



STAR-SPANGLED SOCCER

THE SELLING, MARKETING AND
MANAGEMENT OF SOCCER IN THE USA
GARY HOPKINS

WARWICK
BUSINESS SCHOOL



Star-Spangled Soccer

The Selling, Marketing and
Management of Soccer in the USA

Gary Hopkins

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*To my wife **Paula**, who encouraged me to put pen to paper and whose endless patience love (and cups of tea) got me through it. My children **David, Lindsay** and **Veronica**, who simply make me proud every day I am their father, and my mom and dad who have loved and supported me since the day I was born ... what more can you ask for? Also to my brothers **Paul, Graham, Mick**, sisters **Julie, Mandy**, and nieces **Kelly, Sophie** and **Lucy**.*

*Finally to **Doug Hamilton, Keith Heyes** and **Michael Forte**, friends I met through soccer in America who sadly never made it to full-time. I had some great times with all of them*

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Star-Spangled Soccer

As the trains started to arrive, it was clear something special and momentous was happening. Painted faces, flags over their shoulders, banners waving, thousands upon thousands of soccer fans singing, laughing, chanting, roaring their support and proudly stating their presence. Hour by hour the streets, bars and restaurants filled with these marauding masses: songs echoed, cheers went up, the banter and laughter was non-stop: to and fro with the opposing fans, standing their ground, giving better than they were getting, fearless and proud, passionate and fervent, friendly yet watchful. At 1pm the roar that went up was a deafening and almost surreal wall of sound: USA!... USA!... USA!... – not necessarily original but stirringly powerful.

It started outside the station where fans had gathered and journeyed along the narrow palisade that wound through the town center. It flooded walkway cafes, restaurants, and bars, it echoed through tight alleyways and overhead balconies, it drifted through open shop windows and market stalls, drenching the air with the fervent sound of unflinching patriotism that only soccer fans can deliver. Locals stood in amazement, Czechoslovakian fans stood back in begrudging respect. For on 12 June 2006 in a small town called Gelsenkirchen, American Soccer came of age. The thousands of fans, many of them fresh out of college, who flooded the streets of Gelsenkirchen that day, out-sung the Italians in Kaiserslautern five days later and “took over” the Nuremberg stadium a week after that, made a statement missed by the soccer world: a statement that reflected everything that had been happening for the past 20 years on soccer fields and in boardrooms from Los Angeles to New York. For at the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany a sleeping soccer giant awoke, “the American soccer fan”, putting the world on notice that everything they thought they knew about “football” in the USA was about to change forever.

Star-Spangled Soccer takes it lead from a single premise, that the granting of the 1994 World Cup to the United States by FIFA set in motion a chain of events that has led to a soccer explosion

in America and provided the catalyst for its now unstoppable march forward. For make no mistake in America today a live game between Real Madrid and Barcelona would out-draw the National Football League, decimate Major League Baseball and fill NBA arenas four times over. Why so confident? Well in the summer of 2009, over 94,000 came out to see Barcelona play the LA Galaxy, 72,000 bought tickets to see Real Madrid beat D.C. United and 79,000 poured into Giant Stadium in New York to watch Mexico defeat the USA. These were attendances that no soccer nation in the world could ignore and made it clear to anyone with an unbiased eye and a calculator that the USA is already a soccer nation and one that is at the tipping point of incredible growth. Many will say they have seen it all before, with the glorious but ultimately failed North American Soccer League, led by the legendary Pele and the incredible crowds at World Cup 94, but they would be wrong. Soccer in America today bears little resemblance to past times with 2010 bringing a much stronger array of players, fans, stadiums, and investors underpinning it, a rampant media and internet world connecting it and a new soccer educated generation embracing it.

In America today a new breed of young players see soccer as much a part of American culture and lifestyle as baseball, basketball and football. Exposed to World Cup, Premiership, Italian, Spanish and Champions League soccer aired daily on Fox Soccer, ESPN and Univision, American soccer kids are as likely to know Messi, Ronaldo and Rooney and the star power of “United, Barca and Real” as they are the pitcher for the LA Dodgers or the running back for the New York Giants. Their idols and role models are just a click away on their computer, a dial away on their television or ticket away from a summer tour. Equally a new breed of American soccer fans are rebelling against the slumber of the seventh-inning stretch in baseball and the obligatory “Mexican wave” at a NFL game. Instead, they are taking their lead from the throng of singing masses on the Kop at Liverpool, the chaos of the Bombanera at Boca and the all-encompassing passion of the Catalans at the Nou Camp. For soccer is not only the “beautiful game”, it is also the global game, and the shrinking media world is allowing soccer to encircle and infiltrate America with its stars, its teams, its cultures and its

passion, and with teams that are bigger and wealthier than the Dallas Cowboys or the New York Yankees and stars that are globally more powerful than A-Rod and Kobe Bryant. It takes a certain naïvety to think American society is not changing and that kids today are prepared to accept the status quo of American sports and together with the simple fact that 25 percent of the American population will be Hispanic by 2050, and 50 percent will be of ethnic origin by the same date, it should send shock waves through the American sporting world and have soccer salivating at what can be achieved.

The road ahead is still a tough one with many challenges to overcome and barriers to break down. The entrenched American sports are certainly not going to roll over and play dead as soccer seeks to steal its future fans, its sponsors and its TV time. And it must be causing great concern to them that ESPN will soon unleash on America the largest promotional campaign, for any sport it has ever broadcast, in support of its coverage of the World Cup from South Africa – exposure that could represent the tipping point for soccer in the USA and the moment from which it will never look back. Why? Because for the first time in American soccer history there now exists a sustainable infrastructure and, if you like, “operating system” for the sport in the USA, a structure that can truly take advantage of the developing “perfect soccer storm” appearing on the horizon. This infrastructure, both physical and human, consists of nine new soccer-specific stadiums in the ground with more to follow, a powerful group of some of the wealthiest and most sports-savvy investors in the country underwriting the professional game, 16 million kids playing it, major television networks airing it (including one dedicated to 24-hour coverage) and some of America’s biggest sponsors supporting it. Equally there are 35, and soon to be 50, million soccer-mad Hispanics, who call America home, passionately in love with it.

In my opinion it will be the next decade that will decide the future trajectory of soccer in the USA and whether it kicks on to truly compete with the majors or tapers off to become a “nice” alternative “also ran”. There are opportunities to grasp, hurdles to overcome and potential missteps to take. Can Major League Soccer capitalize on the 30,000 crowds in Seattle, the “sell outs” in Toronto and the profitability of an LA Galaxy to build a sustainable

quality league to compete with the best? Can the US National Team develop players capable of winning a World Cup and populating the world's best teams? Can the sport create enough economic prosperity to entice the country's best athletes to choose soccer over "football" or basketball, for when it does the soccer world will change forever? Can America turn a nation of soccer players into a nation of soccer fans? Can American soccer embrace the global game without it consuming them? Can the American coaching system in all its forms and diasporas let go of its often insular instincts, protectionist outlook and political positioning, to come together to develop American players fully prepared and capable to play in the best leagues and for the best teams in the world – even if this entails losing control and money? Can soccer in America become a viable TV sport generating the millions that will underpin its economics, expand its professional league and allow it to compete for the world's best players?

There are many misconceptions about the game in the USA, most driven by a condescending international media and entrenched American sports writers or fans that fail (or refuse) to understand that their country is changing, their kids are changing and their sports are changing.

It's very easy to bemoan the lack of quality in MLS, the media coverage in national papers or the lack of perceived interest from entrenched (read old) American sports fans, but smart investors look to future earnings and growth, not the past and the fundamentals for soccer's exponential growth over the next decade are firmly in place. Nothing however will propel and fuel this growth more than the return in either 2018 or 2022 of the FIFA World Cup. It has nothing to do with economics, nothing to do with the financial impact, nothing to do with elevating the status of US Soccer with FIFA and around the world. It has everything however to do with turning America into a nation of soccer fans, a developer of top-class talent and cementing forever the future of the sport in the USA. For if the impact was huge in 1994 it will be stratospheric and unstoppable if it returns.

Soccer's journey to respectability in the USA has been a long, exciting and often troubled one filled with tremendous highs, stomach churning lows, Vegas-style gambles, dramatic elections, strong personalities, incredible commitments, huge mistakes, necessary

U-turns, and of course last-minute victories and extra-time heartbreaks. It is a story of how an insolvent Federation convinced FIFA to grant it the 1994 World Cup and how a “whip round” among friends paid for it. How Brandi Chastain tore off her shirt and sent the world into a media frenzy. How Phil Anschutz saved Major League soccer from collapse by purchasing five of its teams and how it then went on to become the greatest sports turn-around story of the decade. How the US National Team made an unexpected run to the World Cup quarter finals to lift a soccer nation and instill hope in the future of the game. How David Beckham shocked the world, and I mean world, by signing for the LA Galaxy, and how American soccer has transformed itself from a recreational participatory sport into a professionally run soccer business and industry that today challenges the major American leagues and excites the international soccer community with its growth and promise.

I hope that by the end of the book you will have an understanding of the great strides soccer has made in the USA over the past 25 years on its road to becoming a soccer nation, and the tough challenges and competitive forces it still has to overcome. I equally hope you enjoy my depiction of soccer’s journey for while *Star-Spangled Soccer* is a business book, it’s also about the events, the people and the players who made this great journey; personalities, great victories, crushing defeats, and heroic fight backs and trust me, soccer in America has had them all.

You're Playing the World Cup Where?

It hardly caused a ripple in the American public psyche on 4 July 1988 when the announcement was made that the USA was to host the 1994 World Cup. Media coverage was tepid and sparse and American sports fans were uncaring and oblivious. Today's news, tomorrow's fish and chip paper as they say in England. To those that did care, i.e. the rest of the world, it was nothing more than a corporate sell out: FIFA had lost its mind ... how could it be hosted in the States? ... what did they know about "Football"? ... it's all about money, a farce, a joke, but I suppose at least a joke with benefits ... we get to go to Disneyland and Las Vegas.

To Werner Fricker, the President of the United States Soccer Federation, and a few USA visionaries it was the Holy Grail, and the catalyst for everything they wanted to achieve for soccer in the United States. To FIFA it was a huge new market to expand the beautiful game and an economic powerhouse they were desperate to harness, but for 95 percent of the American population they could not have cared less. In a country where they proclaim the winners of NFL SuperBowl World Champions the fact that an event of true world inclusion and stature was coming to the USA held no interest, offered no appeal. The fact that it was also soccer doubly compounded the issue. Who the hell plays soccer? Only wheezy kids that cannot make the football or baseball teams at school or those crazy Latins and Europeans that play in the parks at weekends. Oh and by the way, aren't their fans always rioting and killing each other? Probably all true at the time.

But, however it was achieved – like it or not, interested or not – America was going to host the 1994 World Cup, the promise of which and its ultimate success, underpinned everything good that was to happen to soccer over the next 20 years. As the history of soccer in the United States is written it will be seen that

4 July 1988 was the day that the sport entered the modern era and began its march towards international respectability. Respectability founded on the improbable idea that the world's greatest sports event would be hosted in the land of Mickey Mouse and John Wayne.

Tremendous cynicism abounded as the world's media questioned why a country completely lacking in any soccer credibility was awarded such a glittering prize. A country where the collapsed North American Soccer League (NASL) and circus-like comotion of the New York Cosmos, Fort Lauderdale Strikers and Los Angeles Aztecs with their gaudy shirts, fireworks and crass half-time promotions, represented everything glitzy and Hollywood that the soccer world, at the time, was not. This was a place where Pele and Beckenbaur went to see out their final years and take their last hugely rewarding pay checks, a fun diversion, maybe later a movie – but not serious soccer. The media were convinced that the World Cup would be turned into some Spielberg-inspired production that would tarnish and trash its image for ever. Surely the Americans could not possibly understand the nuances and fineries of the “beautiful game” or treat it with the reverence and subtlety it deserved – Americans after all do not do subtlety! And they are notoriously not high on reverence!

So just how did it come about? How did the USA manage to convince FIFA to hand over the keys to soccer's crown jewel risking the ire of traditional soccer nations and cynical soccer press from around the world, particularly knowing full well that 95 percent of the country had no idea what the World Cup was and cared even less if they thought it involved soccer. The answer, as with many things in life, came down to a mixture of luck, preparation, hubris, vision and personal commitment. It started as most things do with the vision and commitment of a few people who believed in soccer and ultimately felt that an event of this magnitude might just be the catalyst for the sport's explosion. There were soccer people such as Werner Fricker, a Yugoslavian American, who arrived in the USA with nothing, played for the US National Team, built a highly successful construction company and then went on to be President of the United States Soccer Federation. There was also Chuck Blazer, now General Secretary of Concacaf, Scott Parks LeTellier who would go on to be the Chief Operating Officer of World Cup 94, and Sunil Gulati now President of the

United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer) – people who were attracted to the game, administered or coached and had a passion for seeing soccer develop in the USA and thought hosting a World Cup would help. None however, I can guarantee, had any idea just how big and how much this single decision would change the face of soccer and indeed to a degree, culture in America.

It sounds like a great idea on paper but how do you go about bidding for the world's biggest sporting event when it was clear you would need to use "air miles" (if they were around then) to visit Zurich to convince FIFA you could do it! Basically insolvent, US Soccer were forced to move from their Empire State Building Offices to three "subsidized" rooms at an airport hotel near JFK provided by a friendly patron of the sport and move its remaining staff to free space in Colorado Springs. (No one mentioned this to FIFA of course.) If this was not bad enough, its Olympic Team was close to being evicted from its training camp hotel when it became clear the Federation could not afford to pay for the extra pot of coffee, morning paper or indeed (and more importantly) the rooms the team were staying in. Only a last minute check provided by sponsor, Budweiser (and delivered coincidentally by the now General Secretary of US Soccer, Dan Flynn), saved the day and of course the Olympic spirit! Suffice to say, times were tough and US Soccer clearly had no right even contemplating bidding for an event of such magnitude and gravitas.

From the outside, every ounce of business school and real-world smarts would scream they were out of their depth and woefully incapable of executing such an event and that FIFA would be crazy to even entertain a meeting let alone a bid. But if twenty years of living and working in the USA has taught me one thing, it is that Americans are never afraid to punch above their weight and have unflinching confidence in their ability to pull off the impossible. It may not always work out but there is always an unfailing belief that somehow it will, and because of this, it invariably does – and in the World Cup 94 case, it did!

In fairness, despite its financial shortcomings soccer in the USA had some strong headwinds helping it along, not least of which was the very strong desire of FIFA to "crack" the American market. They had been shocked by the success of soccer at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics where it had outdrawn track and field events

in attendance with 102,799 turning up to see France beat Brazil 2–0 for Gold, and 100,374 to see Yugoslavia beat Italy 2–1 for Bronze, both staged at the Los Angeles Rose Bowl. Sitting in the expensive seats the proverbial light bulb went on and the realization dawned that they might just might be witnessing the birth of the next great soccer frontier. As such, when the time came for bids to be accepted for the 1994 World Cup, the USA was gently “encouraged” to apply. A few other things were at play here during this time as it had not gone unnoticed by FIFA that a watershed moment in world sports had just occurred. Usually a loss making financial “white elephant” for host cities, Peter Ueberroth had transformed the Olympics from a city-backed tourism brochure into a financially profitable marketing, sponsorship, licensing and television-driven property that had American corporations lined up at the door to partner and Angelinos devouring every ticket they could get their hands on. Witnessing all of this first hand was FIFA salivating at the prospect of replicating this and understanding immediately what the financial impact of turning American Corporations onto soccer might mean.

The reality of the success of soccer in Los Angeles was however a little different. I was living in LA during the Olympics and tickets were near impossible to get, with those for gymnastics, swimming and track events almost impossible and being scalped for ridiculous dollars. Compelled to get their Olympic “fix” Angelinos grabbed on to any ticket they could. This is not to undermine soccer and certainly soccer fans turned up but with Carl Lewis and the USA track and field team sweeping all before them it would be wrong to draw the conclusion that soccer was more popular, because it was not. In truth it mattered little as impressing FIFA was all that did. It reflects however a more a cautionary note that was to be born out in later years to costly effect. Drawing conclusions and spending millions based on Americans showing up for “big events” can be a very expensive mistake. I will introduce my own word here for a disease prevalent in American sports, a disease often misdiagnosed with disastrous consequences. “Big Eventism” defined in the medical dictionary as “the uncontrollable compulsion to attend any big sporting event irrespective of overall underlying interest” ... watch for its appearance throughout the book.

Apart from the incredible crowds and potential financial windfalls, FIFA also bore witness to the great organizational and operational skills of the Americans and in particular those people involved in staging the soccer events. Commissioner of Soccer, Alan Rothenberg, would go on to be the President of US Soccer and World Cup 94, Organizing Committee. Scott Parks LeTellier, Chief of Staff in 1984, would play a pivotal role in securing the World Cup bid and go on to be the Chief Operating Officer of World Cup and Hank Steinbrecher who worked on the Boston venue for 1984 would go on to be General Secretary of US Soccer. These were all people who impressed FIFA, had established personal relationships at the highest level and had instilled in them the confidence that should the World Cup ever arrive on US soil it would have the personnel and skill-sets to execute it.

So FIFA were interested in the USA making a bid, but it still did not mean that US Soccer could afford to do so – not something however that was going to get in the way. Like all good soccer fans around the world, when looking to buy some new uniforms or a new ball, the first instinct is to have a quick “whip-round” among the lads to see what can be raised. Well, US Soccer raised \$500,000 from 100 soccer “lads” who happily contributed \$5,000 each with the promise of good seats and a hot pie should they succeed (and membership in US Club 94) and with another \$750,000–\$1,000,000 secured in the form of a loan from Werner Fricker’s Savings and Loan Bank they were set. Lobbyists from DC were hired to woo various governmental agencies and Ronald Reagan engaged to send a video message expressing the full support of the Presidency and the US Government (but interestingly no money). Ultimately US Soccer submitted a professional, on the point, bid document that covered all bases and could not have failed to impress FIFA.

It’s an interesting note that US Soccer, along with the old NASL, actually bid for the 1986 World Cup after FIFA decided that the chosen site, Colombia, while making great coffee had not quite mastered the art of building soccer stadiums yet and were, as such, not ready to host. Looking for a quick alternative site, the USA were invited to bid but submitted a document that even the architects admit was decidedly amateurish, underwhelming

FIFA on every level, who granted the rights to Mexico, doing the USA a huge favor.

So America's bid was in, funded by a private initiative of an insolvent Federation, a line of credit from a local bank and a "whip round" among the "lads". Compare this approach to those of its main competitors, Brazil and Morocco, both of whose bids arrived with the full backing and political influence of their national governments, the full support and involvement of their media outlets and the passionate support of their entire population who really, really, really cared if they won or not. Morocco could even call upon King Hassan 11 while Brazil of course had the incomparable Pele, decades of World Cup heritage and the fact that they had not hosted the event since 1950. To make matter worse for the USA, the President of FIFA, Joao Havalanche, was Brazilian, which had to help the Brazilian cause. As decision time drew closer, the USA, keen to know where they stood, casually approached FIFA at a meeting in Toronto for a sense of the direction of the prevailing wind (or simply, "do we have a chance?"). Clearly unable to answer, FIFA did however let it be known that in their opinion, and completely unscientifically, if a poll was taken that day among member nations it was likely that Brazil would get 80 percent of the votes, the USA 10 percent while Morocco and Chile (who pulled out in support of Brazil) would get 5 percent each. A body blow to all involved and visions of some very tough discussions with a local Savings and Loan Bank pending.

Sometimes however when you're brave enough to start down a path, events can conspire to work for you – events you could never have predicted or planned for, yet ones that can turn failure into success or of course success into failure. In the US Soccer case it was fortunately the former. With scenes eerily similar to the current financial meltdown, word was leaking out in the financial press that some leading countries were about to default on substantial loans issued by American Banks, which if true could send the issuing banks into bankruptcy. The biggest culprit was Brazil, the USA's main and only real competitor. This was bad for the banks but great for US Soccer. It's a little tough to claim poverty and "stiff" American banks for billions in loans and then go ahead and build 12 new soccer stadiums and nice new

motorways to connect them all! The President of Brazil seeing the writing on the wall and a potential phone call from Reagan in his future decided to remove his government's support for the bid and consequently any hope the Brazilian Soccer Federation had of winning. Morocco, with just one stadium built and a lot of sand where the other 11 would go, soon fell out of favor and so when FIFA then announced that the decision on who would host the 1994 World Cup would be made on American Independence day, 4 July 1988, it was clear to all that the world's greatest sporting event was heading Stateside.

With tears all round, Fricker and LeTetellier stepped out to meet the hundreds of flashing light bulbs, thrusting microphones and probing questions of the world's media. Stunned by the enormity and ferocity of the exposure, Fricker had his first taste of the media circus that surrounded the event. Never comfortable dealing with an aggressive and often cynical media, he would one day pay the ultimate price, for the man whose vision and money helped bring the World Cup to the USA would not be the man to lead it.

Back in the USA, however, the world just went about its way. No live camera shots from the steps of FIFA, no jubilant flag-waving public from cities around the country, no countdowns to the announcement on CNN or ABC. After all, it was not like the Olympics were coming or anything the USA really cared about. On the flight home LeTellier explained to a fellow American passenger that they had just secured the World Cup of Football for the USA who excitedly responded "I love that sport ... those scrums sure look like a lot of fun". Politely explaining he was confusing football with rugby, LeTellier returned to his seat, dwelling on just how much work they had to do and wondering if, after all the struggles, they might have bitten off a little more than they could chew!

Winning the World Cup bid was one thing, convincing the soccer millions around the globe they were justified winners, quite another. To the rest of the world soccer in America was still viewed as an interesting experiment, a summer's diversion from the real "football" taking place in the NFL. Confident that it was all glitter and fluff and no substance, no one was either surprised or disappointed when the old NASL collapsed. Soccer was just

not an American sport. It was not a sport they were any good at and actually not a sport anyone was necessarily interested in them becoming good at. The world did not expect soccer from America; it expected great Hollywood movies and iconic stars, great westerns, rock and roll, Motown, *Happy Days* and corvettes. All over the world people's lives were touched and excited by these icons of American culture, that were embraced, absorbed and envied. (Who didn't want to ride out of town heading a posse, beat Billy the Kid to the draw, or ride into the sunset with John Wayne and just what teenage kid did not want to be the Fonz ... as kids growing up in England, we all did.) These were our images of America, distant, untouchable and inspiring: no one however thought soccer when they thought of America. No one in the 1980s actually thought "soccer" at all; it was "football" – soccer was something the Yanks called it (or saacer as Brits with lousy American accents termed it), a lazy irreverent term that smacked of American marketing. Simply put, the world's expectations were that America might ruin the World Cup, might turn it into an over-hyped fiasco with cheerleaders, cowboys and Disney characters clambering through the stands. The world's media made no secret of their fears and would spend years questioning the validity of the decision. Come 1994 however, they would be here in their thousands, downing hot dogs and coke and sneaking off to Disneyland and Vegas! (Never underestimate the hypocrisy of the European press.)

The world's expectations were one thing, but the expectations of the American soccer community quite another. For every home-based US soccer player, coach, administrator and fan that had toiled in relative obscurity on playing fields across the country, the World Cup represented a momentous opportunity. To those that had suffered the derision and condescending cynicism of American football, baseball and basketball aficionados it was a chance at payback. To those that had battled and fought to get soccer played in schools and colleges, funds allocated, fields appropriated and kids engaged, it was a chance to show how big the sport really was. To every group of parents and coaches that fought with local councils and cities to build new soccer fields, or allocate even 10 percent of a budget scheduled for baseball to soccer, it was to strengthen their arm. To every expatriate and ethnic group that had

grown up in a country where soccer was life it was to be a chance to say “this is why we love it”. To the few true soccer writers who toiled to get column inches printed, or television presenters fighting to get a spectacular goal “aired” this was their moment, for when World Cup 94 arrived they would be the “go to guy”, the one with the knowledge, the understanding of the game and the contacts for tickets and access. It was their chance to say “I told you this sport was big”. In fairness though, most had no comprehension of what was about to hit them and the impact the event would have on their soccer lives.

Arriving back in the States, with proclamation in hand, US Soccer was immediately faced with a couple of pretty significant and pressing issues, issues that if not handled could easily see FIFA issuing a quick U-turn. Firstly they were still broke, in fact less than broke, they were still in debt to the tune of \$750,000, further compounded when the Federal Government raided the Savings and Loan Bank carrying the note and quickly requested it be repaid. (Loaning money for World Cup “bids” sort of explains the 1988–89 Savings and Loan crisis really.) In fact, the new company set up to execute the event, World Cup 94 Inc, was penniless! A situation that was temporarily resolved when LeTellier, the new CEO, funded operations from a private \$125,000 line of credit on his home. It was clear however that this would not last long and a significant influx of cash would be needed for the company and the event to survive. A white knight did appear on the horizon in the form of Steve Caspers and Phil Woosnam, two ex NASL executives who “generously” offered to loan the company \$2m in return for being allowed to control all of the in-country marketing rights for both World Cup 1994 and the United States Soccer Federation. To make the offer even more tempting they were also bringing NBC to the table (in the form of Sportschannel America) who would agree to fund and broadcast the entire tournament.

For an insolvent federation and penniless World Cup 94 Inc, it must have been tempting and a seemingly obvious and easy way out of their current dilemma. Had LeTellier accepted however, it would have signaled the end for World Cup 94 and a financial meltdown that could have crippled the sport. The devil is always in the details and in this case it was most certainly was.

In return for providing a \$2m line of credit and agreeing to guarantee the \$70m minimum payment due to FIFA from ticket sales the new group would have the right to sell all the sponsorship and marketing categories for US Soccer and all the television advertising inventory on the local broadcasts. The strategy was to acquire these rights, wrap as much World Cup equity around them as possible and seize the market. As an added bonus they would receive a 50/50 share of all ticket revenues above the \$70m guarantee to FIFA. You can't blame a man for trying and after all this is America, but while a great deal for the white knights, it was a lousy deal for everyone else.

Had they achieved what they wanted, the world of soccer in the USA as we know it today would not exist. There would have been no \$60m legacy, no professional league and a group of wealthy marketers playing golf in the Cayman Isles. Fortunately, LeTellier fought this off acquiring an \$8m line of credit from Hanover Bank secured against the unencumbered ticketing and sponsorship income the event would surely generate. With his home equity line replenished and boarders repelled, World Cup 94 Inc could concentrate on the task at hand, or so it thought!

The premise of this book is that securing World Cup 94 and executing it successfully changed the future course of soccer in the USA and directly shaped what it has become today. Much of what was achieved however had its roots in the tumultuous times, both on and off the field, surrounding the 1990 Italia World Cup for during this period four momentous events took place in US soccer that in isolation were exceptionally influential, but in combination changed the face of American soccer forever.

Trinaaadad ... we want a goal!

On 19 November 1989 at precisely 4pm a speculative 30-yard volley from Paul Caliguiri rattled the back of the net at the National Stadium in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Lost in a sea of red, no more than 50 ecstatic US soccer fans (including yours truly) leapt from their seats and celebrated as only soccer fans know how. The unbelievable was taking place; the result the USA could only dream of was unfolding before the eyes of the "massed"