

Fall River Recognized as Nation's Soccer Center for Extended Period

With the spread of soccer football throughout the world in the old days, it is doubtful if there has been any spot in this country where the game was more readily accepted by players and fans alike than right here in Fall River.

When the sport started here, Garfield was president; the first of New York's bridges, the Brooklyn, was under construction; the population of Fall River was little better than 50,000; John L. Sullivan was looked upon as the coming heavyweight champion, and Forest Hill Gardens, now St. Vincent's Home, was operating as a shore resort.

Fall River boys were kicking a ball around when William Whittle and others reached here from across the water and the new arrivals lost little time in organizing the boys and teaching them the fundamentals of football.

Newark and Paterson, New Jersey cities, were a few months ahead of us in taking up soccer, but it was not long before this city became the soccer center of the country and today Fall River is known wherever soccer is played or discussed. It actually seemed that football played its part in the city's fast growing population.

Early Playing Fields

Playing pitches and the ball itself were early problems. Open lots, sometimes cow pastures, were leased or permission was granted for their use, and what fields they were! Fences, stone walls, tree stumps and protruding rocks presented many difficulties, but willing hands and determination gradually overcame these obstacles.

All kinds of footballs were used, sometimes just a bladder, but the one giving the most satisfaction was of rubber, inflated to the size of a regulation soccer ball, but a trifle light. The ball needed inflating very often and a brass tube was used in the operation. This tube acted as a key to a protected lock.

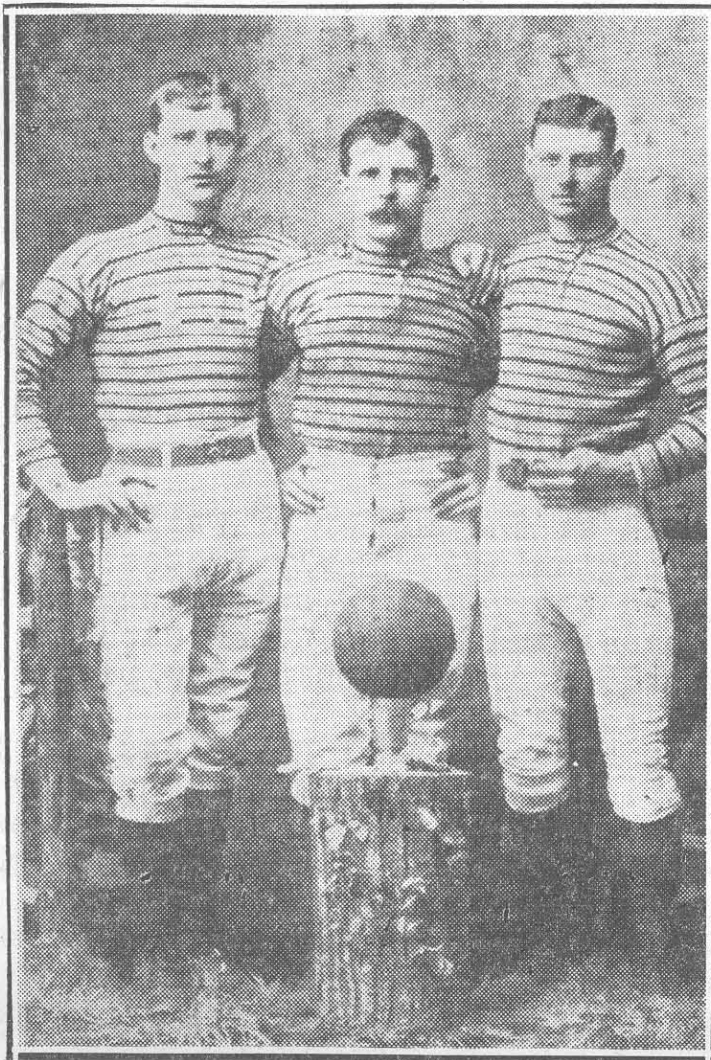
As soon as clubs were organized, Thomas Angell of the Eastern section and William Lowe of the Southern section began to make the leather-cased balls. These were a big improvement but it was not until 1887 that Whittle, returning from England, brought back six English footballs, the first high grade ones ever used here. Angell later had the agency for these balls and also football shoes.

Use Different Styles

According to Whittle, a lot on Pleasant Street was the scene of much practice and schooling and frequently sides were chosen and games played.

Whittle recalled a match in which one club insisted on playing its own style game, kicking and striking the ball with the hands. Whittle's team favored straight football, the game the players were trying to establish here. A compromise was reached, with each team playing its own style. This game, played on Freelove's pasture, east of County Street, in 1882, was for 50 cents a man and was won by Whittle's team.

Playing for 25 or 50 cents and sometimes \$1 a man was not uncommon before fields were enclosed. Clubs developed faster as these games brought together the best players available. Rugged defense



FIRST SOCCER UNIFORMS: East Ends are remembered as the first Fall River soccer team to wear uniforms and among the team's stars were, left to right, William Whittle, Heywood and Darlington. Whittle was known as "The Father of Soccer" in Fall River. Holding the ball is the Nat Fields Cup, one of the early soccer trophies.

the Beatties finally convinced their proteges to adopt the English style and develop a real team.

The North Enders gradually improved and when Beattie thought they were ready he arranged a game with the East Ends, one of the earliest contest ever played here.

Beattie won a medal as a member of the North Ends in the Fields Cup tournament of 1885. He played outside left.

He had the unusual distinction of playing in games which opened four football grounds here—North End, Rovers, Olympics and East Ends. Among the members of the first North End team organized by Beattie were Davy Emmett and Tom O'Hearn.

Probably the outstanding product of Beattie's coaching was Ernest Bowden, a North Ender who developed into one of the city's outstanding soccer players. Walter was a Somerset resident when he died.

Games between the East Ends and North Ends, Walton Cup contest, were played on the Ferry Lane Grounds (Brightman Street) opposite the present St. Mathieu's Church. It was not until 1884 that

that time. With this season came the Baxter Cup.

The Doyle brothers organized the Conanics in 1884, named after the Conanicut Mill. The club's playing field was at the corner of Bay and Middle Streets and, although too small for match games, was well suited for training. Most of the Conanics' games were played at South Park.

In the lineup of the Conanics were the Doyle brothers, Swarbrick and Harry Holden, all of whom had played football in Clithero, England. Spencer of the East Ends and two or three other players in the city had also seen service before coming to this country.

The first lineup of the Conanics included J. White, W. Doyle, W. Houghton, A. Shoard, G. Thomas, R. Hindle, T. Burke. William Connell was the goalkeeper. Players wore blue uniforms. This team defeated the Globes, with Connell's work in the goal featuring the game.

County Street Rovers

Rivalry growing right in the heart of the East End club's neighborhood resulted in the organization of the County Street Rovers. This club was organized by James

imparted to local players the knowledge and skill they needed.

Nothing but a hurricane or an extremely heavy fall of snow would prevent the playing of a game at this stage of soccer's development.

County Street Rovers finished the 1884-85 season in great form, winning eight games in a row.

Recruiting from the Globes and Conanics in 1885, George Marsland, John Brown, Ashworth, Thomas Wilkinson and Ephriam Mays organized the Olympics with T. H. Tomlinson as captain.

The Fall River Football Association had changed its name to the Bristol County Football Association and in the first game of the new organization the Rovers defeated the East Ends. J. Gates was in goal for the Rovers and Sam Larocque for the East Ends. Larocque later became a big league baseball player.

The Marsh Cup Competition for 1885 ended with the Rovers forfeiting to East Ends. Player George Thomas of the Conanics was the bone of contention, the East Ends claiming that his name was on the eligible list, but the Rovers refused to play with Thomas in the East End lineup. The umpire ordered the East Ends to take the field, kick off and score a goal.

The first Olympics lineup included Brown, Bell, Mays, Pilling, Holland, Darlington, Clarkson, Ingham, Williamson, Hostor and Brandon.

Chace Street Rovers came into prominence in the 1885-86 season when they entered the Bristol County Cup series. In their first game away from home the Rovers defeated the ONTs of New Jersey, one of the outstanding teams in the East. The result caused great rejoicing here and thereafter the Chace Street Rovers were eager to meet the strongest opposition available.

A newspaper article at this period said that refereeing was very bad. This opinion was borne out in the same game between the Rovers and ONTs. The referee was "fired" with 10 minutes to play and he was replaced by Mr. Clark, president of the ONT Company. The Rovers scored the winning goal in the last few minutes.

Allowed \$4.50 Expenses

Harry Adams was authority for the statement that the Rovers were allowed \$4.50 for expenses on the trip to Newark. Eight players used a single stateroom. The following season, in the American Cup final, the visiting team was allowed \$40 for expenses.

Fall River Rovers opened their grounds, at the corner of Bedford Street and Oak Grove Avenue, on Sept. 5, 1887. It was a big job to get the field in condition for the opening and despite the fact that players worked many weeks in their spare time on the grounds, they were on the job from 5 A. M. until close to game time on opening day.

This game was a battle from whistle to whistle, according to a newspaper account, with Lang playing a great game in goal for the Rovers. The management of the Rovers was encouraged by the large turnout of fans.

Canadian Team Here

First Canadian team to play in

Playing for 25 or 50 cents and sometimes \$1 a man was not uncommon before fields were enclosed. Clubs developed faster as these games brought together the best players available. Rugged defense and team play soon followed. Organizing, naming of clubs in different sections, league and cup play followed in quick order.

Organization of the East End club was started in 1882 by Whittle, Jack Mercer and Tim Silverwood, with Albert Mercer as secretary. In 1883 the East Ends played the North Ends for what was then called the Walton Cup and later known as the George Fields Cup.

An early lineup in a newspaper named these players: Jack Burke, Hickey, Cowley, Knowles, Blakely, Thomas, Darlington, Walsh, J. Knowles, T. Burke. Swarbrick was the umpire, Silverwood timer, and Mercer, referee. At this time, newspapers gave scant attention to soccer.

Beattie Prominent

A leading figure in starting soccer in the North End of the city was Walter Beattie, who played soccer in England and lost no time in teaching North End Boys the game after his arrival here.

According to Walter, who was assisted in teaching the game by his brother, the boys at first were content to kick the ball in the air, but

Games between the East Ends and North Ends, Walton Cup contest, were played on the Ferry Lane Grounds (Brightman Street) opposite the present St. Mathieu's Church. It was not until 1884 that the East Ends were defeated.

A series arranged between the East Ends and Globes was given advance newspaper notice, the first time this had been done. The opening game was to be played on Pleasant Street, rear of ball grounds (17th and 18th Streets) starting at 4 o'clock. (Mills were running until 3 o'clock at that time). The second was listed for White's Meadow, in the rear of Bellevue Garden, corner of South Main and King Philip Streets.

East Ends won the first game of the series and a newspaper account of the game was of a most discouraging nature. The writer could see no prospects for soccer's future.

East Ends-Globes

Following are the lineups for the first East Ends-Globes game, in the style used in those days:

East Ends—Andrew Gibson, goal; William Whittle and Granville Cook, centers (halfback and forward); Joseph Swarbrick and Richard Lonsdale, left wing; Millin Crook and William Spencer, right wing; William Harwood and J. Layton, halfbacks; James Marsh and John Lang, fullback; Harold Crook, umpire.

Globes—Richard Roberts, goal; Whittaker and Ashworth, centers; Harry Cooper and Jack Lord, left wing; Thomas Broughton and John Barrett, right wing; William Emmett and Abraham Holden halfbacks; William Bell and Joseph Yates, fullbacks; William Ratcliffe, umpire.

The second game of the series went to the East Ends by a 4-1 score. Featuring the game was a goal by Swarbrick from 20 yards out. The Globes' lineup was changed to include the Doyle brothers, Pat and Bill. A newspaper account said that Jim Marsh threw one of the Globes over his head, which "created laughter and applause."

1884-1885 Season

Charles Baxter of the Park Hotel had secured from the city fathers the privilege of using the east side of the South Park for soccer and the playing pitch was probably the best the city had up to

County Street Rovers

Rivalry growing right in the heart of the East End club's neighborhood resulted in the organization of the County Street Rovers. This club was organized by James Marsh, Isaac Buckley, Thomas Buckley and Thomas Burke. The team took the name of Rovers from the Blackburn Rovers of England.

The Rovers were really organized to defeat the East Ends, but it was a long time before the rivals came together. Rovers won the first game but lost the second.

Rovers played the Barnabys in the Fields Tournament and won the game. Lineup of the Rovers: J. Swords, goal; J. Farrell and W. Brown, fullbacks; J. Thomas, J. Buckley and T. Bradley, halfbacks; R. Bell, H. Tierney, right wing; T. Sullivan, center; R. Smith and H. Wilde, left wing; J. Waring, umpire, and J. Lanton, referee.

North End Grounds

First enclosed field for soccer was the North End Grounds, located directly south of the North Burial Grounds, east of railroad, just off North Main Street. It was necessary to go down a lane to reach the playing field, which was leased for football and baseball by the North End Cricket Club. Admission was charged (15 cents) for the first time on Sept. 19, 1885, for a game between North Ends and East Ends.

The Bristol County Cup was put in competition in the 1885 season, which also saw the opening of the East Ends' new grounds.

Baxter Cup

Late in the Spring, East Ends were eliminated by Conanicut in the fourth game to decide the winner of the Baxter Cup. The contest was marked by a spectacular finish when George Thomas, showing fine ball control, scored the winning goal on a beautiful solo dash. Thomas was also a professional cricket player. This series was hard fought and the result was a big disappointment to the East Ends.

This was a most successful season in the development of interest in soccer and newspapers were giving generous space to the sport.

At this time Fall River lost two of its best players when Joe Swarbrick and Harry Holden left for Newark, N. J. Both were remembered for a long time as they had

newspaper account, with Lang playing a great game in goal for the Rovers. The management of the Rovers was encouraged by the large turnout of fans.

Canadian Team Here

First Canadian team to play in Fall River battled to a scoreless tie with the pick of New England on the Rovers' grounds. Whittle and Korzeneski were in the lineup of the All-Stars.

Results of Christmas Day games in 1897: East Ends defeated the Conanicut, Olympics beat Providence, Rovers won over the Almas of New Jersey and the East End downed Pawtucket Free Wanderers.

A Second Class League was organized at this time, comprising the Harrisons, Pleasant Street Rovers, Clippers, Ramblers, Shove Wanderers, Fall River Rovers, Seconds, Granites and Wamsuttas.

In the first round of the American Cup, the first cup game played in Fall River, Rovers defeated East Ends on the former's grounds. This brought soccer some valuable publicity and it was noticeable that the sport was rapidly rising in popularity.

Rovers National Champs

With big Jack Mullen in goal, Rovers reached the final round of the American Cup by beating Kearny (NJ) Rangers. On April 14, 1888, Rovers won the first national championship by turning back Almas of New Jersey, 5-0, in the cup final. The Rovers' lineup:

Mullen, goal; Lonsdale and Bradley, fullbacks; Buckley, Waring and Adams, halfbacks; Bell and Bruckshaw, right wing; Wilde and Duff, left wing; Blakely, center.

Goals for the Rovers were scored by Bruckshaw (2), Blakeley, Wilde and Duff. The score was received here by telegraph and was the occasion for a celebration in the East End. Arrangements were made for a big demonstration, including a torchlight parade and banquet, when the players returned home.

Olympics enjoyed a fine season, but games at the North End grounds had not been drawing so well. However, a game between the Olympics and Rovers, won by the former, attracted the largest crowd to attend a game on the North End Grounds up to that time.

Denny Shay's Debut

Later the Rovers defeated the Thistles of New York in a game that marked the debut of the Denny Shay, goalkeeper, with the Rovers.



DeWAR TROPHY: Known as the National Challenge Cup, this trophy is awarded annually to the team winning the open soccer championship of the United States and has been held by Fall River teams a number of times. The cup was the gift of Sir Thomas DeWar.

Fall River Teams Won Many No

In modern soccer history, since 1914 to be exact, Fall River teams have won nine national championships—five Open and four Amateur. Ponta Delgadas of Tiverton have taken seven national crowns—one Open and six Amateur.

Fall River teams have been runnersup twice in Open championship finals, so have the Pontas.

In Amateur finals, Fall River clubs were runnersup twice and on one occasion the final was not played because it was impossible to obtain suitable grounds.

Pontas have a perfect record in Amateur championship finals, six victories in six opportunities.

The National Challenge Cup Competition, also known as the Open Cup, started in the 1913-14 season and Fall River Rovers were in the final for three straight seasons, starting in 1915-16, when Bethlehem (Pa.) won 1-0.

Rovers reached the top in 1916-17, when Capt. Tommy Swords scored the only goal of the game with Bethlehem in the first minute of play.

In the 1917-18 final, Rovers tied Bethlehem, 2-2, and in the replay the Pennsylvania booters scored a 3-0 win.

Then came the period when the Fall River Football Club, playing

home games at Mark Stadium in Tiverton, dominated soccer in this area.

Fall River won the National Open title in 1923-24, 1926-27, 1929-30 and 1930-31, defeating teams from St. Louis, Detroit, Cleveland and Chicago in that order. The 1930-31 title was the last won by a Fall River team.

Ponta Delgadas made the Open final for the first time in the 1945-46 season, losing to Chicago Vikings. The next season Pontas won the Open crown by beating Spartas of Chicago. In 1949-50, Pontas lost to Simpkins of St. Louis.

First Fall River team to reach the