

The Past and Present of Soccer - Soccer Rules

Not much is known about the first soccer team. However, the Greeks and Romans played football and ball kicking games. The London Football Association developed the first sets of rules in 1863.

British sailors and settlers brought the game to India, South America and Europe. During the late 19th century, soccer was brought to the United States. However, it did not prove popular until after World War I. In 1908, soccer was made an Olympic event. Since 1952, Hungary has won the most gold medals with three.

Even today, although it is an international game, it has been slow to gain popularity as an intercollegiate sport in the USA. It is however, gaining popularity and is being included in physical education programs in many schools. Also, many local communities have started youth soccer leagues for children of all ages.

The game of soccer, or association football as it is properly called, is the Europe's most popular sport. Just about every country in the world plays soccer in some form or another. It is both physically and mentally demanding, requiring athletic skill and quick thinking.

There are many tales about how soccer began. Many civilizations claim that they discovered the sport. There are records of soccer like games having been played in China, Greece, Japan, and Mexico more than 2,000 years ago. Also the The Federation International de Football Association (FIFA) was formed in 1904 as an international governing body.

Today, FIFA, which is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland, has more than one hundred-forty member nations and overseas about thirty-nine million players worldwide. France, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Denmark, and Sweden were the founding fathers of FIFA. In 1905 Germany, Austria, and England joined the organization. At this time there was discussion of the first World Cup.

In soccer there are many rules that have changed. Back in the 1700's the playing field was shaped like a square. There were only four major markings on the field. They were the touchlines, goal lines, halfway line, and the eighteen-yard lines. When the Football Association (FA) was created in 1863, the first uniform rules were made.

FIFA now requires that soccer be played on a rectangular field between one hundred and one hundred-thirty yards long and between fifty and one hundred yards wide. For international matches the field should be between one hundred- ten and one hundred-twenty yards long and between seventy and eighty yards wide.

There are two goals, one placed at each end of the field. They are eight feet tall, eight yards across, and six feet deep. The lines that mark the sides of the field are called touchlines; those that mark the two ends of the field are called goal lines. Also there are five other distinctive lines. They are the halfway lines, the goal areas, the penalty areas, the corner marks, and the center circle.

Soccer players must learn to think for themselves during games. Since there are no time-outs, they hear from their coaches only at half time - and then only for a few minutes. If adjustments in team strategy are needed during play, the members of the team must know enough to make them by themselves. Each player must be adaptable enough to play both offense and defense, to take the responsibilities of a teammate in certain situations. Every player must be prepared to do everything. Soccer provides a fine balance between individual skills and teamwork. Playing winning soccer requires the cooperative effort of eleven men and the individual skills of each, and that's what makes a good soccer team.

About the Author

Dan Borlan is a professional SEO for Mike Filsaime Inc. If you require professional help you can contact Dan at: www.1certifiedinstaller.com

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