

The Peace Cup soccer event is shut down

John Haydon
October 30, 2012



Peace Cup

WASHINGTON, October 30, 2012 — The Peace Cup, which drew some of the world's biggest soccer clubs, including Real Madrid and Juventus, has folded. The biennial summer event, sponsored by the Unification Church and mostly hosted by South Korean club Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma, has been shut down according to news reports and internal church memos.

The Agence France Presse reports that Peace Cup spokesman Ahn Ho-Yeol said the decision to end the tournament was in line with the church's efforts "to focus on its internal stability and missionary work." A report by Yonhap News, said financial constraints were the reason for the closure.

The Peace Cup was started in 2003 by Unification Church founder Rev. Sun Myung Moon following the success of South Korea at the 2002 World Cup, where the co-hosts reached the semifinal. Brazilian star Pele was recruited to help promote the 2003 event.

Since Rev. Moon's death in September, there has been a reorganization within the church now led by his wife Mrs. Hak Jan Han Moon.

The Peace Cup was used as a pre-season warm-up event by many big European clubs and boasted a \$2 million prize for the winners. The motto of the event was: "Play football, make peace...transcending the barriers of ideologies religions, and cultures via football."

Money made from the games was used to promote youth tournaments in the developing world. The last Peace Cup was a four-team event held in Suwon, South Korea in June involving Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma, German team SV Hamburg, English Premier League club Sunderland and Dutch outfit FC Groningen.

It was won by Hamburg and Rev. Moon presented the trophy to the German team's captain. It was Rev. Moon's last public event. He was taken ill the following month and died on September 3.

In 2003, the \$16 million inaugural event involved eight teams, including the Los Angeles Galaxy and 1860 Munich, and was won by Dutch team PSV Eindhoven. In 2005, English club Tottenham Hotspur

won the event. Two years later, French champion Lyon, which had been the runner-up twice, downed Bolton Wanderers, to finally win the tournament.

The 2009 incarnation took on a more ambitious approach and was co-hosted by Spanish giant Real Madrid in Spain. Twelve clubs, including Italian giants Juventus, Spanish team Sevilla, Portuguese side Porto and English team Aston Villa, took part in the games. All but two of the 15 games were held at venues in the Andalucian region of Spain, home to Spanish entrants Sevilla FC and Malaga.

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. That event has been shut down too. Also the church-owned women's team Choong Nam Ilhwa has been disbanded. The future of seven-time Korean champion Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma, is still to be determined.

For 20 years John Haydon wrote a weekly soccer column for The Washington Times. He has covered two World Cups and written about Major League Soccer from the league's inception in 1996.