

SOCCER: HISTORY WITH A KICK!

By Marissa Bea

Ah, soccer, the Beautiful Game.

This is the first of our soccer series, which will continue through next year, essentially spanning the months between the [Men's FIFA World Cup](#) in 2026 and the [Women's FIFA World Cup](#) in 2027.

Let's "kick" off with a brief history of soccer in the United States, and in subsequent articles we'll weave in the history of soccer in Redmond, including stories from locals, RHS members, and maybe more.

Soccer-like sports—that is, kicking, running, and quick decision-making—have an extensive history, and variations of ball-kicking games can be traced back hundreds of years to multiple countries. As we know it today, "association football" (its official name) was invented by the English in 1863. It actually shares its early origins with rugby, but there were a number of schisms related to codes of conduct (those wanting to use their hands vs. feet), and the two sports split early on, with rugby later forming its first official union in 1871.

Like many cultural traditions, soccer was brought to the United States by immigrants, who introduced the game and helped lay the foundation for its growth across the country. Only a few years after soccer was established in England, the first official association football game was played in Waukesha, Wisconsin in 1866 ([US Soccer History –Timeline](#)). While collegiate athletes weren't fully sold on soccer, it remained popular among immigrant communities, and less than 20 years later, the first soccer league in the US was formed in St. Louis in 1883. Soccer has been played in the United States since the mid-1800s—well before Washington became a state in 1889.

Soccer has a wonderfully colorful history, and Redmond is but a small but mighty part of the largest, most popular sport in the world. We suggest reading or watching more about it (see Sidebar). Nowadays, Redmond boasts some of the strongest youth soccer clubs in the country, as well as the largest soccer complex west of the Mississippi (King County's Sixty Acres Park).



Image: Sammamish Valley News

Share Your Soccer Story!

Got memories or photos of soccer in Redmond? Email us at programs@redmondhistoricalsociety.org. Your contributions may be added to the Redmond Historical Society archives.

'Meet Me at Marymoor' Watch Party July 19

Celebrate with your community! In anticipation of the FIFA World Cup (June 11–July 19, 2026), the City of Redmond has designed and scheduled a wide variety of events and activities with its [Fútbol for All](#) speaker series, watch parties, and more. Join the final event, "Meet Me at Marymoor," on Sunday, July 19, 10:00 AM–3:00 PM at Marymoor Park for a live World Cup screening, entertainment, food vendors, kids' activities, and community booths. More info: [Redmond's Ready for the World](#)

Recommended Reading:

[How Soccer Explains the World](#) by Franklin Foer

Recommended Viewing:

[Bend it like Beckham](#) (2002), directed by Gurinder Chadha