

SOCCER: THE WORLD'S LANGUAGE

By Marissa Bea

My (Abbreviated) Soccer Story

In 1989 (or thereabouts), I kicked my first soccer ball (well, a foam one, in elementary-school gym class). In the decades that followed, I tried my hand at a half dozen other sports, but soccer stuck—fast and hard. It's my second language, and one that I share with half the world (at least).

Growing up, I spent my summers at Skyhawks camp, and I love that they're still around, helping kids get better at all kinds of sports. By about age 10, I'd found a permanent position as goalkeeper. I consistently played on city teams, and during middle school I played for both school and city simultaneously, a double life I maintained through high school. Then I went off to theater and art school and had my only hiatus from soccer, something I will never do again. It was horrible!

While I've come nowhere close to playing on a professional level, my soccer journey has taken me farther than I ever expected: to a teen tournament in the Netherlands, adult leagues in New York City, and weekly games in Seattle for the past 12 years, with a smattering of adult tournaments in between. The plan is to play until I physically can't anymore. Because that's what soccer does. It reels you in, quietly. It becomes a need rather than just a want.

The connections and friendships built from soccer are what last the longest, far beyond the point where my knees give out. My closest friends are people I've met through the game. It all comes back to that common language. It's not the only thing we have in common, but it is the place where we all find each other—the collective altar we worship at. Soccer is the most widely spoken language on the planet,

according to my very scientific research. Best of all, it's the easiest to learn.

Sport for Everyone

It was only in 1972 that [Title IX](#) was signed into law, making sex discrimination illegal: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." In terms of sports, Title IX effectively made it illegal for public schools to have a boys' sports team

without an equivalent girls' team.

Then came a rush of schools to comply, and an abundance of new opportunities for girls to play sports. While schools previously could have chosen to field girls' teams (and a good many did), they were now required to do so. Soccer excellence is perfectly encapsulated in the example of the 1991 United



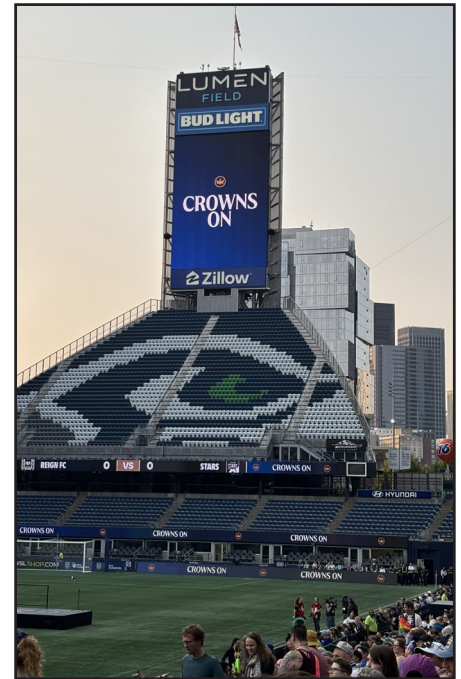
Author and sister en route to Skyhawks, ca. early 1990s.
Photo courtesy of the author

States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT). All women on this team were born just in time to benefit from mandatory equal sports participation. Less than 20 years later, they were champions of the first Women's World Cup. Competing at the highest levels has always been about opportunity. The USWNT has since won the top spot four times and continues to dominate.

Those players all started at the beginning. Kicking a soccer ball for the first time in a gym, on a field, or in a garage. They grew up in places just like Redmond, going to local sports

camps, spending weekends at tournaments, and participating in their school's sports teams. And I guarantee you, every one of them is a multisport athlete. Redmond is overflowing with opportunities for kids of all ages to play soccer, from community leagues at Arena Sports and teams in the Redmond school system to the elite Crossfire Premier Soccer Club, and more.

Best of all, Redmond's expansive green spaces are perfect for a quick, informal soccer game. After all, it's a simple language. All you need is a ball—and someone to kick it around with you.



Lumen Field, August 15, 2026.
Photo: Author's Collection

SHARE YOUR SOCCER STORY!

What's *your* history and connection to soccer in Redmond? If you have soccer stories you would like to share with us, please send us an email at programs@redmondhistoricalsociety.org.

PREPARE FOR THE NEXT WORLD CUP!

While still over a year away, the [FIFA Women's World Cup](#) will be here before we know it! I highly recommend you begin following [Seattle Reign](#), our region's professional women's team.

Recommended Reading:

[History of Title IX](#), Women's Sports Foundation [website](#)

Recommended Viewing:

[Ted Lasso](#) (Seasons 1–4), Apple TV