

## **Peace Cup founder Sun Myung Moon was avid sports fan, soccer lover**

John Haydon

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The Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who passed away early Monday in South Korea, was an avid sports fan who sponsored fishing tournaments, founded South Korea's most successful soccer club and created an international soccer event that attracted such famous clubs as Spain's Real Madrid, Tottenham Hotspur of England, and the Los Angeles Galaxy.

Rev. Moon loved to fish, and spent countless hours fishing for salmon in Alaska, for tuna in Gloucester, Mass., and recently for bass in Lake Mead, Nev.

But his greatest sports passion was soccer, a sport that he played as a young man, and one in which he later invested substantial resources, working with Brazilian star Pele to create the Peace Cup, which has featured some of the world's biggest and most prestigious clubs.

In fact, Rev. Moon's last public appearance was in July at the Peace Cup in Suwon, South Korea, where he awarded the championship trophy to German club Hamburg, a former European champion.

In 1989, Rev. Moon founded Ilhwa Chunma FC soccer team in Seoul, which was sponsored by the Ilhwa Ginseng Tea company, and nicknamed Chunma — the Unicorns. The club was based in a number of cities and ultimately settled in 2001 in Seongnam, a town one hour south of Seoul.

At first, the mayor of Seongnam wanted to expel the team because of the club's affiliation with Rev. Moon's Unification Church. The mayor was running for re-election in the heavily Protestant town and used the attack on the team as part of his platform.

"It was a mixture of bigotry and political opportunism," said Eoghan Sweeney, soccer writer for the Korea Times.

Fans demonstrated against the mayor by lying down in front of his car. The mayor relented, and Seongnam Ilhwa went on to win four Korean league titles, the Korean Cup knockout tournament and the Asian Champions League title in 2010, making it Korea's most successful team.

It is not unusual for religious groups to run soccer teams in Korea. One of the league's founding clubs was the Christian team Hallelujah FC.

Rev. Moon also established two soccer teams in Brazil: Atletico Sorocaba and CENE.

In 2003, Rev. Moon met with Pele in New York and founded the Peace Cup, which became a sought-after preseason tournament on the soccer calendar.

Pele called soccer "the beautiful game." Rev. Moon preferred to call it the "game of peace" and said, "Through soccer, you can unite all peoples."

In 2009, Real Madrid, along with its prized new asset Cristiano Ronaldo, competed in the fourth edition of the tournament in Spain, which featured four teams that have been European champions. That tournament also involved Italy's Juventus, FC Porto of Portugal, Spanish side Sevilla FC and French club Olympique Lyon, but the \$2.4 million prize went to English club Aston Villa.

"When you mention the word 'peace,' when you are trying to bring peace in the world, I will always be there," Pele said in 2003 on why he worked with Rev. Moon.

At the conclusion of the 2005 tournament, Rev. Moon donated \$1 million to promote youth soccer in the developing world. His Play Soccer, Make Peace youth program held events in 35 countries, including the troubled Gaza Strip

After the success of the men's Peace Cup, Rev. Moon in 2006 founded the Peace Queen Cup, which was won by the world-renowned U.S. women's team starring Abby Wambach and Kristine Lilly.

A North Korean women's team was invited, but declined because of political circumstances. The North Koreans sent a rare letter to Rev. Moon, whose birthplace is in North Korea and who had met with the country's founder, Kim Il-sung. In the letter, the North Koreans expressed regret about the tournament but commended the efforts of the program to bring peace on the divided peninsula