

MEDIA RELEASE

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DATE: April 12, 1989

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WESTERN AND AMERICAN SOCCER LEAGUES ANNOUNCE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME, PLAN MERGER

SEATTLE, WA; SCARSDALE, NY--The American Soccer League and the Western Soccer League champions will meet in San Jose, California on September 9, 1989, in a national pro soccer championship game. WSL Chairman William Sage and ASL Chairman Clive Toye announced the title contest simultaneously on both coasts today.

Toye and Sage also announced that they have begun laying the foundation for a merger that will establish a professional circuit of at least 20 teams by 1992.

The two leagues' decision to begin working toward a merger represents a major development in support of the United States Soccer Federation's announced plan to establish a three-tiered national professional league system.

"This is a most significant step forward by our two leagues--a step we believe will help rally the soccer fans of this country as the 1994 World Cup approaches," said Toye and Sage in a joint statement. "These are the two premier leagues in the United States, and it only makes sense for us to join forces in pursuit of our common goals: the promotion of the game, the development of the American player and the wise management of big-league soccer."

According to the joint resolution adopted by the WSL and ASL Boards of Directors, the leagues will begin work at once to finalize details of the eventual merger and begin paving the way for their teams to join the USSF's new Professional Division. A timetable for interleague play will be developed, but not implemented until such a schedule is economically viable.

The two leagues will also devise a joint plan for developing of regional divisions in the central US.

The WSL, known until September, 1988 as the "Western Soccer Alliance," was founded in 1985 with four charter clubs. It opens its fifth season April 22 with nine teams: the defending-champion Seattle Storm, Portland Timbers, Sacramento Jazz, San Francisco Bay Blackhawks, Real Santa Barbara, California Kickers (Los Angeles area), San Diego Nomads, L.A. Heat, and Arizona Condors, based in the Phoenix area.

The ASL begins its 1989 campaign on April 16. All 10 teams are veterans of the League's inaugural season in 1988. Last year's champions, the Washington Diplomats, are joined by the Albany Capitals, Boston Bolts, New Jersey Eagles, Maryland Bays, Washington Stars, Tampa Bay Rowdies, Orlando Lions, Ft. Lauderdale Strikers, and Miami Sharks. An eleventh team, based in the South Jersey/Philadelphia area, will begin play in 1990.

"Since the WSL was formed, its stated purpose has been to serve as the forerunner for a new national professional league," Sage explained. "With this agreement to merge we feel that, in essence, we will take a large step toward that goal. We look forward to working with the ASL officials and clubs to bring about a smooth transition."

"The ASL began with identical objectives and philosophies," Toye continued, "first and foremost being the desire to be of benefit to the game of soccer. With that common ideological base, the practical issues of merging should not be particularly difficult."

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