

SASH

HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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We haven't forgotten that we promised that if the United States advanced to this year's round of World Cup qualifying, we would continue the series we begin in the fall issue considering past United States World Cup qualifying campaigns. We'll do that in the spring issue. For this issue, we turn our focus to another matter.

The Story in the Grandstands

1996 was a big year for soccer crowds in the United States, as you can see from the list below of the 50 largest soccer crowds of all time in this country. But if you look carefully at that list, you will see that the really significant thing that it says about 1996 is not the number of large soccer crowds but the variety of events that produced them.

1996 wasn't like 1994, when nearly all the large soccer crowds in the United States came from the World Cup, or like the 1970s, when they nearly all came from the North American Soccer League. In 1996, games from four different competitions produced crowds that appear on this top-50 list, the Olympic Games, Major League Soccer, the U.S. Cup '96 and the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Of course, many of the most significant American soccer crowds of 1996 don't appear on this list. They include:

***The 34,643 gallant fans who watched the Major League Soccer final in appalling weather in Foxboro, Mass., in the midst of a 10.3-inch rainstorm, a stunning demonstration of how much American soccer fans are willing to endure to see the professional game.

***The 40,527 who watched a World Cup qualifier in Palo Alto, Calif., against Costa Rica on Dec. 14. That was the largest crowd ever to attend a World Cup qualifying game in the United States, but still considerably smaller than many of the year's other crowds (and the crowd that saw the same two nations play in the same stadium at the 1984 Olympics). All this underscores the fact that World Cup qualifying still hasn't caught the imagination of American fans.

***The controversial 30,082 who watched a World Cup qualifier against Guatemala in Washington on Nov. 3. How large a portion of that crowd was there to root for the home team was unclear, but it certainly was less than the organizers (and the home team itself) would have liked.

***The 58,012 who watched the United States versus Portugal in an Olympic game in Washington on July 24. Five months later, when the Washington Redskins played their final National Football League game at RFK Stadium before moving to a new stadium, the sentimental stories about the event made no reference to the stadium record crowd. It wouldn't have seemed right in a story about football to mention that the stadium record was for a soccer game, not a football game.

A comment concerning one of the crowds that is on this list:

***About two months after the United States opened its Olympic campaign in front of 83,810 in Birmingham, Ala., the University of Texas played Notre Dame in football in front of 83,312 in Austin, Texas. That Texas-Notre Dame crowd was the largest ever for a football game in the Lone Star State. Did you ever think you would see the day when you could say that the largest football crowd ever in Texas wasn't as big as the largest soccer crowd ever in Alabama.

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50 Largest Soccer Crowds Ever in the United States

- 101,799.....Brazil vs. France, Olympic Games, Pasadena, Calif., Aug. 11, 1984
100,374.....Yugoslavia vs. Italy, Olympic Games, Pasadena, Calif., Aug. 10, 1984
97,451.....France vs. Yugoslavia, Olympic Games, Pasadena, Calif., Aug. 8, 1984
94,194.....Brazil vs. Italy, World Cup, Pasadena, Calif., July 17, 1994
93,869.....United States vs. Romania, World Cup, Pasadena, Calif., June 26, 1994
93,134.....United States vs. Colombia, World Cup, Pasadena, Calif., June 22, 1994
92,216.....United States vs. Mexico, U.S. Cup '96, Pasadena, Calif., June 16, 1996
91,865.....Colombia vs. Romania, World Cup, Pasadena, Calif., June 18, 1994
91,123.....United States vs. Mexico, friendly, Pasadena, Calif., June 4, 1994
90,469.....Romania vs. Argentina, World Cup, Pasadena, Calif., July 3, 1994
88,125.....Mexico vs. Brazil, CONCACAF Gold Cup, Los Angeles, Jan. 21, 1996
86,117.....Nigeria vs. Argentina, Olympic Games, Athens, Ga., Aug. 3, 1996
84,569.....Brazil vs. Sweden, World Cup, Pasadena, Calif., July 13, 1994
84,177.....United States vs. Brazil, World Cup, Palo Alto, Calif., July 4, 1994
83,959.....Sweden vs. Cameroon, World Cup, Pasadena, Calif., June 19, 1994
83,810.....United States vs. Argentina, Olympic Games, Birmingham, Ala., July 20, 1996
83,769.....Colombia vs. Switzerland, World Cup, Palo Alto, Calif., June 26, 1994
83,716.....Sweden vs. Bulgaria, World Cup, Pasadena, Calif., July 16, 1994
83,642.....Brazil vs. Italy, Olympic Games, Palo Alto, Calif., Aug. 8, 1984
83,401.....Brazil vs. Cameroon, World Cup, Palo Alto, Calif., June 24, 1994
81,715.....Romania vs. Sweden, World Cup, Palo Alto, Calif., July 10, 1994
81,061.....Russia vs. Brazil, World Cup, Palo Alto, Calif., June 20, 1994
78,587.....Brazil vs. Nigeria, Olympic Games, Athens, Ga., July 31, 1994
78,416.....MLS All-Star Game, East Rutherford, N.J., July 14, 1996
78,265.....United States vs. Costa Rica, Olympic Games, Palo Alto, Calif., July 29, 1984
78,212.....Argentina vs. Portugal, Olympic Games, Athens, Ga., July 30, 1996
77,691.....Cosmos vs. Fort Lauderdale, NASL, East Rutherford, N.J., Aug. 4, 1977
77,217.....Brazil vs. Sweden, World Cup, Pontiac, Mich., June 28, 1994
77,094.....Italy vs. Bulgaria, World Cup, East Rutherford, N.J., July 13, 1994
76,891.....FIFA World All-Star Game, East Rutherford, N.J., Aug. 7, 1982
76,481.....United States vs. China (women), Olympic Games, Athens, Ga., Aug. 1, 1996
76,322.....Ireland vs. Norway, World Cup, East Rutherford, N.J., June 28, 1994
76,031.....Cosmos vs. Tulsa, NASL, East Rutherford, N.J., Aug. 26, 1979
75,646.....Cosmos vs. Santos, Pele Farewell Game, East Rutherford, N.J., Oct. 1, 1977
75,239.....Brazil vs. West Germany, Olympic Games, Palo Alto, Calif., Aug. 1, 1984
74,914.....Russia vs. Cameroon, World Cup, Palo Alto, Calif., June 28, 1994
74,901.....Cosmos vs. Tampa Bay, NASL, East Rutherford, N.J., Aug. 27, 1978
74,826.....Italy vs. Ireland, World Cup, East Rutherford, N.J., June 18, 1994
74,624.....Italy vs. Norway, World Cup, East Rutherford, N.J., June 23, 1994
73,669.....Cosmos vs. Rochester, NASL, East Rutherford, N.J., Aug. 24, 1977
73,425.....United States vs. Switzerland, World Cup, Pontiac, Mich., June 18, 1994
72,416.....Bulgaria vs. Germany, World Cup, East Rutherford, N.J., July 10, 1994
72,404.....Saudi Arabia vs. Morocco, World Cup, East Rutherford, N.J., June 25, 1994
72,342.....Cosmos vs. Fort Lauderdale, NASL, East Rutherford, N.J., April 22, 1979
71,528.....Sweden vs. Russia, World Cup, Pontiac, Mich., June 24, 1994
71,219.....Cosmos vs. Seattle, NASL, East Rutherford, N.J., May 21, 1978
71,147.....Mexico vs. Bulgaria, World Cup, East Rutherford, N.J., July 5, 1994
70,312.....Cosmos vs. Fort Lauderdale, NASL, East Rutherford, N.J., June 22, 1980
70,042.....Cosmos vs. Tampa Bay, NASL, East Rutherford, N.J., Aug. 8, 1979
69,225.....Los Angeles vs. New York/New Jersey, MLS, Pasadena, Calif., April 13, 1996

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Membership Notes

The last page of this newsletter is a form that you can use to renew your SASH membership for 1997, which many of you already have done. The deadline for renewing your membership is May 1. Note that since the fall issue we have added a place for you to list your e-mail address, if any.

The SASH membership rate for 1996 remains at \$10. Please return the membership form, along with your payment, to SASH, c/o Will Lunn, 11 Ford Ave., Oneonta, N.Y. 13820.

The annual membership meeting of SASH is tentatively set for Oneonta on the evening of Thursday, June 12. The American Soccer History Symposium, co-sponsored by SASH and the National Soccer Hall of Fame, will be held in Oneonta the following day. The Hall of Fame hopes to confirm these dates by early April.

Three positions will be up for election in next year's SASH election. They are president (currently held by Roger Allaway), treasurer (currently held by John Biggs) and one of the four director positions (currently held by Ray Bernabei). Executive director Will Lunn has agreed to serve as a one-man Nominating Committee to conduct the election, which will be held next spring. If you are interested in running for one of the three positions named above, please contact him by May 1 at the National Soccer Hall of Fame, 11 Ford Ave., Oneonta, N.Y. 13820 or (607) 432-3351 to let him know that you want to be on the ballot. The election will be held by mail.

SASH member Clay Berling was named as the 1997 winner of the Honor Award of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America at its NSCAA's annual convention in Nashville, Tenn. in January. He is the first SASH member to have won the NSCAA honor award since SASH was founded in 1993. Four other present SASH members have won it in earlier years. They are John Eiler, Mickey Cochrane, Walter Bahr and Ray Bernabei.