

**I**N 1975, a group of Minnesota businessmen purchased the struggling Denver Dynamos soccer franchise, bringing to the Twin Cities the team that would become the Minnesota Kicks. Owners and players alike faced a stiff challenge: soccer was not popular in the U.S. at the time, Minnesota already had two professional sports teams, and the baseball season was virtually the same as soccer's.

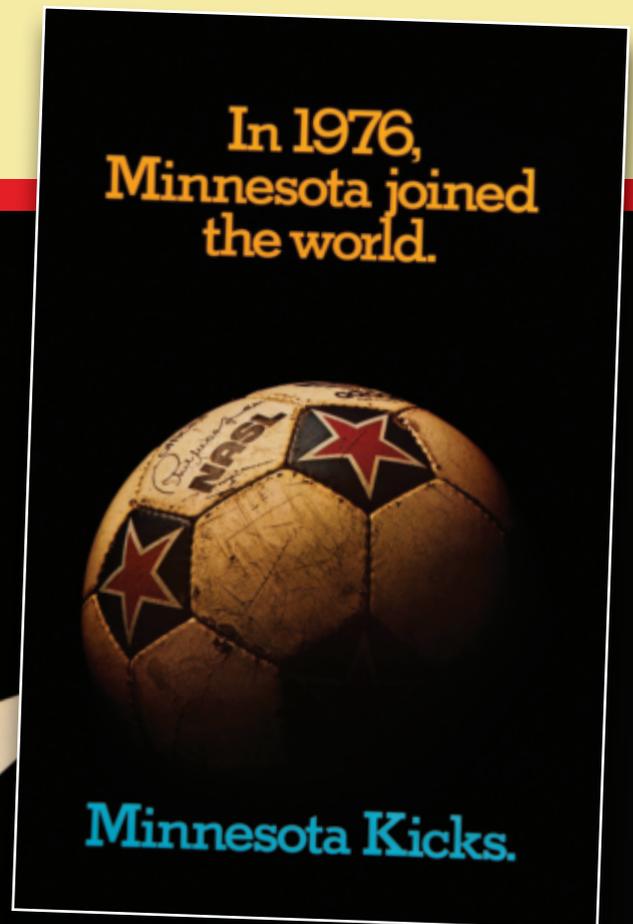
And so, guided by its advertising consultants, management went to work creating an aura of excitement and international sophistication for the new team. It must have helped that many of the players were charming, friendly, and citizens of Great

Britain, Italy, or Africa. The ad strategy, beginning with a naming contest, was to make the Kicks "the people's team." That strategy succeeded brilliantly—for a while.

Newspaper and radio ads targeted a new sports crowd: young adults. Cheap tickets, free parking, promotional giveaways, and game-day events in Met Stadium's parking lot turned the traditional tailgating experience into something akin to 1969's Woodstock festival.

Pictured here from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society are some souvenirs of the team's six-year career in the state.

The round, white cap sports a stylish brim. Other fan memorabilia in the collections, all in team colors with the Kicks logo, vividly portray the era and the team's fan base: a halter top, wristwatch, duffel bag, mug, phonograph record, more posters, and an inflatable beach ball labeled "Sunkist/Good Vibrations." The collections also contain soccer shorts, a jersey, a shoe, and socks that belonged to team players. For more about soccer and the Kicks in Minnesota, see the article beginning on page 102.





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