

# SASH

## HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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*The article below is based on research by SASH member Colin Jose, who has studied the American Soccer League of the 1920s and the United States World Cup team of 1930 perhaps more extensively than any other soccer historian. The article was written by SASH member Roger Allaway.*

### **British pros on the 1930 United States team? Take a Closer Look**

It's one of the most enduring myths of World Cup history. It won't go away. It keeps being repeated from source to source.

The myth in question is the idea that the United States team at the 1930 World Cup contained a half-dozen pro soccer players imported from England and Scotland. The implication is very strong that the United States recruited a bunch of ringers for that first World Cup, thereby explaining how it managed to reach the semifinals.

This myth is not something that just crops up occasionally. It's the conventional wisdom, rarely questioned. Listen to these statements:

From Brian Glanville, in the latest edition of *The History of the World Cup*, published in 1993: "The American team...was made up largely of British and Scots pros..."

From David Guiney in *The Dunlop Book of the World Cup*, published in 1973: "...America's team--composed mainly of former Scottish and English professionals..."

From Ian Morrison in *The World Cup: A Complete Record*, published in 1990: "...many British professionals, mostly from Scotland, had emigrated to the United States since the [1928] Olympics and were now members of the American national side."

From Guy Oliver in *The Guinness Record of World Soccer*, published in 1992: "Five of the team were former Scottish professionals so perhaps reaching the semi-final should not be seen as too surprising."

From Richard Henshaw in *The Encyclopedia of World Soccer*, published in 1979: "The American team was...made up of five former Scottish professionals and one Englishman."

From Paul Gardner in the latest edition of *The Simplest Game*, published in 1994: "The 'Americans,' who were mostly ex-English and Scottish professionals..."

This is quite a distinguished group of soccer writers, all making very similar statements, and making them fairly recently. Who would doubt such a chorus?

And perhaps they are right, if you want to play around quite a bit with words. Six of the 16 members of that United States team had been born in England or Scotland, and all of the six were professional soccer players by the time of the 1930 World Cup.

But having been born in Britain and having been a professional soccer player there are not the same thing. It appears that going into the 1930 World Cup, the combined professional experience in Britain of those six players added up to a total of two games, both in the English Third Division.

Actually, those six players were more of a factor on the 1930 United States team than just six out of 16. In a sense, they were six out of 11, because the each of them played every minute of the United States' three games,

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against Belgium, Paraguay and Argentina. The United States used the same lineup in all three of its games, and no substitutions were allowed.

But were they former British professionals, just because they were British born, and had become professional players by 1930? Let's look at them one by one.

**Andy Auld** was born in Scotland in 1901 and came to the United States in 1922. In Scotland, he had played for junior clubs Ardeer Thistle and Parkhead. Two years after coming to the United States, he turned pro with Providence of the American Soccer League, for whom he ended up playing six seasons. After the 1930 World Cup, and the breakup of the original ASL, he played several seasons with Pawtucket Rangers. His professional career was entirely on this side of the Atlantic.

**James Brown** was the most recent immigrant in the team, having come from Scotland, where he was born in 1910, only a year before the World Cup. But his professional career was all still ahead of him when he arrived in the United States, still a teenager, to join his father in 1929. Brown had played local soccer in Scotland. In America, he played briefly with Bayonne Rovers and Newark Skeeters in New Jersey before signing his first pro contract, with New York Giants, just three months before the 1930 World Cup. After the failure of the original ASL, he sought his fortune playing in England. He played three seasons with Manchester United in the early 1930s, and then played a season each with Brentford and Tottenham Hotspur. He later had a long career as a high school coach in Connecticut, and his son George also was capped for the United States, playing in a World Cup qualifying game against Mexico in 1957.

**Jimmy Gallagher** was born in Scotland in 1901. He never played professional soccer there, however. According to his daughter Carol, who lives in Ohio, he moved to New York with his mother when he was 12 years old. He began his professional soccer career in 1924 with the New York-based Indiana Flooring team of the American Soccer League. He played continuously in the ASL until it folded in the early 1930s, after which he moved to Cleveland and played there.

**Bart McGhee** was born in 1899 in Scotland. His son Edward, who lives in New Jersey, says that his father came to the United States when he was "a young teenager," but is not certain of the year. Bart McGhee's father, who had been a professional player and manager in Scotland, came to America in September 1910, but Bart was not with him at that time. It is known that Bart McGhee played for New York Shipbuilding Company in the 1917-18 season, when he was 19 years old, and for Philadelphia Hibernians in 1920. He eventually moved to the ASL, where he played for New York Football Club, Indiana Flooring, New York Nationals and New York Giants. There have been reports in Europe that he played for Hull City in England. These are incorrect. The Hull City player was a different man, named John McGee, who played for Hull City from 1922 to 1928.

**George Moorhouse** is the one member of the 1930 United States team about whom there is no doubt that he did play professionally in Britain prior to 1930, albeit briefly. Moorhouse was born in Liverpool, England in 1901 and raised there. In 1921, he had an unsuccessful tryout with Leeds United, and subsequently signed with Tranmere Rovers, a Third Division team near Liverpool. He was with Tranmere from December 1921 until May 1923, but during that time he played only two games in the first team, Third Division games against Ashington on Dec. 26, 1921 and Accrington Stanley on Jan. 28, 1922. The rest of his time there he spent in the reserves, who played in the Cheshire League. He left England in the summer of 1923, going first to Canada and then to the United States a few months later. After a few games with Brooklyn Wanderers, he moved to New York Giants, where he eventually became one of the greatest stars of the original ASL. He had a long career in New York, even after the failure of the original ASL, and was a member of the New York Americans team that won the National Open Cup in 1937.

**Alexander Wood** is another who, like James Brown, definitely did play professionally in Britain, but not until after 1930. After all, when his family moved from Scotland to America in 1921, he was only 14 years old. He had been a promising soccer player in Scotland, playing in a schoolboy international against Wales in the spring of 1921, and he was playing for Holley Carburetor in Detroit at the time of the 1930 World Cup. After the World

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Cup, he moved to Brooklyn Wanderers of the ASL, and then on to England, where he played several seasons with Leicester City and Nottingham Forest in the mid-1930s.

So where are these former English and Scottish pros that everyone keeps talking about? Moorhouse is one, but his British pro credentials are anything but imposing. And by 1930, those credentials were not very recent. And the two players who did make significant professional careers for themselves in Britain, Brown and Wood, hadn't yet done so in 1930.

What the writers quoted at the top of this story, and others, seem to have overlooked is that there was a thriving professional soccer league in the United States in the 1920s, and that for a British-born immigrant to the United States to have played pro soccer, it was not necessary that he have done so in Britain. It was quite possible in those days to build a career in professional soccer *after* emigrating from Britain to the United States.

Of those quotations, the strangest is the flight of imagination from Morrison, who says that the emigration of "many British professionals" was responsible for the United States teams' improvement since the 1928 Olympics. It's true that the U.S. team at the 1930 World Cup was a far stronger one than the U.S. team in the 1928 Olympics, but that was because the United States had sent an amateur team to those Olympic Games. Of the 16 members of the 1930 team, 15 already were living in the United States in 1928.

The United States has had problems over the years with the use of the use of players who weren't quite legit, although this has been cleaned up in recent years. But there were no such problems in the 1930 team. The implication that the United States' excellent performance in the 1930 World Cup was tainted by the use of a bunch of ringers simply isn't true. The idea that the United States team in 1930 was led by a group of players who were veterans of the English and Scottish professional leagues has been repeated so often that it tends to be accepted as fact. The strength of American soccer in 1930, a result of the ASL of the 1920s, is forgotten.

### **Membership Notes**

As we told you by letter about six weeks ago, this year's SASH meeting and American Soccer History Symposium will be held in Oneonta on Friday, June 30, both on the same day. The symposium will begin at 9:30 a.m. The SASH meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. Both will be held at Morris Hall on the campus of Oneonta State University, in the same room where they were held last year.

The topic of the symposium will be the contributions of immigrant groups and ethnic soccer to the growth of the sport in the United States. There will be four speakers, on various aspects of this topic. The speakers will be SASH members Colin Jose, Ric Fonseca, Harry Saunders and Len Oliver. Each speaker will take about 20 minutes, and will be followed by about 30 minutes of discussion of his subject among the entire group gathered there that day (unlike last year, we will not be breaking down into smaller groups). We are trying to put together a panel to lead those discussions. So far, SASH members Ed Borg and Mark Salisbury have agreed to serve on this panel, and there may be others.

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You should be receiving your ballot for this year's SASH election in the mail by mid-May. The deadline for returning it to the Hall of Fame to be counted will be June 20, ten days before the SASH meeting. Results of the election will be announced at the SASH meeting. Three positions are up for election, president, treasurer and one of the four director positions.

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Those of you who were at the SASH meeting in Oneonta last year may remember that SASH is attempting to fill the role of a replacement to the late Sam Foulds as the United States representative to a German organization

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called the International Federation for Football History and Statistics. This organization has assigned us to write a history of soccer in the United States from 1900 to 1920, for a future issue of one of the periodicals that it publishes. This article is largely complete. However, there are some gaps in the statistical material, and we are hoping that some of you may be able to help us to fill these. A great deal of this concerns the first names of players, which the IFFHS requests for its statistical summaries of games. Here is the information we are missing:

1. The results of the American Cup finals from 1906 to 1912. We know who the winners were. What we don't is the losing teams, the scores, the dates and the sites of the finals.

2. First names of more than 30 players in the National Open Cup finals of 1914 to 1920. We already have a great many of these. Teams for which we have all the first names are the Bethlehem Steel teams of 1916, 1917 and 1918, the Fall River Rovers teams of 1916, 1917 and 1918, and the Ben Millers team of 1920. Teams for which we are missing only one first name are the Bethlehem Steel teams of 1915 and 1919. Teams for which we are missing a great many first names are both finalists of 1914 (Brooklyn Field Club and Brooklyn Celtic), the Brooklyn Celtic team of 1915, the Paterson team of 1919 and the Fore River Shipyard team of 1920.

We already have written to several members about this, but without success. If any of you are able to provide any of this information, please write to Roger Allaway (1263 Stirling St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19111) or bring the information to the June 30 meeting in Oneonta.

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The last page of this newsletter is a copy of the SASH questionnaire, in case you would like to fill one out for the first time or update an earlier one. As we've said before, filling out the questionnaire is entirely optional. We don't want to twist anybody's arm. Having these is a help to us in compiling the annual membership directory, however.

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

If you need more space for any answer, feel free to use the back of this sheet.

1. What is your particular connection to soccer, and what is/was your occupation?

2. What are the areas within the overall subject of American soccer history on which you feel you have enough interest or knowledge that you would be willing to field questions, either from others within this organization or from people outside the organization?

3. What do you have in the way of materials, particularly books and periodicals, that might be useful as reference sources for answering questions on American soccer history?

4. Are there any areas within the overall subject of American soccer history that you are currently researching or that you are curious about and would like to do research about for your own enjoyment?