



# NEWS RELEASE

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## AZTECS SIGN JOHAN CRUYFF -- THE BEST SOCCER PLAYER IN THE WORLD

LOS ANGELES--The greatest soccer player in the world is now a Los Angeles Aztec.

Johan Cruyff, internationally acclaimed as the top performer in the game today and regarded by many as the most skillful player to ever play the game, today signed a multi-year contract with the Aztecs. He will make his North American Soccer League (NASL) debut tomorrow night (Wednesday) when the Aztecs play host to the Rochester Lancers in a 7:30 game at the Rose Bowl.

The 32-year-old Cruyff (pronounced YO-han KROYF), joins the Aztecs after spending nine years (1965-73) with Ajax of Holland and the last five seasons (1974-78) with Barcelona (Spain). The accomplishments of the 5-9, 150-pounder, on both a team and individual level, are second to none.

In his 14 year career, Cruyff, a native of Amsterdam, Holland, led his teams to six league championships, three European championships, one club team World Cup, and in 1974, he directed the Dutch National Team to the finals of the World Cup.

Cruyff's individual honors are equally impressive: five times named Dutch Soccer Player of the Year; three times selected European Soccer Player of the Year (a record); and in 1974, voted the Most Valuable Player in the World Cup.

Cruyff retired from soccer in November of 1978 after leading Barcelona to the National Championship (National Cup) of Spain. His return to soccer is not only a major coup for the Aztecs, but for the NASL as well.

"There is no question that the city of Los Angeles deserves a soccer superstar and now it has one," said Aztec President Larry Friend. "Los Angeles will now be the showcase for the top player in the world.

"I am confident that with Johan Cruyff, the Aztecs will be one of the powers in the NASL for a long time to come. At the same time, this should let the rest of the world know that the NASL is rapidly becoming a major soccer force to be reckoned with."

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The signing reunites Cruyff with his longtime coach, Rinus Michels, regarded by many as the greatest coach in the game today. Michels, who joined the Aztecs prior to the 1979 season, coached Cruyff for six seasons at Ajax and for four seasons at Barcelona.

"Naturally, I am delighted at the prospect of working with Johan again," said Michels. "As a player, he is blessed with the best skills and mental approach to the game that I've seen in the last 15 years. No one can do more with the ball, can read the game better, or has a better instinct for making the right move in the right situation than Cruyff.

"From the American spectators' viewpoint, I think that Cruyff has more to bring to the game than even Pele. You must remember that Pele came to the NASL late in his career. Cruyff is still at the top of his game and can still demonstrate the skills that have made him the world's greatest player."

Cruyff started playing soccer at the age of four in East Amsterdam, and as he recalls, "started training seriously" at the age of seven. When he was 10, he was selected from over 200 hopefuls to play on the Ajax Juniors.

At age 17 (1964), Cruyff made his debut with the Ajax Senior team and in his first game scored the only goal in a 3-1 loss. For the next nine years, the goals would come in bunches.

Twice during his career with Ajax he led the Dutch National League in scoring -- netting 33 goals in 1966-67 and 25 goals in 1971-72. In all, Cruyff scored an incredible 256 goals in 350 career games for Ajax.

In that time, he directed Ajax to six Dutch League championships, four Dutch Cup championships, and a record three consecutive European Cups (Championships) in 1971, 1972 and 1973.

In 1972, he helped lead Ajax to the club team World Cup Championship, which matches the champions of Europe and South America. After the two game series, the London Daily Mirror wrote of Cruyff, "Johan Cruyff has taken over the role of Pele as the world's most complete and spectacular soccer player."

But the best was still to come. In 1974, Cruyff rose to even greater heights in the seven games of the final round of the World Cup. He scored two goals against Argentina, one against Brazil, assisted on all four goals against Bulgaria, and was fouled in the first minute of the World Cup Championship game which allowed Holland to score its lone goal in a 2-1 loss to West Germany. Following the games, he was named "The Best Soccer Player in the World."

Cruyff created world headlines of a different nature a year earlier in 1973 when he left Ajax to play for Barcelona. His transfer fee was \$2.5 million, the largest transfer fee ever paid for a player at that time.

At Barcelona, Cruyff was reunited with Michels, who had come to coach Barcelona two years earlier. Cruyff immediately picked up where he left off in Holland, and directed the team to the Spanish League Championship in 1974 and second place league finishes in 1976 and 1977. Last year, Barcelona won the National Cup (Championship) of Spain.

Cruyff came to the United States last fall and played in two exhibition games with the New York Cosmos. In November, 1978, he played in his "Farewell Game," when Ajax met Bayern Munich in Amsterdam.

The signing was the culmination of months of negotiations between the Aztecs and Cruyff's agents, principally George Taylor of Inter Soccer, located in New York, who negotiated the contract and manages all of Cruyff's business endeavors.

Married, Johan and his wife, Danny, have three children -- Chantal, 8; Susila, 7; and Jordi, 5.

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JOHAN CRUYFF

Born: April 25, 1947

Place of Birth: Amsterdam, Holland

HONORS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

European Soccer Player of the Year: 1971, 1973, 1974 \*

Dutch Soccer Player of the Year: 1968, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1974

World Cup Most Valuable Player: 1974

\* Matches the record set by Alfredo DiStefano (3 times)

MISCELLANEOUS

1972 -- Played on an "All-World" team that met Red Star Belgrade in 1972 and scored one goal.

1975 -- Captain of the World All-Star team (on which Pele played) that played Anderlecht of Belgium.

PERSONAL

Was raised by his mother after his father died when he was 12 ... Speaks Dutch, Spanish, French, English and Italian ... Enjoys baseball, tennis and skiing ... Did television commentary in England for the World Cup Matches in 1978.