

SASH

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Bethlehem Steel vs. Fall River Rovers

One of the greatest rivalries in American soccer history? Maybe. That's very hard to say. But one of the most forgotten rivalries in American soccer history? There can't be much argument about that.

The National Open Cup, which was then known as the National Challenge Cup, before the advent of the National Amateur Cup, was first held in 1914. It quickly eclipsed the American Cup as the premier American competition, and within a few years it had produced one of the first great rivalries in American soccer. This was the rivalry between Bethlehem Steel, a relatively new team, and Fall River Rovers, which had won the American Cup as far back as 1888.

In addition to representing different states, one from Pennsylvania, one from Massachusetts, these two teams represented two very different approaches to the sport, two approaches that are still contending today. Bethlehem Steel was composed largely of players imported from England and Scotland by Horace Edgar Lewis, the Bethlehem Steel Company vice-president who had set out to assemble the greatest professional soccer team that American had yet seen. Fall River relied primarily on native-born players. When it upset Bethlehem in the National Open Cup final of 1917, it did so with a team on which nine of the 11 players had been born in the United States.

Bethlehem Steel and Fall River Rovers met in the final of the National Open Cup three consecutive times, in 1916, 1917 and 1918. The imports representing Bethlehem were the favorite every time. In addition to beating Fall River in 1916 and 1918, Bethlehem also won the National Open Cup in 1915 and 1919. But the competition was a fierce one every time.

That 1917 game, when the home-grown team from Fall River upset the imports from Bethlehem, was considered at the time to have been the greatest in American soccer history. What follows here is the account of the game in the *New York Times* of May 6, 1917, the next day. What it shows is that even in defeat, Bethlehem was a very strong team. Bethlehem is referred to as the visitors because Pawtucket, where the game was played, is very close to Fall River.

"PAWTUCKET, R.I., May 5--A rush in the first minute of play and a shot by Sullivan from the 18-yard line gave the Fall River Rovers a victory over Bethlehem and the soccer championship of the United States today. The score was 1 to 0. Bethlehem was constantly on the offensive, but the mighty work of Albion, the Rovers' goal, saved his team from defeat. The difference between the two teams on the offense is illustrated by the fact that Albion or his teammates--but chiefly Albion--saved the Rovers about two dozen times when it looked as if well directed shots would tally for Bethlehem. Duncan, at goal for Bethlehem, had opportunity for only three or four saves, besides the goal that surprised him and the rest of the Bethlehem team at the start of the game.

"Bethlehem won the toss and elected to have the Rovers kick off. The Rovers drove down hard and Sullivan, right inside forward, made a long driving kick that proved to be the only score of the ninety minutes of play. It was well placed, and the surprise furnished at the start by a team supposed to be the underdog was cheered by the thousands at the game.

"Bethlehem here forced the playing desperately to overcome the initial advantage. In a drive toward the Rovers' goal, a corner was forced, but nothing came of it. Then the visitors got loose again and

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Forrest missed a great try by inches. A foul against Pepper gave the visitors another chance for a tally, but it came to naught. Booth, right back of the Rovers, cleared a dangerous shot, and Swords was cautioned for a run-in with Fletcher. McFarlane stopped a rush by Easton of Bethlehem and sent the ball spinning toward the Pennsylvanians' goal, in the course of which a foul against Cullerton gave the Rovers another opportunity, but it was fruitless.

"The Rovers were on the offensive again, but Ferguson cleared a great rush by their forwards with a magnificent kick. It was easily the best defensive effort of the game, and showed the great possibilities of the Bethlehem game. Sullivan fouled Fletcher near the Bethlehem's goal and a good chance to score was lost. Stone cleared a strong kick by Forest.

"In a scrimmage in front of the Rovers' goal Forrest missed by a foot and Fleming followed this with a hard shot that went just over the bar. Bethlehem was desperate from so many misses and obtained two corners in quick succession without avail.

"Fletcher here contributed a sensational defensive feat by a somersault in stopping Cullerton. Kirkpatrick fouled, being detected holding, but the Rovers missed, and as the interval arrived Bethlehem had two other lost opportunities. One of them was a shot by Campbell from a conceded corner and the other was from a foul against Easton, after which Pepper had a chance.

"The game was mostly in the Rovers' territory throughout the second half also. Bethlehem forced two corners at the start, and after a foul against Sullivan had enabled the Rovers to add to their misses, Bethlehem forced two corners again, but the chief result was a wide shot by Easton over the bar. Swords made a wide shot for the Rovers, and Ferguson cleared from C. Burns. The Rovers got into the Bethlehem goal once, but couldn't deliver.

"Forrest added to the disheartening misses of Bethlehem by taking the ball up and falling in front of the goal, and as the game neared the end the faint hopes for a last successful drive to tie the score died when Campbell was knocked out by the ball hitting him in the stomach. Bethlehem, however, forced once corner from which Fleming made a good drive, but Albion, the Rovers' goal, was on the job."

The lineups from that day were:

Fall River Rovers: Jack Albion; William Booth, Charlie Burns; Frederick Burns, John McFarlane, William Stone; William Turner, John Sullivan, Francis Landy, Thomas Swords, John Cullerton.

Bethlehem Steel: William Duncan; Sam Fletcher, John Ferguson; Thomas Murray, William Kirkpatrick, James Campbell; George McKelvey, Frederick Pepper, James Easton, William Forrest, Thomas Fleming.

Membership Notes

The second annual SASH membership meeting was held on July 1 in Oneonta, N.Y. However, the lack of a quorum prevented the meeting from being able to take voting action on any of the issues discussed. Only 14 members were present, less than the required 25 percent of the membership, which totalled 68 at that time.

Discussed were SASH's accomplishments in the past year and projects it may undertake in the coming year. Those accomplishments have included:

1. The preparation of new inscriptions for the U.S. Soccer Federation section of the Hall of Fame Room at the Hall of Fame in Oneonta. These capsule biographies were written with the intention that they might eventually become part of a booklet to be sold by the Hall of Fame, but this use also has been made of them.

2. The writing of an article on the history of soccer in the United States from 1900 to 1920, to be published by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics, a German organization, in its magazine, *Libero*.

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3. The spring issue of the SASH newsletter, which received favorable comment in *Soccer America* for its article on the 1930 United States World Cup team, showing this that was not the group of British pros that it has often been called.

Hopes for coming year that were discussed include:

1. Plans for the 1996 American Soccer History Symposium, which is to be on the history of college soccer. A call will go out this fall in several publications for papers on several particular topics to be presented at this symposium.

2. Plans for SASH to become involved in the selection process for the federation section of the Hall of Fame, through writing to state associations and others with the power to make nominations, urging nomination of certain persons who may have been overlooked in past years.

3. Preparation of a display for next winter's annual convention of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. The convention is to be held in Philadelphia, and the display would be on the history of soccer in Philadelphia.

The results of the 1995 SASH election were announced. Roger Allaway, the only candidate for president, was re-elected with 36 votes. John Biggs, the only candidate for treasurer, was re-elected with 36 votes. Ed Borg was elected a director with 16 votes, to 12 for Shawn Ladda and 5 for Anne Woodworth. There also were several write-in votes for this position.