Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

In modern soccer playing nations, research and development has not just been restricted to the realms of software and medical science. As football evolves, research and development forms an integral part of the world's top soccer nations. In contrast, Indian football has failed to emerge out of its ancient traditions and, if international standards are any yardstick, India has only slipped down the ladder. With the introduction of the National Football League, the apparent amateur world of Indian soccer steps into a new era as professionalism arrives to revive its plummeting image.

Football has come a long way and has had a storied history as the world's most popular sport. The London Football Association was established in 1863 and developed the rules of modern football, based on the earlier style of just using the feet to advance the ball. This became known as association football, and through history, to soccer football, and soccer. England and Scotland played the first international match in 1872. The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international governing body of football, was established in 1904. In 1908, football was sanctioned as an Olympic sport, and in 1930, the first World Cup was held in Montevideo, Uruguay with 13 countries
competing. France hosted the 16th World Cup in 1998, which was watched by record 37 billion people around the world\(^1\).

Despite it's British origins, soccer has been adopted around the world. The rules of the game are international, but the associated rituals are often the product of native culture. The folklore of Brazilian soccer is unlike that of the German game; watching Santos of Sao Paolo is not the same as a visit to the terraces of Schlock 04. Among the Zulu’s of South Africa, pregame ceremonies include incantations, dances, and ritual incisions performed on the players by witch-doctors\(^2\).

Football, a game like no other, a sport whose quadrennial summit - the World Cup - brings the whole world together in a sort of tribal bounding that all the greatest statesmen of our times together cannot achieve. Over the years, more emotional capital has been invested on this sport by more people than perhaps in any other human activity barring love and courtship. And, if football is just a game, then love is just another four-letter word?

The day of the World Cup finals 1998 several times more people watched (37 billion) two teams compete at a ball game than world would have watched the Titanic, the mega-budget hit (Oscar). From the

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Shanty towns of Sao Paulo to the biggest single slum colony in the world, Bombay's Dharavi, from the swanky, expensive villas on the Cote d’Azur to the mansions of the rich and the famous on Beverly Hills, a huge chunk of the human race tuned in to the drama being enacted by two football teams.

It is a coming together of the sort that the human race seldom experiences as people from vastly different backgrounds, rich and poor, black and white, and every shade in between, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish as well as the agnostics and the atheists, live through a set of shared emotions on a vast scale for 90 minutes..... and perhaps more.

Neither a crucifixion nor a coronation, and surely no other single sporting event including the Olympics, might command such attention from the human race.

There are religions. And then there is football. The world game is the ultimate religion, one that cuts across every known border on earth; something that, like every great religion, unites, divides, elevates, plummets, provides inspirational highs, sets off fits, shoots up nerves and puts one on the edge and makes one scale the gamut of emotions in 90 minutes.

No other ball game is known to trigger such extreme responses in so many millions. Other sport can only aspire to match the status of football. What is it about a simple ball game that makes it so popular,
cutting across all barriers? What is the key to its special allure, its near-hypnotic appeal?

These questions might make it appear that the source of the great game’s unparalleled popularity is a deep mystery and serious scientific analysis was necessary to unravel it. But, then, given the nature of the game and the ambit of its appeal, it would not only be difficult to attempt anything like that but also, it would defeat the very purpose. Cold science can seldom get to the heart of the matter. On the other hand, the heart alone can. The key to football’s appeal is the game’s simplicity. The game needs no equipment like cricket or tennis or hockey. You only need a ball and a good pair of legs to kick it with. Have ball, will play.... and the game is on.

This of course, means the game is accessible to the poorest of the world. From the pavements on the Rio de Janeiro beachfront to the parking lot outside the Chennai Central station where street children kick waste paper and rags rolled into balls, from the impoverished villages of sub-Saharan Africa to the maidans of Calcutta, it is a game of the people, for the people, by the people.

“During the between-war years, the football pool did more than any one thing to make life bearable for the unemployed,” wrote George Orwell about the game’s appeal during the years of the Great Depression.
Through decades, football, the common man's game, has put a
smile on more faces - faces of man defeated by life and its cruel twists -
more than all other sports put together. In the event, it is hardly surprising, given
the ways of the world, that nobility and the ruling classes should have, in
the past, scoffed at it. Kings and Queens, in England in particular, have
tried to ban the sport through proclamations and many intellectuals have
looked down upon the people's game and passed derisive remarks.

The principal objection of the privileged classes was that the
game was an escape for the masses. Of course, it was, of course it
continues to be a source of escape. So what? Life itself, for the most part,
is all about escaping, is it not?

To the porters of the Chennai Central Station, to the mine
workers of Yorkshire and to the rickshaw pullers of Calcutta, all of them
trying to forget about the dark despondency of the day, about their own
unflattering situation in life and its scheme of things, football is a God-send.
All their troubles seem so far away when these men walk into a stadium for
a match. With like minded persons, they suddenly feel a sense of
belonging. Life's not kicking them in the backside anymore. It's kinder,
nicer.... and they belong.

Football is perhaps India's oldest favorite modern sport. It is played widely all over the country and is as popular in India as it is in Europe and Latin America. However, the progress in the sport has not kept pace with that of other countries, even in Asia, not to speak of the world. The story of Indian soccer is as old as it is fascinating. The British army introduced organised football in 1880. The sport became popular first in Bengal before it spread to other parts of the country.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF), the national body controlling the sport in India as an affiliated unit of the Indian Olympic Association and the world body (FIFA) was formed in 1937, but organised football was linked more closely with the Indian Football Association (IFA), Calcutta, the oldest state level football organisation in the country, formed in 1893. The credit for popularising the sport amongst Indians can truly be given to three leading clubs of Calcutta: The Sovabazar Club (formed in 1880), the Mohun Bagan Club (1888) and the Mohammedan Sporting Club (1889).

The first ever competition in the country came into existence in 1888, when Sir Henary Morhamen Durand, the foreign secretary of India donated a trophy called Durand Cup. The Durand tournament was held at Arundale at Simla. The competition for the Durand Cup was confined only

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to the military teams. The next year (1889) the Dorsi Athletic Club introduced Traders Cup and it was "Sovabazar Club" which became the first ever Indian team to defeat an European team (East Surrey Regiment) in 1892 in a Traders Cup match.

The first football match in India was played in April 1884 in Esplanade - Fort William, Calcutta between the "Calcutta Club of Civilians" and the "Gentlemen of Barrackpore". The first Indian to kick a football and form a school club (Hare School Club) was late Nagendra Prasad Sarbadhikari in the year 1872 and therefore he is rightly called "Father of Indian Football".

It was the Indian Football Association(IFA) which spread the name and fame of Indian Football to other parts of the world. Under its aegis in 1924 a team of Bengalee Footballers made an extensive tour visiting the Far East playing at Singapore, Rangoon and Bataria (now Jakarta in Indonesia) causing tremendous enthusiasm for the game among the natives of those countries who had not till then taken to the game. The team came back unbeaten with the additional distinction of having inflicted the first defeat in 12 years on a Dutch team at Bataria.⁵

On May 24, 1950 a cable arrived at the headquarters of the International Football Federation (FIFA) in Zurich, "Regret, unable to participate in the World Cup. Letter follows: Inform Brazil". It was

curtains for India to get a first-hand taste of the World Cup Football. Brazil was hosting the World Cup for the first time in 1950. According to Andreas Herren, information officer, FIFA, who unearthed the documents related to India’s efforts from the FIFA archives, “India unilaterally withdrew from the World Cup”.

It was on the basis of the 1948 London Olympics performance that the entries had been considered. As Israel, Burma and the Philippines withdrew, India’s qualification was confirmed by FIFA. But the hitch was that the Indians played barefoot. The rules of the game, however did not permit that. FIFA General Secretary, Dr. Schrickok wrote to All India Football Federation saying that since boots were equipment for a player, a referee could stop barefoot play. The Indian Secretary, Dutta Ray’s argument that Indians had been allowed to play barefooted in the 1948 London Olympics was in vain.

The rules could not be altered at that late stage, wrote Schrickok. “There is only one way to avoid the difficulty”, he wrote. “Your players should wear light shoes”. The All India Football Federation had picked 25 players in 1949 and toughened them by putting them through their paces playing matches in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. But at last India could not participate in the World Cup (1950)\(^6\).

For just about a decade, 1951 to 1962, India was amongst the best in Asia, winning the Asian Games gold medal twice in 1951 at Delhi and in 1962 at Jakarta. During this same time span, India finished fourth in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. Center-forward Neville D'Souza scored a hat-trick in the 4-2 win over Australia. He is the only Indian to have achieved this feat in either the Olympics or the Asian Games. The other laudable achievements were a bronze medal in the 1970 Bangkok Asiad, runners-up in the 1964 Asia Cup at Israel, and runners-up in the Merdeka tournament.

At the Melbourne Olympics, India played with such tactical maturity, that several critics, including the legendary Willy Meisel, said that Rahim was one of the best coaches in the world.

The last major triumph was achieved by the Indian Junior team led by Sabbir Ali in the 1974 Asia Youth Championships at Bangkok.

From 1952-55, India won the Quadrangular tournament which was confined to countries of the former British Indian Empire. Other participants were Burma, Pakistan and Ceylon. India remained unbeaten in these four tournaments played at Colombo, Rangoon, Calcutta and Dhaka, respectively.

In the beginning, 113 years ago, it was a Raj-inspired obsession that was kick-started in 1893 with the Indian Football Association (IFA)

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Shield, India's very first competitive football event. Five years later, an era of heady club matches began with the launch of the Calcutta Football League. And when a barefooted Mohun Bagan became the first Indian team to defeat the British team, East York, and lift the IFA Shield in 1911, Calcutta football seemed to symbolise the struggle against British colonialism.

The major Indian Shields, Cups, Trophies and Tournaments are the Santosh Trophy, Durand Cup (second oldest tournament of the world), Rovers Cup, IFA Shield, Federation Cup, DCM Cup. The National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy was started in 1941. The Competition is held annually at different places in the country. The intention behind inaugurating the Federation Cup Football Tournament in 1977 was to organise a championship in which only the top clubs of the country would participate. The winner of this prestigious tournament was expected to grow in stature every year and could then genuinely be called the 'Champion Club' of the country.

There was a time in the '50s and early '60s when Indian football had the label of an achiever at the Asian level. Players of calibre was one reason, but more importantly other nations were yet to catch up. More than three decades thereafter India finds itself in the mid-level among the 45 nations which are affiliated to the Asian Football Confederation.

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8 Docherty, *Better Football* p.120
Almost similar is the story unfolding in the more amiable South Asian region. The country had the ‘big brother’ status when the SAARC football tournament was launched in 1993 in Lahore under the aegis of the South Asian Football Federation. The theme was to cement the bonds of friendship and at the same time through mutual competition raise the standard of the game in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal, the six nations which take part in the event.

In 1995, the SAARC tournament was rechristened as the SAFF Cup and in keeping with the change has been the polishing of the football image of the competing countries other than India. But the point to be noted is that since the first edition up to the latest (1999), the SAFF Coca-Cola Cup at the Nehru Stadium in Margao, India may have missed the title only once (in 1995 at Colombo to Sri Lanka) but the gap in standards vis a vis India and the rest has narrowed down considerably. At Margao (1999) India initially struggled to beat these lesser known teams from South Asian region. If anything this portrayed the true state of Indian football⁹.

India’s results in international football over the last two and a half decades are not something that would inspire confidence. To no other major sport in the country has progress been as alien as it has been to football in the last 25 years. While almost every other Asian and African nation has moved forward, gaining technical competence and a spot of

international recognition here and there, Indian football has gone from bad to worse.

Some of the Asian countries had improved significantly to get close to the international elite and others had jogged at a leisurely pace to still be within sight of the goal, it is almost as if Indian football has been content to occasionally kick its arms and legs in a bedraggled state, and from the same spot, moving not an inch forward really.

If one anticipates the future of Indian football to be of world standard, it has to be planned sensibly. The needs for planning are clear also. First of all we have to have improved facilities for both playing, coaching, and watching. Added to this we have to have more and even better coaches, managers and programmes of soccer activities. Soccer must demand the best at all levels. This requires thought and action from everyone who loves the game.

One can look forward confidently to the future of soccer provided all are prepared to accept change - change that is for the better. After all, soccer is the best game in the world and its worth fighting and changing for.

Plans to reorganise soccer in India have taken place, with the start of a National Football League in December 1996. The creation of the new league follows a visit by a FIFA study group in the year 1995. Their main aim was to investigate the availability of infrastructure and to suggest
ways and means to develop the game in the country. The most important
suggestion made by the FIFA study group was to start a professionally
managed national league which would pull Indian soccer out of its
amateurish rut and at least put it on the right rails for a proper
metamorphosis.

The National League has not only been suggested as a panacea
for the ills afflicting our soccer; it has the endorsement of the Asian
Football Confederation and the FIFA. In 1994, the dynamic secretary of
the Asian Football Confederation Mr. Peter Velappan, advocated full scale
professionalism as a remedy to pull Indian soccer out of the morass in
which it has been in during the last three decades\textsuperscript{10}.

Asian football is moving towards full professionalism, and
players and officials must be prepared for change. Peter Vellapan,
secretary, Asian Football Confederation, said this at a meeting of 44
executives from National Federations throughout the region and added:
"Football is now business, and we have to reorientate our thinking that
way. The history of Europe and South America is based on club football,
and we must move in that direction too."

In international soccer, the amateurs had their day back in the
mists of the leisurely golden age that died before the turn of the century.
The days of the gentleman all-rounder passed, the professionals came, and

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{World Soccer} 36:11 (August 1996): 53.
that was the end of it - apart from those who are playing as amateurs because they are not good enough to be professionals. There are thousands of amateurs for each one of the professionals. There is no doubt that the professionals have carried the skill of the game to a point far beyond the capacities of the amateurs and to that extent the amateurs have been outstripped, and the days when they could be compared on any kind of equal terms with professionals are certainly long gone. The nature of the amateur, and of what used to be called the amateur spirit, has changed too, and the chief reason is not the dominance of professionalism, but the change in society. The old amateur was in the old sense, a gentleman; that is to say he had a conception of leisure and its uses that grew out of a privileged education and a privileged position, economically, in his world. It depended, to a large extent, on the universal acceptance of a society rigidly divided into classes. It is a conception that can only survive to a very limited degree in a world where nearly everyone works for a living. To the old amateur, sport was part of an expression of his way of life, and from that it drew certain graces and gallantries, indefinable character, aristocratic and careful, a quality of giving seriousness to pursuits one knows are fundamentally unimportant, that has cast a nostalgic, sentimental glow over the amateur period that declined with the nineteenth century.

The modern amateur was born out of a different background into a changed world. Nine times out of ten he comes from the same
working class background as the professional. The professional is his model, and on him he forms his standards, not on the lessons of the public school and the university.¹²

The Philips National League 1996-97 is about the greatest thing that has happened to Indian football in its long history. International Sports Management Group (IMG), Star Sports and Philips India have written a new script for Indian football. Time alone will tell if it will land to better standards of play. Richard R. Alford, general manager, IMG India rightly said, “We have re-written the calendar of Indian football this year”. The All India Football Federation is using IMGs expertise to try and make football a success in India. The method adopted is similar to the innovations launched in China by IMG. The Leisure Sports Management Group, marketing agents of the federation (AIFF), played a key role in bringing sponsors not only to the National League but also a number of other tournaments.¹³

In England professionalism was legalised in the year 1885. The identity of the first man to receive payment for playing football will never be definitely established. In its earliest days professionalism was an “under the counter” affair. It was frowned on by the Football Association and

indeed banned by a rule made in 1882 which permitted only payment for actual wages lost in addition to normal expenses.

However, the player generally considered to have been the first professional footballer was a Scot, F. Suter. He came south in 1879 to play for Darwen. The first clubs to import Scotsmen in any number was Blackburn Rovers and Darwen, between 1879 and 1881. They were soon followed by Preston North End and Botton Wanderers. The last amateur to appear in an English international XI with professionals was B. Joy who played centre-half versus Scotland, October 14, 1944.¹⁴

The Football League is the most powerful in the world. Formed in 1888, following a proposal of Mr. William McGregor of Aston Villa, it is the father of all football leagues. With the spread of professionalism throughout the North and Midlands during the 1880s it became obvious that if clubs were to survive they would have to be better organised so as to attract more support from the paying public. Under the old amateur regime football was more of a casual pastime geared to suit the players, with only limited attention to such details as fixtures regularly organised in advance and kick-off times properly agreed and adhered to. It began in September 1888 with the 12 clubs. From the beginning the League has always been a highly professional club in the south of England.

before about 1890, although Luton Town unofficially paid a number of their players from about 1886.\(^{15}\)

The USA, Japan, China, Singapore, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia have started their professional leagues in the '90s and due to the league the standard of these countries has gone up and it is evident in their recent matches against top playing countries. Japan, for the first time, qualified for the World Cup (1998) in France and their junior team reached the finals of Junior World Cup at Nigeria 1999. Japan's professional league was started in 1992, popularly known as J-league. There is much to learn from this. When Japan launched its professional league for the first time, the fans came by their thousands, sponsors poured in money and the world's top players queued up to play for inflated wage packets.

Asia's oldest professional league (the Korean professional league started in 1983 while Hong Kong had a professional set-up from the mid-1960s), South Korea, has one of the strongest club systems in Asia. South Korea have qualified for four successive World Cup finals (the finals in 2002 will be an Asian record fifth in a row and sixth in total), no Asian country has come close to emulating their record.\(^{16}\)


In 2002 the World Cup will be held at Japan and South Korea, for the first time in Asia. That only shows how the Asian football has moved forward.

With the introduction of National Football League in India, professionalism has been initiated in Indian soccer. The famous multinational electronic instrument manufacturer Philips came ahead with the funds to host the (first National Football League) largest football fair of the nation, and it became Philips League. Currently National Football League is sponsored by Coca-Cola. The entry of multi-nationals into football will definitely professionalise the game in India. In fact the Philips League here in India was the richest football tournament with cash prizes in the region of Rs. 2 crores won by participating teams. The first National Football League (1996-97) cost Rs.3.5 crores which is the largest amount in the history of Indian football till that date.

With the introduction of National Football League, the All India Football Federation has also allowed five foreigners to play in each club for National Football League matches. With this move clubs have brought many new foreign faces to Indian football. Most of the footballers coming to India are Africans and they are truly adding glamour to the National Football League and Indian soccer.

The move by the All India Football Federation to introduce professionalism in Indian soccer is to catch up with the world of soccer.
No doubt other footballing countries have moved the same way we are moving now. When the world is ringing in changes, we can’t remain a mute spectator. We must try to make things better.

If one carefully goes through the above mentioned developments in Indian soccer, one will come to the conclusion that Indian soccer is moving towards professionalism. At the same time our performance at the international level is in a poor state and that may be due to the poor standard of soccer in the country. Therefore, to find out the reasons of poor quality/standard of soccer in the country and to suggest remedies to improve the soccer standard, and above all, to study the entire developments that have taken place in Indian soccer with the introduction of National Football League in the country, the present study has been undertaken by the research scholar.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of the study was to analyse the Indian soccer in the context of the National Football League.

The other purpose of the study was to find out the causes of poor quality/standard of Indian soccer and to suggest remedies.
**Delimitations**

1. The study was delimited to men’s soccer only.

2. The study was further delimited to the following sources: a) leading Indian soccer clubs and its players, including foreign coaches and players, b) Indian coaches, c) soccer administrators (including secretaries of state soccer associations), d) referees, e) sports journalists, f) veteran international players and g) sponsors.

**Limitations**

1. Soccer is played in every corner of the country but the research scholar visited only a few selected places. This may be one of the limitations of the study.

2. Normally the investigator should have liked to contact a large number of clubs and players but it was not possible for the investigator to interview all the players and clubs due to lack of finance and time.

3. Although full assurance was promised regarding the confidentiality of the responses, still some of the subjects might have hesitated in presenting the true picture. This might be another limiting factor of the present study.
Definition and Explanation of Terms

Soccer

Soccer is called football in every other country except the United States, Australia, and Canada where it's called 'soccer', and Italy where it is called 'Calcio'.

To distinguish the game from the football played in the U.S., it was called Association Football. It was then shortened to Assoc. Football. Some people just called it assoc.. Then, because it was common to add an 'er' to words at that time, 'er' was added to 'assoc' and then just 'soc' to make the word "soccer". The name has stuck ever since.\(^\text{17}\)

In the present study 'soccer' and 'football' have been interchangeably used.

Professionalism

It is relating to a profession and showing a sound workman's command. Engaging in some activity as a remunerated occupation, professional football players (ed. AMATEUR). Some also engages in an activity especially a sport to earn money.\(^\text{18}\)

In the present study professionalism denote initiation of professionalism in Indian soccer and not full professionalism.

\(^{17}\)\text{Internet Website: http://www.sunsite.sut.ac.jp/wc94/wcinfo/wc history.html.}

National Football League

It is the competition among selected clubs in India, which was started in 1996. This championship is played on league basis with home and away format. With the introduction of this competition, professionalism was initiated in Indian soccer.

In the present study 'National Football League' and the term professionalism, both denote initiation of professionalism in Indian soccer.

Significance of the Study

1. The study may help in bringing out the facts and figures of soccer in the country.

2. The findings of the study may help clubs, State Soccer Associations and All India Football Federation in making policies and programmes for Indian soccer.

3. The study may aid in improving the standards of National Football League.

4. The result of the study may help in recommending changes in the professional structure of Indian soccer.

5. The findings of the study may help in drawing out the causes of poor performances of Indian team at international level.

6. The results of the study may help in recommending remedies to improve the standard of soccer in the country.
7. The findings of the study may help in assessing the status of Indian soccer players with respect to players of other sports discipline in the country.

8. The findings of the study may help in differentiating the league standard and structure of Indian soccer with that of other countries.

9. The findings of the study may highlight changes that might have taken place in Indian soccer after the introduction of National Football League in the country.

10. The results of the study may help in drawing profiles of Indian clubs and players.

11. The results of the study may help coaches, physical educationists and players to improve their knowledge in soccer.

12. The study may help in popularising soccer in the country.