



Players challenge for the ball during a Chicago soccer match

The Age of the Mortar Slingers

How the plight of the Chicago Bricklayers embodies the problem of soccer in the USA

By Charles Carlson

"The battle royal between Sparta and Bricklayers started with the gong sounding in an atmosphere of expectation, as Chicago's two greatest rivals squared up for the final of the competition. THE FIGHT STARTED AS A FOOTBALL GAME."

Soccer Herald, 1 February 1931

In the first three decades of the 20th century, the culture, and business, of soccer in the United States was evolving similarly to other soccer-playing countries around the world. Local clubs formed around shared interests in sport and, as soccer playing experts began looking for suitable competition, professional and semi-professional soccer circuits were established and provided a means for working people, if not to make their living solely from sport, at least to supplement their income.

This "culture of soccer" was a clear contributing factor in the US men's national team's third-place finish at the 1930 World Cup, and as the 1930s progressed, it seemed soccer would be an integral part of the US sport landscape the way baseball was ingrained in it. However, this pro-soccer evolution ground to a halt and, many would argue (given soccer's position as the fifth-most popular US sport), soccer is

still struggling to regain the popularity it once had. What happened to stunt the evolution of the game in the US? Competition from the sport of American Football is clearly one reason, but the story of the Chicago Bricklayers and their conversion into the Wieboldt Wonderbolts in 1933 might shed some light on an additional reason for soccer's failure to capture fans in the US market: reliance on cautious business interests.

Soccer was a competitive pastime in the city of Chicago in the 1930s. Teams such as Sparta, representing the city's Czech community; Maccabees, representing the Jewish community; Necaxa, a Mexican aggregation; the Swedish-Americans and a host of other 'ethnic' clubs competed fiercely for city, state and national dominance. High quality soccer, though, was not restricted to 'ethnic' clubs. The Bricklayers, along with sides like the Carpenters, Pullman, the Western Electric and Joliet FC represented not ethnic enclaves but community pride.

The Chicago Bricklayers or, as they were nicknamed, the 'Brickies', 'Trowel Welders' and 'Mortar Slingers' soccer team, were founded in 1912, under the umbrella of Bricklayers Union 21. Over the course of two decades, the Brickies built a community around sporting success which included local, national

and international competition, garnering strong fan support and commitment to the team. These supporters even helped build a soccer-specific ground next to the Chicago White Sox baseball team's sporting cathedral, Comiskey Park. By 1936, less than three years after the Wieboldt Store Inc had taken over the team, and renamed them the Wieboldt Wonderbolts, the soccer club was effectively gone.

When the Bricklayers and Masons (as the Trowel Wielders were initially known) played their first game in December of 1912, soccer competition in Chicago and the state of Illinois had existed for a few decades. There was a vibrant league structure and the Bricklayers were initially members of the newly christened Chicago District League, a rival of the Association Football League of Chicago (AFLC), which had been founded in 1906. The AFLC was primarily a British operation and clubs such as Campbell Rovers (Scottish) and Hyde Park Blues (English), were mainstays. The new District League demonstrated a widening of the competitive opportunities for soccer players, and though the Bricklayers team was, initially, also primarily made up of players of British descent, many of their opponents, such as Slavia and Sparta were from Chicago's growing non-British immigrant soccer playing communities.

On the field, the Mortar Slingers' league debut on 5 October 1913 was not auspicious; a 9-4 drubbing at the hands of Lincoln Park, a team situated in an upmarket neighbourhood of Chicago. The Brickies probably did take some heart from the fact that they outscored their opponents 4-3 in the second half.

Quickly, though, by recruiting players from more established teams in the city, as well as identifying younger, American-born talent, the team improved their on-field performance and finished second in the league to Lincoln Park in that first season.

The organisation of Chicago soccer leagues in the late teens was occasionally chaotic, but the number of teams vying for trophies continued to grow. The Bricklayers bounced around various leagues in their first years of existence and, though they were recruited, chose not to join a professional league that formed in 1916. This turned out to be a wise business decision, as the league had only four teams, didn't make it beyond one season and led to the longtime Chicago team Hyde Park Blues folding.

While league competitions in the Chicago area were malleable, one competition was stable and reliable for the Bricklayers: the Peel Cup. Named after Peter Peel, an Irish immigrant and soccer administrator, the knockout competition was emblematic of the "Championship of Illinois". The Cup competition had started in 1909 with about 20 teams competing. In that first year, a number of Chicago clubs entered, but so did teams from much smaller communities such as the coal-mining town Braceville (population: 971) and the rural Farmington (population: 2,421). By the middle of the 1920s the Peel Cup had more than 75 entrants from Illinois.

The Brickies first entered the competition to fight for the 1916 Peel Cup, and although they did not make it as a team, the final was held at their soccer-specific ground, Bricklayer Field. Chicago Americans beat Joliet FC 2-1 in that 1916

final, and, in an indication of how soccer was ingrained into the sporting culture of Chicago at that time, the trophy and medals were awarded by the Chicago mayor William Hale Thompson.

This Peel Cup competition, which raised money for players who had been injured but could not afford medical care, is still held annually in the State of Illinois as the Governor's Cup. Today, it is mostly an amateur competition, and a team like MLS's Chicago Fire would never consider entering. However, when the Bricklayers were evolving into one of the top teams in the country in the early 1920's, they were mainstays in the competition.

Bricklayers Union 21's commitment to the soccer team was demonstrated by the building of Bricklayer Field, and that commitment from the community was repaid on the pitch. In 1920, and again in 1924, the Brickies were crowned Peel Cup champions. While many of the players in the starting eleven on those championship teams were immigrants from the UK, top Illinois born players such as Dick Vidano, George "Fish" Heron, the Bromley brothers Ed and Art, as well as forward Billie Truesdale were regulars.

Soccer predominance for the Bricklayers in Illinois had been established in the early 1920's, but it was clear the team had larger goals in mind. The National Challenge Cup (now known as the US Open Cup) was the competition where they could test their skills on a national stage. The Cup had officially kicked off in 1913 (four years after the Peel Cup) and Chicago teams were active from the outset. In fact, part of the impetus for starting the competition was a 1912

game between the West Hudson team of Pennsylvania (the 'Champions of the East') and the Pullman team of Chicago (the 'Champions of the West').

The Brickies had entered the competition in their first year of existence, and actually made the semi-finals of the 1919 edition, losing 5-0 to the eventual champions Bethlehem Steel. In March 1924, the Bricklayers again made the Challenge Cup semi-finals, and they were again on the wrong end of a 5-0 drubbing, this time at the hands of St Louis Vespers. The Bricklayers had arrived in St Louis with a contingent of 200. In total, 7,500 turned out at St. Louis High School field to see Chicago's top team humbled.

The coach Billy Alexander went back to the drawing board and worked to strengthen his Bricklayers team. Off the field, the organisation of soccer in the US was moving more towards a professional model. The American Soccer League (ASL) had been established in 1921 and many East Coast teams were successful enough to attract talent worldwide with offers of wages and jobs. The Midwest did not want to be left behind and in 1926 a professional Midwest League was organised with four teams from Chicago and four from St Louis. This league didn't last beyond a season but the fact that Bricklayers joined the league at all indicated that the community was ready for professional soccer.

As professional leagues were organised in the boardrooms in the mid-1920s, the Brickies were expanding their competitive horizons as well. They followed up their 1924 National Cup semi-final performance with a

Thanksgiving friendly match against Indiana Flooring of the American Soccer League (ASL). On a cold November afternoon, the Bricklayers held the easterners to a 3-3 draw in front of 2,000 fans at Chicago's Riverview Park. They followed this up with a 2-2 Christmas Day result in St Louis against the Vespers, the team who had thrashed them 5-0 earlier in the year. St Louis sportswriters were impressed with this revamped Bricklayers team with the *St Louis Post Dispatch* stating that the promise of a stronger side was "no idle boast."

1927 would be a big year for the Bricklayers. They were ready for international competition when a touring Uruguayan team made Chicago one of their stops on a US tour. Uruguay had won the 1924 Olympics and the Nacional team that arrived in Chicago included the great José Leandro Andrade.

Nacional had started their tour in March by thrashing New York's Indiana Flooring 6-1. By the time they arrived in the Midwest, they had had a couple games abandoned because of on-pitch fights but, in completed games, they were undefeated. (Nacional were losing when the games were abandoned.) The Uruguayans started their Chicago leg with a hard-fought 1-0 win over Sparta of Chicago at Soldiers' Field in front of 7,000 fans. They had a full week to rest before they met the Bricklayers on that same ground. Perhaps it was their midweek visit to South Bend, Indiana and a tour of the famous American Football grounds there that affected the South Americans, but the Uruguayans were beaten 3-2 by the Brickies, the goals scored by Hugh Hill, a former Scottish first division player; Alan Walker,

another player with Scottish playing experience; and Alec Woods, a future 1930 USA player.

In addition to this international success, the Bricklayers continued to improve their starting eleven by recruiting top players from throughout the Midwest and beyond. By the time the Bricklayers kicked off their 1928 US Challenge Cup campaign in January, the tournament, which had grown to 117 teams when it kicked off in September of 1927, had been whittled down to 32 teams. The Bricklayers easily defeated Gar Woods of Detroit before beating their fellow Illinois club Buda AA 4-0. They defeated their local rivals Sparta 1-0 in the following round, earning the right to face the powerful Ben Millers team of St Louis in the Western Final as the tournament semi-final was now known.

Given the Bricklayers' previous difficulties with St. Louis teams, and the fact that this final would, thanks to the decisions of the USFA (under the command of the former St Louis resident, Tom Cahill) be played in the Gateway City, encouraged the *St Louis Globe-Democrat* to assume the Missouri men would "not have much trouble in eliminating the Bricklayers."

The Hatters, as the Ben Millers were known, had had a lot of success in St Louis leagues, and were Open Cup finalists in 1926. The fact that they were playing in St Louis, in front of a partisan crowd of over 9,000, certainly gave them confidence. But the Brickies were not to be denied. They had recruited heavily from Scottish players who migrated to the Midwest and had added a defensive stalwart in Tom Scott, a crafty winger in 'Wee' Willie McClean (who would go on to play for the USA in 1934),

and a potent striker in the Canadian Joe Phillips. While St Louis papers indicated the Brickies were outplayed for long stretches, they walked away with a 2-0 win, a place in the national finals and a chance to be the first Chicago team to lift the Dewar Cup Trophy.

Billed as the "capital vs labor" final in the *St Louis Globe-Democrat*, it really was a battle between two competing soccer business operating principles. The Nationals, owned by Charles Stoneman, a former Wall Street investment banker and owner of the New York Giants baseball team, had previously been known as ASL's Indiana Flooring (the same Indiana Flooring with whom the Bricklayers drew in 1924). When Stoneman bought the franchise, he changed the name to Nationals (Giants was already taken) and immediately began proposing changes to the ASL, both on the field (an indoor season in the winter) and off (more baseball owners).

The Bricklayers, on the other hand, were organised, funded and directly supported by Chicago Bricklayers Union 21. Almost all of the Bricklayers players were bricklayers by profession and members of the union. There were player acquisitions by the Brickies, but most of them had been local and the players' off-field profession was a consideration. Stoneman had, according to media reports, told Nationals player-manager Bob Millar: "Buy me the best players in the world."

The final took place on April 8 at the storied New York baseball stadium, the Polo Grounds. The vast majority of players on the field were either Scottish

by birth or had learned the game in Scotland. The Bricklayers had reason to be confident. They had been on a 19-game unbeaten streak in competitive matches until losses in a March friendly and in a Peel Cup match on April 1. New York's Nationals on the other hand had finished at the bottom of the ASL's first-half standings. Perhaps indicating the Eastern bias of odds makers, the Nationals were 7-5 favourites.

That Polo Grounds match drew at least 15,000 (some reports indicated that there were 25,000 there) and the Bricklayers were buoyed by labour leaders and union members from all over the East Coast. The mayor of New York couldn't make the game, but his stand-in, future acting mayor Joe McKee, kicked off proceedings. 90 minutes of soccer ended in a 1-1 draw, and an additional 30 minutes were played without breaking the deadlock. After the team managers agreed, the capital v labor final would be settled in a replay the following week in Chicago.

Soldiers' Field, the ground where the Bricklayers had famously defeated Nacional of Uruguay the year previous, was the setting. A respectable turnout of 15,000 witnessed the Bricklayers take the game to the Nationals. At half-time, the Brickies had amassed eight corner kicks to none for their opponents but trailed 2-0. The second half didn't go much better, a missed penalty by Hugh Hill seemed to take the air out of the Bricklayers and a third goal for the Nationals settled matters. While the New York leg had been reported as a tense but fair match, in this leg each team had a player sent off and the police intervened when it seemed things might get out of hand.

If the Bricklayers had won, perhaps soccer in the USA would have taken a different turn. Stoneman used the Nationals victory in the final to press for greater change in the ASL rules, and worked to undermine future Challenge Cups. This resulted in the 'soccer wars' of the late 1920s when the US federation and professional teams in the East battled for administrative and financial control, ultimately contributing to the downfall of the ASL. By 1930, Stoneman had lost interest in his pro-soccer team and disbanded the club.

For the Bricklayers, the defeat was, combined with the Great Depression, a significant blow. Multiple leagues were folding and fans were drying up. Support from the Union decreased as unemployment plagued the city of Chicago. The effect of the Depression was so bad, the former Bricklayer team administrator, and US team manager for the 1930 World Cup, Bill Cummings, stated that "things here in Chicago are awful" and "only a handful of fans turn out. They're all out of work. The players are ... simply not getting enough to keep their stomachs filled to permit them to play the right kind of game."

Despite these challenges, the Brickies continued to play, and in 1931 they reached the final of the US Challenge Cup for a second time.

The records show that the 1931 US Open Cup final was played between the Fall River Rovers and Chicago Bricklayers. That would probably surprise the players on the field and the fans who attended the three matches that constituted the final. At the time, the games were another Chicago v New York matchup,

the Brickies against the New York Yankees, or, essentially, another matchup of labor v capital.

The Yankees *were* actually the Fall River Rovers, though they played their games in New York City. Sam Mark, the longtime owner of the very successful Rovers, wanted a bigger market for his team, and he hoped to find it with a move to Gotham. The Depression had devastated the mills of Fall River, and to keep his team alive Mark moved the entire side to New York and rebranded as the Yankees, albeit after they had played their first Cup match as the Rovers. Similar to Charles Stoneman's New York Nationals, that move for money didn't pan out on the balance sheet, but it did on the field.

The 1931 Bricklayers were not exactly the same team as the 1928 side, but they still had Wee Willie McClean on the wing; Clem Cuthbert, a goalscorer in the previous final, up front; and Tom Scott manning the centre of the park. The Chicago leagues were in a constant state of flux after the Depression, but the game of indoor soccer (not the game played in a hockey rink with boards like the USA version of indoor today, but 11 v 11 with touchlines) kept the Brickies in shape year around. Crowds in the thousands would turn out for matches at US military armouries strewn throughout the city. They also kept the Bricklayers in competitive spirit, as matches occasionally descended into fisticuffs.

The first leg of the 1931 Challenge Cup final was played at the Polo Grounds. In 1928, the Brickies held their own there; in 1931 they were thrashed 6-2. That

scoreline, however, does not indicate the closeness of the match. Down 3-0 at half, the Brickies brought the game to 3-2 in the second half, then had what would have been an equalising goal disallowed. So, while the scoreline looks like a rout, the details tell a different story.

Still, because this was a best of three final, the Brickies did have a chance for redemption, and they got it by drawing 1-1 with the Yankees at Chicago's Mills Stadium. It's indicative of the financial state of soccer in 1930's Chicago that Mills was a ground more known for softball. That draw resulted in a third, make or break game, to be played in Chicago at the home ground of the Brickies' local rivals, Sparta Stadium.

One of the best players to play in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s was the prematurely grey-haired Alex McNab. A star wherever he went, he was captain of the Yankees in 31. So it seemed fortuitous for the Bricklayers that McNab injured his arm in a mid-week "friendly" and, although he was able to participate in the pre-game coin toss, would not be available to play. The Yankees had not brought any subs to Chicago, so they were left to play with 10.

That player advantage did not work out for the Bricklayers. The USA stars Billy Gonsalves and Bert Patenaude, who would go on to score the first ever World Cup hat-trick, were too much for the men from Chicago. Patenaude had scored five goals at the Polo Grounds game and he put the Yankees ahead before drawing a penalty to give the eastern champions a 2-0 win on Chicago's West Side.

While the Depression had clearly had an impact on the local leagues, it did not stop teams from the United Kingdom from touring the US. Celtic made the journey from Glasgow in 1931. The Bricklayers were their Chicago opponent and shelled out US\$750 to rent Cubs Park, home of baseball's Chicago Cubs. 11,000 fans saw Celtic hammer the Brickies 6-3. The venture, though, had helped the Bricklayers' front office to net \$1,069.04, a not insignificant sum during the Depression.

Despite this success on the field, and occasional financial success off the field, by 1933 there was real concern that the Bricklayers as a club would fold. The top Chicago soccer league in 1932 was called the National Professional Soccer League, but despite the "National" in the name, it was an all-Chicago affair. With cup competitions, both national and local, plus the regular season, and friendlies with clubs in St Louis, the Brickies played plenty of games.

During the early years of the Depression, the Bricklayers, and the Chicago soccer community as a whole, had a strong soccer ally in the recently elected mayor of Chicago. Anton Cermak was born to Czech parents in Kladno, a small town about 20 miles west of Prague, but he grew up in Braidwood, Illinois, an early soccer hotbed. When he came to Chicago, among other means, he established the Cermak Cup soccer competition to assist him in his rise to the pinnacle of Chicago's notoriously Darwinian political arena.

In February of 1933, Cermak went to Florida to meet President Franklin

Roosevelt and was shot while shaking hands with the US President. Whether the gunman was trying to assassinate Roosevelt or whether, as some historians have speculated, Cermak was the intended target, will never be known for certain. Cermak died from his wounds on 6 March 1933 and Chicago lost one of its best advocates for soccer.

That same year, the Chicago Bricklayers name would also perish. While the team had continued to have a lot of success locally and nationally in 1932, the Bricklayers Union no longer had the resources to support the team at the highest levels. In stepped a local department store with sponsorship funding: Wieboldt's.

William A Wieboldt, a German-American storekeeper, started a small department store on Chicago's North Side in the 1880s. He went on to build a chain of stores in the city and by 1933 Wieboldt's Inc had six outlets in the Chicagoland area. Unlike many businesses during the Great Depression, Wieboldt's was financially stable. They had focused on providing high-quality goods at a reasonable price and appealed to masses of consumers as they were willing to accommodate customers in a number of languages. William Wieboldt was also known as someone who did not operate in "high society," so soccer, as a working persons' game, seemed to be a good fit for his company.

Wieboldt's Inc had a history of philanthropy in the Chicago area, providing hundreds of thousands of dollars to "charitable and welfare" organisations as well as the YMCA and YWCA during the 1920s. A move into the

professional sports arena did not seem out of character.

In 1931 Wieboldt's had inaugurated their Wonderbolt sales program, which was billed as the "value champion of the world". This combination of working-class values, sport interest and sales acumen seemed a perfect combination for the branding of a successful soccer team. So from the ashes of the Bricklayers came the Wieboldt Wonderbolts for the 1933 season.

A few new players had been added to the squad but Billy Alexander's team was basically the same as the team of Bricklayers successful seasons past. The Bricklayers had acquired the former Celtic keeper Julius Hjulian in 1932, and for the 1933 season they added some firepower upfront with Jimmy Lille from the East Coast, but it was certainly not a new team when the Wonderbolts kicked off their cup and league seasons in the fall of 1933.

Success on the field also followed.

The Wonderbolts got off to a fast start in that 1933 Fall season and continued their success against international competition when they beat the reigning "North American Soccer Champion" Toronto Scots 2-0 in an indoor match in front of 7,000 fans at the 124th Field Armoury in December.

The quality of the team was clear on a quick trip to St Louis during the New Year's season, as they took on the Challenge Cup holders Stix, Baer and Fuller as well as the Ben Millers. They held their own against Stix, losing 3-1 but the next day beat Ben Millers 3-2 with a late own goal.

As 1934 kicked off, the involvement of Wieboldt's deeper pocketbook clearly helped the Wonderbolts attract more talent. In addition to holding on to 1934 US Men's National Team goalie Hjulian and mainstays like Tom Scott, they began signing players of national reputation such as Chick Rebello from Fall River and Werner "Scotty" Nielsen, a Norwegian born player, who also earned two caps for the USA in 1934.

Though the Wonderbolts continued to play, the effects of the Depression on sports attitudes were clearly impacting the relationship between fans and athletes in the mid-1930s. As an indication of the importance of the local Peel Cup tournament in the 1930s, the Wonderbolts continued to compete for the trophy. They actually won it in 1934, although the final was contentious. Lining up against Vienna, a top Chicago amateur side, the first leg had to be abandoned when disputed calls led to rioting among the supporters. Two fans were stabbed, and the Chicago Police had to clear the field before the final whistle. The Wonderbolts won the rematch 5-0. The intensity that had existed on the field for years had escalated into the stands.

In 1935, the Wonderbolts reached the Western Finals of the US Challenge Cup. This was supposed to be a best of three series and their opponents were Central Brewers of St Louis. The Centrals, who were Stix, Baer & Fuller a year previous, had also been recruiting nationally and had the 1930 World Cup stars Bert Patenaude and Billy Gonsalves as well as the former Bricklayer Wee Willie McClean in their lineup. No matter the team names, the Wonderbolts (Bricklayers)

and the Centrals (Stix) had met often and games were always tense affairs.

The first game in St Louis ended in a 2-1 win for the Centrals and the second match in Chicago had ended in a 1-1 draw, despite 30 minutes of extra time and a couple of penalty kick opportunities for the Wonderbolts. The deciding third match was played in St Louis on the evening of April 6. That game, however, ended in a 3-3 draw, and so a fourth match was played as, according to the US Soccer official Colonel A Donald Anderson, two victories would be needed for a Western champion to be crowned.

The teams returned to Chicago for game four of the series. The Centrals went 2-0 up and looked to be heading for the final when the Wonderbolts came back to level, before winning 3-2 in extra time. A fifth match would be needed.

The question was where that final match would take place. Billy Alexander requested a neutral venue, as he felt that tensions on and off the field were getting out of hand. Alexander himself claimed to have been assaulted by members of the Centrals staff, although St Louis officials denied it. US soccer eventually cabled the Wonderbolts that the deciding game would be played in St Louis on April 21.

Finally, the Centrals prevailed with a 1-0 win in front of only 4,500 fans, Bert Patenaude getting the only goal. Central Brewers went on to win the 1935 Challenge Cup, giving their franchise a third consecutive national championship.

The fallout from the five-game series for the Wonderbolts, however was longer-

reaching than just defeat in a semi-final. A staff member of the Wonderbolts claimed that some of the 4,500 St Louis fans had been shooting pellets at the team during the last game, and four Wonderbolts players were badly beaten by fans after the match. Not all press reports highlighted these charges, but it was publicised nationwide in a wire report story about violence and sports in the US.

The difficulties on the field carried back to Chicago as well. The Wonderbolts had not lost a game in the Chicago area in almost two years, and they were the holders of the 1934 Peel Cup. They expected to retain that title when they met Harvey, Illinois on 2 June 1935 at their adopted home of DePaul field. Hjulian was out so the forward Dave Coutts took over in goal. Perhaps that was the issue as they ended up on the wrong end of a tight 3-2 match. Hopes of a state and national championships were dashed within a few weeks.

Wieboldt Inc was a very successful department store and they had weathered the Great Depression better than many companies. Still, there had been financial ups and downs, and in 1934 the company underwent a major financial reorganisation. The fact that the Wieboldt name was associated with a successful soccer team had its benefits, but the violence surrounding the team ultimately was a factor in their decision to pull the plug on sponsorship.

In mid-1935, the Hungarian-American team from Chicago adopted the Bricklayers name, but the new team had little association with the old one as almost all Wonderbolts players

departed. This included the midfield stalwart Tom Scott, who went to their local rivals Sparta, whom he would help to win Chicago's first national title in 1938, by which point even the depleted Bricklayers were no longer a part of the Chicago soccer scene.

From 1912 to 1936 the Bricklayers/Wonderbolts club were one of the most competitive soccer teams in the United States. By associating with the bricklayers union, the club had a built-in support community and they attracted high-quality players from the Midwest and beyond. While that community was supportive, there had also been signs of impermanence. Bricklayer Field, their early home ground, was dependent on the Chicago White Sox baseball team, and when the baseball team wanted the space back, the Bricklayers lost their home.

This did not deter the club from attracting players and playing at the highest levels of the sport in the US. Their runs to the US Challenge Cup finals in 1928 and 1931 demonstrated their high-quality play. Defeat in the 1928 final was, in some ways, a harbinger of things to come regarding the American reliance on individual capitalists for soccer community support. Had the Bricklayers won that final, would the New York Nationals owner Charles Stoneman have had the self-confidence to start the 'soccer war' which helped bankrupt the professional league?

The 1931 Challenge Cup Final was another example of a team, Fall River Rovers, being relocated from their home community to the big city, getting a rebrand and having initial sporting

success. While Sam Mark's commitment to soccer in the US was clearly greater than Stoneman's, the fact that soccer teams looked to corporate interests and brighter lights must have made an impression on Bricklayers administrators. So, when a corporation, Wieboldt's Inc, appeared as a saviour while the ravages of the Great Depression took out income

sources, the Bricklayers went with that option.

In the short term, the team did have some success on the field, but the lack of commitment from the corporation to the soccer club ultimately cost the team its existence. 