

SPORTS TURF MANAGER

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Soccer Stalemate

PAUL S. HENDREN AND COLIN JOSE EXAMINE THE STADIUM IRONY THAT PLAGUES CANADA

Huddled inside a downtown Toronto office, in the shadows of City Hall, crack teams of architects and designers have worked relentlessly to create one of the world's most progressive state-of-the-art soccer grounds. Several blocks away, also situated in Toronto's city centre, lies a symbol of the irony that has beset soccer in the land of beavers and canoes. Varsity Stadium, Canadian soccer's home for the better part of the 20th century, sits in its own cobwebs narrowly avoiding the wrecking ball year after year.

Varsity's condemned East Grandstand, outdated cinder track, splintered benches and deteriorating concrete structure continues to house big league soccer while at the same time one of Canada's leading architectural firms are exporting their expertise abroad. From right under Canadian soccer's noses Brisbin Brook Beynon Architects, in conjunction with Stadium Consultants International, have been recruited by Turkish soccer giants Galatasaray S.K. who are embarking on a progressive scheme to redesign Ali Sami Yen Stadium in Istanbul. A project that will convert the existing inner city concrete bowl into a 40,000 seat grand theatre



"To a real fan it is hardly necessary to explain the allure of the football ground, or indeed the central role it plays within the game. Football is not like theatre or cinema, where all eyes are focused upon the screen and all else is in darkness. A football ground – its floodlights, its crowds, its noise, even its smell – is as much a part of the event as the game itself." Simon Inglis, author of *The Football Grounds of Europe*.

of sport offering soccer patrons the ultimate stadium experience in style and comfort. There will be 100 private suites, over 12,000-reserved weather protected seats, VIP lounges, restaurants, food courts, a sophisticated three level internal shopping mall and an attached office tower. BBB Architects and SCI have established notoriety in Canadian sports

circles with their work in the Air Canada Centre, General Motors Place and the Skydome, not to mention their numerous international projects.

A Storied Past

Canadian soccer has a storied past with its beginnings dating back to the early nineteenth century when soldiers of the British garrison situated on the Eastern seaboard took on visiting men-of-war or seamen from merchant or fishing vessels. Professional soccer also took root several decades ago with several Canadian teams participating in the famous North American Soccer League that included legends Pele, Franz Beckenbauer, Johan Cruyff and George Best, to name just a few. Even such celebrated global superstars as Sir Stanley Matthews, Eusebio, Peter Beardsley, Graeme

Souness and Roberto Bettega made a living playing soccer on Canadian soil.

In the 1920s and '30s Toronto was rich with soccer homes. Ulster Stadium, a facility designed specifically for soccer, frequently attracted crowds well into five digits and at one time, it was considered the best soccer stadium in North America. Famous England *continued on page 7*

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