

The Development of Soccer in Canada: A Social and Historical Perspective

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It is somewhat ironic that soccer, the “world game” has failed to establish itself as a premier sport in North America where sport is a vital part of North American culture.

In Canada, there appears to be many historical, geographical and cultural factors which have impeded the development of soccer in this country and prevented it from usurping or at least joining the ranks of the “big time sports”.

Canada’s immense physical size and it’s harsh winters are definitely barriers to soccer’s development but one must also look at historical and cultural factors to fully understand the problems that soccer has faced in Canada.

The fact that soccer has failed to date in the USA and the dominance of American culture in Canada, combined with the fact that the very patient nature of the game of soccer may be incompatible with the fast pace of North American society where instant gratification is demanded and expected, are obstacles to the acceptance of soccer by Canadians.

From a historical perspective all of the current “big time” sports in North America were established on this continent although they may merely be variations of foreign games. Thus soccer faces a problem in that it is asking Canadians to accept the game in it’s current status, which is that of a foreign sport. The ethnic influence and the ethnic stigma attached to soccer in Canada has helped the game emerge from it’s grass roots in this country but also impedes it from being accepted by the Canadian public as a truly native sport.