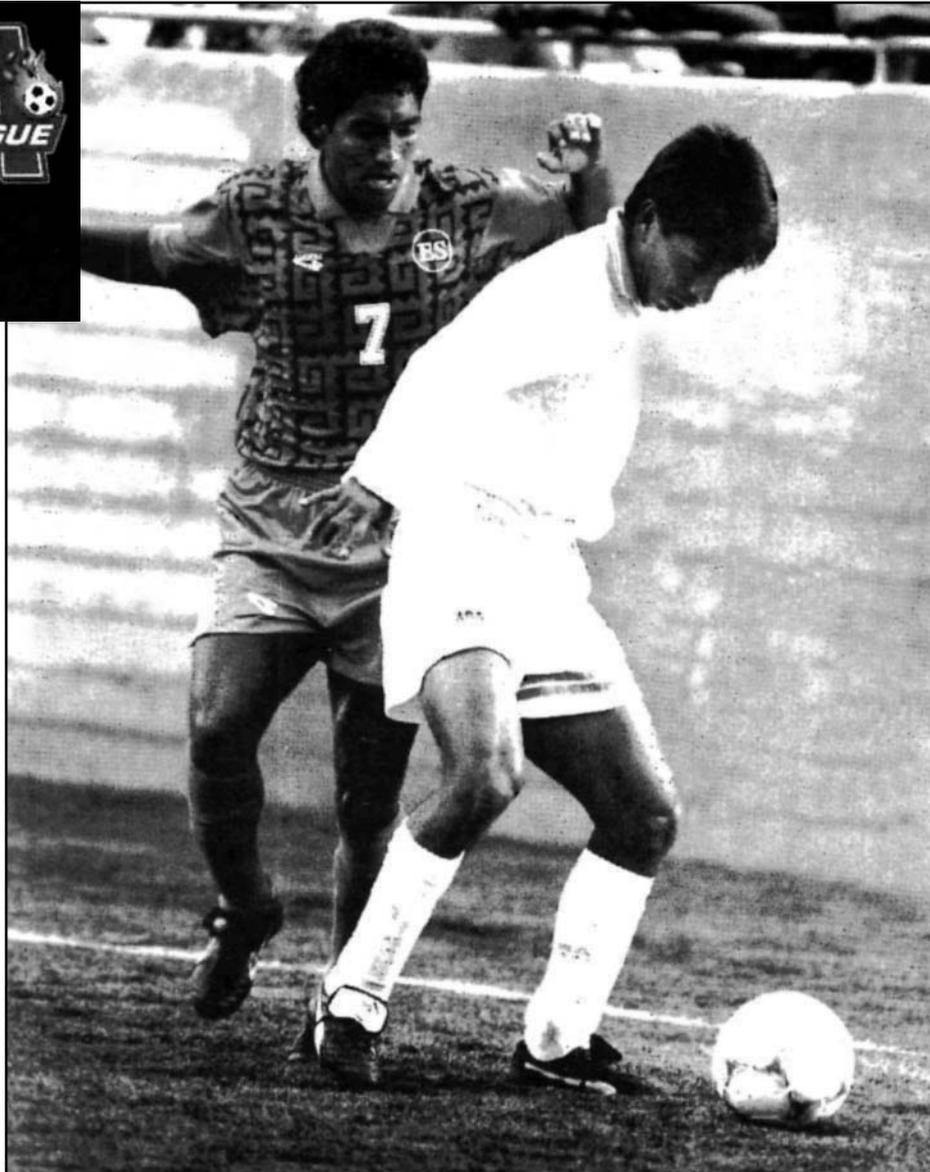


# Bulldogs create a Salvadoran connection

*Boston lands longtime national team star Renderos; team savors relationship with Revs*

BY POUL SWAIN



MILTON CROSSEN

The Boston Bulldogs found what they were after on an offseason recruiting trip to El Salvador. William Renderos Iraheta was doing his thing in the midfield for FAS in the semifinals of the Salvadoran championship, and looking on in admiration were Bulldogs general manager Joe Cummings and coach Steve Nicol.

"We weren't there 15 minutes before we realized he was the player we needed," said Cummings, who proceeded to negotiate Renderos' transfer.

The addition of the 28-year-old Salvadoran international, a national team regular who faced the United States in France '98 qualifying, gives the Bulldogs a midfield playmaker who can hold the ball and service countryman Elias Montes. Last season, Montes had seven goals in eight games for the team.

"He's a very typical central midfielder, in that he possesses the ball very well in tight spaces," Cummings said. "He does all the things that you would expect from a central midfielder, but he also sends a very good long ball. It's a special one because he seems to send it with just the right amount of pace. He has the ability to float it in behind defenders. And that's what we needed, so that Montes is able to receive the ball and take players on one-on-one."

"I would expect for him to be a real surprise in the A-League."

Renderos' arrival is the latest step in what the Bulldogs hope continues to be a productive relationship with the soccer community of El Salvador. Montes opened the door after coming on board last season, and Nicol visited the Coca-Cola School of Excellence in El Salvador last October, and came away impressed with the training

methods and programs that have produced over 100 national team players in 25 years.

Nicol, 38, is optimistic about the upcoming season, in which he will again perform as player/coach for the Bulldogs.

The former Liverpool and Scotland star played in 16 games last season, but was hobbled with a strained calf muscle for the latter stages of the campaign.

This season he's fit again and looks

The signing of Salvadoran international William Renderos Iraheta (No. 7) will give the Boston Bulldogs a veteran presence in midfield.

forward to manning a spot in the center of defense, alongside or behind Trinidad & Tobago international Avery John.

"I feel fine," Nicol said. "I'm ready."

Boston Bulldogs tryouts, conducted in conjunction with the D3 Cape Cod Crusaders, also owned by Massachusetts Pro Soccer, and the Revolution, were attended by hundreds of local hopefuls.

The relationship with the Revolution, for whom Cummings worked in various capacities before taking over the Bulldogs, has only gotten better.

"[The relationship] gives us an opportunity to build the model as it's supposed to be, with us actually serving as the farm team," Cummings said. "It allows Revolution players the opportunity to get some rehab, to spend some time with the Bulldogs, and gives Bulldogs players a chance to see some time with the Revolution."

"Our draft was one of constant communication, where we were telling them of some players we had interest in, and they were sharing with us some of the players they had interest in. In case those players aren't successful in remaining with the Revolution, they certainly would have opportunities with the Bulldogs."

The Bulldogs and the W-League's Renegades, also owned by MPS, will each play a doubleheader with the Revolution at Foxboro Stadium. The Bulldogs will open their A-League season against Pro-40, before an April 22 MLS game between the Revolution and the Chicago Fire.

"Just the fact that our teams are being showcased at Foxboro tells you a great deal about the relationship with the Revolution," Cummings said. "It's fantastic."

(Poul Swain is an associate editor at Soccer America.)