

The National Spread of Soccer Fever

Thousands of mad-driven, die-hard fans march into Seattle's CenturyLink Field Sunday night wearing blue and green getting ready to cheer on their team from the sidelines. With the roar of nearly 47,000 fans in attendance, the noise level could be heard for miles and miles outside of the stadium. The surprise is that these fans were not there for the hometown champion NFL team, the Seattle Seahawks, but instead for a different kind of "football". They were there to cheer on the local soccer team, the Seattle Sounders, as they were pitted against the Los Angeles Galaxy in a fight to keep their season alive. With record attendance throughout the 2014 MLS season, and the spread of fever throughout the summer, there is no denying the fact that, soccer, a sport in once nobody knew about in the US, is having its moment, and is on it's way to taking a place as one of the most beloved sports in American culture.

Over the summer, a record breaking 24.7 million people tuned in for the U.S Men's National team game against Portugal in the World Cup, with 18 million of those people watching on ESPN alone. This broke the record of a nationally televised soccer game, and in fact have even surpassed the numbers drawn by the NBA Finals or the Stanley Cup finals. In each game an estimated of 20,000 American fans attended, and around 200,000 American fans bought tickets throughout the World Cup, leading to the U.S having bought the second most tickets out of thirty-two countries. Then in Michigan, 110,000 people poured into Michigan Stadium to watch a star filled match against two huge international teams, Real Madrid vs Manchester United. This match broke records, as this was the highest attended match in the United States ever, and proved to the rest of the world that soccer fever is a disease that thrives in the U.S, and without any sort of cure. About 917,000 people tune into the weekly English Premiere League matches shown by NBC, with advertising campaigns going up by 93% for matches each week.

Shifting the scene to Major League Soccer, the U.S' domestic league, the Sounders being one of the most beloved teams in the MLS, and having stars like Clint Dempsey and Deandre Yedlin, average about 43,000 fans per game and even have had record breaking attendance set over 60,000 fans a game. The Sounders are not the only ones breaking records when it comes to people showing up to cheer on the team, but small clubs like Toronto FC have increased from 18,000 to 22,000 fans as they begin on renovations for the stadium to increase the capacity to 30,000. Also the value of each team has spiked up. In which once an MLS team was worth an average of \$37 million, the average is now \$107 million. TV networks are beginning to see the interest of fans in the United States and are handing out major deals to Major League Soccer to broadcast the sport. Recently, a new deal has been reached with ESPN, Fox, and Univision that

will bring in a total of \$720 million to the MLS. The league has seen a viewer growth of 60% throughout the season, and can only expect more success in the future.

With how much publicity the league has gotten over the year, there have been more deals involving the expansion. The two newest additions to the league, set to play in 2015 and 2016 are Orlando City, and newly planned powerhouse New York FC, who are owned by the champion Barclay Premier League Team, Manchester City. Both teams include major international signings of superstars like Kaka, David Villa, and Frank Lampard. These teams have already sold a combined 10,500 season tickets, without ever even playing a game yet. Even more teams are planned to come into the league by 2017, with planned cities such as Sacramento, Las Vegas and Detroit.

As leagues expand and soccer continues to linger on American interests, the quality of soccer in the U.S has gotten better. Players like Clint Dempsey are proven international superstars who are known as elites in the positions they play throughout the world. Young players like Deandre Yedlin and Julian Green are sought out by international powerhouses across Europe. With a lot of American players finding success in the BPL, arguably the best league in the world, international teams like Liverpool, and Bayern Munich have not only shown interest in young American athletes, but also have some in their rosters. With Jurgen Klinsmann coaching the U.S National Men's soccer team, the international team shows an immense amount of potential to grow, being already a well respected team after the 2014 World Cup. Programs around the nation have millions of kids playing soccer, and now that soccer is more of a well known sport, more children are more likely to grow up with soccer being their first love.

After the outstanding support for the U.S Men's National Team in the summer, the soccer fervor will go onto linger forever in the United States. More and people are coming to recognize soccer, and as the new generation grows up, they will come to know as soccer being one of the major sports in their lives. All the campaigns produced by major leagues have proven to have effect on the people, and Fifa 15 a soccer game created by EA has even grown to become be one of the best selling games in America. The major sports known in the U.S right now are basketball, football, hockey, and baseball, but with a budding audience, and an abundance of room to grow, soccer has the possibility to take over one of the sports in the “major four”, or even make it “the top five sports in the U.S”.