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Chapter 6

Unlocking American Soccer's Secret Weapon

The secret weapon goes back to prehistoric times when the first caveman picked up a rock and brained his opponent. Secret weapons change the balance of power and history by giving a side an insurmountable advantage. Secret weapons create fear because they can turn the haves to have nots instantly. American soccer is a have not standing at a crossroad with millions playing

and watching the game but falling short of passion and international success.

In fairness, soccer in America has come a long way since the days of the NASL when the role of American players was to do the dirty work for the league's international stars, playing defense and keeping goal. The U.S. National Team failed to qualify for the Cup for 40 years (1950-1990), a period that included the "Golden Years" of the NASL. No more than a handful of Americans played with clubs abroad and none made a lasting impact.

Major League Soccer brought first division professional soccer back to the States in 1996 and continually moves toward profitability, becoming more competitive with clubs around the world each year. Yet something is still missing from the equation. Being competitive and actually having the capacity to defeat the best teams in the world are two separate issues.

Despite the low points suffered during the 1998 and 2006 World Cups, it became obvious from these tournaments how far U.S. Soccer had progressed by 1990. The first World Cup 1990 game against Czechoslovakia ended as a 5-1 beat down that was far worse than the final score indicated. Improvement in overall quality in the American player since 1990 means a duplication of the Czechoslovakia game is unimaginable.

The problem is the U.S. isn't capable of playing attractive, attacking soccer against teams outside of the