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NEWS

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WINGS SIGN SOCCER VETERAN LIOTART

WICHITA, Kan. (Sept. 30, 1980) -- The Wichita Wings announced today the signing of top American soccer veteran Hank Liotart (LEE-oh-tart) to a contract for the coming Major Indoor Soccer League season.

Liotart comes to the Wings from the San Diego Sockers, semifinalists this past summer in the North American Soccer League. He is considered one of the top Americans in the sport and was one of 18 players selected for the U.S. Bicentennial team in 1976.

The 5-foot-11, 175-pound Liotart will play either midfielder or defender for the Wings. While he has never played indoor soccer before, he was Head Coach of the Major Indoor Soccer League's Hartford Hellions last season.

Liotart has ties to the Wichita and South Central Kansas area. While he is now an American citizen, he immigrated to the United States from Holland in the late 1950's. His point-of-entry was Wichita, and he lived in the city for a short while as a teenager. His family soon moved to Newton, Kan., where they lived for about a year before moving to California. Liotart graduated from Ramona High in Riverside, Cal. in 1962. He still has relatives who live in the Wichita area.

Liotart also has ties to Wings Head Coach Roy Turner. The two played together for the Cleveland Stokers of the young NASL in 1968 and for the Dallas Tornado in 1969.

MORE

MORE ON LIOTART...

"I know Hank Liotart probably as well as any player we now have on the team," commented Wings Coach Roy Turner in making the announcement. "And knowing him as I do I have great confidence he will be a tremendous asset to this club."

Liotart has played for no less than eight professional teams in his 16-year career. He turned pro after returning to Holland in 1964 to pursue a soccer career (Professional soccer was nearly non-existent in the U.S. at that time), making his start with Blue White, a first-division Amsterdam team.

He returned to the U.S. to sign with the Stokers in 1968, then played for Dallas in 1969. In 1970 he returned once again to Holland to play for Pec of Zwolle and later Nec of Neirnwegen.

In 1974 he signed with the Seattle Sounders of the North American Soccer League and played in Seattle until mid-season 1976, when he transferred to the Portland Timbers at his request. It was in 1976 he was selected one of the top 18 **American** players as a member of the Bicentennial team.

After a year away from pro soccer in 1978, Liotart came back to sign with the Sockers for the 1979 season. He was head coach for the Hellions last winter, then returned to the Sockers for the outdoor season.

Liotart is a firm believer in the indoor game in the United States.

"It's opened up a new lease on life for me," he said. "I didn't really like what I saw happening in soccer in Holland in 1978 and I see it happening outdoors in the United States now. The game has been taken away from the skilled player somewhat. That's not the case indoors, however. Indoors you're on the ball a hell of a lot more. It's a skill game."

Liotart has fond memories of the Wichita crowds from last year when he came here with the Hellions.

"I thought you had an excellent crowd atmosphere there," he said. "The people seemed to be very much behind the team. I'm looking forward to playing for Wichita."

Liotart and his wife Sharon were expected in Wichita late Wednesday afternoon.