

## UTAH SOCCER BEGINS TO REVIVE: THE 1960S

The 1960s saw a continual increase in the numbers of people in Utah playing soccer, as well as greater recognition of the sport in schools and on college campuses. One such notice came in 1963, when George Squires, a British soccer player playing for the University of Wyoming Cowboys, defeated the University of Utah football team almost single-handedly, kicking three field goals and an extra point. The University of Utah, perhaps inspired by this loss, formed a men's soccer team that played in the Utah Soccer League, even though they were not a varsity or letter team. Weber State College and Brigham Young University also fielded teams in the 1960s. BYU men's soccer had gotten its start in 1955, when two brothers, Carl and Harold Boden, came from Germany to attend the school. Learning that there was no soccer team, they placed an ad in the Daily Universe, the BYU student newspaper, and soon had enough players. They joined the Utah Soccer League the next year, and soon were playing teams around the state. In 1963, the sport was given official sanction by the college, but it was still not recognized by the NCAA. In 1974, a new coach, Shavji Dusara, came to BYU, and quickly made his mark on the team. Official NCAA sanction came in 1977, but eventually pressure created by Title IX caused the NCAA status to be shifted to the women's team, and the men's soccer team reverted to club status.

In the world of semi-professional soccer in Utah, however, the decade of the 1960s was dominated as it had never been before by one team, SC Alemannia. Formed in 1953 by Arthur Zander--after he and Herman Neumann had a falling out--along with Ed Weymann and several other members of AC Germania, Alemannia smoldered through the 1950s and then sprang to life as a soccer powerhouse in 1959, when the club began an incredible run of seven state championships, and even more amazing, nine straight Daynes Cup titles. No team had ever won so many state and Daynes Cup titles in the history of Utah soccer and the feat has not been equaled since. Alemannia also won two Intermountain regional championships, and represented Utah



Hollandia leaves for the Netherlands,  
1966.

(Deseret Morning News photo)

at a number of other regional tournaments. The secret of Alemannia's success was twofold: first, the team recruited experienced German players to come to Utah and join the team. Second, the team also employed professional soccer trainers to help the team develop the skills that would take them to the top of the Utah soccer standings. George Sirstin, one former team member, recalled that the members of the team would get a call saying "be at Sunnyside Park at 9AM on Sunday." When they showed up, there would be a trainer that none of them had ever met. The trainer—sometimes players from top teams such as Bayern-Munich, or other premier European teams, who were on the injured reserve list—would put them through paces for a few hours, and they would never see him again. In 1964 and again in 1968, the club was invited to tour Austria and Germany to play exhibition matches against European teams, and held their own. Like Herman Neumann, Arthur Zander was inducted into the Utah soccer hall of fame.

Alemannia was not the only Utah soccer team to travel abroad during these years, either. In 1966, Hollandia sent a team to the Netherlands to play exhibition matches against some of Holland's finest teams, and again, gave a good account of themselves. Then in 1974, Brigham Young University's men's soccer team, which won the Daynes Cup in 1970 and would take the honors again in 1976, was sent to Italy for a 22-day tour. BYU's team was an international one, with players from Zambia, Germany, Mexico, Scotland, Peru, Brazil, and Uruguay, along with several players from the U.S. They played eight matches against junior professional clubs, and compiled a respectable record against such powerful teams.

During the 1960s, high school soccer was also thriving in Utah, Neumann and Zander's efforts having finally born fruit. Salt Lake valley high schools such as Highland, East, West, South, and Olympus, as well as private high schools like Rowland Hall all fielded teams of varying quality.



Utah high school soccer game, 1960s

Bill Bosgraaf, the current president of the USA, came to this country as a teenager in 1960. He arrived as an experienced soccer player, having grown up with the game in his native Holland. He found that there was, despite his misgivings, soccer to be played in Utah. He lived near Fairmont Park, where one day he saw a man and his sons kicking a soccer



ball. So he joined them, and learned about the local soccer scene. Bill quickly became a member of the Vikings B team, comprised of older players who were past their prime but

still  
Utah high school soccer game, 1960s  
wanted to get out on

the field. After a year of that, he joined the Hollandia B team for several years. In the meantime, he attended South High School in Salt Lake City, where he found that there was a high school

soccer league; Bosgraaf quickly became a star on the South High soccer team, and played teams from all over the valley, such as Skyline, Olympus, Highland, and East High schools. He also found out that most of the other teams did not really come to play soccer, though; they were football players, and their join the soccer team training. Naturally, immigrant players football players, with players would triple-team the players just to try to were never Bosgraaf lettered in of high school<sup>17</sup> and teams against teams California. He



coaches made them as a form of spring Bosgraaf and the other ran rings around the the result that the other sometimes double and experienced soccer take them down. They successful, and soccer all three years played on the all-state from Colorado and remembered that years

later, a man came up to him and asked “Are you Bill Bosgraaf?” When he replied that he was, the man said he had played soccer for Skyline high school, and said “We used to hate you, because you were so much better; we’d spend the whole game just trying to get a piece of you!” They both laughed, and shook hands. And it wasn’t just the Salt Lake valley that had high school soccer; a successful high school soccer program that is still in existence was started in Bountiful by Hugh Wigham, who later became president of the Utah Soccer Association. Garlan Fitzgerald, a former member of the BYU soccer team, and like Wigham a member of the Utah

<sup>17</sup> South High School was one of the few that awarded letters for playing soccer.

Soccer Hall of Fame, started high school soccer programs in Provo and Orem in 1971 that are still going strong today.

The 1960s represent the transition from the old, ethnically-based teams to teams composed of people from all over the world. Before that, however, there were still a few immigrant teams that made their mark on Utah soccer. One such team was Hellas, a team composed of Greek immigrants. It was formed in 1967 by a local businessman and quickly began to make a name for itself. One of the stars was Constantine “Gus” Colessides, who was born in Cavalla, Greece, in 1948. He started out playing for a local team but his coach, who was also the Greek National Youth Team coach, felt he could make soccer his career, and young Gus was all for it. His father intervened, however, and Gus soon found himself on his way to the U.S. When he arrived in Salt Lake City in 1966, he entered Westminster College, working on a degree in math and physics. At Westminster, a small private college, he found a few others who played soccer. One day he was watching the football team practice, and noted that their kicker was terrible. He went over to the coach and told him that he could kick much better. After a few place kicks, the coach signed him up on the spot. All went well until one game where the front line missed their blocks and Gus found himself buried under about half a dozen big linemen from the opposing team; that was enough of American style football.

He was still interested in playing soccer, however, and soon a group of Greeks who met in the local Hot Shoppe in Little America decided they should form a Greek team, to be called Hellas. Gus was a member of the Hellas team for several years. Hellas faced one of the same problems as any other team in those days: where to get equipment.



Hellas, 1967. Gus Colessides is second from right, front row

The Greek sponsor of the team solved it the same way, by going to Arthur

Zander, who sold them uniforms, cleats, balls, shin guards, and nets from his basement on 9<sup>th</sup> East. Zander, however, didn't have any uniforms in the Greek national colors, blue and white, so they had to play in green shorts until some proper jerseys and shorts could be imported from Greece. When internal dissensions caused a rift in Hellas in 1972, a new Greek team, Apollo, was formed. Apollo lasted only a few years, and Gus joined a new team called Pan World SC. Pan World was not named for the diversity of its players, as might be expected. The team had members from Italy, Argentina, Spain, Mexico, Greece, Holland, and Norway, as well as a number of Americans, but according to Bill Bosgraaf, who was also a member of Pan World S.C., the name came from a bicycle shop whose owner donated \$100 for equipment. The team would meet on Thursday evenings and make hundreds of shishkabobs, which they would then cook and sell at the game on the weekends to raise money. Pan World SC went on to win five Daynes Cup championships and six state championships in the 1970s and early 1980s. After moving to both Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Houston, Texas—and playing soccer in both places--Gus Colessides returned to Utah where he became the head of the state referee association.

By the end of the 1960s, things were changing in the small world of Utah soccer. Some of the old clubs were breaking up and disbanding and reforming into new clubs, with the old country and ethnic teams breaking into new groups that were not so strictly arranged along national lines. Meanwhile a new wave of immigrants—from Spanish speaking countries this time, where the passion for soccer was just as strong as it was in Europe—was about to change the face of Utah soccer forever and take it to heights never imagined by the players earlier in the century. One of the first was formed by British players who broke away from AC Germania and other clubs. SC United, the new club, won the Daynes Cup their first year in existence. In the next few years SC United won a further two Daynes Cups, as well as two state championships. The other new club was the Incas, comprised for the most part of immigrants from South America. One of its first members was Ricardo Castro, who was born in Lima, Peru. He started playing barefooted on the streets in Lima, with a ball made out of rags. After he came to the U.S. in 1960, he and other Latin American immigrants banded together and founded the Incas. Ricardo played for several more years with the Incas, helping them win state championships in 1967 and 1969, and also played for the University of Utah. The Incas also had a talented forward named Pando Baias who was the scourge of the other teams. The club disbanded after a few more years, and never won a

Daynes Cup—although many of their players joined Pan World S.C.--but the Incas were the harbinger of a wave of Hispanic immigrants that would, from the 1970s to the present, represent the largest number of people playing in soccer in Utah.



AC Germania, 1970s  
(USHS photo)

## SOCCER: “THE GAME THAT ATE SURBURBIA”

The 1970s saw major changes in the Utah soccer scene, changes that are still having an impact today, and with the exception of one aspect—the attempt to get a professional soccer team in Utah--will mark the end of this history. After that there are just too many clubs, teams and leagues to try to follow any individual one. The three major changes in the 1970s were the wave of Spanish-speaking immigrants, which only increased in the ensuing decades; the rise of the youth soccer movement; and the advent of women’s school soccer programs on an organized level. The wave of Hispanic immigrants, who brought soccer, their national game, with them, has been mentioned above. Bill Bosgraaf of the Utah Soccer Association noted that as of the last fifteen years, since 1990, soccer among the Latino community has grown exponentially, as more and more immigrants from Central America and Mexico, as well as those from South America, have come to Utah. Today there are three Hispanic soccer leagues in the Salt Lake valley, with 30-40 teams each. In addition, there are leagues with multiple teams in Logan, Ogden, Provo, and St. George. That equals thousands of Hispanic Americans playing soccer, and doesn’t even count the youth soccer players in the Latino leagues.

Tony Yapias, who came to the US from Peru in 1981 when he was 14 years old, originally came to this country to herd sheep near Evanston, Wyoming. He soon found himself traveling to Salt Lake City, Logan, Park City, and other localities to play soccer with the *Liga Union Hispana*. While the Latino leagues were originally organized by country, today they are more mixed and no longer have that national basis.



Murray youth league soccer game, 1970s  
(Murray City Library photo)

The second factor that caused soccer to explode starting in the 1970s and continuing today, with no signs of abatement, is the youth soccer movement. Jim Haner, in *Soccerhead*, claims that the popularity of soccer among youth today is the result of Baby Boomer parents who wanted their kids to be involved in sports, but didn't want them to get hurt or rejected by trying out for the traditional American sports, football, baseball, and basketball. Soccer is something that any child, boy or girl, can play and even excel at, and even though they might get knocked down sometimes, injuries are nothing like in football. You don't have to be particularly tall or big or talented; if you can run and kick a ball, you can play. Excelling in the sport, and going on to college soccer, is another matter entirely, but at the outset, it's the perfect sport for young children. Even against entrenched, heavily subsidized programs like football and baseball—whose adherents and advocates are often openly hostile toward soccer programs, denying use of fields and hoarding the recreation budgets--soccer has grown exponentially among Utah's youth. Murray City, in the Salt Lake valley, is one of the communities that recognized the value of soccer and was one of the first cities to establish a youth soccer program in the state. In Weber County, by 1968 there were 2000 youngsters enrolled in youth soccer programs, and within just over a decade that number had grown by tenfold. The Utah Youth Soccer Association—which is only one of several programs for Utah's youth—estimates that there are now around 47,000 registered players, and that does not include the junior high and high school soccer teams, both boys and girls, which finally received official sanction of the Utah High School Activities Association in 1982.

Finally, there is the rise of women's soccer, which came about starting in 1972, with the passage of Title IX of the U.S. Code, mandating that women and girls must have equal access to athletic programs in any school that received federal funds (which of course is just about any school in Utah). Haner, in *Soccerhead*, notes that the impact of Title IX on soccer “was huge; over the next two decades, 7.4 million women and girls would



strap on shin guards and tug on cleats to double the number of registered players nationwide and transform a dying sport into the native game of

University of Utah Women's  
soccer game, 1996  
[University of Utah Special Collections  
photo]

suburbia.” He also notes that more than 1500 colleges, universities, and school boards nationwide fought Title IX tooth and nail, “denying that they had unequal facilities, uneven funding, or unfair scholarship allocations for women’s sports.” This was true in Utah as well, where as late as 1987, the Utah High School Activities Association rejected a proposal to sanction girls soccer programs, claiming that school budgets couldn’t handle the extra expenses. Soccer advocates, however, pointed out that soccer programs were not that expensive, especially compared to football and baseball, which had long been subsidized by the school districts. Finally, in 1989, discrimination lawsuits were filed against Box Elder, Logan, Ogden, Weber, Davis, and Cache school districts were alleged to be in violation of Title IX. In the end, the school districts and colleges who had been fighting Title IX gave up and instituted girl’s soccer programs, which are now wildly successful. Today virtually every junior high and high school in Utah has a girl’s soccer program, and the women’s soccer programs in Utah colleges and universities are often contenders for NCAA championships. The Weber State University women’s soccer team, for instance, won the Nikolai Challenge Cup in 1992. In the 1970s and 1980s, both Utah and BYU fielded women’s club teams that won numerous championships in the state. After the University of Utah’s women’s team was given NCAA status in 1996, it compiled a winning record, including being unbeaten in Mountain West Conference play in 2006 and advancing to the second round of the NCAA tournament. Soccer has taken hold among female players in Utah like none of the old miners and ethnic teams could have ever imagined.<sup>18</sup> Even now, however, soccer programs have a hard time in Utah, continually having to fight for fields and playing time. In one example, the director of recreation for Davis County was reported to have said that despite the fact that he had 24 fields that were in constant use—and that if the number was doubled those would be full too—that if he had his way, the number of fields would be zero. The national situation that Haner describes in Soccerhead hold true in Utah to this day:

“Kept in a state of financial malnutrition by entrenched football and baseball boosters who continue to command the lion’s share of public money in local parks and recreation departments, soccer continues to lack for the simplest of things. Basic needs—such as fields and uniforms—have to be

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<sup>18</sup> The advance of women’s teams, however, was not viewed as a plus in all circles. The BYU men’s team, which in the 1980s was an NCAA sanctioned team, had to give up its NCAA status so that a NCAA women’s team could be formed.

leveraged with private money, or the sport most assuredly would have died by now. ... In Salt Lake City, thirty-four thousand kinds in shin guards campaigned door-to-door to support a \$15 million bond issue for a 'plex of their own—thirty fields along the Jordan River.”<sup>19</sup>

All of these factors—Latino leagues, youth soccer, and women’s soccer--have combined to make the history of soccer in Utah after the 1980s so complex and multi-layered that it is almost impossible to describe in anything less than a full-length book. Utah soccer has grown beyond the simple days of a few teams playing pickup games. Today it is a major activity for thousands and thousands of Utah residents, and generates millions of dollars in annual revenue. By the end of the 1970s, Utah was poised to take the ultimate step, into professional soccer.

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<sup>19</sup> *Soccerhead: An accidental history of the American game*, by Jim Haner. P. 39, 42. Bill Bosgraaf, head of the Utah Soccer Association, recalled a time when he called a local county recreation office to schedule fields for soccer teams. He was told in no uncertain terms that if it was up to the official he was talking to, there would be no soccer fields in the whole county.