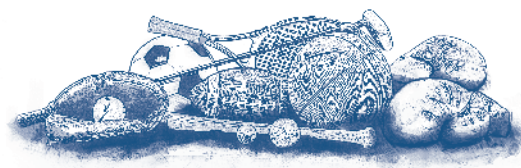


UP FRONT



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SPORTS MUSEUM

By Anne Madarasz,
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The Other Football

A new chapter in sport began on April 13, 2013, when the Pittsburgh Riverhounds played their inaugural game at the newly built Highmark Stadium. Located in Station Square, the stadium faces the river and the city, connecting the sport of soccer to downtown Pittsburgh. This region, identified around the country with American football (and especially the Steelers), also has a lesser-known, but important, association with the sport Europeans call football, and that we know better as soccer.

Soccer has its roots in the coal towns populated in the late 19th century by immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. For more than 100 years, these patch towns have supported and nurtured both an old world sport and new world champions. The Beadling Soccer Club, founded in 1898 and one of the oldest in the nation, takes its name from the coal mine that sponsored the team and employed its players. Three brothers, William, Thomas, and James Beadling, opened the Harrison Mine in 1883 south of Pittsburgh in Upper St. Clair Township. The mine quickly became known as “Beadling mine,” and the area around it as Beadling. Workers, many of Italian and English origin, started a company soccer team, eventually competing against others in the region’s “Miner’s League.”

In the 1930s, the Beadling Sports Club opened in the former machine shop of the mine, supporting an array of sports. But soccer remained central to the area’s identity and its residents. Nick DiOrio, who grew up nearby in Morgan, ended his playing days with the Beadling Club in 1959, but continued to serve as a coach and administrator of the sport until the 1970s. DiOrio, who stood only 5’7”, had an

outstanding high school career as a basketball player for South Fayette, once scoring 50 points in a game. But after leaving high school, soccer became his lifelong passion. He played first for the Avella Juniors team, which captured a national championship in 1939, then for the Morgan Strassers, a preeminent national favorite with U.S. Amateur Cup championships in 1940 and 1943. A forward



Medal won by Nick DiOrio with the Avella Junior team at national championships, 1939.

HHC Collections, gift of Diane Rafle, 2008.142.7a. Photo by Paula Andras.



Team jacket worn by Nick DiOrio when he represented the United States in the World Cup, 1950.

HHC Collections, gift of Diane Rafle, 2008.142.2. Photo by Paula Andras.

for the team, he starred in their 1949 U.S. Open Cup win and then again with the Harmarville team that won the U.S. championship in 1952. His crowning achievement came with his selection to the U.S. team that competed in the 1950 World Cup. That team pulled off what is thought to be one the greatest upsets in soccer history when they beat heavily favored England 1–0 early in the tournament.

DiOrio followed another local star that had competed in the World Cup. Aldo “Buff” Donelli led the Pittsburgh league in scoring from 1922 through 1928, then competed for Heidelberg and Curry in the early 1930s. A member of the U.S. squad for the 1934 World Cup, he became a surprise scoring sensation when he notched four goals in a qualifier against Mexico, still a shared record for the U.S. national team. Donelli, a member of the Soccer Hall of Fame like DiOrio, is best remembered locally as a football coach at Duquesne University and briefly for the Steelers.


The accomplishments of the great coal patch teams of the 1930s, ’40s, and ’50s may have faded as attention shifted to football, but soccer never died in the region. It began to flourish again, at the youth and high school level in the 1970s, and the city even supported a Major Indoor Soccer League team, the Pittsburgh Spirit, from 1978 to 1986.

The Riverhounds and their new stadium demonstrate the strength of that tradition and bring soccer full circle. A number of the players on the roster hail from this region; several, such as Rich Costanzo, trained and played with the Beadling Club. Costanzo, who captains the Riverhounds, led his Thomas Jefferson High School team to a state championship. An All-American and national champion at Maryland, he played professionally for Minnesota and Rochester before joining the Riverhounds last year. Growing up just miles away from the stadium where he now plays, he was imbued with the work ethic of those who came before him: immigrant coal workers, soccer players as tough as the ore they mined. ☀

Trading card, Rich Costanzo, University of Maryland, c. 2008. After earning Big Ten Freshman of the Year honors at Penn State in 2005, Costanzo transferred to Maryland. He co-captained the team in 2008 when they captured the NCAA Division 1 national championship.

HHC Collections, gift of Renee Costanzo, 2010.60.3b and 2010.60.3f. Photo by Paula Andras.

Rich Costanzo



As a transfer from Penn State in 2006, he played in 21 games at midfield and defense, starting in 17 of them. In his freshman year at Penn State and led Penn State with seven assists. He was Big Ten's Freshman of the Year. Before he was Pennsylvania State Player of the Year.

addition to being a two-time NSCAA All-American and All-American, he was also named the WPIAL Player of the Year.

POSITION: MIDFIELDER

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 5'10"/175

CLASS: JUNIOR

HOMETOWN: PITTSBURGH, PA

COSTANZO'S CAREER STATISTICS					
	M-S	G	A	PTS	Shots
Year 2006	21-17	1	1	3	23
Totals	21-17	1	1	3	23



U.S.S.F.A. National Open Cup trophy, won by Harmarville Soccer Club, 1951–52. John Prucnal played for the Harmarville Hurricanes from 1946 to 1958, a time when Pittsburgh teams such as Harmarville dominated national soccer. These amateurs regularly drew 3–4,000 fans for their home games, comparable to the seating at Highmark Stadium today.

HHC Collections, gift of John Prucnal, 2009.103.3. Photo by Paula Andras.