

Middle-Aged Immigrants in LA Stay in Shape Playing Soccer

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In Los Angeles, middle-aged soccer enthusiasts are still in the game, a little slower than they once were but just as passionate. The multinational group is part of an organization called the Los Angeles Soccer Club

Bobby Summerfield was born in England, grew up in South Africa, and has been in the United States for 17 years. He jokes that he doesn't play soccer but makes a good show of it, staying fit with a group of his friends.



(L) Bobby Summerfield (C) Alec Masterton (R) Helmut Anheier

VOA photo - M. O'Sullivan

"I enjoy it," he said. "I played all my life as a kid. They're a great bunch of guys, and we have fun. Just really pure fun, really."

Jorge Teran, from Peru, said these immigrants from around the world have maintained their love of soccer.

"If you go to any field in Los Angeles or Southern California, I think you will find players from all over the world," he added. "The United States, Mexico, Salvador, Brazil, Peru, ex-Yugoslavia, Croatia, Serbia, Austria, Germany, England, Scotland, Ireland."

The list goes on, he says, to include players from countries like Egypt and Iran.



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German immigrant **Helmut Anheier** said that he plays to stay in shape, and for the camaraderie. He said that the players get a good workout, although they've slowed down a bit.

"Age is the thing," he explained. "You know, most of the guys are over 40, and there's only so much you can get out of them these days."

Some of the players, in fact, are in their upper 60's.

Alec Masterton has played with the Los Angeles Soccer Club since 1970. He said that California's climate is better for outdoor sports than that of his native Scotland, and says these players are not too bad, all things considered.

"The level of play for guys our age is pretty good, actually, because most of the fellows back home are pretty sedentary compared to us," he noted. "They can't believe that we're still doing this, that we're crazy enough to be out in the noontime sun, running around."

Bobby Summerfield said that these men are passionate about soccer, and closely follow the sport in their native countries.

"Pretty religiously, yeah. I've got a [satellite] dish network, and I get my mates," he said. "We get together and have a couple of beers and watch all the Premier league stuff from England and all the [German] Bundesliga - at four in the morning."

Roman Samokish, known as Sam, is a New York-born Ukrainian American. He has loved soccer since his childhood in the 1950s and 1960s, when he played in immigrant leagues on the East Coast.

Now, despite some aches and pains, he still enjoys a good game of soccer.

"And right after the game when we play on Saturdays, we go to a little Irish pub and we solve the problems of the world," he joked.

Teammate Alec Masterton agrees that after 34 years in the sport, the key to happy life is a good game of soccer and some cold beer afterwards.

"We're still at it," he added. "Play around a little. Go for a beer. Life is good."



Roman Samokish
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