

Isle Soccer History Starts in late's 1800 | Print |

Written by Joey Richards

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Back in 1954, a Daily News writer by the name of Corlis Holt saw great promise in the sport of soccer.

“It is a fast-moving, exciting sport,” he wrote.

Holt was surprised the sport hadn't caught on like football — a sport born from soccer — especially at the teenage level. He thought it would be a good idea for someone on the island to form a junior league for ages 11 to 14.

Soccer had been played on Galveston before the turn of the 20th century. It was likely played well before the first organized football game was played by Ball High on the island in 1892, a game that also proved to be the first involving a high school team in the state of Texas.

But the first soccer club wasn't formed on the island until 1911, when a group of former British players created the Galveston Association Football Club. The club played teams from Houston and Port Arthur, and it also organized games against the crews of various steamships that visited Galveston.

The Galveston team even played for a state title in 1916, losing to Dallas, 4-2.

After that 1916 game, the Fort Crockett Olympic Club and Pirate Soccer Club joined the Galveston Association in the first island-wide league.

The Pirate club claimed Galveston's first state title by beating Dallas, 3-0, on New Year's Day in 1921 in Galveston.

Star Dairy, a Pirate club team, won state in 1932, beating Dallas' Union Fidelity, 2-0.

Another Galveston team, Falstaff, won state titles in the 1937-38 and 1938-39 seasons.

By the 1920s, the Galveston soccer games were drawing large crowds. You can imagine the excitement in watching the local teams play more savvy players from the steamships that were docked in the island port.

Perhaps the biggest game played came in 1935 when the Pirate club battled a team from the British battleship HMS Dragon. The Dragon team was the champion of the British West Indies fleet, but it lost a hard-fought game, 2-1, before a large, overflowing crowd.

One British officer was quoted as saying, "By George, this is a fast game."

Yet by the mid 50s, the sport didn't have a foothold at the youth level in Galveston County. Holt was convinced the sport had a future at the youth level. The youngsters just needed good role models.

"If there were some good professional soccer teams in the country, the game would doubtless spread swiftly among the youngsters," he wrote.

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