

## World Cup Legend Inaugurates Futsal Field at Pacoima Park



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Wednesday, 25 February 2009



Youngsters play in the newly inaugurate futsal field at Hubert Humphrey Park in Pacoima. The field has a surfaced made of Nike Grind, a material made of recycled Nike Shoes.

For two years, Salvador Barragan and his friends practiced futsal (indoor soccer) on the handball courts in front of the gymnasium at Hubert Humphrey Park in Pacoima.

But all that changed Saturday when Nike and its famous ambassador, former Mexican national team goalkeeper Jorge Campos, along with City of Los Angeles

officials inaugurated a new futsal field at the park, only the second of its kind in the city and the first in the San Fernando Valley. The only other field of its type is located in South Los Angeles.

"This is nice", said Barragan looking at the field. "Now we don't have to worry about other people already playing here".

Barragan, 15, is part of Futbolito Pacoima, a futsal league in existence since 2006 that includes about 100 13 to 18- year-olds from the Northeast San Fernando Valley. The sport has been around since the 1930s and arrived in the U.S. around the 1980s. It is played in colleges and Boys and Girls Club throughout the country. Futsal is a 5-on-5 game of fast soccer played in an enclosed area.

"It's harder than regular soccer. The ball is heavier and you run a lot more. You get more ball touch and you learn to control the ball better", said Barragan.

The league, organized by the nonprofit agency Youth Speak Collective, plays at four sites (Maclay Middle School, Fernangeles Park and San Fernando Gardens) and holds tournaments twice a month where all the teams play each other.

Rafael Campos, another youngsters, who said "soccer has always had a great impact on my life", recalled how he grew up as an only child and the "soccer ball became my friend".

But his parents wanted him to practice martial arts instead of soccer and it wasn't until he moved from North Hollywood to Pacoima that he heeded the soccer call. "We used to play on the basketball courts at Maclay Middle School, but they didn't have soccer there", he recalled. "We used to rush before school and during lunch and we made goal posts with our backpacks".

Since then he has part of Futbolito Pacoima for the past three years indulging in the sport he loves.

Mayra Esparza, coordinator with Youth Speak Collective, said Futbolito Pacoima is meant to keep kids busy, doing something healthy and fun.

"We're trying to keep the kids active and off the street. The coaches we have are positive role models and we try to provide something other than what is on the street", she said.

Marcos Canales, 27, is one of these coaches.

"In the other sites you play on the pavement. But this field allows for different moves you can't do there and you can control the ball better", said Canales.

The field, built at a cost of \$250,000, is enclosed by walls measuring some three feet tall to prevent the ball from leaving the area. The field is purposely painted green, since the surface incorporates Nike Grind, made from discarded Nike shoes, said Alicia Procello, spokeswoman for the sports gear manufacturer.

The field is part of Nike's "Let Me Play" program, a community effort by the company to promote sports and physical fitness. Apart from building surfaces for play, this program also provides grants and product donations to support sporting activities.

Futsal can be a good alternative for the practice of soccer, since the regular game requires large fields. Here in Los Angeles, where park space is often limited, fields such as this one can allow more youngsters to play the sport.



Former Mexican National Team Goalkeeper Jorge Campos plays with the ball during the inauguration of a futsal field at Hubert Humphrey Park in Pacoima, the only field of its kind in the San Fernando Valley.

Part of the money for the construction of the field also comes from the LA84 Foundation that uses money from profits obtained by the City of Los Angeles during the 1984 Olympic Games.

Anita DeFrantz, president of the LA84 Foundation, said the new field is part of a partnership with Nike to build and or refurbish 84 playgrounds throughout Los Angeles.

"We're trying to make it easier for kids to play their favorite sports in adequate places, where they get more out of them", she said.

Jon Kirk Mukri, general manager for the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Park, and a Pacoima-native, said the field "is going to bring the community together".

"This should be a crossroads in the community", he said.

## **FUTSAL**

According to the U.S. Futsal Federation, the sport has its origins in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1930 when Juan Carlos Ceriani devised a five-a-side version of soccer for youth competition in YMCAs.

The game is often played on basketball-sized courts, both indoors and outdoors. It is fastpaced, with players always chasing the ball up and down the court. Without having sidelines, the action never stops, unless the ball leaves the court.

The game is played with two teams of five players each, one of which is the goalkeeper. The maximum number of substitutes allowed is seven, with unlimited substitutions during the match. Substitutes can come on even when the ball is in play. If a team has fewer than three players on the team, the match is abandoned.

Futsal is played with a smaller ball with less bounce than a regulation soccer ball and players must wear rubber-soled shoes.

The game is controlled by a referee who enforces the rules, who is also assisted by a second referee. There is also a third referee and a timekeeper.

A standard game consists of two equal periods of 20 minutes. The half time interval between the two halves cannot exceed 15 minutes.

A kick off is used to signal the start of the game, and is also used at the start of the second half. It is also used after a goal has been scored. After a temporary stoppage of the game, the referee will drop the ball where the play was stopped. If the ball goes over the goal line or touchline, hits the ceiling, or the play is stopped by the referee, the ball is out of play.

If it hits the ceiling of an indoor arena, play is restarted with a kick-in to the opponents of the team that last touched the ball, under the spot where it hit the ceiling.

As in regular soccer, the winner is determined by the team that scores the most goals.

The game spread in popularity through South America, particularly in Brazil, where many of the legendary soccer stars, including Pele, Zico and Ronaldinho developed their skills playing the sport.

The first international competition took place in 1965, when Paraguay organized the first South American Cup.

Known also as Minisoccer or Futbol Sala, the first FutsalWorld Championship under Soccer's international governing body, FIFA, was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1982, the country that won it that time. Since then, it has been organized in Spain, Australia, Holland, Hong Kong, Guatemala and China.

The sport reached the United States around the 1980s.

According to the Federation, some 1,100 Boys and Girls Clubs throughout the US now promote sport.

