



A Short History of the Wisconsin Adult Soccer Association

By Richard Williams

The Wisconsin Adult Soccer Association (WASA) is one of the oldest soccer associations in the United States. Although soccer was probably played recreationally in Wisconsin in the late 1800's and early 1900's, it was not until 1913 that we have record that three Milwaukee teams the Caledonians, the Vikings and the Sons of St. George organized into a formal league. In 1914, these teams with clubs from Racine and Kenosha formed the Lake Shore League.

In 1914, these teams formed the Wisconsin State Football Association. Participating teams were the McWhytes of Kenosha, the Horlicks of Racine, the Caledonians, St. Andrew's, and the Sons of St. George of Milwaukee. The first President of the Association was Dr. James Frew of Milwaukee. Dr. Frew also instituted the Adult Wisconsin State Challenge Cup competitions.

Following World War I, with the influx of new immigrants, the Association expanded. Teams were located in the principal cities of the state as well as teams from Minneapolis and Duluth, Minnesota.

In the Spring of 1923, the Wisconsin State Soccer Football League, was formed for the purpose of promoting better soccer football in The State of Wisconsin. The league operated under the rules of the United Football Association and was part of the Wisconsin State Football Association. The league of 11 teams was divided into two divisions. In Division "A" were Ke-Nah-a Club, Racine Vikings I, Sheboygan F.C., Simmons Blues of Kenosha, Vienna F.C., and Wacker I. In Division "B" were the Deutcher Sport Verein-Milwaukee, Deutcher Sport Club-Kenosha, Kohler Recreation Club, Racine Vikings II, and Wacker II.

The soccer clubs and teams, besides providing the players with great exercise and competition, also served as social centers for the clubs' ethnic participants and their families. The teams also acted as safe havens for new immigrants because they found people who shared their cultural traditions and spoke their native languages. The clubs helped these new "Americans" find employment and helped to acculturate these perspective citizens into their new homeland and communities.

The clubs have frequently represented corporate sponsors starting in the 1920's and continuing to the present. Some of the most well-known sponsors include such corporate names as Wacker, Falk, Indian Motorcycle, Horlick Co., Kohler, Pabst, Schlitz, Leinenkugel, and Miller.

In the late 1920's the league organized interstate All-Star games between Wisconsin and Chicago players. The All-Star game held on November 17, 1929, at Borchart Field in Milwaukee attracted a crowd that broke all records for paid attendance in The State of Wisconsin. The Adult Association instituted the state's first youth program in 1929. There were three teams in the "Junior League" The teams were named Mannheim, Hamburg, and

Bremen. The league's first game was played between Mannheim and Hamburg as the preliminary match before the All-Star game. The game was played in front of over 2,000 fans. Mannheim won the game 1-0. The youth program emphasized player development for the adult teams and provided the community's youth with good, wholesome exercise and activities that supplied kids with positive social and moral activities that kept them out of trouble.

The Wisconsin Adult league and All-Star team and League teams played successfully in competitions in Illinois, Michigan, and Missouri in the 1930's and early 40's. The most notable of these teams was the Falk Corporation team. They won the Tri-State Championship between Illinois, Missouri and Wisconsin in the early 1940's and reached the National Open Cup Semi-Finals in February of 1942. At the semi-finals, they lost to the Chicago Spartan's in a game played in Chicago.

World War II weakened the quality of play in the early 1940's when many of the league's players were drafted and volunteered for service. Following World War II many Europeans immigrated to Wisconsin, and the State Association and its leagues saw an influx of "New Blood" for their teams. Immigrants once again sought out ethnic groups where they could share language and cultural values. The soccer clubs once more provided these new "Americans" with a safe haven and helped acculturate the new immigrants into their new "home" country.

The post war period through the 1970's, with its influx of European talent and the development of high quality local players, created great competition between Major Division teams as well as State League teams. The soccer powers during this period were the Serbian Soccer Club, the Milwaukee Brewers, Milwaukee Sport Club, Polonia Soccer Club and the Bavarian Soccer Club.

The Wisconsin Adult Soccer Association was one of the leaders in the promotion and development of youth soccer programs in the United States when it required all of its adult Major Division teams to have youth teams in order to play in the early 1970's. At a time when soccer was a bad name among many high school athletes and athletic coaches, the State Association contributed to the development of local high schools in the Milwaukee area and assisted in the development of the first public high school league in the state. When Milwaukee High Schools began to develop teams, the State Association worked to provide assistance for the fledgling teams. It provided referees to the schools free of charge for at least two years and invited school teams to participate in their indoor programs at the Milwaukee Arena free of charge for several years. In the early 1970's the State Association formed the Wisconsin Junior Soccer League and later developed the Wisconsin Youth Soccer Association.

As high school programs began to develop and communities developed youth programs, the State Association developed a coaching program to which they sent coaches from around the state. The goal was to provide the growing numbers of youth and their teams with qualified coaches. The Association also provided free coaching and youth clinics to generate interest in the "new" game among youth players and new coaches. The State Association also established the State Coaching Education Program to license coaches in 1974. The program provided aspiring coaches with a well structured education curriculum

which gave them the knowledge to improve their teams and develop their players to play at higher levels of play.

The teams and clubs of the Adult Association, in the post World War II era, like their predecessors after World War I, produced many quality players, teams coaches, and administrators that brought the Association and Wisconsin recognition in the Midwest Region, the National and the International soccer community. During this period the Wisconsin Soccer Association President, Gene Edwards, rose to National and International prominence as President of the United States Soccer Association, and served on the FIFA Board of Directors, the U.S. Olympic Committee, was Vice President of CONCACAF, was inducted into the U.S. Soccer Hall of Fame, the CONCACAF Hall of Fame, and received the FIFA Order of Merit. Michael Wuertz, a State Referee was recognized by the USSF with a National Referee Badge and was awarded a FIFA Referee Badge and was selected to referee in the 1972 Olympic games in Munich, Germany. He also was selected to referee in the North American Professional Soccer League. Three Adult Association were selected to play on the 1972, Olympic Team and played in the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, Germany. They were Horst Stempke (Milwaukee Sport Club), John Bocwinski (Polonia Soccer Club), and Walter Ziaja (Bavarian Soccer Club). Gene Edwards served as the team administrator. Glen Ward, of the Bavarian Soccer Club, played with the U.S. Pan American Soccer Team and the U.S. National Team program. In 1990, Wisconsin adult soccer was represented in the 1990, World Cup Games, in Italy by Jimmy Banks of the Bavarian Soccer Club. Banks represented the United States in over 30, matches internationally.

In the coaching sector the Adult Association produced several coaches that have brought recognition to the Association and the State. However, Bob Gansler has risen to represent the State Association as a National Amateur Champion Coach in 1974, as the player coach of the Bavarian Soccer Team. He worked as both the Assistant Olympic and the Head U.S. Olympic team coach and was appointed to coach the U.S. National team and as their head coach directed the team to the 1990, World Cup games in Italy. He served as the Director of Coaching for the U. S. Soccer Federation. He also played for the U.S. Olympic Team in the 1960's and served as the team's captain. He played professionally for the old Chicago Mustangs. He has served as the Head Coach of the Kansas City Wizards of the Major League Soccer, MLS. He has won MLS Championships and won the U.S. National Open Cup Championship, with the Kansas City team and is one of the few coaches to have coached teams to both the U.S. National Open Cup and National Amateur Championships.

From the 1940's to the present 2000's, Wisconsin teams have won National Amateur Championships in both the U.S. Adult National Open and National Amateur Championships. The Bavarian Soccer Club won the 1974, National Amateur Championship under the leadership of Bob Gansler. The Madison 56ers won the 1992, National Amateur Championship under the leadership of Dean Duerst and Ian Davies. In the late 1990's and early 2000's the Milwaukee Bavarian Soccer Club won three consecutive National Amateur Championships and pulled off a double National Championship by winning the National Amateur and the National Amateur Open Cup Championships in 2003. This was the first time a team had won three consecutive National Amateur Championships and won the National Amateur Open Cup Championship and National Amateur Championship in the same year in over 50 years of National Amateur Cup Competition. The accomplishment was

achieved when Wisconsin was the host state of the U.S. Adult Soccer Association's National Cups Tournaments, held at Uihlein Soccer Park in Milwaukee, WI. The Bavarian coach was Tom Zaiss, who was named the Midwest Region Adult Association Coach of the Year three times in a row as a result of his achievements.

The Wisconsin Adult Soccer Association soccer program has had many of its players develop into some of the most successful and well known coaches at the college level both in and out of state. Some of the better known and successful of these coaches are: Aldo Santaga - Croatian Eagles S.C. - UW Green Bay (men's coach), Dean Duerst - Madison 56ers - UW Madison (women's coach), Rick Kilps - Polonia S.C. - UW Parkside (men's coach), Jim Launder - Milwaukee Kickers - Madison 56ers - UW Madison (men's coach, NCAA Div. I, National Champion and NCAA Coach of the Year), Greg Ryan - Madison 56ers, UW Madison (women's coach, U.S. Women's National Team, Assistant Coach and Appointed Head Coach of the U.S. Women's National Team 2005), Jerry Panek - Polonia S.C. - Marquette University (men's coach), Louie Bennett - Victoria S.C. - Milwaukee Bavarian's S.C. - UW Milwaukee (men's coach, selected as Horizon League, Coach of the Year, two times), Mike Moynihan - Milwaukee Kickers S.C. - UW Milwaukee (women's coach), Craig Webb - Madison 56ers - UW Madison (women's coach), Craig Peltonen - Milwaukee Bavarian S.C. - Marian College (men's coach), and Brian Tompkins - Milwaukee Bavarian S.C. – UW Milwaukee - Yale University (men's coach).

The Adult Association provides coaches and referees to all levels of the state's high school and youth programs as well as players and referees for our local and out of state professional teams.

Leadership for the Wisconsin Adult Soccer Association has come from all walks and backgrounds of life. Doctors, educators, corporate leaders, legal experts, skilled and unskilled laborers. All have served as volunteers in service to the Association for the improvement, growth, and development of Soccer in Wisconsin. Some of those who have served and presently serve are: Dr. James Frew, Frank Breznay, Judge John C. Karel, Richard Falk, Judge Robert Cannon, Gene Edwards, John Zussman, Mike Kabanica, Richard Williams, Judge Ted E. Wedemeyer Jr., Bill Sandoval, and Scott Engroff.

The Adult Association is presently active in giving assistance in the development of women's soccer and U-23 Programs as well as helping new immigrant and minority groups develop soccer programs which can only strengthen our communities and the state of soccer in Wisconsin.

As a side note, the Wisconsin Adult Soccer Association was originally the Wisconsin Soccer Association, Inc. and agreed to become the Adult Division of the Wisconsin Soccer Association (W.S.A.) when the W.S.A. formed a unified State Association in 1994, with the following Divisions: The Wisconsin Adult Soccer Association, The Wisconsin Youth Soccer Association, The Wisconsin Soccer Association State Referee Unit and the Wisconsin Soccer Association Coach's Organization.