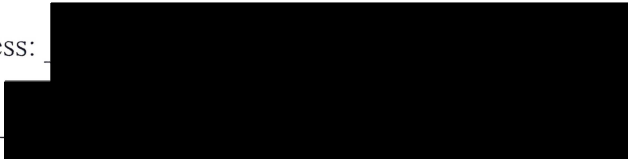


Interviewer: Jennifer Haselhorst

INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY

Name: Ruben Mendoza

Date and Place of Birth: 1931 in St. Louis

Address: 

Telephone Number: 

Interview Date, Time, and Place:
Oct-30-01 4:30 pm. Lincoln Place Community Center
in Granite City, Illinois

Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):

Ruben Mendoza began to play soccer as a child not even by choice. Ruben originated from St. Louis, Missouri and then quickly moved to Lincoln Place, Granite City one year after birth. But it was not until Ruben moved to Durango, Mexico before he picked up the sport of soccer. Very rapidly Ruben picked up this sport & devoted all of his time and energy to enhance his skills in soccer. At an early age of 16-17, Ruben was playing on select teams in the St. Louis area where he began playing teams from all over the world. Through his team, Kuti's, Ruben had the opportunity to play in the Olympics, and World Cup. At a young age Ruben hurt his knee but never gave up. He then built up the soccer club "The Elks" in

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:

The interview was conducted at the Lincoln Place Community Center. Because of this location, the background is sometimes covering up the words spoken. Also there was a little boy that came in the interview.

Jennifer Haselhorst
Bibliographical Summary
Ruben Mendoza

Ruben Mendoza was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1931. After one year of living there, Ruben and his family moved to Granite City, Illinois; more specifically Lincoln Place. Lincoln Place is a very ethnically diverse neighborhood in Granite City. Being of Mexican decent, the Mendoza family fit in perfectly in this neighborhood. Although the Mendoza's bought a house in Lincoln Place, the duration of their stay was not very long. The Mendoza's moved to Durango, Mexico after six to seven years in Granite City. Here Ruben learned how to play soccer which ultimately shaped a large part of his life and who he is today.

Around seven years old, Ruben Mendoza and family moved to Durango, Mexico where Ruben had to establish a new circle of friends. On his way to school one morning Ruben noticed a group of young boys his age kicking what looked to him as a baseball. Ruben asked the boys what they were doing and they replied: "playing soccer." Never hearing of the sport, Ruben denied the young boys request for him to join, however he became friends with the group of boys but never wanted to play soccer with them. A few years had passed, and Ruben decided to go and watch his friends practice. While watching Ruben noticed the coach talking to the young group of ten year olds, and did not really think anything of it. A few moments later, the entire team had surrounded Ruben and made him join the practice. Apparently the coach threatened the boys of canceling practice unless Ruben joined the practice. Ruben decided to practice with the team and he really enjoyed it. From there, Ruben Mendoza's life changed.

Ruben enjoyed the sport so much that every spare moment he had, he spent that time practicing. Ruben quickly excelled at the sport, that he decided to quit playing all other sports and focus all his efforts on soccer. This dedication quickly pushed Ruben above and beyond his friends, after a minimal amount of time Ruben was named team captain. From this point on, Ruben Mendoza lived to play soccer. Moving back to the states when he was sixteen years old, Ruben did not think soccer existed. Moving to Lincoln Place again, Ruben was unable to find soccer events anywhere. Then Ruben got word of the U.S. National Soccer Team playing over in St. Louis so he went to the game and met some people over there attending the game as well and was invited to try out for the St. Louis Kutis team. Upon trying out for the team, Ruben practiced and touched up on his skills. Ruben made the team with no questions or second thoughts.

The Kutis team was a major powerhouse when it came to soccer in the amateur division. This team played some of the best national teams from all around the world. Because of his involvement with the Kutis team Ruben had the experience to train and try-out of the Olympic games for three consecutive years. Only one year they actually made the Olympics. From there, Ruben Mendoza actually played the World Cup games. Ruben Mendoza at that time and even considered now one of the best soccer athletes to play the sport in the United States. Ruben will soon be inducted to the National Soccer Hall of Fame.

Unfortunately at an early age Mendoza ran into some horrible tragedy; which then resulted in his inability to play soccer anymore. At the young age of 29, Mendoza injured his knee to where he no longer was able to play soccer again. However this did not stop the young athlete. Living back in Lincoln Place, Granite City, Mendoza joined the

neighborhood children together and taught them how to play soccer. This team slowly evolved into two, which turned into three and before Mendoza realized he had a club of seven different age groups and competitive teams to play against. This actually turned into the Granite City Elks, one of the largest soccer organizations east of the Mississippi. Granite City Elks has aspired to be one of the strongest soccer clubs in the St. Louis metro area. Mendoza brought soccer to Southern Illinois and with that made the game available to anyone who dreamed of playing. Because of this Ruben Mendoza has been nicknamed the "The Grandfather of Soccer."