transformation, the combination of a rising bourgeoisie majority during a period of American history where nativism was arguably at its highest led to baseball crowding out cricket and other "gentlemanly" games played by the upper-classes, and instead birthed the first modern American sports space.

While baseball was busy becoming the "people's sport" in America during this period, soccer was following a nearly parallel evolution in Great Britain. Similar to baseball in the United States, unorganized games resembling modern soccer existed long before the 1800s.

Children were usually the participants of these early games, as with baseball, but wealthy college students were known to play as well. At the time, English colleges such as Oxford and Cambridge were traditionally, "…seen as research institutions, training grounds for state bureaucrats, or domains of the church" (Markovits, 2001, p. 43). These institutions were thus bubbles of aristocratic thought and values, where young men played sports in the pursuit of the same "gentlemanly" ideals that their American counterparts who played cricket sought.

In 1856, a group of students at Cambridge University put the rules of soccer into writing for the first time ever (BBC, 2016). The "Cambridge Rules," as they are known, were drawn up to prevent future bickering over rules whenever Cambridge would play other schools in their "kicking game." The ten laws would end up providing the fundamental structure for the modern sport of soccer, which would sweep across England over the next twenty years in much the same way that baseball did in America over the same period. In 1871, the newly founded Football Association, which remains England's governing body on soccer, established the FA Cup, swiftly ushering in the era of professionalism (BBC, 2016). Increased spectator interest naturally followed the professionalization of the sport as more consumers desired to witness the best of the best play to win.

Contrary to baseball's path to cultural dominance in America, soccer did not rely on any sort of nativist movement in England to gain traction within its working- and middle-classes. Instead, its spread was driven by the deeply entrenched, class-based collectivism that differentiated European bourgeoisie identity politics from that of America's. David Goldblatt (2014), a British sports sociologist, illustrates how soccer was able to explode in popularity among England's lower classes because of this phenomenon:

> [Soccer] provided an opportunity for a gathering of people whose origins, identity, and purpose cut across local neighborhoods, industrial occupations, employers, trade union membership—and united them around a bigger but comprehensible geographical location and identity. It also served to insert these nascent forms of working-class localism into a national framework and institutions (p. 59).

In other words, civic pride and local identity—factors that were arguably more actively experienced among citizens of Great Britain due to the geographic limitations of an island nation—played a crucial role in disseminating the sport to every corner of the Isles. For English soccer fans, the thrill of beating the team just down the road was akin to a bloodless declaration of regional dominance, an exhilarating expression of superiority that had previously been unknown to the common man's experience due to the region's Medieval history.

Thus, while the spread of baseball in America was fueled by an appeal to *nationalism*, which made sense for a newly founded country struggling to find its patriot identity, the spread of soccer in Great Britain—and Europe soon after—was fueled by an appeal to *localisms*, which likewise made sense for a continent composed of fractured, class-bound collectives. Both sports were founded in aristocratic circles as "gentlemanly" activities before trickling down to the working- and middle-classes, who then devoured the games and twisted them into competitive expressions of geographic-based identities, albeit at different scales initially. But because baseball in America followed such a similar evolution to soccer in Europe, the cultural space that soccer could have theoretically filled in America during the mid-late 1800s was already occupied. The slightly differing orientations of the bourgeoisie—the people—on these continents therefore resulted in different sports assuming their respective titles of the "People's Game."

*Not So Fast: The Emergence of Football and the Role of American Colleges*

Though a large part of the American sport space had already been filled by baseball in the late 1800s, there still existed opportunity for new games to enter country's sporting culture by virtue of the United States' unique bourgeois orientation and geographic scale. One of the most significant societal consequences of these two factors is the proliferation of colleges across the American continent. Markovits (2001) summarizes the importance of the United States' higher education system as follows:

> Bespeaking America's true bourgeois ethos and mission, the country developed a concept of education that emphasized the inclusion of large numbers on all levels, even that of the postsecondary colleges and universities. In notable contrast to Britain and the Old World, where higher education remained the preserve of a privileged few until the education explosion of the late 1960s and 1970s, higher education in the United States rapidly developed into a mass structure with the establishment of land-grant colleges and public universities that had the clear mission of educating the country's large middle class…. Higher education and its institutions developed into an integral part of American middle-class culture well before it did so in Europe and elsewhere. (p. 42)

In many parts of the United States, colleges act as the regional population's institutional and societal points of focus. And because the role of colleges is so ingrained in the history of America's majority middle-class, they also assume an important point of *cultural* focus. Taking things one step further: because many colleges predated the rise of baseball as America's first hegemonic sports culture in the 1850s, the new notion of sports representing competitive rather than gentlemanly expressions—a movement largely proliferated by America's lower- and

middle-classes—found a natural home on the campuses of these bourgeois universities. Markovits (2001) further elaborates:

> Since these institutions often existed in states with few large cities and thus in areas where the presence of professional sports made no economic sense, universities and their teams soon became the sole purveyors of sport on a meaningful competitive level for large areas of the country. Being a Sooners fan in Oklahoma, a Huskers fan in Nebraska, a Longhorns fan in Texas, a Wildcats fan in Kentucky, or a Wolverines fan in Michigan has been every bit the iconographic, spiritual, and affective equivalent to being an Arsenal supporter in North London, a Rangers fan in Glasgow, a Rapid supporter in the Hütteldorf district of Vienna, and a Barca fan in Barcelona. As is the case of major European soccer clubs with their clear identities, milieus, and networks…American universities became essential representatives of the identity and culture of their respective regions, states, cities, and towns. (p. 43)

The sport that would eventually come to represent the identities and cultures of these college-defined localities, however, was not the People's Game of baseball. Rather, an offshoot of British rugby known as American football would rise to prominence within the United States' elite academic institutions during the late 1800s before exploding onto the professional scene in 1950 and superseding baseball as the country's premier hegemonic sports culture, where it remains to this day.

The story of football's development on college campuses is a fascinating one that, combined with baseball's popularity, would ultimately spell doom for soccer's 20th century bid to enter America's sport space. Key evidence lives on in the name itself: American *football* as opposed to soccer's colloquial name in the non-American world—*football*. Even though

American football hardly utilizes participants' feet during the run of play, the name suggests an intimate relationship with the kicking game that the rest of the world knows so well. In fact, the football that Americans know and love today was extremely close to being phased out in favor of a kicking variant that very likely would have established soccer in place of American football in the United States' contemporary sport space—were it not for a college by the name of Harvard University.

Americans had been playing unorganized, scrum-heavy ball games as early as 1609 in Virginia (Markovits, 2011). These contests sometimes involved moving a ball by whatever means possible to a predetermined location that would render one team "victorious," but other times there was no ball at all and the competition resembled more of a loosely organized brawl. By the 1850s, such games were notorious on Harvard's campus, earning the moniker "bloody Monday" on account of their brutality (Markovits, 2011). Initially, the Harvard game represented a cross between modern American football and soccer, where the aim was to advance a ball to a fixed point with the feet only while tackling defenders attempted to stop the team on offense. On account of the leg injuries that players were suffering, the Harvard faculty finally outlawed this version of the sport, along with their Yale and Columbia contemporaries, in the late 1850s (Markovits, 2001). But soon after, during the 1860s, a similar type of game emerged with more organization and regulation at secondary schools in Boston. This new "Boston Game" was fundamentally different from Harvard's original contests in that it allowed players to carry the ball with their hands, in addition to the usual method of advancing via kicking. The Boston Game was quickly picked up by Harvard students who became obsessed with the quirks that being able to run with the ball introduced to the game—namely, the first forms of passing the ball through the air (Markovits, 2001).

Variations of this rugby/soccer game spread to other elite colleges on the east coast, namely Princeton, Yale, Columbia, and Rutgers. Interestingly enough, these institutions all agreed that the ball *could not* be carried in their games, setting up an inevitable confrontation with Harvard and its Boston rules. In 1873, the Sans-Harvard collective of schools met to uniformly adopt England's association football rules; that is, they started to play "Cambridge Rules" soccer amongst themselves instead of the rugby-like sport that had previously been the norm for intramural contests (Markovits, 2001). Harvard students, stubborn about preserving their unique running game, chose not to attend this inter-collegiate summit.

Two years later in 1875, however, Harvard and Yale students were both itching to replicate their institutions' long-standing academic rivalry on the sports field. Yale players ended up conceding to Harvard's demands to play by their rugby-like running rules instead of soccer, resulting in a blowout Harvard victory in the first iteration of "The Game." The other elite universities who had previously been members of the soccer league quickly followed suit. By 1877, university soccer's last holdout, Princeton, had abandoned association football in favor of the rugby-like Harvard game (Markovits, 2001). In a mere four-year window, soccer's promising American future disappeared completely because of Harvard's stubbornness and "elite" reputation; indeed, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, and several other schools considered to be equally prestigious in their own right all looked to Harvard as an example to emulate due to its older and more established presence in American society. Without an upper-class institution willing to nurture and promote the sport naturally, soccer's early American fate was left in the hands of individual businessmen, who would subsequently prove unable to organize and establish a league with any real staying power.

From 1880 – 1900, American football—as it was now known—evolved into *the* college sport in the United States. While baseball enjoyed broader popularity at the time, several scandals driven by the excesses of professionalism sullied the sport's reputation. Additionally, baseball's designation as the People's Game—primarily followed by the lower working classes—further contributed to the bourgeoisie notion that baseball was turning into a "dirty" business. Football thus represented the antithesis to baseball's place in American culture at the turn of the century: a "genuine" sport contested by middle-class amateurs who simply played for their love of the game. Though baseball initially occupied a huge chunk of America's sport space, football's rise—and eventual spread—demonstrates how America's unique bourgeoisie dynamic can open a cultural niche for newcomers. Unfortunately, it happened to occur at soccer's expense.

*Post-Grad: American Soccer Experiences from 1880-1931*

Even with baseball and football forming the bulk of the American sports space at the beginning of the 20th century, soccer's fate was not yet completely cursed. Large numbers of immigrants arriving from the British Isles played and even formed teams on the east coast during the last quarter of the 19th century. Forebodingly, these first American soccer teams tended to form around ethnic, religious, or occupational lines, displaying how European notions of collectives could even follow people to the New World (Markovits, 2001).

The first attempt to establish an organized American soccer league came in the form of The American Football Association (AFA) in New Jersey in 1884 (Markovits, 2001). For nearly thirty years, the AFA's member teams languished over the professional-amateur debate that had previously afflicted America's other major sports. Ineffective league leadership led to some

clubs leaving, contributing to the rise of other, smaller soccer leagues on the east coast. In 1912, some of these smaller leagues combined to form the American Amateur Football Association (AAFA) in direct competition with the AFA (Markovits, 2001).

Both the AFA and the AAFA desired international legitimation among the rest of the soccer world, a status that only FIFA could bestow. In 1912, delegates from both leagues independently asked FIFA for its blessing of recognition; to these requests, FIFA told the two leagues to consolidate. Thus, in 1913, the AFA and the AAFA merged to form the United States Football Association (USFA) (Markovits, 2001). Mirroring other countries, the founding of the USFA introduced the concept of a soccer federation that governs over all leagues that contest the sport to Americans. This bureaucratic structure is lifted directly from European countries, where each has a national soccer body that monitors and develops the sport domestically by working with players and leagues from grassroots all the way up to professional levels. In American sports, on the other hand, the NFL, MLB, NHL, and NBA each evolved to represent the highest level of their respective sport at the league level as well as at the national level, making the idea of a governing federation redundant. So while the AFA and AAFA were originally leagues with their own interests at mind, their leaders joined forces to create a governing federation instead. The member teams of the AFA and AAFA continued to schedule their games in a haphazard, semi-professional manner, but they were now playing under the auspices of the USFA.

Squabbling amongst USFA-approved squads commenced almost immediately. Not only this, but the USFA's leaders, former AFA and AAFA officials who were mostly European immigrants themselves, foolishly decided to intentionally market their product as un-American. Markovits (2001) elaborates on the implications of this decision:

> In addition to incompetence in running their operation, these soccer officials further alienated the sport from the mainstream of American society by not only identifying themselves as immigrants but, more important, by priding themselves on consciously maintaining the foreign flavor and European origins of the game, certainly a drawback at a time in American history when nativism and the creation of an American identity in opposition to Europe was culturally hegemonic. (p. 101)

The fallout from these promotional efforts was immediate. The USFA failed to ever generate any meaningful revenue streams on its own that would have enabled it to grow, and by ignoring the sport completely in high schools and colleges—at the prospect level—it relinquished an opportunity to grow the sport domestically in a natural way (Markovits, 2001).

In contrast to Major League Baseball and college football in the late 1800s and early 1900s, these fledgling American soccer leagues—both pre- and post-USFA merger—lacked the financial capital and effective bureaucratic organization that could have anchored the sport as a legitimate piece of the country's athletic culture. Once more looking at sociological factors, the reason for this is clear: soccer was intentionally positioned by its early American adherents, most of whom were first generation immigrants, as a foreign import, a sport supposed to invoke memories of the "Motherland," wherever that might be. Because of the aforementioned nativism that had gripped the United States several decades before, these immigrant representatives, soccer's only American ambassadors, were mostly barred from entering the upper-class societal institutions that could have helped disseminate the sport from a "top-down" perspective – à la early cricket clubs with baseball and elite colleges with American football. Soccer, therefore, was never legitimized by any sort of organization that constituted a notable piece of society during the rise of modern professional sports in America.

That said, the 1920s presented soccer with yet another opportunity to root itself in America's sport space. The economic prosperity that the Roaring Twenties brought upon the United States was a blessing in the post-WWI world, and the average American consumer was arguably the biggest beneficiary. Indeed, with more money to spend on creature comforts than before, the American middle class helped finance the Golden Age of American Sports, a period marked by new stadium construction, the proliferation of the radio, and subsequently, of sports broadcasts, expanding newspaper coverage of sports besides baseball, and improved interstate roads, which made travelling to distant cities for spectator events more accessible than ever before (Sumner, 2004).

American interest in all sorts of sports exploded in this environment. Boxing, for example, proliferated throughout the United States during the 1920s whereas it had previously been thought of as an uncouth activity to follow. The National Football League (NFL) was also founded in 1920, another instance of a sport growing at the professional level amidst so much free-flowing capital. As with its sporting counterparts, soccer similarly benefitted from the Roaring Twenties in America, but also with the help of some unique events unfolding across the Atlantic in the United Kingdom. There, the English Football Association, soccer's original supervisory institution, was coming to blows with FIFA, the newer but more globally recognized body, over who should wield more governing power over the sport. As a result of this dispute, the FA withdrew itself and its member teams from FIFA in 1920 (Markovits, 2001). British players, who were already beginning to perceive the cosmopolitan turns of the sport and whose paychecks partially hinged on FIFA's support, scoffed at the FA's arrogance in making this decision and began to actively pursue employment opportunities outside of the Isles, some of the best choosing to go where the money was: America.

Recall that the AFA and the AAFA had folded into the USFA in the mid-1910s by this point. Though its initial executives, many of whom were former AFA and AAFA league representatives, flailed about at first, the USFA eventually came to represent an important step toward establishing soccer as a hegemonic culture several years into its existence by infusing competent, and more importantly, *native-born* Americans into its bureaucratic leadership for the first time—key among them Thomas W. Cahill. Though constraining diversity at the decision-making level in organizations is an unethical and unprofitable business practice today, the USFA's pivoting to native leadership in the early 1900s finally gave American soccer access to some of the upper-class institutions and capital that baseball and football had since already had the privilege of benefitting from.

A St. Louis native, Cahill was the first executive secretary for the USFA as well as the first U.S. Men's National Team coach during the 1910s, quickly building a reputation for himself as the preeminent soccer figurehead in the United States (Foulds & Harris, 1979). This notoriety enabled Cahill to play a key role in forming the American Soccer League (ASL) in 1921, the third major attempt, after the AFA and AAFA, to establish a viable professional soccer league in America. This time, however, the league would be blessed with FIFA's approval, lending it more international credence from the get-go. The founding of the ASL timed perfectly with the English FA's decision to leave FIFA, and against the backdrop of the prosperous 1920s, the fledgling American league was suddenly hiring some of the best soccer talent in the world from overseas (Foulds & Harris, 1979).

The exodus of genuine, world-class soccer players from Ireland, Scotland, and England to the ASL ignited an interest in soccer among Americans that had never existed before. For the first time in the sport's history in the United States, enough spectators began showing up to

games to convince American businessmen – those crucial representatives of upper-class social institutions – to invest their own dollars in a professional league. The ASL thus enjoyed more financial support than both the AFA and the AAFA, which contributed to higher spectator rates, which itself resulted in greater media attention. In fact, the ASL was so successful for several years in the 1920s that its media coverage actually outweighed that afforded to the NFL, though it is worth noting that American football already had a strong cultural presence from its college game at the time (Foulds & Harris, 1979). Still, the fact that a soccer league was more popular than the NFL for a period of time in America is certainly a paradox worth noting in retrospect.

In his titular novel about the American Soccer League, author Colin Jose (1998) contends that, "The decade from 1921 to 1931 became known as the 'golden years' of American soccer" (p. 7). During this period, ASL teams would periodically take on – and defeat – some of the greatest foreign teams in the world, suggesting that the league, incredibly, had a partial claim to representing the zenith of soccer competition on the planet during the 1920s (Jose, 1998). But as with the AFA and AAFA before it, the ASL encountered both institutional and environmental challenges that would eventually lead to its downfall.

On the institutional side, the USFA and ASL had a relationship that was barely cooperative at best and outright toxic at worst. As the FIFA-sanctioned representative body of soccer in the United States, the USFA had previously founded a competition known as the United States Open Cup, a single-elimination knockout tournament that pits teams *from different leagues* against each other so that a true, national American champion can be named at the end of the soccer season. This is not a radical concept; nearly every other soccer-playing country has a national cup competition outside of the governance of that respective country's premier soccer league. For example, England has its FA Cup, Spain has its Copa del Rey, France has its Coupe

de France, and Germany has the DFB-Pokal. Each of these competitions is played in a knock-out format, made up of teams from leagues *of all levels* in their respective countries, and are organized, financed, and promoted by that country's own version of the USFA. In non-American countries, where top-flight soccer leagues and their governing national bodies had developed together earlier and therefore more symbiotically, there is already a tradition of playing these cup knockout games concomitantly within the participating leagues' seasons – that is, teams would play games for different competitions in the same season, made possible by the fact that there's simply fewer games to be played in a knockout tournament than in a round-robin league schedule. So a team might have *league* matches on a Saturday and on the following Sunday in a given week, but a federation-organized, knockout *cup* match sandwiched in between on a Tuesday. Winning both one's league competition and one's national cup competition in the same season is a huge achievement and is commonly referred to as winning the "double" in countries everywhere today.

The organization of soccer leagues in 1920s America was a bit different, however. The ASL, a suddenly successful upstart league, soon came to view the barely younger USFA as an inferior organization that was merely an impediment to its business interests, even though the USFA had superior governing powers vested in it by FIFA. As such, when the USFA began insisting that ASL teams participate in its United States Open Cup within the ASL's own season, the league balked at the federation and cited unnecessary financial burden and scheduling confusion as reasons for ignoring the competition. In reality, ASL club owners were more concerned with limiting their mandated profit share with the USFA and the notion that participating in a lesser-quality competition would dilute the values of their teams' brands (Markovits, 2001). After several years of warnings and bickering, the USFA finally suspended

the 1924-1925 ASL season (Foulds & Harris, 1979). The next year, three ASL teams – the New York Giants, Bethlehem Steel, and the Newark Skeeters – defied their league overlords and entered the USFA's Open Cup, sparking outrage from the ASL commissioner who subsequently fined and suspended the violators. The USFA hit back, warning the ASL that drastic measures would be taken if it did not lift the sanctions on the three rogue teams. The ASL refused and as promised, the USFA formally outlawed the ASL, fatally designating it as a non-FIFA sanctioned league. The three rogue teams joined with five new teams to form the USFA-approved Eastern Professional League, while a subordinate league, the Southern New York State Association, sided with the ASL and withdrew from the USFA (Foulds & Harris, 1979). This rift between leagues who respected the USFA's authority and those who did not would come to be known as the American Soccer War, in which the USFA and ASL essentially jockeyed for control of the sport's future in America (Allaway, 2015). As the stock market crashed several years later in 1929, sapping the capital that had previously allowed the ASL to attract high-profile players, the ASL and its motley crew of rebel leagues floundered for several years before disappearing altogether in 1931. As Markovits (2001) writes:

> The ASL's struggles and its final demise in 1931 augmented soccer's aura of obscurity for most Americans who—at least until the 1980s, possibly even the 1990s—continued to view soccer as the sport of foreigners, immigrants, school-children, and those student athletes as well as weekend "jocks" who saw themselves in some fashion "above," "not fit," or otherwise disinclined toward the homegrown North American sports of baseball, football, basketball, and ice hockey. (p. 114)

Thus, the difficult business culture surrounding the ASL scared potential future investors away from the sport, and combined with the subsequent experiences of the Great Depression and

World War II, America would essentially forget about soccer for the next four decades until 1970. But for a brief moment in history nearly a century ago, soccer appeared to be on the brink of becoming a hegemonic sports culture in the United States.

*Soccer's American Revitalization: Television and NASL*

From 1930 to 1970, no single American soccer league rose to prominence above the rest. As in the days of the AFA and AAFA, teams reverted back to identifying themselves along collectivist lines, fighting over players and their salaries, moving franchises from one geographic location to another, and engaging in other self-serving deals that stymied the growth of the sport by further cultivating an uncooperative business environment. In 1933, a second ASL was founded with completely new teams, but this venture never approached the financial success of its 1920s progenitor. That said, ASL II teams began the important tradition of inviting top-flight European and South American clubs to the United States for "friendly" matches during the offseason, which aided in exposing the sport to more Americans. Around the same time, an ASL II match was featured on a New York television broadcast in 1952 (Allaway, 2001). Even though the event itself was a disaster from the perspective of spectator ratings, simply getting soccer onto American television sets would prove to be a valuable developmental step in retrospect.

The advent of television as a mass-medium for consuming entertainment began to change American culture in the 1960s, especially with regards to sports. Up until this point, the radio was the primary way that people monitored events if they did not have the privilege of being able to attend in person. The television completely switched the primary sense that one uses to digest an event from the ears to the eyes, leaving much less to the mind's imagination. As a result, television increased the ceiling of admiration that fans have for professional athletes now that

their wildest exploits could be seen in real time, further driving a general societal appreciation of sports. As Markovits (2001) writes:

> Television changed American (indeed, the world's) culture so intrinsically, that this is easily taken for granted. Ultimately, since at least the 1960s, it is television that has determined the presentation and perception of a major sport in the United States, its financial success, as well as its popularity and position within the American sport space. (p. 129)

Soccer's relationship with television, especially in America, would henceforth be a constant indicator of the cultural relevance of the sport compared to other forms of entertainment.

Getting Americans to sit in front of a television for a whole soccer match was, and still is, a difficult task. Compared to those of the Big Four, a soccer broadcast is just different to watch. For starters, play is completely uninterrupted for two, forty-five-minute halves. There are no timeouts to be taken and the referee does not have the authority to stop the clock. As a consequence, commercial breaks are completely absent from soccer broadcasts besides those at halftime, rendering the sport much less desirable to advertisers. Though the product may be more attractive to the viewer because of a dearth of commercials, the opposite is true for financial backers, putting the sport at a competitive disadvantage compared to baseball, football, basketball, and hockey broadcasts.

Additionally, many Americans are simply unfamiliar with soccer because of its relegation to the fringes of hegemonic sports cultures in the United States. As a result, there is a general lack of appreciation for what constitutes a good soccer play, which, to "fluent" fans, is more than simply when a team scores a goal. Objectively, a goal-line clearance in a soccer game is just as significant of an event as a 4th quarter interception in a close American football game, but the

contextual importance of both circumstances is lost on fans who are not *familiar* with the other sport. Markovits (2001) elaborates on this point by explaining, "As in other team sports on television, some degree of knowledge on the part of the viewer is necessary, so as to presume and/or anticipate the position of players and action off camera" (p. 130). Soccer, with a playing surface that is larger than and scores that are usually lower than those of Big Four games, is therefore at a disadvantage with attracting the attention of an average American sports fan, who is used to being able to see every player on a television screen at once and witnessing more instances of scoring "events" over the course of a contest.

With regards to growing the presence of soccer in America, creating an attractive product for the television medium is the most immediate challenge facing the sport's leaders in the country today. And it has remained the most significant obstacle to growth for every prospective soccer league since the 1952 New York broadcast of an ASL II game failed to attract significant numbers of viewers. Indeed, where television has hurt soccer's prospects in the United States, it has only helped the sport's competitors, especially the NFL, which finally overtook college football in terms of popularity in the 1950s on the heels of its popular broadcasting style (Markovits, 2001).

As television really began to establish itself as a mainstay of American pop culture in the 1960s, it played a critical role in expanding the country's entertainment industry. Sociologist Phyllis Marie Goudy Myers (1984) explains how several environmental factors, many driven by the spread of television, contributed to creating an overall auspicious environment for the formation of new sports leagues at this time in her Purdue University Ph.D. dissertation:

> The cultural environment in the United States at this time featured leisure as an ethic and a commodity that would soon see the business community and the American vernacular

> coin the phrase ‘leisure industry.’ Economically speaking, unemployment was at a record low, the stock market was performing extremely well, and the nation was experiencing a lengthy boom that facilitated increased consumption of leisure goods and recreation. The demographic environment featured two developments particularly favorable to the expansion of existing sports leagues and the creation of new ones: the coming of age of the baby boom generation, whose early cohort had just reached its late teens and early twenties at the time; and a seemingly irreversible trend toward the formation of major urban centers surrounded by large and generally prosperous suburbs. Finally, the legal environment of the time was favorable to the formation of sports leagues. (p. 29)

It was in this environment that for the first time since the ASL in the 1920s, wealthy American businessmen seriously began paying attention to the potential profitability of a professional soccer league. Not only that, but this round of financiers consisted of successful owners of Big Four teams, including Lamar Hunt of the NFL’s Kansas City Chiefs, Jack Kent Cooke of the NFL’s Washington Redskins and NBA’s Los Angeles Lakers, and Roy Hofheinz of the MLB’s Houston Astros (Markovits, 2001). With their preexisting knowledge of managing sports franchises, owners such as these were charmed by England’s wildly successful experience hosting the 1966 World Cup, in which the thrilling final game between England and West Germany was nationally broadcast on NBC in the United States to rave reviews (Jose, 1989).

In the second half of 1966, three disparate groups of investors emerged, each with the goal of winning the USFA’s, and by extension, FIFA’s approval for an American professional soccer league, just as the AFA and AAFA had attempted to do so nearly four decades prior (Markovits, 2001). Two of the groups soon consolidated to form the National Professional Soccer League (NPSL) and managed to fortuitously land a television contract with CBS. In a

twist of fate eerily reminiscent of the 1920s Soccer War between the ASL and USFA, however, the NPSL rejected the USFA's demands for a percentage cut of television revenue and ticket sales, moving the USFA to once again designate a viable professional league as an outlaw organization (Markovits, 2001).

The remaining group of investors, led by Jack Kent Cooke, decided to do the opposite of the NPSL and bent to the USFA's financial requirements. Cleverly labeling itself the United Soccer Association (USA), this league actually contracted twelve preexisting, established teams from South America and Europe to come to the United States to play in the summer months, during the offseasons of their respective domestic leagues. On the other hand, the NPSL managed to pool together enough capital, with the help of its television contract with CBS, to build up ten American teams from scratch (Markovits, 2001).

Both leagues played their inaugural seasons in 1967 as business competitors, giving Americans their first glimpse of serious professional soccer played on domestic soil since 1931. But by the end of their competitions, both leagues had incurred serious financial losses and failed to make any type of serious impact on the public, even with the additional exposure that their television deals afforded them (Markovits, 2001). Instead of folding in light of their failed seasons, the NPSL and USA put their differences aside, perhaps due in some part to their respective team owners being familiar with one another from other sports ventures. Beginning in 1968, the NPSL and USA thus reorganized and merged to form the North American Soccer League (NASL), an organization whose existence would be short-lived just like so many leagues before it, but whose impact on the sport's perception in America would have lasting consequences into the modern era (Jose, 1989).

The biggest contribution that the NASL would make to American soccer culture was through its use of the Brazilian star Pelé as a promotional figurehead. The man who many consider to be the greatest soccer player of all time today was just hitting the peak of his professional career in the late 1960s, having already become a global household name from his performances in the 1958 and 1962 World Cups. In 1968, before the NASL began its inaugural season, the league invited several foreign teams to play preseason exhibition matches against its own clubs. One such invitee was Pelé's Brazilian club Santos, which toured the United States that summer playing in cities such as St. Louis, Kansas City, Boston, and Washington D.C. (Jose, 1989). Pelé, who was arguably the only soccer player with name recognition in the United States at the time, further wowed the American public with his spectacular play that summer and ended his tour with a newfound optimism for the fate of the sport's future in the United States.

Seven years later in 1975, Pelé made due on his appreciation for American soccer and signed a three-year, $4.5 million contract with the New York Cosmos of the NASL (Jose, 1989). The deal signaled a turning point in America's soccer fortunes by bringing more domestic media attention to the sport than ever before, driving high numbers of spectators to NASL matches across markets but in New York especially—where Pelé played. Pelé's participation in the NASL not only ignited a domestic passion for soccer but also served as a signpost of legitimacy to the rest of the soccer world, which had essentially dismissed the United States as a soccer nation at this point. As Markovits (2001) writes:

> Pelé's presence gave the league instant legitimacy in the world of soccer, and like a magnet, his presence attracted other major stars from around the world. In short order, such living legends as Germany's Franz Beckenbauer and Gerd Müller, Italy's Giogio Chinaglia, Holland's Johan Cruyff and Johan Neeskens, Northern Ireland's Geroge Best,

> Peru's Teofilo Cubillas, Poland's Kazimierz Deyna, Brazil's Carlos Alberto, Yugoslavia's Vladislav Bogicevic, England's Gordon Banks, and Portugal's Eusebio (often called "the European Pelé")—among many other excellent European and Latin American players—entered the NASL, thereby raising soccer in the United States to a level not previously approximated since the first ASL in the 1920s. (pp. 166 – 167)

Though many of these foreign stars had already played through the peak of their athletic careers elsewhere, their coinciding presence in the NASL is noteworthy considering that many of the men named above are often included on any soccer fan's "greatest of all time" list. An argument could therefore be made that the NASL showcased the highest-quality soccer on the planet for a brief period in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Unfortunately, the positivity surrounding the NASL quickly began to subside. In 1979, during the midst of Pelé-mania, ABC signed a lucrative broadcast deal with the NASL, but consistently high television ratings had all but disappeared three years later. This phenomenon is largely due to the NASL's failure to cultivate an organic culture around its product. Markovits (2001) writes:

> Simply put, most Americans were not sufficiently interested in watching soccer in a sustained manner beyond the occasional glimpse of Pelé. As for the "hyphenated Americans" [Americans who can trace their ancestry to other parts of the world] who traditionally comprised the bulk of the sport's constituency in the United States, most apparently lost their enthusiasm for home [NASL] teams not composed primarily of their ethnic or national brethren. This was reflected in the poor television ratings and the ever-declining number of spectators in the stands. (p. 169)

Put another way: the NASL lacked many of the prerequisite conditions that other soccer-playing nations had in place already that would have caused its fans to embrace the cosmopolitan makeup of its teams' rosters. Though the quality of play was certainly spectacular and perceived to be world-class, which is a necessary requirement for any sport deemed to possess a hegemonic culture, the NASL lacked any form of American superstar who could have exploited the power of nationalism to expand the sport's popularity on a broad domestic level.

Because of this phenomenon, NASL team owners realized early on that the only way to come close to breaking even was via attracting large crowds, who would only show up to watch a major-league quality product. Consequently, team owners initiated a vicious, perpetual cycle of showering foreign superstars with lavish contracts while ignoring American players of lesser quality (Jose, 1989). This cycle quickly evolved into a lose-lose situation for the NASL: they could not succeed with strictly American rosters, even if doing so would drive more domestic interest, because the quality of play would not be good enough to attract profitable numbers of fans; and they also could not continue to sustain themselves by spending so much money on foreign player contracts. Every single NASL team was hemorrhaging money by the mid-1980s. On Father's Day in 1985, the New York Cosmos played the last officially sanctioned game of the original NASL against Italy's Lazio in front of just nine-thousand fans at Giants Stadium, a venue that could hold more than 80,000 (Markovits, 2001). The NASL was yet another promising American soccer league gone the way of so many before it, but is also the last historical example of a failed league in the United States. In a way, the NASL was the final significant "lesson" that American soccer proponents had to endure before finally being able to build a viable league with all the trappings of a 21st century sports organization in the form of Major League Soccer in 1996.

## Chapter Four: MLS and Stability

Major League Soccer (MLS) represents the most cohesive attempt at establishing soccer as a professional sport in America to date. Put simply, the league was founded as a sort of antithesis to how predecessor leagues had conducted business, particularly the NASL and its unsustainable management of foreign player contracts. A dearth of historical alignment between the USFA, now called the United States Soccer Federation (USSF), and the various failed leagues that it had governed over the years was also top of mind as well. The specific genesis for the idea of MLS, however, actually came from FIFA, which mandated that the United States establish a professional soccer league as part of a condition for hosting the 1994 Men's World Cup. Authors John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson write about FIFA's newfound motivation at the turn of the 20$^{th}$ century to grow soccer in one of the world's largest unaddressed markets:

> One of the principal reasons that prompted FIFA to assign the 1994 World Cup to the United States…was FIFA's desire to help a professional league get off the ground as soon as possible. A World Cup final competition is a golden opportunity for providing traditional football with potent publicity at the professional level in a country like the United States, where three popular ball games of American football, basketball, and baseball already predominate. (Ch. 9)

FIFA's awarding of the 1994 World Cup to the United States was, according to official statements, an altruistic attempt to grow the presence of the sport in America. But FIFA's MLS caveat signaled truer intentions: to monetize and capture a significant portion of the American sports consumer's share of wallet by playing a key role in establishing the country's premier for-profit league (Sugden & Tomlinson, 1998). FIFA knew that an American World Cup would be

massively profitable but only during the brief summer months of 1994; with MLS, they could theoretically extend American profit streams for years. Ironically, though FIFA's underlying profit-driven intentions may seem nefarious, the organization also recognized that some modicum of institutional alignment absolutely had to be in place in order to make its American venture profitable. The buildup to the 1994 World Cup, which FIFA was heavily involved with, was therefore the beginning of a strategic consolidation of American soccer stakeholders' interests. Finally, after more than a century of institutional infighting, proponents at all levels of the game were unified in *how* they were going to go about growing the sport's presence in the United States.

Understanding the difficulties inherent in vertically reorganizing American soccer's existing institutions, FIFA designated a single man to plan and organize the 1994 World Cup as well as the subsequent professional league that would come to be called MLS: Alan I. Rothenberg (Markovits, 2001). A Los Angeles lawyer and devoted soccer fan who had been active in the sports events industry pre-NASL, Rothenberg earned a glowing reputation in the 1980s for being a fantastic event manager and scheduler. Particularly notable were Rothenberg's efforts surrounding the 1984 Olympics in America, in which he organized all of the soccer games played in Los Angeles, drawing far more spectators than any other participating city (Markovits, 2001). Impressed by Rothenberg's track record and forward-looking ambition, FIFA supported his bid to become president of the USSF in 1990, a role that he won and held until 1998. Rothenberg's appointment to the head of the USSF essentially united domestic and international interests in American soccer for the first time ever: a single individual, with FIFA's all-important blessing, would now be responsible for managing the sport's governing federation (USSF) as well as organizing and establishing the sport's highest-level professional league

(MLS). In supporting Rothenberg, FIFA hoped that the internecine conflicts between America's past professional leagues and the sport's adjudicating body would permanently go away, preventing American soccer from getting financially bogged down in legal and bureaucratic disputes as had been so often in the past.

One of the biggest challenges that Rothenberg first took on was how to maintain collective focus on a vaguely defined mission—to grow the sport's presence in America—in an industry as profit driven as that of the American sports market. To accomplish this, Rothenberg organized the MLS under a single-entity concept, very different from how the Big Four leagues are run. As the MLS (1998) media guide states:

> MLS features a unique ownership and operating structure. Unlike other professional sports leagues, which are a confederation of individual franchise owners, MLS is structured as a single limited liability company (single-entity). In a single-entity league, each team operator owns a financial stake in the league, not just their individual team. In addition, player contracts are owned by the league rather than by individual teams. The single-entity concept allows teams to operate autonomously in their markets, but with the incentive to see that all teams are financially successful. MLS believes this single-entity structure enables it to avoid many of the pitfalls that have plagued other professional sports leagues. The single-entity design provides MLS and its member teams with the ability to: Limit the disparity between large and small markets; Offer commercial affiliates an integrated sponsorship and licensing program; Decrease the opportunity for sponsor ambush; Gain economies of scale in purchasing power and cost control; Make decisions in the best interest of the entire league rather than just one team. (p. 15)

Rothenberg's single-entity concept was devised with one thing in mind: alignment. By distributing the league's financial responsibilities to team operators, the probability of a franchise owner becoming greedy and going rogue against the overarching mission of the league was basically made zero.

MLS's ownership of player contracts is also a unique quirk not only in the realm of American sports, but when compared against other countries' sports industries as well. This provision essentially lowers and equally distributes the financial risk that a team takes on when it signs a player. While "bad contracts" – when a player is paid more than his performances are worth – exist in sports everywhere, they are especially hazardous in soccer. Indeed, because American sports franchises were initially positioned to be profit-producing business while European soccer clubs were founded on more ideological terms back in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the fallout from a bad player contract is much more severe in the world of soccer due to the fact that very few teams have the capability to be self-sufficient. To wit, multiple soccer clubs in England have historically been placed under administration by the FA, meaning that they are insolvent, due to contract costs spiraling out of control (Goldblatt, 2014). In the Big Four American leagues, however, a bad player contract might make a team less competitive for a period of time, but it would never threaten a team's very existence. The NASL and MLS, though modern American sports leagues, were and are more significantly *soccer* leagues, meaning that they had to play along with the exorbitant labor customs and norms that existed in countries elsewhere when they wished to bring aboard foreign talent. Hemorrhaging player contracts are endemic to the soccer business, but Rothenberg, recognizing the disadvantaged position MLS would be in when trying to enter the American sports market in the 1990s, took major, pioneering steps to combat this risk.

MLS teams finally began play in 1996. Consisting of ten teams originally, the league enjoyed adequate levels of spectator rates for its first two years before hitting a rut in 1998. According to Forbes, MLS collectively lost $250 million in its first five years, mostly due to start-up costs and declining attendance after a promising first season (Smith, 2013). As with preceding American soccer ventures, putting a quality product on the field that would keep fans in their seats both in stadia and at home on the couch was the league's paramount concern. Though MLS had much of the internal organization and institutional support in place that would ensure its eventual survival, league leaders made some questionable operational and marketing decisions that negatively impacted spectator involvement in the late 1990s.

First of all, eight of the original ten teams played in American football stadiums, which often have capacities of more than 60,000 spectators. As an upstart league, there was almost no way that MLS could fill these stadia to capacity – and the resulting games played in front of half-empty seats resulted in a cheap atmosphere that drove away in-person spectators as well as television viewers (Silverman, 2013). Second, MLS decided to experiment with some rule variations to make the on-field product more appealing to American sports tastes. Examples include settling ties with an adapted penalty shoot-out involving a thirty-five yard running start and using a countdown clock without any extra time as opposed to a timer that counts up towards ninety minutes (Silverman, 2013). Instead, these "Americanized" rules only alienated potential fans, who were already accustomed to the universality of how soccer is played in other elsewhere. These two strategically induced phenomena reflect how, even with a century of experience suggesting otherwise, notions of American Exceptionalism continued to infiltrate MLS's early leadership.

Furthermore, the United States men's national team had an abysmal showing in the 1998 World Cup in France, failing to win a single game. The fact that most of the roster consisted of MLS players did little to inspire public confidence in the upstart league (Silverman, 2013). By the conclusion of the 1998 season, MLS's original commissioner, Doug Logan, was fired and replaced with Don Garber (Silverman, 2013). Significantly, Garber immediately set out to correct the MLS's stadia issue by helping the Columbus Crew franchise construct America's first soccer-specific stadium in 1999 (Silverman, 2013). Building new stadiums designed with soccer specifically in mind – meaning they have capacities around 20,000, rectangular orientations, and awning-covered seats – is an ongoing and expensive project for MLS, but once built, these crucial bits of infrastructure exponentially elevate the matchday atmospheres for their respective teams, driving further traffic to games.

Several years into his reign as commissioner, Garber lucked into the fortuitous situation of managing MLS in the wake of the 2002 World Cup, in which the men's national team pulled the exact opposite of their 1998 World Cup performance and miraculously managed to reach the quarter-finals of the tournament (Markovits, 2001). To date, the USMNT has yet to return to the quarter-finals in a World Cup, indicating how difficult and prestigious of an accomplishment this was. Domestically, the USMNT's massive success on the global stage in 2002 ignited a huge wave of American interest in soccer, and MLS was already in place to capitalize. The 2002 MLS Cup subsequently managed to produce the highest attendance yet with over 60,000 Americans watching the Los Angeles Galaxy defeat the New England Revolution in Boston (Silverman, 2013).

In 2004, MLS was blessed with yet another positive development when a fourteen-year-old named Freddy Adu signed a player contract for D.C. United (Silverman, 2013). Originally

from Ghana, Adu moved to the United States when he was eight and quickly earned near-universal prodigal status by dominating his peers on the soccer field (Silverman, 2013). Adu's emergence was novel in America: no other youth talent had ever showed so much promise to eventually become one of the world's greatest soccer players, and the press quickly took notice. Media coverage on Adu indirectly produced further interest in soccer among casual Americans, who continued to drive further demand for MLS. At some point in the mid-2000s, a combination of improving stadia infrastructure, leftover nationalistic fervor from the 2002 World Cup performance, and interest in Adu's story concretely established MLS's presence in the American sport scene, solidifying confidence among stakeholders that it would not be another failed league.

At a global level, other countries began to notice the increasing quality of MLS and several European clubs actually began to seek out American talent. Goalkeeper Tim Howard left the New York MetroStars for Manchester United in England's Premier League, defender DaMarcus Beasley left the Chicago Fire for PSV Eindhoven in the Dutch Eredivisie, and attacker Landon Donovan departed for Bayer Leverkusen in Germany's Bundesliga, to name a few (Silverman, 2013). All three of these players originated from MLS's Generation Adidas program, a youth development venture between MLS and the USSF that Rothenberg helped to establish in 1997 (MLS, 2020). Designed to counteract the NCAA's rules on collegiate amateurism while competing with youth academy structures in foreign leagues, Generation Adidas is a vital program that creates opportunities for young men, usually between sixteen to twenty-two years old, to begin getting paid for playing professional soccer during their vital late-teenage years. In Europe, where college sports do not exist on the level they do in America, the best youth players begin playing senior-level soccer before they even turn eighteen. In America,

if a player begins to play a professional sport before he or she goes to college (usually around the age of eighteen), then the NCAA will disqualify them from having the chance to earn an athletic scholarship. This was creating a developmental gap for aspiring male American soccer players during their college years by forcing them into an ultimatum: play in MLS and relinquish the college experience, or go to college and risk the chance of never developing into a professional athlete. Fortunately, Generation Adidas has a large scholarship mechanism that enables it to put youth players through university, should they wish to go, which has solved the “college problem” for America’s very best youth soccer players (Silverman, 2013). Unfortunately, the talent threshold to be accepted into Generation Adidas is very high, meaning that thousands of potential stars continue to go unserved.

By 2007, MLS was witnessing some of its best Generation Adidas players leave for leagues overseas (Silverman, 2013). Recognizing that the talent void needed to be filled, MLS commissioner Garber introduced the Designated Player Rule, allowing a team to use internal funds to sign up to three players for amounts *exceeding* the league’s agreed-upon salary cap (MLS, 2020). Garber introduced this new financial tool to allow MLS clubs to compete with the deeper-lined pockets of European clubs, which have no league-mandated salary cap to limit their spending on acquiring players. At the same time, Garber was also cognizant of how ballooning foreign player contracts upended the NASL, so he capped the number of players that MLS clubs were free to financially woo at three per team. The Designated Player Rule almost immediately raised the MLS’s global perception by enabling the Los Angeles Galaxy to sign English superstar David Beckham while other MLS teams signed similarly gifted players from other overseas leagues (Silverman, 2013). The introduction of Beckham’s namesake to MLS particularly boosted interest in the league, however, due to the additional celebrity appeal that he

brought along with his playing talents. That he would be playing in Hollywood was just a boon to the rest of his coming to America story.

To illustrate how the Designated Player Rule works, Beckham signed a five-year, $32.5 million contract to play for Los Angeles in 2007. That means that Beckham was getting paid $6.5 million individually by his team every year; the 2011 *roster average* in MLS, on the other hand, was just $3.5 million (Silverman, 2013). Since 2007, MLS rosters have thus been composed of decent homegrown American players, some younger, promising athletes sourced from Generation Adidas, and finally a handful of foreign “stars” who are usually the highest quality players on their team. By striking a balance between growing players in academies and sourcing just enough veteran talent from overseas to produce a quality on-field product, all under a controlled cost structure, MLS finally seems to have found a sustainable identity. Since 2007, MLS has introduced *eighteen* new franchises, indicating that the league became stable enough after a tumultuous first decade to begin primarily focusing on growth. Though there may not be a hegemonic culture surrounding soccer in the United States now, the ongoing presence of a domestic professional league with 21st century support will be a massive asset going forward.

## Chapter 5: Further Promising Developments

As history shows, soccer has actually been on the precipice of entering America's sport space in the past. First came Harvard's insistence on playing its running "Boston Game" instead of the "kicking game" that its Ivy League counterparts had adopted from English colleges in the 1870s. Half a century later during the 1920s, the ASL appeared primed to become a serious enterprise before folding due to a combination of institutional ineptitude and the Great Depression. Besides these two older junctures, other hotspots of interest spiked over the course of the 1900s, usually in response to something novel like the introduction of a new technology (television in the 1960s) or an exciting, sudden development (like Freddy Adu in 2004), but also in the wake of an American team's successful outing at an international competition due to the rallying power of patriotism. Looking at the present state of American soccer in 2020 with these experiences in mind, one can paint a cautiously optimistic picture of how the sport will continue to grow domestically in the short, medium, and long terms.

One of the most exciting recent developments in American soccer has been the women's national team's (USWNT) dominance on the global stage. FIFA first organized the Women's World Cup in 1991 in the same manner as the male competition: to be played once every four years. With the most recent tournament concluding in 2019, there have since been eight Women's World Cups contested to date; of these, the USWNT have been crowned champions four times and never placed lower than third in the other four. Such a consistent run of excellence over nearly three decades is almost unprecedented in any sport, let alone at an international level.

The root cause of the USWNT's success can be traced back to how soccer's early national federations treated female players. For lack of a better way to put it, the late 1800s and early 1900s simply were not progressive enough for leaders of the sport to remotely consider organizing female competitions. In some European and Latin American countries, women were banned outright from playing until federations began to lift these restrictions around the mid-1900s (Goldblatt, 2014). In the United States, which arguably never possessed a firmly entrenched soccer federation until FIFA forced the USSF to found MLS in 1994, there was no history of male chauvinism institutionalized within the sport, so the women's game had a much lower barrier to entry to the country's athletic culture. Former USWNT star Julie Foudy succinctly sums up the perceptual differences of women's soccer between America and Europe during an interview with the *New York Times* in 1998:

> Everyone plays soccer here [in the United States]. Girls are encouraged. But you travel abroad, and the game is considered a man's world in so many cultures. A girl is considered a freak if she plays. We've been to Spain, and jumped into a men's game and been looked at like we were crazy. (NYT, C23)

In the twenty-two years since Foudy's quote, European and Latin American nations learned to begin taking their women's national soccer teams seriously, but not to the extent that they follow their men's squads. Interestingly enough, this phenomenon of traditional soccer nations being slow to get behind their female athletes goes the exact opposite direction in countries where soccer was adopted later on. Indeed, in addition to the United States having a stellar women's team, so too do Norway, China, Japan, and Sweden, all countries whose men's national teams and domestic professional leagues lag in quality compared to their global peers.

To further illustrate the attitude that established soccer nations have about the women's sport, Markovits (2001) writes about foreign media coverage of the 1999 Women's World Cup:

> German, English, and Brazilian newspapers…either ignored the 1999 Women's World Cup or ran articles making fun of it. Some saw it as yet another American aberration in which vulgar materialism and Hollywood-style commercialism—phenomena that these countries routinely associate and conflate with their negative views of the United States—had altered their hallowed game of soccer. In Europe some of the more serious pieces on the tournament and/or women's soccer ran in the human interest sections of newspapers rather than on the sports pages. (p. 176)

Contrast this with how he describes American media coverage of the event:

> Perhaps most impressive of all, the women's national team attracted and attained media coverage—which started slowly and steadily increased toward the crescendo of the final, then gradually subsided over the next two weeks—that could easily rival what is routinely directed at the Big [Four], and in one month far surpassed all the cumulative media coverage garnered by MLS in four years. (Markovits, 2001, p. 177)

The global disconnect over how to treat women's soccer represents both opportunity and threat to the United States. Because USWNT's initial successes were not wholly expected and the USSF's priorities in the early 1990s were directly geared at growing the men's game via the 1994 World Cup and MLS, the federation did not really know what to do when the greatest women's team in the world suddenly fell into its lap. At the time, all of the USSF's and MLS's initiatives were extremely forward-looking, with growth milestones to be achieved years, sometimes even decades, down the road. When the USWNT appeared as a finished product in the midst of USSF's strategic planning for the future of the men's sport, it threw decision-makers

for a loop. Nobody anticipated to have such a powerful asset on hand so early on, and as a result the USWNT has been underutilized by the USSF as a vehicle for spreading the sport's presence in America. Evidence for this failed recognition is heavily supported by the USWNT's ongoing lawsuit against USSF over the basis of pay discrimination based on gender. In short, male players get paid exponentially more by the USSF than their female counterparts, even though the USWNT is leaps and bounds more successful than the USMNT against its respective peers. In early 2020, quotes from USSF lawyers during a 2019 deposition with USWNT players were made public, revealing a frighteningly misogynist tone. Part of the USSF's argument included their opinion that "the job of MNT player carries more responsibly within U.S. Soccer than the job of WNT player," which they attempted to justify by claiming that the job of a men's team player "requires a higher level of skill based on speed and strength" (Draper, 2020). These comments were rightfully met with outrage in America, especially by USWNT players themselves such as captain Carli Lloyd, who accurately pointed out that "skill" in a sport such as soccer is not predicated on speed and strength at all; rather, it has to do with one's composure and creativity with the ball in their possession.

Though the USWNT's lawsuit with USSF is still ongoing, fallout from the released legal documents was immediate. Carlos Cordeiro, president of the USSF since 2018, resigned days after his lawyers' language was made public while Coca-Cola, Volkswagen, Budweiser, Visa, and Deloitte, some of the USSF's largest sponsors, all publicly condemned the lawyers' arguments (Draper, 2020). Perhaps most grazing was now-esteemed MLS commissioner Don Garber's public statement on the matter, in which he indicated that he had formerly reached out to Cordeiro to express "how unacceptable and offensive I found the statement in that filing to be" (Draper, 2020). Fortunately, the USSF seems to be correcting some of its faults by appointing

former USWNT player Cindy Parlow Cone as its new president, the first woman to ever hold the role (Draper, 2020). Going forward, there is a good chance that the USSF will better integrate the USWNT into its growth strategy for the sport.

The USWNT satisfies two key conditions for establishing soccer as a hegemonic culture in the United States: "attractiveness for being the very best (i.e., quality as a means), and attractiveness for winning and making their fans feel proud for being American in a sport where being American had certainly not been a major source of pride and satisfaction (i.e., quality as an end)" (Markovits, 2001, p. 179). But as a female team, the USWNT is also at an inherent disadvantage; recall that hegemonic sports are defined by male participation historically. Though unfortunate, some scholars believe that this phenomenon—lower demand for sports played by the opposite sex—caps women's soccer's total number of potential spectators at a level below the critical mass needed to form a hegemonic sports culture. However, I believe that the USWNT's unparalleled supremacy puts it in a bit of a unique situation with regards to this dilemma. Because the team has been so good for an established period of time now, the USWNT is actually beginning to claim fans outside of its intended female target demographic. Indeed, during the 2019 Women's World Cup, I became aware that my male friends and I were spending more time on watching and discussing the USWNT's 2019 exploits than what my experiences were like following them during the 2015 and 2011 Women's World Cups. It is hard to tell whether the USWNT's unique position within American sports can independently establish a hegemonic culture for soccer, especially while USSF's long-term strategy is repositioned through new leadership, but the rampant success of the team and subsequent winning over of legitimate male fans demonstrates how the "attractiveness for being the very best" will outweigh any gender-related concerns going forward.

Nor am I alone in this assessment: Alex Andrejev of the *Washington Post* wrote a piece during the midst of the 2019 Women's World Cup in which he interviewed several parents and youth coaches about the impact of the tournament on their children's perception of the sport. One coach questioned, Martin Kantai, had some interesting things to say:

> 'There's a bit of a transition,' said Kantai, who said he has coached boys' and girls' teams for the past 10 years. "There's greater interest also on the men's side with the women's game. That's a new dynamic. You have a lot more informed people who now say: 'Oh, okay. We have the men's team. We have the women's team. I can start watching different types of leagues, like English Premier League or La Liga'…. Now people are starting to branch out because they are identifying what they feel connects with them' (paras. 10 - 12).

Though Kantai supports my claim that men and boys are demonstrating more vested interest in the USWNT, he also does a great job of summarizing where general perceptions of soccer stand in present-day America: people are gradually coming to understand the complex interplay of foreign soccer leagues and their various competitions and are also seeking out certain teams to become fans of based on their histories and shared values. This identity-driven discovery phase is akin to laying the foundations of a culture! Phrased another way: now that Americans are beginning to comprehend which intangible associations and which generalizations apply to which particular teams, leagues, countries, competitions, and rivalries—i.e. how everything "fits together" in the world of soccer—they are approaching the minimum threshold of knowledge required for being able to intelligibly communicate on the soccer-as-a-language spectrum.

The notion of "fitting in" to the broader framework of global soccer culture is a question that continues to elude individual Americans—but also MLS in particular. Because wage

budgets vary exponentially from one another between foreign leagues, there is a commonly understood and accepted set of tiers among soccer fans about which countries traditionally have the highest-quality competitions. English, German, Spanish, Italian, and French clubs are historically the biggest spenders; they are therefore colloquially referred to as the Big Five (not to be confused with America's Big Four). Though bias exists among fans about which of the Big Five is the best of the bunch, the same fans collectively agree that the quality of players distributed throughout these five leagues renders them comparable to one another as *the* top-quality domestic competitions worldwide. The next "tier" down of high-quality European leagues consists of those in Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, Russia, and Turkey. Again, though a different fan may omit or add a similar-quality domestic league to that list, there is general agreement that these countries can be grouped together on the basis of roster quality. Finally, there is a notable tier of leagues coming from countries such as Austria, Scotland, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Ukraine, Sweden, Norway, and Serbia. This far down the list, teams are operating with wage budgets that are orders of magnitude lower than in the first two tiers, meaning that these clubs place greater focus on producing youth talent than on acquiring new players. As a result, these countries' competitions can be thought of as "bridge leagues" for promising youth talent to develop in a professional setting before attempting to make the jump to one of the Big Five. Latin and South American leagues are all conduits of youth talent for the Big Five but their fan bases tend to be larger than those of the European bridge leagues. Consequently, these clubs, especially from Brazil and Argentina, are able to retain players of a certain quality that a European bridge league club might not have the financial capability to do, simply by selling more tickets. The Latin and South American leagues are thus a combination of bridge and destination competitions. These clubs have the capability to either

grow and keep or grow and sell their human assets, usually hinging on a particular player's career ambitions.

While traditional soccer nations' leagues evolved naturally in unison with each other over the course of the 20th century, MLS abruptly appeared on the scene one-hundred years later with markedly different rules and financial regulations than the norm. Not only that, it announced its presence with a degree of haughtiness all-too characteristic of other United States sports leagues, which arbitrarily consider their competitions to be "world championships" even though they are domestically contested. Indeed, MLS's first operators were so caught up in forcing a world-class product onto the field as quickly as possible that they failed to take a step back to strategically consider *where* MLS's niche in the global league hierarchy might be. Because there was no initial direction along this line of thinking, foreign leagues were hesitant about conducting business with MLS teams from 1996 – 2002 due to the league's novel salary structure, which few non-Americans understood at first. Were it not for the revitalization ignited by American success in the 2002 World Cup, there is a chance that MLS would have folded in part because of foreign partners' reluctance to conduct business with an "Americanized" soccer league.

The introduction of the Designated Player Rule provided a bit more direction for MLS by giving teams the ability to compete for a limited amount of world-class talent. Commissioner Garber's decision to introduce this financial tool signaled to the rest of the world that MLS desires to be a destination league like the Big Five one day, an assumption he corroborated by specifically stating that the Designated Player Rule is designed to make the MLS a "global premier league" by 2022 (Clark, 2013). Objectively, however, MLS is still incurring growing costs and does not have deep-enough cash reserves to consistently outbid Big Five teams for the world's very best players. As a solution, MLS needs to strike a perfect balance, much like Latin

and South American teams do, between acting as a destination league for some players and as a bridge league for others. In becoming fully incorporated into the rest of the soccer world's league hierarchy, MLS will become more attractive to the casual American soccer fan by giving him or her a concrete league association to identify with, further driving development of a hegemonic sports culture. To make this a feasible strategy, though, the United States *has* to begin earning better returns on the youth talent that it produces.

The discrepancy between the number of active soccer players in the United States versus those who actually go on to play professional soccer in Europe, which represents the top level of the sport globally, is massive compared to other countries in the world. According to NBC, 24,472,778 people played soccer of some level in the United States in 2017 (Johnson, 2015). Of that number, forty-seven currently play for a team that could be considered to be part of the top three European league tiers that I previously described; only sixteen play for a Big Five club (Soccerway, 2020). This means that America has a "quality" professional soccer success rate, where players are earning a more-than-healthy living, of 0.000192%. Compare these numbers to those of the Czech Republic, a country with a much smaller total population than that of the United States. According to FIFA, approximately 280,000 people out of roughly ten million play soccer at some level in the Czech Republic (FIFA, 2018). But of those 280,000, sixty play on teams that belong to the top three tiers of leagues in Europe (Soccerway, 2020). That is a "quality" professional soccer success rate of 0.021429%, a figure much higher than the United States'. Though I arbitrarily selected the Czech Republic, there is nothing outstanding about their professional success rate relative to other soccer-playing nations; in fact, the Czech Republic possess a significant, second hegemonic sports culture for ice hockey in addition to soccer, meaning that their total pool of available soccer talent is arguably lower than a similarly sized

nation where soccer dominates culturally such as Slovakia, which possess seventy-three such players out of a total national population of roughly 5,500,000 (Soccerway, 2020).

There are several reasons for the lagging soccer success rate in America. Much has to do with the fact that the sport was late to entering the America's cultural space via MLS; by the 1990s, there were already four established professional leagues that dominated Americans' athletic focus. Youth athletes, especially those aspiring to improve their lots in life by earning a living as a professional sports player, have thus been familiar with the fame and fortune that being an MLB, NFL, NBA, or NHL star brings with it for decades now. As an upstart league, MLS unfortunately does not have the salary reserves to differentiate it enough from the Big Four to entice youth athletes to pursue soccer instead of another sport. So while soccer represents a form of mass youth participation like other American sports, it is not collectively perceived as being a means to earning a living yet. And while one could go abroad to do so, most Americans remain unaware of how that path to professional soccer specifically looks like, especially considering the established role of college sports in America and the lack thereof in Europe.

Another consequence of soccer's late entry to America has to do with the quality of its coaches. Because there is yet to be a generation of world-class players who learn what it takes to succeed overseas before returning to the sport as coaches, America has been stuck with a quasi-professional pool of managers who grew up with the sport representing a casual youth pastime in the 1980s and 1990s (West, 2016). The fact that NCAA soccer, which represented the highest level of the sport in America in the years before the NASL and MLS, had and still has a rule permitting unlimited substitutions also complicates things (West, 2016). Because of this rule, which stands in stark contrast to the usual three substitutions per game that FIFA-sanctioned guidelines call for, American coaches have traditionally placed on emphasis on players who are

physically bigger and faster than their peers because a team's collective stamina does not diminish over the course of a match (West, 2016). An indirect consequence of this is that American players have historically not needed to rely on fancy footwork to excel domestically while some of the best players abroad are taught early in their careers to use their creativity and imagination when their bodies begin to break down later in games (West, 2016). This leaves American players at a competitive disadvantage when coming across more skillful players in professional, FIFA-organized play.

Some of these developmental deficiencies arguably sabotaged Freddy Adu's eventual career. After being anointed as America's soccer savior at the raw age of fourteen, Adu bounced around the world as an unsuccessful player for the next thirteen years—playing for thirteen different teams in countries such as Portugal, France, Greece, Turkey, Brazil, Holland, and even lesser-known leagues in Finland and Serbia (Schoenfeld, 2019).

The man who originally discovered eight-year-old Freddy, Arnold Tarzy, believes that the fallen prodigy simply was not challenged enough by the quality of America's youth system to ever develop a professional training ethic. A 2019 ESPN interview quotes Tarzy as saying, "It's a matter of habits…. He [Freddy Adu] never had the work rate. He never had to. Things always came easy" (Schoenfeld, 2019). As a result, Adu's entire career has consisted of good teams taking a chance on him based on his origin story before growing dissatisfied with his performances, oftentimes within less than a year. The same article continues with an interview with Adu himself:

> "I saw my game in a certain way…They [teams Adu played for] saw it as, 'You can give so much more to the team.' And I wasn't doing that." He shook his head, thinking about the years he lost, wearing uniform after uniform but often barely

> playing at all. "My 20s….The prime of my career….Growing up, I was always the best player….Guys who were way below me at the time, you'd say right now had better careers than I did….So when I see a kid who's really talented, clearly above the rest, and he's just coasting, trying to get away with his talent, I say, 'No, no, no. That can't happen! You can't let that happen! They will surpass you.' Because I was that kid." (Schoenfeld, 2019)

Adu was unfortunately born a generation too soon. Had he come of age when the MLS was more mature, there is a chance that an additional decade of coaching and institutional evolution would have better pushed him to live up to his full potential. At the same time, however, Adu's story provided modern American soccer with an early cautionary tale regarding youth player development. Most importantly, it demonstrated to USSF leadership that mid-2000s MLS might not be the best environment in which to groom America's best talent; instead, some players would need to begin their professional careers in the academies of Europe's best teams in order to receive proper training while MLS continued to grow. As Adu's career fizzled, America's youth pool grew to consist of ever-more prospects who were choosing to play in Europe starting at a young age, particularly in Germany's Bundesliga, which is world-renowned for its teams' academy systems.

## Chapter 6: Christian Pulisic and American Soccer's Roadmap

On January 5th, 2016, German Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund, one of the more established brands in the soccer world, announced that a young American named Christian Pulisic would begin training with its senior squad (Uersfeld, 2016). Originally from Pennsylvania, Pulisic was part of the first wave of American youth talent that began to head overseas to develop amid more competitive leagues than what MLS presently offers. Because of his father's former professional indoor soccer career in America, Pulisic and his family were arguably better keyed-in on how to maximize his talent when they collectively realized his immense potential at a young age. Consequently, the Pulisics decided to move to North Rhine-Westphalia when Christian turned sixteen so that he could enter the German academy system at Borussia Dortmund instead of becoming a member of MLS's Generation Adidas or playing college soccer.

Within just fifteen matches for the club's academy, Pulisic scored ten goals and provided eight assists to teammates (Seltzer, 2016). Impressed with the American's offensive efficiency, Borussia Dortmund permanently promoted Christian to its professional first team in the second half of its 2015/2016 season. Still not a legal adult by American standards, Pulisic began starting in Bundesliga games at the age of seventeen and scored his first goal on April 15th, 2016, in the process becoming the youngest non-German Bundesliga goal scorer ever (Uersfeld, 2016). After two more successful seasons in which he established himself as one of the team's best players, Pulisic left Borussia Dortmund in summer 2019 after London-based English Premier League club Chelsea agreed to pay $73 million to secure his services, making him the most expensive American soccer player of all time (Law, 2019). Though the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

shortened Pulisic's debut year in the toughest soccer competition in the world, he did manage to score a hat-trick—three goals in the same game—in his first season, a feat that most professional soccer players never achieve over the course of an entire career (Goff, 2019).

Christian Pulisic is what American soccer has been waiting on for decades now: a bona fide star who can not only compete in a Big Five European league but be one of its best players as well. Though predecessors such as Landon Donovan and Clint Dempsey, America's two most well-known contemporary soccer athletes, also spent time on Premier League teams, neither ever showed the type of transcendental talent that Pulisic has already displayed by his current age of twenty-one. Indeed, Pulisic was named the youngest-ever captain of the USMNT in 2018, a clear vote of confidence from much older teammates who already recognize how superior his skill level is to theirs (AP, 2018).

Pulisic's presence in the Premier League directly opens the door to a third opportunity—after the Harvard and ASL gaffes—for soccer to truly emerge as a hegemonic sports culture in America. Now that the sport no longer suffers from the institutional malaise that stunted its growth for so long, a solid enough foundation exists to detail a roadmap about *how* this process will unfold, with one key assumption: that Pulisic will excel and eventually become one of top ten soccer players in Europe. If Pulisic can continue to perform at a world-class level, a nascent interest in the Premier League will start to emerge among American sports fans who otherwise would not watch soccer, simply by virtue of sharing Pulisic's nationality. An increasing Premier League fan base in the United States will better solidify the general sports fan's understanding of how world soccer's various leagues and institutions interact with one another, in essence raising America's soccer "fluency" to a minimum, baseline level.

By 2026, Pulisic should be in the prime physical shape of his career. That summer, the United States, Canada, and Mexico are scheduled to co-host the World Cup, with the majority of the games taking place across the continental U.S. As a host-nation the United States should automatically qualify, which will negate the risk of a disaster scenario unfolding as was the case in 2018 when the USMNT lost a crucial game to lowly Trinidad & Tobago to miss out on that year's iteration of the quadrennial tournament. Consequently, anticipation and excitement in the months building up to summer 2026 will be rampant, further heightened by the growing prevalence of social and digital media in American culture, which will enable the World Cup to be consumed and digested at a level never before seen. Additionally, a Cindy Parlow Cone-led USSF will have likely have an integrated promotional system in place, more efficiently mobilizing the USWNT's historic success in congruence with the USMNT's preparations.

In addition to Pulisic, the USMNT should also have several other rising stars in Europe by 2026. Weston McKennie of the Bundesliga's Schalke 04, Sergiño Dest of the esteemed Dutch club Ajax, and Tyler Adams of the Bundesliga's RB Leipzig are a handful of players all around Pulisic's age who should similarly be in peak form six years from now. Though not quite at Pulisic's level, these three Americans are also showing promise beyond what any prior USMNT stars possessed, suggesting that Pulisic could have a talented supporting cast around him for the 2026 World Cup. Winning just one game would do wonders, but were the USMNT to advance further into the tournament—perhaps to another quarterfinal appearance—while playing on home soil, widespread American pride in its national team's soccer performances would surely push the sport past the critical mass required to begin evolving into a hegemonic culture.

With the basis of a hegemonic sports culture ignited by the World Cup, demand for MLS will be even higher than it was in 2002, assisted by the league's rapid expansion into cities across

the continent since. In attracting more fans to both games and broadcasts, MLS will optimistically become more profitable, enabling its teams to compete for better players on the world market, further improving the competitiveness of the league to a Big Five level. In seeing that soccer now possesses a league just as formidable quality-wise or lucrative financially-wise as that of the Big Four, enough American youth will begin to seriously pursue the sport as a means to an end, lifting the country's "quality" professional success rate to a level comparable to its global peers. Only then—when soccer begins to be played on a mass scale at the grassroots level in venues beyond YMCA fields—will the sport have fully finished disseminating from a top-down perspective to emerge as America's fifth hegemonic sports culture.

**References**


Allaway, R. & Jose, C. & Litterer, D. (2001). *The Encyclopedia of American Soccer History.* Scarecrow Press.

Allaway, R. (2015, May 11). *What was the Soccer War?* Society for American Soccer History. https://www.ussoccerhistory.org/what-was-the-soccer-war/

Andrejev, A. (2019, June 23). As U.S. women's soccer storms through World Cup, there are more boys' faces in the crowd. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from Gale in Context (GALE|A590418491).

Araton, H. (1998, July 28). Sports of the times; A pioneer in her sport and beyond. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/28/sports/sports-of-the-times-a-pioneer-in-her-sport-and-beyond.html

Associated Press. (2018, November 20). Christian Pulisic, 20, becomes youngest in modern era to captain U.S. men's national team in 1 – 0 loss to Italy. *Chicago Tribune*. https://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/soccer/ct-spt-us-italy-christian-pulisic-20181120-story.html

BBC. (2016, October 19). *Cambridge University FA rules football hall of fame honour*. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-37701939

Breech, J. (2020, February 5). *2020 Super Bowl ratings revealed: Chiefs-49ers ranks as the 11th most-watched show in TV history.* CBS. https://www.cbssports.com/nfl/news/2020-super-bowl-ratings-revealed-chiefs-49ers-ranks-as-the-11th-most-watched-show-in-tv-history/

Carp, S. (2019, July 27). *Premier League global audience climbs to 3.2bn for 2018/19 season*. SportsProMedia. https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/premier-league-audience-figures-global-2018-19-season

Clark, D. (2013, February 28). *MLS Commissioner Don Garber delivers his annual state of the league address.* Seattle Sounders FC. https://www.soundersfc.com/post/2013/02/28/mls-commissioner-don-garber-delivers-his-annual-state-league-address

Draper, K. (2020, March 12). U.S. Soccer President Carlos Cordeiro Resigns. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/12/sports/soccer/uswnt-carlos-cordeiro-us-soccer.html

FIFA. (2018, December 21). *More than half the world watched record-breaking 2018 World Cup.* https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/more-than-half-the-world-watched-record-breaking-2018-world-cup

FIFA (2020). *Czech Republic Czech Football Association*. https://www.fifa.com/associations/association/cze/

Goldblatt, D. (2014). *The Game of Our Lives: The English Premier League and the Making of Modern Britain*. Nation Books.

Johnson, A. (2015, May 27). *Soccer by the numbers: A look at the game in the U.S.* NBC. https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/fifa-corruption-scandal/soccer-numbers-look-game-u-s-n365601

Jose, C. (1989). *NASL: A complete record of the North American Soccer League.* Breedon Books Sport.

Jose, C. (1998). *American Soccer League, 1921 – 1931: The golden years of American soccer*. Scarecrow Press.

Law, M. (2019, January 2). Chelsea strike early in transfer window to sign Borussia Dortmund winger Christian Pulisic for £57.6m. *The Telegraph*. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2019/01/02/chelsea-sign-borussia-dortmund-winger-christian-pulisic-576m/

Markovits, A. S., & Hellerman, S. L. (2001). *Offside: Soccer & American Exceptionalism*. Princeton University Press.

Markovits, A. S., & Rensmann, L. (2013). *Gaming the World: How Sports Are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture*. Princeton University Press.

MLS. (1998). *1998 Major League Soccer official media guide*. Major League Soccer.

MLS. (2020). *2020 Generation Adidas players*. Major League Soccer.

MLS. (2020). *MLS roster rules and regulations 2020*. Major League Soccer.

Myers, P. M. G. (1984). The formation of organizations: A case study of the North American Soccer League (Publication No. AAI8423399) [Doctoral Dissertation, Purdue University]. Purdue e-Pubs.

Opta Sports (2020). *Players Abroad (Czech Republic)*. Soccerway. https://us.soccerway.com/players/players_abroad/czech-republic/

Opta Sports (2020). *Players Abroad (USA)*. Soccerway. https://us.soccerway.com/players/players_abroad/united-states/

Schoenfeld, B. (2019, June 17). *Freddy Adu exclusive: "I'm not ready to give it up'*. ESPN. https://www.espn.com/soccer/club/united-states-usa/660/blog/post/3873263/freddy-adu-exclusive-im-not-ready-to-give-it-up

Seltzer, G. (2016, April 18). *Who is Christian Pulisic and how did he make the Dortmund first team at 17?* MLS. https://www.mlssoccer.com/post/2016/01/31/who-us-international-christian-pulisic-and-how-did-he-make-borussia-dortmund-first

Silverman, B. (2013). *Resurgence and expansion of the MLS.* Duke University. https://sites.duke.edu/wcwp/tournament-guides/world-cup-2014/usa-soccer-and-world-cup-2014/resurgence-and-expansion-of-the-mls/

Smith, C. (2013, November 20). *Major League Soccer's most valuable teams.* Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/chrissmith/2013/11/20/major-league-soccers-most-valuable-teams/#4c698a019a66

Sugden, J. & Tomlinson, A. (1998). *FIFA and the contest for world football: Who rules the People's Game?* Polity.

Sumner, J. (2004, March 21). *Sports in the 1920s: The Golden Age of Sports*. Tar Heel Junior Historian. https://www.ncpedia.org/sports/golden-age-sports

Uersfeld, S. (2016, January 5). *U.S. youngster Christian Pulisic trains with Borussia Dortmund first team*. ESPN. https://www.espn.com/soccer/borussia-dortmund/story/2780485/us-christian-pulisic-trains-with-dortmund-first-team

Uersfeld, S. (2016, April 17). *Christian Pulisic becomes youngest non-German to score in Bundesliga*. ESPN. https://www.espn.com/soccer/borussia-dortmund/story/2852892/christian-pulisic-youngest-non-german-to-score-in-bundesliga

West, A. (2016, November 18). *The 7 biggest flaws of college soccer*. Fox Sports. https://www.foxsports.com/soccer/gallery/the-7-biggest-flaws-of-college-soccer-111816

Willacy, G. (2018, December 11). Rugby league should never forget the power of free-to-air TV. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/sport/no-helmets-required/2018/dec/11/rugby-league-power-free-to-air-tv-bbc-england-team

## Biography

Though not a born Texan (see: Baltimore, Maryland), Sam Dockery has lived in either Dallas or Austin since he was two years-old, instilling in him state pride as a virtue from a young age. Originally choosing to attend the University of Texas at Austin for its Plan II Honors program, Sam also graduated with a B.B.A. in Marketing from the McCombs School of Business. In addition to his love of sports, particularly soccer, American football, and hockey, he also enjoys the company of animals, collecting vinyl records, and experiencing different world cultures through travel. He will begin working as a business development consultant at the tech firm Oracle this fall, with a future objective of eventually becoming a global product or brand manager.