

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

THE HISTORY OF SOCCER IN THE CHIPPEWA VALLEY:  
THE GLOBAL ORIGINS OF THE GAME, THE ARRIVAL OF SOCCER  
AND ITS IMPACT IN THE CHIPPEWA VALLEY

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To my wife Jessica

For not letting me quit and encouraging me to take this class for the third time

## Abstract

This paper is an effort to present soccer as the premier sport in the Eau Claire area amongst youth. It will show its popularity not only with young but also older players as well and its impact on the local sports scene. Also I am hoping that it will help those who read it, to better understand its global popularity and its impact on different societies around the world since its invention thousand years ago. Soccer has conquered the world and the only place that is not considered a major sport is the United States. The nature of the game (no timeouts, low scoring matches, foreign roots) combined with the unfriendly TV marketability have relegated soccer to a youth only sport. That notion has started to change the last twenty years or so with the successes of the U.S. Women's National team and the exportation of American soccer players in countries like England, Germany and Holland where soccer is considered the national sport.

At the local level the success of the UWEC women's team and the various high school teams have brought soccer in the forefront and out of the shadows of other sports in the area. With over two thousand kids and six hundred adults participating in various soccer leagues in Chippewa Valley, soccer has become the fastest growing sport in the area.

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## **Part I---Preface**

This paper examines the history of soccer in the Chippewa Valley. In order to understand the growth and the rate that the popularity of the sport has risen in the last twenty years, first we have to explore its origins and its global impact.

Through out this paper the reader will encounter the terms “football,” “the beautiful game,” “the game” and of course “soccer.” The term soccer is used primarily in the United States to describe what is known to the rest of the world as football. Since many of the sources used in the first part of this research were written outside the United States, the author deems necessary to identify these terms for the reader to avoid any confusion.

The reader will be able to follow the birth and growth of soccer in the city of Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls through data from different programs and organizations such as the Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department, the YMCA, the Eau Claire United soccer club, and the American Youth Soccer Organization. Through membership records, testimonials from local coaches, club officers and city officials, this paper will prove that the game of soccer has become an integral part of the local community and it is here to stay.

Finally it is the author’s hope and intent that this paper will provide the base for a future, more extensive work on the history of the most popular and influential sport of the world and its impact on the local community.

## **Part II—The Beautiful Game**

### **The Origins of Soccer**

I think that everyone has their own philosophy and idea for what is football. For example for me the game is my life because football has given me everything I have. I would like to research and find the person who invented football. That person we will never need to build a statue or a monument for him. He or they will always be part of the world history with all the other great inventors and geniuses of the world, those who discovered penicillin and gravity, and those who invented the telephone or television. Those are some of the great discoveries in the history of the world, but whoever invented football should be worshipped like a God.<sup>1</sup>

Hugo Sanchez, Coach of the national Team of Mexico

Soccer undoubtedly is the most popular sport in the world. It is the only game that can compete in popularity and in most cases overshadow the Olympic Games. The World Cup's global TV and Web audience is bigger than the Olympics or the Super Bowl's – 28 billion in-home viewers worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Its popularity spreads amongst all social classes, with no barriers within different races, ages or genders. The game is played in every country on this planet from pole to pole whether there is grass, dirt or snow on the ground.

Sports have long being prevalent in the history of great civilizations and it is through these that the game of soccer as we know it today was conceived,

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<sup>1</sup> Hereward Pelling, producer and director, *History of Football: The Beautiful Game*, (London: Freemandle media,1998), VCD.

<sup>2</sup> Marketing, "Adidas World Cup Shutout," *Newsweek*, April 2006, [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06\\_14/b3978079.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_14/b3978079.htm) (accessed 3 March, 2008).

shaped and refined. Thirty four hundred years ago in the place that we know today as Mexico the Mesoamericans played the first team sport using a ball made out of rubber. The Mayas later on adapted the sport. To them the round ball symbolized the sun, a symbol of power and fertility. Also it was a part of their game that showed the first signs of violence and hooliganism in soccer, the part that the losing team's captain was decapitated as a sacrifice to the Gods. The Chinese were more forgiving. Their form of soccer celebrated life and not death. Around 136 BC a local Chinese poet said "The ball is round, the field is square, just like the sky is round and the Earth is square. The ball flies around us like the Sun as the two teams face each other."<sup>3</sup>

The game spread to Japan where it was renamed Kamari. It happened the same time that Buddhism arrived from China. In Japan it took more of a ceremonial form than the street game played around the world. Before a game took place, the players would take the ball to a temple to be "blessed". The prayer would call for peace and prosperity and only after the ceremony was over, the game would begin. It was played by six or eight players that played together, with no winners or losers. They played for the enjoyment and the spiritual value of the game. Unlike the Japanese version of the game where the calming and spiritual aspects were the main focus of the game, the Romans viewed the game as limited warfare with a struggle often to the death. It was in Rome that we see supporters that often wear the colors of their team and the first clashes of organized fans. Ball games for the Romans were not played in arenas but merely were more of exercise and military training. Their version of soccer was called

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<sup>3</sup> Pelling, *History of Football: The Beautiful Game*, min 4-5.

“Harpasto,” a game that they learned from the Greeks. It gained popularity because part of the game was that you have to “steal” the ball from the other team. They would divide into four lines: the Astatu, the Veliti, the Printsipi and the Treari.<sup>4</sup> That was the first form of the modern goalkeeper, defenders, midfielders and attacking players. During the Roman conquest the game reached Britain.

It was there that the game reached its final stage of development. It is still a highly debated subject as to who invented soccer and we don't know if the Romans initiated or simply influenced the existing ball games played in Britain. One thing is sure that a thousand years after the Romans left the British were playing a variety of ball sports, a mix of soccer and rugby simply called folk football. The game was played around Christmas or New Year and it was full of pagan rituals. Its origin was one of the oldest, grizzliest tales and best known soccer myth that the first balls were human heads. The story goes that a local tyrant named Taskar, well known for his oppression of his local people, fled to Scotland after his people revolted against him. A local hero caught up with him and after a long fight he cut off the tyrant's head. He tied his head in his saddle and rode back to his town. On his way back, the head bit him and his leg got infected. The local hero managed to gather his strength and make it back to his town where all the locals were gathered around the cathedral in the centre of the town. He climbed to the top of the cathedral, threw the tyrant's head in the crowd and then he died from his infected wound. The people were so saddened and furious for the local champion's death that they started kicking the tyrant's head

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, min 7-8.

up and down the streets of the town.<sup>5</sup> This legend is being reenacted every year by the people of Kirkwall in Scotland and it is very similar to other ball games that were played in Britain at the time. The field is the whole town, there are hundreds of players and the goals are town landmarks about a mile apart. It usually takes one goal to win the game and it could take the whole day to accomplish that.

It took almost three centuries for the brutal and violent folk football to develop into the beautiful game we know today. Folk football had survived persecution for centuries from several kings of England that viewed the game as too violent and unfit for young men to participate in, but its biggest threat was yet to come. The industrial revolution forced local towns and cities to ban soccer from being played in the streets. The game suddenly needed a new playing field. The new grounds were provided by the private boarding schools in England. That was the turning point that drove folk football to extinction. It was from the ashes of folk football that the modern game had risen and started to take shape. In 1863 the Football Association was formed and established a universal set of rules by eleven local school soccer clubs. It was during their first meeting on October 26, 1863, that the Cambridge set of rules were adopted as the universal rules of football that all teams had to obey by.<sup>6</sup> In 1871 the F.A. Cup was born, a competition amongst school teams and local amateur teams that still takes place today. The success of the F.A. Cup prompted in 1872 the first international match between England and Scotland. Soccer started to spread around the globe at a

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, min 9.

<sup>6</sup> Charlton, Sir Bobby and James Lawton. *Sir Bobby Charlton: The Autobiography. My Manchester United Years*, (London: Headline Publishing Groups, 2007),155.

fast pace. During the nineteenth century, soccer struggled to establish itself as the main sport across the British Empire and its colonies. Other British sports at that time such as rugby and cricket were viewed as more suitable to the predominately white upper class societies of colonies such as Australia, India, New Zealand and South Africa. It wasn't until the locals and the working class started to take interest in the game and organize their own teams that soccer started to gain power and status.<sup>7</sup>

### **The World Stage**

Soccer rose to power through the masses of the working class in Europe very early in the twentieth century. Workers from the factories would make sports their escape and one of the few means of entertainment they could afford was the beautiful game. There were countries that were reluctant to embrace soccer because it was viewed as a British sport. In Germany, they found the game inappropriate because it was played by players in shorts that revealed their legs. After the replacement of the Kaiser in 1918 by a democratic government, gymnastics, the main sporting activity in Germany then, was replaced by football the game of the masses. In Latin America it took the arrival of the railroad to spread the game from the elite gentlemen's clubs to every corner of the continent. Games between the locals and the colonials became symbolic acts of revolt. In Argentina, the game was dominated for almost thirty years by an

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<sup>7</sup> Goldblatt, David. *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Soccer*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2006, pp. 89.

English team named Alumni. It wasn't until 1913 that the local club Racing beat the English to win that year's title, that the game was finally embraced as the national game and was no longer viewed as the English game.<sup>8</sup>

In India the impact of the game had deeper consequences. The game was brought into the country during the 1870's by Christian missionaries who used the game to attract young people to church on Sundays. The different Christian brotherhood schools would organize teams that played against British soldiers for fun. Then the locals formed their first club Mohun Bagan Athletic Club in 1888-1889. When their club won the Durand Tournament against the East Yorkshire Regiment in 1911, that game was viewed by the locals as a sign of independence. If they could beat the British in a soccer field it was time to win their independence as well. The idea of the British superiority had vanished.<sup>9</sup>

There are hundreds of stories similar to those of India and Argentina. The power and popularity of the game is well documented through out our history. Soccer is the only game, other than the Olympics, known to start and stop wars. Many stories have been written of soldiers from different sides on both World Wars playing pick up games during seize fires, or in prisoner camps. The game has been used as a vehicle to spread the word of God by missionaries and to gain political influence by aspiring rulers.

In 1986, four years after the British had invaded the Falkland Islands off the coast of Argentina and defeated the Argentinean army, the two nations met at the quarterfinals of the World Cup where Argentina got their revenge. Silvio

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<sup>8</sup> Pelling, *History of Football: The Beautiful Game*, min. 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, min. 16.

Berlusconi, the second richest person in Italy, according to many gained popularity and became the Prime Minister of Italy only after he bought A.C. Milan, one of the biggest football clubs in Italy and Europe.<sup>10</sup> The Soccer War between the nations of El Salvador and Honduras in 1969 erupted after a World Cup qualifying game. Although the war was caused from socioeconomic issues and immigration policies between the two nations and not because of soccer, that game provided the spark to ignite a conflict that was ready to erupt.<sup>11</sup>

Soccer has given the world moments of joy and hope and occasionally moments of sheer horror. What makes it so powerful, popular and influential is its simplicity. People connect to the game because it allows them to participate. Whether small or big, tall or short, black or white, rich or poor, anyone can play. All you need is a ball and boy or a girl they can play against a wall. If you have two people you have someone to pass the ball too, if you have four you have two teams. You can play in the rain, in the snow, on grass or dirt.<sup>12</sup>

### **Part III—Soccer in Chippewa Valley**

#### **The early years (1970's)**

In the winter of 1970 Dave Staehling, an Eau Claire YMCA patron, walked on one of the basketball courts for his evening pickup game. He had fought off

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<sup>10</sup> Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004), 89

<sup>11</sup> Lorenzo Dee Belveal, "The Great Honduras – Salvador Soccer War:Part II," <http://www.marrder.com/htw/special/fiction/soccer1.htm> , (accessed 7 March, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Pelling, *History of Football: The Beautiful Game*, min 32.

the snowstorm and was waiting for his work out partner, Dale Quick, to arrive when he noticed on the far side of the courts someone kicking a ball against a wall. He walked towards him, introduced himself and asked if he could join in. In a thick British accent the person replied "Sure thing, mate," and that was the birth of soccer in the Chippewa Valley.

The Englishmen, one Ray Priestley, with Dave Staehling and Dale Quick spent the evening chasing a soccer ball around the gym. That evening a friendship was struck and soon all three individuals were talking with the YMCA director soliciting the start of a local soccer program.<sup>13</sup> At that time, the North American Soccer League (NASL) was enjoying its glory days. The North American Soccer League had been the only Division 1 professional soccer league in the United States. After a slow start in the late 1960's, the NASL enjoyed tremendous success in the mid to late 1970's but spiraled out of control with expansion and escalating salaries culminating in the demise of the league in early 1985. World class famous players such as Franz Beckenbauer, Yohan Croyff, George Best, Hugo Sanchez, and of course Pele, the best player to play the game, were members of teams such as the New York Cosmos, the San Diego Sockers and Team America.

The efforts of Staehling, Priestley and Quick convinced John Schaft, the original YMCA director, to give his approval and in the winter of 1972 the first organized adult indoor soccer league in the Chippewa Valley started. The newly founded league needed a home and the location chosen was Central Junior High

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<sup>13</sup> Terry Albright, Head Soccer Coach of North High School City of Eau Claire, interview by author, tape recording, Eau Claire, Tape 1, side B, min 4.

School in downtown Eau Claire. With a very modest membership in its first year, the league looked for ways to gain popularity and to increase the number of players and teams.

ACTIVITY	LOCATION	ATTENDANCE	SESSIONS	GAMES PLAYED	ENROLLMENT
Soccer					
1. Adult	Central Jr.High	415	12		Drop In
2.Children	Central Jr.High	123	9		Drop In

Fig.1 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.

Papers 1972-2007

The answer came in the form of an annual indoor tournament that brought teams from around the Midwest for a long weekend of soccer in Eau Claire.

The tournament was held on the third weekend of March and it started in 1972 with four teams. The teams that participated in that year were the Eau Claire Soccer Club, the Madison United from Madison, Wisconsin and two teams from Minnesota, the Minneapolis Kickers and the Internationals. The tournament proved to be a huge success and took off immediately. At its glory days in 1982, the tournament had as many as 65 teams from all over the Midwest and it used the facilities at YMCA, North High School's and Central Junior High School's.<sup>14</sup>

Central Junior High School became the facility that housed soccer for the next eight years until the 1979-1980 year. In 1980 the indoor soccer league

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<sup>14</sup> Albright interview, Tape 1 Side B min. 8.

found itself in need of a new home. Central Junior High School closed when South Junior High School was built in 1980.<sup>15</sup>

At that time, parallel to the adult program that was flourishing in numbers; the children's program had started to take off as well. The simplicity of the game and the fact that it was a very inexpensive sport to enroll in made soccer very appealing to many families that wanted to have their kids try a new sport. Staehling reached an agreement with YMCA director Schaft to run the youth program in exchange for the use of the YMCA facility by the Eau Claire Soccer Club. The agreement was that the members of the team would help organize, teach, and coach the children's program.<sup>16</sup>

Also in 1978-79 a Chippewa Falls team and a Cadott team started to organize and compete against the Eau Claire team. Those teams started a Chippewa Valley league with a total of ten teams in 1979.<sup>17</sup> Many of those teams would also participate in the annual tournament in March hosted by the Eau Claire Soccer Club.

### **Soccer is Growing (1980's)**

In 1980's the indoor adult league was thriving. The partnership between the YMCA and the Parks and Recreation Department programs was working and the move to the YMCA was a success.

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<sup>15</sup> Mary Hanson, Field Director of the Parks and Recreation City of Eau Claire, interview by author, tape recording, 4 March 2008, Eau Claire, Tape 1, side A, min.20.

<sup>16</sup> Albright interview, Tape 1 Side B min. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Stan Williams, Head Soccer Coach of Chippewa Falls High School of Chippewa Falls, interview by author, tape recording, 1 March 2008, Chippewa Falls, Tape 1 Side B, min. 15.

SOCCKER - INDOOR -This program is developed for soccer enthusiasts. Both adults and children participate on Saturdays from 1:00-6:00 pm.

Instructional sessions are held at north Senior High from October through March.

Year	LOCATION	PLAYERS	SESSIONS
	North		
1984-85		1003	75
1983-84		1252	63
1982-83		1210	71
1981-82		1150	84

Fig.2 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.

Papers 1972-2007

In 1981 attendance had almost tripled from the previous year with 1,150 enrolled. In 1982-83 enrollment was 1,210 players, in 1983-84 it was 1,252 players and finally in 1984-85 it drops down to 1003 enrolled participants.

SOCCKER - OUTDOOR -This program was developed in response to the rapid growth of soccer in Eau Claire. The program meets at North and Memorial Senior High Schools for eight weeks beginning in June. There are three age groups, 6 & 7 year olds, 8-10 year olds, and 11-16 year olds. This was the first year that volunteer coaches were used and practices and games were held in the evening.

Year	LOCATION	PLAYERS	TEAMS
1985	City Wide	2132	2
1984	DeLong & North	756	
1983	DeLong & North	905	
1982	DeLong & North	925	
1981	DeLong	576	

Fig.3 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.

Papers 1972-2007

At the same time, the numbers of the outdoor league players started to increase respectively. In 1981 participation started at 576 players, in 1982 it almost doubled to 925, in 1983 it leveled at 905 and in 1984 it dropped down to 756. The main difference between the two leagues at that time was that the indoor league was predominately an adult league and the outdoor league was mostly the youth program.

In 1986 a new soccer organization was formed that changed the landscape of soccer in Eau Claire. A gentleman by the name of Brian George initiated the beginning of Charter #803 of the American Youth Soccer Organization. The A.Y.S.O. is a national soccer organization that was founded in Torrance, California in 1962. The organization's motto was "everyone plays," a philosophy that revolutionized youth sports. Every child that registered on a team was guaranteed playing time (at least half the game) and it focused more in participating and learning the game rather than competing to win. In 1997 A.Y.S.O. had 600,000 players registered nationwide and reached children in all sorts of communities across the United States and as far as Moscow, Russia.<sup>18</sup>

The organization is built around volunteers. Coaches, referees and administrators are all parents that donate their time and expertise to the kids and the game of soccer. A.Y.S.O. provides training materials and equipment for every chapter and encourages relationships with local groups such as the Parks and Recreation, Girl Scouts and others. By using volunteers, A.Y.S.O., has been

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<sup>18</sup>National AYSO, "A History of AYSO," [http://www.ayso751.org/AYSO\\_history.html](http://www.ayso751.org/AYSO_history.html), (accessed 7 March, 2008).

able to keep membership prices very low in order to attract kids from all socioeconomic backgrounds to this day.

A.Y.S.O. became an overnight success. They would offer two sessions, one in the spring and one in the fall. The first year they had almost five hundred kids registered and by their second year of existence their membership grew to over a thousand kids. Their success unfortunately signaled the demise of the YMCA youth program.<sup>19</sup> The YMCA children's program "Happy Feet", which took place in the late 1980's, was more of an instructional program. It ran in the summer time and it was in direct conflict with the Parks and Recreation outdoor youth program. Every year that passed and A.Y.S.O. grew the YMCA started to fade.<sup>20</sup>

It was in the beginning of the 1990's that the next big challenges for soccer in Chippewa Valley arose. A.Y.S.O. was sharing the same fields with the YMCA and the Parks and Recreation programs but because of its tremendous popularity in the early 1990's the need for more fields became apparent. The population increase in the late 1980's and the influx of the first migration wave of the Hmong refugees in Eau Claire, brought more kids into the game and more people were looking for fields to play on.

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<sup>19</sup> Ken Van Ness, Director of YMCA in Eau Claire, interview by author, tape recording, 15 March 2008, Eau Claire, tape 1 side A, min 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, min 5.

**The Progression of Soccer (1990's)**

In the 1990's soccer was undoubtedly the number one sport amongst youth athletic programs. A.Y.S.O. had an estimated membership of twenty five hundred kids playing in spring and fall and in between the two sessions the Parks and Recreation program had five to seven hundred participants. The adult indoor league was still strong and although it did not enjoy the numbers that they had in the mid 1980's, it was still considered a successful program. Its annual spring tournament remained popular with many of the teams from the surrounding cities in both Wisconsin and Minnesota.

In the first half of the 1990s the Parks and Recreation program did not offer adult soccer league in the area.

<b><u>ATHLETIC PROGRAMS - FIVE YEAR HISTORY</u></b>					
<b>Adult Activities</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1991</b>
Mens Basketball	143	162	180	147	131
Mens Hockey	118	106	86	N/A	86
Tennis Leagues	27	37	34	41	26
Tennis Tournaments	104	74	57	51	65
Co-Rec Volleyball	438	419	408	482	392
Co-Comp Volleyball	184	167	213	159	172
Sand Volleyball	100	128	112	N/A	N/A
Women's Volleyball	94	88	117	115	130
Tri-City Volleyball Tournament	275	N/A	N/A	275	N/A
<b>TOTAL ADULT ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>1483</b>	<b>1181</b>	<b>1207</b>	<b>1270</b>	<b>1002</b>

Fig.4 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.

Papers 1972-2007

Unlike the adult athletic programs in the youth activities we see a gradual increase of membership which made soccer the most popular youth sport that Parks and Recreation offered second only to Junior Baseball. (fig. 5)

<b><u>ATHLETIC PROGRAMS - FIVE YEAR HISTORY</u></b>					
<b>Youth Activities</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1991</b>
Junior Baseball	816	896	807	844	794
Basketball	91	99	67	74	78
Golf League	25	24	24	23	23
Hersey Track Meet - Regional	125	167	155	141	183
Hersey Track Meet - State	N/A	333	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hockey	413	437	378	324	294
Soccer	796	700	643	475	442
Tennis Tournaments	61	31	26	16	22
Tennis Leagues	N/A	N/A	28	12	26
Twins trip	82	132	91	125	115
<b>TOTAL YOUTH ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>2409</b>	<b>2819</b>	<b>2219</b>	<b>2034</b>	<b>1977</b>

Fig.5 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.

Papers 1972-2007

It is safe to assume that the increase the Parks and Recreation program was enjoying was directly related to the success of the A.Y.S.O. program. A percentage of the kids that were signing up in the spring with A.Y.S.O. would spill over to the Parks and Recreation program during the summer and then they continued in the fall again with A.Y.S.O. Unfortunately, the YMCA youth program was never able to establish such a symbiotic relationship with either one of the other organizations and since it was competing with the Parks and Recreation youth league it ended up with thirty or forty participants for every session.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, min. 9

In contrast with the youth league, the YMCA offered the only adult league in the area. The warning signs had started to appear in 1992 that the league was starting to have problems. Although they faced no local competition, participation of teams from Minnesota started to fade, due to the fact that there were several indoor (soccer specific) arenas opening up in places such as Woodbury (Billinberg Arena) and Maplewood (Cornerkick Sports Indoor). Another problem the league was facing was the lack of individuals that would pick up the torch from the founders of the club and continue the league.<sup>22</sup> The first generation of players that started the club including, Mr. Staehing, Mr. Quick, and Mr. Priestley were now gone and the lack of leadership proved costly to the club. In 1996 the club dissolved. That was also the last significant contribution of the YMCA in the soccer community. The only adult soccer games played in Eau Claire since 1996 were just unorganized “pick up” games with players through church groups or from the Hmong community.

The next big development for soccer came in the year 1995. That was the first year of high school soccer. In the fall of 1995 the high schools in the Chippewa Valley area introduced soccer as a varsity sport and they joined the Big Rivers Conference. The conference was made up of the following high schools: North and Memorial from Eau Claire, and from the towns of Chippewa Falls, Hudson and River Falls. In the 1997-98 season they were joined by Menomonie and Rice Lake which were up to that point club teams.

The first coaches for North and Memorial High School were Mark Johnson and George Oien respectively. High school soccer was viewed as a natural

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<sup>22</sup> Albright interview, Tape 1 Side B min. 12

progression since at that point there were over two thousand kids (many of them already in high school) playing soccer through A.Y.S.O. and Parks and Recreation. The first year Memorial High Schools held tryouts to form the varsity and junior varsity teams, they had over seventy kids competing for forty five spots.<sup>23</sup> In 1997, Terry Albright became the head coach at North where he still remains in charge of both the girls and boys programs. George Oien remained the head coach at Memorial High School. until 2005 when he resigned and was replaced by David Kite who took over the boys' team and Kit Schiefelbein who took over the girls' program.

Unlike Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls was not fortunate to have the same stability in leadership of their soccer program that North and Memorial High School enjoyed. The first coach was a local chiropractor by the name of Tom Wallace with very limited experience and knowledge of the game. Next was Lisa Cardell who ended up coaching for one year only after she was fired for taking a personal vacation during the soccer season and forfeiting at least one game.<sup>24</sup> The first sign of continuity came in the face of Yan Wickstrom who took over the position of head Coach initially for three years but ended up staying for a total of seven years. His successor Stan Williams took over the boys' team in the fall of 2006 and in the spring of 2008 he also replaced Paul Peterson as the head coach of the girls' team.<sup>25</sup> That lack of continuity forced Chippewa to always be the "other team" from the Chippewa Valley area in the Big Rivers Conference.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, min. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, min. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Williams interview, min. 17.

Another boost to the popularity of soccer in the area came from the University of Eau Claire women's team. In 1992, '93, '94 and '95 the team reached the final game of the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference tournament only to lose to their nemesis UW-Stevens Point. The UWEC team provided some highly competitive soccer and it became a great venue for many of the youngsters that were part of the youth soccer programs.<sup>26</sup>

After 1995 soccer witnessed a small decline in the Parks and Recreation program. The numbers of participants dropped in 1997 and again in 2000, 12.5% and almost 14% respectively. (fig 5)

<b>ATHLETIC PROGRAMS - FIVE YEAR HISTORY</b>					
<b>Youth Activities</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1996</b>
Junior Baseball	392	324	423	490	586
Basketball	225	103	105	121	135
Golf League	72	72	57	48	47
Hersey Track Meet - Regional	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	105
Hersey Track Meet - State	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hockey	268	323	372	365	394
Soccer	595	677	685	680	765
Tennis Tournaments	N/A	N/A	9	14	33
Tennis Leagues	N/A	6	15	N/A	N/A
Twins trip	N/A	N/A	66	57	70
<b>TOTAL YOUTH ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>1552</b>	<b>1505</b>	<b>1732</b>	<b>1775</b>	<b>2135</b>

Fig.6 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.

Papers 1972-2007

Also by the year 1998, A.Y.S.O. saw a 10% decline in their membership. Two of the main factors for the drop in participation were the start of a new club

<sup>26</sup>WIAC, "Women's Soccer Tournament All-Time Results," <http://www.uwsa.edu/wiac/soccer/trnyalltime.htm>, (accessed 15 March, 2008).

in September of 1996, the Eau Claire United, and the lack of available soccer fields in the city of Eau Claire.

The birth of the E.C.U. signaled the start of competitive soccer in the summer for kid's ages nine and up. All the teams were traveling teams that registered and competed in the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association. This was again a non-profit club based on volunteers but differed from A.Y.S.O. due to its competitive nature, selection and placement of players and the fact that eventually hired coaches for their teams.<sup>27</sup>

The second factor, the lack of playing fields, was a more serious problem that needed to be addressed immediately. In 1996 the city of Eau Claire agreed to build a soccer park in the Sky Park area in the corner of Craig Road and Hamilton Avenue.

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<sup>27</sup> Donna Springer, ECU club Administrator, interviewed by author, tape recording, 10 March 2008, Eau Claire, tape 1 side A min, 26.



Barton-Archman Associates, Inc.		Job No. 655408			
111 Third Avenue South, Suite 350		Sheet 1 of 2			
Minneapolis, MN 55401		By: JLM			
(612) 332-0421 FAX: (612) 332-6180		Date: 11/14/96			
Preliminary Cost Estimate For:		Eau Claire Soccer Complex			
		Eau Claire, Wisconsin			
Item #	Description	Quan.	Unit	Unit Price	Ext.
1	Mobilization	1	L.S.	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
2	Layout and Staking	1	L.S.	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 8,000.00
3	Clearing and Grubbing	1	L.S.	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 8,000.00
4	Common Excavation	39,000	C.Y.	\$ 2.00	\$ 78,000.00
5	Silt Fence	3,500	L.F.	\$ 3.00	\$ 10,500.00
6	Aggregate Base	3,500	C.Y.	\$ 15.00	\$ 52,500.00
7	Bituminous Pavement	4,450	TON	\$ 25.00	\$ 111,250.00
8	Concrete Curb and Gutter	5,000	L.F.	\$ 10.00	\$ 50,000.00
9	Driveway Apron Cross Gutter	4	L.S.	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 10,000.00
10	Concrete Paving	16,700	S.F.	\$ 2.00	\$ 37,400.00
11	Aglime (Under Bleachers)	1,200	S.Y.	\$ 4.00	\$ 4,800.00
12	8" Gate Valve and Box	3	EA.	\$ 600.00	\$ 1,800.00
13	D.I. Fittings	600	POUND	\$ 2.00	\$ 1,000.00
14	6" Water Main	50	L.F.	\$ 25.00	\$ 1,250.00
15	Hydrant	2	EA.	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 3,000.00
16	8" Water Main	1,850	L.F.	\$ 30.00	\$ 55,500.00
17	1-1/2" Copper Water Service	40	L.F.	\$ 10.00	\$ 400.00
18	1-1/2" Corp. Stop	2	EA.	\$ 120.00	\$ 240.00
19	Wet Tap	2	EA.	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 3,000.00
20	6" PVC Sanitary Sewer	1,110	L.F.	\$ 10.00	\$ 11,100.00
21	Sanitary Sewer Manhole	2	EA.	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,000.00
22	12" Concrete Storm Sewer	480	L.F.	\$ 20.00	\$ 9,600.00
23	10" PVC Storm Sewer	350	L.F.	\$ 18.00	\$ 6,300.00
24	10" PVC Culvert	240	L.F.	\$ 10.00	\$ 2,400.00
25	Catch Basins	4	EA.	\$ 250.00	\$ 1,000.00
26	Storm Sewer Manhole	1	EA.	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00
27	Area Drains	2	EA.	\$ 150.00	\$ 300.00
28	Connect into Existing Manhole	3	EA.	\$ 200.00	\$ 600.00
29	Wells (Irrigation)	1	L.S.	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
30	Well Pump	1	L.S.	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
31	Parking Lot Stripping	1	L.S.	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
32	Basketball Court Markings	1	L.S.	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00
33	8' Chainlink Fence	1,700	L.F.	\$ 12.00	\$ 20,400.00
34	Stadium Bleachers (Permanent)	2	EA.	\$ 105,000.00	\$ 210,000.00

Fig.8 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.

Papers 1972-2007

Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc.					Job No. 655408
111 Third Avenue South, Suite 360 Minneapolis, MN 55401 (612) 332-0421 FAX: (612) 332-6180					Sheet 2 of 2
Preliminary Cost Estimate For: Eau Claire Soccer Complex Eau Claire, Wisconsin					By: JLM
Date: 11/14/96					
Item #	Description	Quan.	Unit	Unit Price	Ext.
35	Electrical Distribution	1	L.S.	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
36	Type 'A' Lighting Assembly	8	EA.	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 28,000.00
37	Type 'B' Lighting Assembly	13	EA.	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 52,000.00
38	Stadium Lighting	1	L.S.	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 200,000.00
39	Skating Rink Lighting	2	EA.	\$ 4,750.00	\$ 9,500.00
40	Pathway Lighting	20	EA.	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 50,000.00
41	Irrigation - Soccer Fields	1	L.S.	\$ 62,000.00	\$ 62,000.00
42	Irrigation - Stadium	1	L.S.	\$ 17,500.00	\$ 17,500.00
43	Irrigation - Parking Area	1	L.S.	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
44	Irrigation - Misc.	1	L.S.	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 3,600.00
45	Pavilion Building	1	L.S.	\$ 180,000.00	\$ 180,000.00
46	Shelter Building	1	L.S.	\$ 86,000.00	\$ 86,000.00
47	Stadium Building	1	L.S.	\$ 172,000.00	\$ 172,000.00
48	Soil Amendments	1	L.S.	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
49	Soccer Field Seeding	14	AC	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 28,000.00
50	General Park Seeding	21	AC	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 33,600.00
51	Sod	5,000	S.Y.	\$ 2.00	\$ 10,000.00
52	Deciduous Trees	1	Allow	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
53	Evergreen Tree (Transplant)	1	Allow	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
54	Shrubs	1	Allow	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
55	Indoor Soccer Complex	1	L.S.	By Others	
56	Play Structure/Equipment/Etc.	1	L.S.	By Owner	
57	Signage	1	L.S.	By Owner	
58	Moveable Soccer Goals	9	EA.	By Owner	
59	Benches	1	L.S.	By Owner	
60	Trash Receptacles	1	L.S.	By Owner	
SUBTOTAL					\$ 1,774,240.00
10% CONTINGENCY					\$ 177,424.00
COST ESTIMATE TOTAL*					\$ 1,951,664.00

\* Cost Estimate based upon preliminary concept plans prepared by BA/COA/NWA/MTI dated 11/7/96. Final costs may vary based upon: final design, soil conditions, alterations to plan and phasing/timing.

Fig.9 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department. Papers 1972-2007

Phase I of the project was the immediate construction of playing fields, parking lot and a playground. Phase II was the construction of the Pavilion, to house the bathrooms and concession stand, paving the parking lot, and completing the landscaping. Finally Phase III was the construction of a 2,000 seat varsity soccer stadium.<sup>28</sup>

In June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1998, Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson arrived in Eau Claire for the ground breaking ceremony of the Soccer Park. He was greeted by a crowd of three hundred people mostly youth players in their soccer uniforms.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Hanson interview, min. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Leader Telegram*, (Eau Claire), 2 June 1998, 1

The City of Eau Claire and the local soccer clubs raised enough money to complete Phase I and start on Phase II.

## [ phase I ]

The goal of phase I of the project is to provide playable fields as quickly as possible to relieve the pressure on other fields in the city. Phase I includes grading the Site, irrigating the fields, developing a gravel parking area and constructing a neighborhood playground. A successful fundraising effort will allow the project to begin in the spring of 1998 and play to begin in the spring of 1999.



**PHASE I**  
fund raising goal  
**\$275,000**

### COSTS

design	47,000
Field development	413,000
parking - grading and gravel	100,000
neighborhood playground	115,000
contingency	25,000

**total costs** \$700,000

### FUNDS AVAILABLE

city	345,000
DNR	30,000
existing soccer funds	80,000

**total available funds** \$455,000

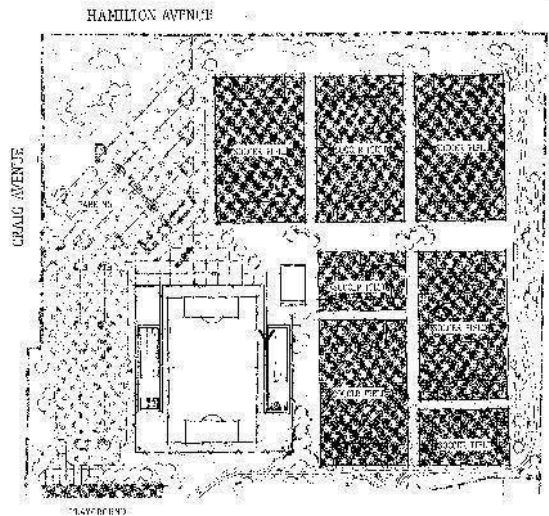


Fig.10 Data From Mary Hanson, City of Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.

Papers 1972-2007

In the summer of 1999 eight soccer fields (five full size and three youth fields) were delivered to the clubs.

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000, Phase II was given the green light for construction and the next year (the summer of 2001) the Pavilion with the bathrooms and concession stands were ready for use by the clubs. Unfortunately Phase III never materialized. Budget concerns and the lack of pressure by the soccer

organizations pushed aside the plans for the construction of the varsity stadium. Nonetheless, Eau Claire and its soccer players had some of the best soccer fields in the Midwest. That benefited mainly the Eau Claire United Club that used the fields for their annual tournament that attracted teams from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Michigan but also boosted the local economy - especially the hospitality industry. The ECU tournament would bring two to three thousand kids every third weekend of June to Eau Claire, which in turn brought in a considerable amount of money to the area.<sup>30</sup>

## **PART IV – CONCLUSION**

### **Soccer is Here to Stay**

The new millennium found soccer on top of all youth sports, according to membership numbers, in the Chippewa Valley. Soccer was finally on the map. The success of the high school teams on both the boys and the girls' side started to attract the attention of the news. Local soccer players started to advance and were recruited by colleges. Many of the ECU teams would travel to tournaments statewide and in Minnesota and their success would bring further recognition to the Chippewa Valley. Many of the players would also attend try-outs for advanced soccer programs, such as the Olympic Developmental Program. The two most notable achievements were by Katie Bethke, a forward from Memorial High School who was invited to the National U-17 Team and is currently playing

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<sup>30</sup> Springer interview, min. 28.

for the University of Minnesota, a Division 1 NCAA school, and Patrick McLain, goalkeeper again from Memorial High School, who was recruited and is currently playing at Cal Poly Tech and has been attracting attention from several Major League Soccer teams.

A.Y.S.O. membership also stayed strong and averaged over twelve hundred players per season. ECU grew to about five hundred players per season, and the Parks and Recreation program, although it lost some of its glamour, still carries an average membership of four hundred players.

The UWEC women's team has been crowned WIAC champions three years in a row, in 2005, '06 and '07. In 2007 they were ranked 15<sup>th</sup> nationwide amongst Division III NCAA schools and in 2006 they were in the top 10.

Also since 2000, businesses directly related and dependant upon soccer started to appear in the Chippewa Valley. In May of 2000, a group of investors requested to buy land adjacent to the soccer fields from the city of Eau Claire. Their plan was to build an indoor facility, which would mainly cater to soccer and other sports. The sale was approved and the Eau Claire Indoor Sports Center was built.<sup>31</sup> Eau Claire finally had a beautiful facility that could really propel soccer by providing a place where kids could play and train year around. Unfortunately, a series of bad management decisions, including overestimating the number of serious players in the area that would be willing to pay the premium prices that they charged for usage of the field, overpricing, and the renting of the facility out for trade shows so frequent that they disrupted any

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<sup>31</sup> Hanson interview, min. 13.

soccer or other athletic programs, has put the facility in financial hardship and alienated many of the soccer players in the area.

Another soccer-related business that caters specifically to soccer players was established in May of 2005. Planet Soccer the first soccer specialty retail store in the Western Wisconsin was opened by a local coach and has been operating successfully for almost three years now. Last but not least, many training camps are put together during the summer months by local coaches, clubs or teams. These camps are for the most part a fundraising vehicle for the various teams but still generate a considerable amount of money and aid the growth of the game.

It is the author's belief that the game of soccer has a bright future ahead in the Chippewa Valley. The game has established strong roots within the community and its popularity has grown. Also today there is a familiarity between the spectators or the first time participants and the game, a relationship that did not exist in the 70s when soccer was beginning. There is a whole generation of ex-players that know the game and are willing to help expand the sport by coaching, refereeing or simply volunteering within the local club.

In addition the communication revolution in the last decade has made soccer easily accessible by everyone. Any young local player can become a fan of an English team and follow their progression through their league over the internet. Live games are being webcast everyday on line. There are many soccer channels on cable and satellite services and even a soccer dedicated XM satellite radio channel. The beautiful game will probably never be as popular or

powerful as it is in Europe, Latin America and the rest of the world, but it will be in a good position to eventually compete with the NHL or the NBA. The changing population nationwide has brought an increase of immigrants who are soccer lovers, because they grew up with the sport being part of their everyday life. Finally the importation of well recognized soccer players in the MLS such as David Beckham, generates an extra buzz around the game and attracts new fans due to the celebrity factor.

It would also be interesting to discover the impact of soccer on the local economy and also percentage of participants from different social and economical levels within the community. The game of soccer has always been linked with the lower income levels of society in the rest of the world but the author is willing to speculate that a similar study in the Chippewa Valley and in the Unites States in general, would produce evidence contrary to that. Until then...GOOOOAAAAALLLLLLL!!!!

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