

Soccer Encyclopedia Article

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Soccer probably originated in China as early as 400 B.C. with a game called tsu-chin. In 200 A.D. , Romans and Greeks played a game in which two teams tried to move a ball across a line on a field. During the tenth century, London children played forms of soccer in the streets.

Two English towns, Derby and Chester, claim to have organized the first soccer game around 1220. The annual game, played on Shrove Tuesday, remained an English tradition until 1314. That year, King Edward II banned the sport because "too much noise is created in the towns by all the shoving and pushing around of the big balls, which may give rise to any number of the many evils that God forbids." Happily for soccer fans, the edict was never applied.

Soccer, as we know it today, was created in 1863, when the London Football Association distinguished it from football rugby and set up different rules for it. In 1871, the Football Association Challenge Cup Competition was introduced and remains one of soccer's most famous contests. By 1885, professional soccer had begun in England.

Soccer soon spread to other parts of the world. By 1900, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, and Switzerland all had soccer associations. In 1930, Frenchman Jules Rimet founded the World Cup--an international competition still held every four years.

Until the mid-1800s, soccer was the only form of football played in the United States. American football, however, gained in popularity and overtook soccer as the favored sport. Many American schools and colleges, however, continue to have soccer teams.