

Soccer's Continued Predicament in the United States: A Major Force in Sport Participation and the World of Playing

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Few things have become so universally accepted and understood as the languages of sport. These languages have transformed formerly local and unstructured games into what we have come to know as modern sports – with their rules, institutions, organizations, producers (players) and consumers (followers of the most varied kind).

The lecture will highlight the historical processes that led America to proceed on a different sports path from Europe. It will then turn to soccer's extant history in the United States and conclude with how soccer has always been present, indeed prominent, in America's sports history but how it also constituted itself quite differently. The lecture will end with a discussion of soccer's unique American characteristics – this convention being a case in point – and ponder as to whether soccer might at some point in the future enter America's mass-based sports culture in becoming the fifth major team sport that millions actually also follow rather than “merely” play.