

U.S. Intercollegiate Men's Soccer History of 1905-1996

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Spring 2018 Updated 2/7/24

The origins of college soccer began in 1905 with the Intercollegiate Soccer Football League (ISFL), a forerunner to the Ivy League in the Eastern U.S. region.

The Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was formed on March 31, 1906 as a discussion group and rules-making body. The intent was to protect young people from dangerous and exploitive athletic practices at the time. In 1910, the organization became known as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). This group first held a Championship in 1921 for Track and Field.

During the years of 1905 through 1925, college soccer was a Fall sport with the exception of 1910 through 1914 when competition was held in the Spring. The ISFL organization determined a National Champion which did not involve any Post-Season Playoffs. Decisions were reached from a polling of their committee as based upon season records and the strength of competition.

The early years of the college game also included The Intercollegiate Soccer Football Association of America (ISFAA) which was a service organization of institutions that sponsored intercollegiate soccer. It began in 1926 on the East Coast and, by 1970, became known as The Intercollegiate Soccer Association of America (ISAA).

From its inception in 1926 and through 1958, the ISFAA announced the National Champions. Again, these were mythical honors. For some years, post-season games were held under the guise of being playoffs but the actual game results did not always translate to the winner being recognized as the National Champion.

The ISFAA did launch the first "Soccer Bowl" game in 1949. This occurred in St. Louis, MO on Sunday January 1, 1950 where Penn State and San Francisco tied 2-2 to be declared "National Co-Champions."

In fact, college soccer in the U.S. at that time consisted of a few leagues and conferences located only in New England, NY, PA, OH, NJ, DE, MD and Northern CA. Just over 100 teams had Varsity status.

While collegiate soccer in the U.S. began in 1905, All-America teams were first announced with the 1909-10 school season. Men's Soccer was played as a Spring sport from Spring 1910 through Spring 1914 and returned to being a Fall sport in Fall 1914. The All-America honorees were comprised of players from only the limited number of teams in the East at that time operating under the Intercollegiate Soccer Football League. The initial All-America team of Spring 1910 was comprised of honorees from only five schools: Harvard of MA, Columbia of NY, Yale of CT plus Penn and Haverford of PA. These selections were made by the various team captains. For the Spring 1911 team through the Fall 1917 team, All-America honorees were selected by team managers. No teams were named in 1918 or 1919 due to World War I.

As of 1926 through 1940, the All-America teams were selected by coaches from the ISFAA. During this period, there were no single All-America teams but, rather, Regional teams that were selected by districts. In 1941, William Jeffrey of Penn State and Richard Schmelzer of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute then took responsibility to once again select a singular All-America team from among all the districts.

In 1941, the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) had formed. Beginning in 1942, the NSCAA conducted the selection of All-America teams. That organization has now become the United Soccer Coaches as of 2017.

In 1949, the NSCAA for the first time adopted an objective selection method in naming their All-America team where 27 schools had players honored. Five Area teams were created: New England Area, New York Area, PA/NJ/DE Area, Southern Area and Midwest Area. These Regional Areas had selections which then served as the candidates for All-America selection. In 1961, a sixth Regional Area was added for the Far West Area.

In the Midwest, the earliest record of Men's Intercollegiate Soccer in Ohio occurred on Saturday December 6, 1913 with Ohio Wesleyan University playing at home against Ohio State and winning, 1-0. The following Saturday December 13, 1913, the two teams met again at Ohio State who prevailed, 2-1.

Oberlin College fielded a team in 1916 to become another opponent for Ohio Wesleyan in that season. With the onset of World War I, men were enlisting in the armed forces. Programs at Ohio Wesleyan, Ohio State and Oberlin were then disbanded at the close of the 1916 season.

Oberlin re-launched their Men's Soccer program in 1929. Doc Nichols re-introduced the game at that school as an Intramural sport and quickly elevated it to Varsity status in 1930.

Beginning in 1949, the Ohio College Soccer League formed for those schools who fielded teams. The earliest All-Ohio selections as confirmed began with the 1953 post-season. In 1956, the league reorganized to become the Ohio Collegiate Soccer Association which was then comprised of 12 schools: Akron, Case Tech, Dayton, Denison, Fenn, Kent State, Kenyon, Oberlin, Ohio State, Ohio University, Ohio Wesleyan and Western Reserve. That year was the origin of the OCSA Newsletter by Walt Ersing, the Head Coach at Ohio State, and the first post-season OCSA All-Ohio teams as voted by Coaches and Officials. The awarding of Team Champions as the earliest documentation of the honor may have commenced with the 1958 season from a vote of OCSA members.

The Midwest schools began to organize with the formation of the Midwestern Collegiate Soccer Conference which was created in the Spring of 1950 and consisted of five schools: The University of Chicago, Indiana University, Purdue University, Wheaton College and Morton Junior College. When Purdue was invited to play Penn State in the 1950 second ISFAA "Soccer Bowl" which was again to be held in St. Louis, MO, the game of soccer in the Midwest had a boost in recognition. However, the third ISFAA "Soccer Bowl" was its final year. Teams with the best records had difficulties to be able to attend to play so the significance of the game was marginalized.

The NCAA first conducted Men's Soccer Post-Season Playoffs for a National Championship beginning in 1959. St. Louis University won the initial title when they defeated Bridgeport, 5-2, in Storrs, CT on Saturday November 28, 1959. St. Louis University began as a Club team in 1957 and had quickly moved to Varsity status. This National Championship sent a message that native-born Americans could be competitive in soccer versus those college teams at the time which were dominated by foreign players.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) had its origins in 1937 as a governing body for small college athletics in the U.S. and Canada. Coincidentally, like the NCAA, the first Men's Soccer Championship for the NAIA was held in 1959. Pratt Institute of NY beat Elizabethtown of PA, 4-3 in 2 OT, playing at Slippery Rock College in PA.

The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) also commenced with Men's Soccer competitions in 1959. A total of only nine schools fielded teams across the U.S.: Dean and Leicester in MA, Broome Tech, Corning and Orange County in NY, New Haven and Mitchell in CT, Warren Wilson in NC plus Santa Ana in CA. Many games were versus Senior Colleges due to the scarcity of Junior Colleges. The initial Junior College All-America selections in 1959 were comprised of a First Team and Honorable Mention choices. With only nine schools in competition, the 22 honorees represented just six schools.

Orange County of NY was considered the Junior College Champion with a 9-1-1 record from scoring 71 goals and allowing only 15 goals. The NJCAA then held its first National Championship in 1961 as an invitational tournament where Dean of MA defeated Orange County of NY, 4-2. These post-season invitational play-offs continued through 1967 to be then followed by National play-offs which were competitions between the Regional Champions.

For Senior colleges, schools of all sizes would compete for the one NCAA National Championship. During several years of the late-1960s through 1971, the NCAA also held two Regional tournaments in the post-season for small schools in the East and the Midwest that were recognized as Regional titles but did not advance those teams to the National Championship tournament. In 1972, NCAA post-season playoff selections were comprised of brackets for "University" and "College" categories which resulted in playing for two distinct National Championships. In August 1973, the NCAA created the identities of Division I, II and III for recognizing different levels of Men's Soccer competition. The first Division II bracket occurred that year and the first Division III bracket then occurred in 1974. This structure allowed for schools of various sizes to compete in playoffs against similar size schools for a National Championship.

The ISAA organization began conducting their ISAA Coaches Poll of National and Regional Rankings of teams as of 1969 through 1995. Pat Damore, the Athletic Directory at Fredonia State, is credited with creating and launching this ratings system for all ISAA-member colleges. In 1996, the ISAA merged into partnership with the NSCAA who now manage former ISAA programs and continues the ranking of teams. The ISAA had maintained membership in the NCAA, the NAIA and the United States Soccer Federation (USSF).

Post-season All-Star Games were also organized to honor outstanding collegiate players as well as serve to promote the game of soccer in the U.S. It may be that one of the earliest efforts for a National game

of this type occurred in 1951 when a North vs. South All-Star Game was held at LaSalle College in Philadelphia, PA. The North prevailed 3-2 in front of a crowd of over 5,000! Soon thereafter in 1952, the Soccer Forum began as organized by Glenn Warner, the Men's Soccer Head Coach at the U.S. Naval Academy, and continued through 1958. These were also North vs. South and included three games over 10 days during the last two weeks of December with games held in St. Petersburg and various locations in FL.

The Ohio Collegiate Soccer Association first attempted to hold a post-season Senior North-South All-Star Game in November 1967 where rosters were named. At late notice, the game was not held when a playable field could not be secured. The OCSA was then successful to launch this game in 1969 through the efforts of Jim Sarno at Toledo University. By 1971, the game expanded into a second post-season game of Ohio Senior All-Stars versus Indiana Senior All-Stars. That game was also held in 1972 but coordination efforts to continue the series fell apart. The Ohio Senior North-South All-Star Game also came to a close with a Spring 1974 game held at that time so players in 1973 post-season playoffs would be available for the All-Star Game. The OCSA Board of Directors voted in a Fall 1974 meeting to not continue hosting the game due to the lack of additional support desired from professional teams in Ohio at that time.

From 1972 through 1983, the ISAA hosted a Senior Soccer Bowl Classic. These games were intended to be a National showcase where top college soccer players could compete in an East vs. West all-star game for scouts of professional teams to be able to see America's best players in one location. The Tangerine Sports Association of FL hosted the game in Orlando, FL and, with the 1977 season, Pepsi-Cola and Sports Craft became sponsors. That same season also launched recognition of ISAA-Pepsi Games of the Week for "University" and "College" divisions and a Player of the Week from each of those games. Despite the Corporate Sponsorship support, these Senior Soccer Bowl Classic games also ceased.