

Rugged World for Soccer A Struggle for Recognition

By STEVE SOLOMON
Collegian Sports Writer

Quona Armah Taylor, who employed the sides of his feet for the Liberian National soccer team before his boat docked in Washington D.C., has carried on an uncharacteristically violent existence on the soccer field this season. On the physical insistence of his American hosts, the sidestepping 24-year-old has struck up an intimate acquaintance with the playing turf on a distressing number of occasions.

Only five games into his playing career at George Washington University, Taylor has already taken such terrible physical punishment that he was pulled from his offensive center-forward position against Penn State recently and was relegated to a less strenuous afternoon of diving for balls in the goal. Obviously, his father, Henry Q. Taylor, a former soccer player and now Assistant Secretary of Health in Liberia, knows nothing of his son's debilitating playing environment.

Taylor, who speaks English fluently, is a freshman with a sound mind, but lately, a painful, heavily-taped body. His 5-7, 146-pound physique has been temporarily scarred with disconcerting bruises and bumps which multiply

with every exposure to the American brand of soccer.

The American adaptation, of course, has about all the style and grace of a bruising football game. For Taylor, who handles the ball like it was an extension of his foot, the United States has proven to be something of a rude awakening. He has been playing soccer for 16 years in a country that identifies with the soccer star, that heaps respect and admiration upon a fellow who can put a fallen arch to work. He has developed the moves and tricks with the ball that impress even his own countrymen, shrewd judges of soccer skill.

But polished moves, Taylor is quick to concede, are not an overriding asset when one is lying in a prone position. "You Americans are playing with too much body contact," he says. "You don't have the agility yet — but that will come with time."

American soccer is still in its infancy. The professional leagues import foreign players, and often the colleges are forced to use inexperienced players who have been nurtured on the violence of football. The other choice, the American talent is thin and secondary.

Soccer is a monopoly sport in Europe and South America. Here it

competes with football, basketball, and baseball, where a great athlete — an O.J. Simpson or a Leroy Keyes — can become a rich young capitalist with one sweep of the pen. The stars go where the money is, and in America, it's not yet in soccer. I mean, if the matchless Brazilian Pele had been born in the Bronx, he would be passing to a split end today, not to a left wing.

The American public has yet to break down any turndrums in pursuit of the game. Like baseball, the 1-0 and 2-1 scores are cause for a yawn and a turn of the channel.

"I think some rules will have to be changed," Harry Rodgers, the NCAA rules interpreter said. "I know the American public would like to see some higher-scoring games. Maybe we'll enlarge the goals. There has been some talk already of revising the offside rule."

But goals or no, the moguls who run pro soccer here are simply burning up their oil depletion allowance until they bring Americans into the game. They needn't build a moat around their field to withhold angry fans until the guys in uniform recognize the National Anthem. The patrons want to see an American fake an injury for a TV timeout, not one of a multilingual delegation from the United Nations.

The native talent is still a generation away, with the 10-year-olds in the schoolyards of America. The English and French and Italian youngsters dream of the World Cup not long after they can walk. They play between geography and math lessons at recess, after school, then under the brilliant sky before dusk. They learn to pass and dribble, and by the time they can vote, they play the game with a technical yet flowing gracefulness.

But can soccer flourish in America? Can it compete with football for the fans' almighty dollar?

"I think so," Harry Rodgers said. "Maybe in five to 10 years. But they're going to have to start on the lower levels, in junior and senior high school. The colleges have started giving out scholarships, and that helps. Mainly, though, the game has to be publicized. Television exposure has created more interest, but that's not enough."

In other words, it will take money in splendid profusion. It will take colorful American personalities on the field to capture the imagination of the fans — possibly a soccer-bred Wilt Chamberlain in the goal, a Willie Mays at left-wing, a Bo Belinsky at center-forward. Maybe even a Sonny Liston for a dive to start a TV timeout.

USG Agreement Of '66 Season Is Sellout Cause

(Continued from page one)

to investigate the alternatives involved. Their talk yesterday with Czekaj didn't result in any immediate solutions, but future prospects seem promising.

"We're going to meet again in February to plan a program for next year," said Don Paule of USG, who with Steve Gerson spoke to Czekaj about the problem. "But until then, I guess there's nothing we can do."

"I think students are getting the raw end of the deal," Paule added. "We get the impression that they (the athletic department) are out to make money first and to serve the students second. Students are considered only after an assurance of revenue is received."

A few suggestions were discussed concerning the new program. For instance, Czekaj said perhaps the summer application for season tickets could also apply to individual game tickets. Then a more accurate estimate of student attendance could be made.

Paule also suggested that students could buy single-game tickets two or three weeks in advance, after which general sales could commence. Thus student consideration would come first. However, such issues will go no further than discussion before February.


"It's physically impossible to guarantee a seat to everybody in the setup that we now have," Czekaj said. "However, this is subject to change at any time. I'm very willing to sit down with USG and try to revise the system."

Until that time, student football fans who don't want to stand in line for hours Monday mornings will have to be content with watching the action along the wire fences next to the field. The situation seems regrettable, but while the gradual process of change slowly proceeds, it seems to be the only way.

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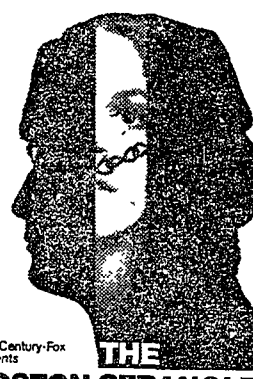
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