



The Rebirth of Professional Soccer in America: The Strange Days of the United Soccer Association

Dennis J. Seese

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The history of soccer in the United States is far richer and more complex than many people realize. Leagues competed in the U.S. as far back as the late 1800s, and in 1919 Bethlehem Steel became the first American professional soccer team to play in Europe when they toured Sweden. Multiple leagues existed during the early 1900s, but after the American Soccer Association folded in 1933, the country did not see a rebirth of professional soccer until 1967. It was a painful, hostile revival that saw dueling groups of American sports entrepreneurs fracture into two separate professional leagues, The United Soccer Association (USA) and the National Professional Soccer League (NPSL).

The Rebirth of Professional Soccer in America: The Strange Days of the United Soccer Association tells the story of this largely forgotten chapter in the sport's history. The USA and NPSL were ragged, misshapen pieces of a puzzle that refused to fit together, two leagues competing directly for fans and revenue. While the USA was a league sanctioned by FIFA but absent from the nation's airwaves, the NPSL was considered an "outlaw" league by FIFA but it held an exclusive television contract with CBS. This would have been strange enough, but the USA league imported entire teams from Great Britain, Italy, and South America, including Stoke City, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Cagliari Calcio, and Bangu. This book recounts soccer riots in Yankee Stadium, teams with dual identities, World Cup winners on the pitch, and a cast of characters featuring the likes of Phil Woosnam, Lamar Hunt, Derek Dougan, and Gordon Banks.

Drawing on meticulous research and interviews, this book reveals the little-known story that unfolded on the field, in the boardroom, and across the country during this single strange season of professional soccer. Featuring an impressive group of global soccer legends, this book delivers a fascinating piece of soccer history for the growing legions of American soccer supporters, as well as for soccer fans around the world.

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