

ARMSTRONG TO BRING SOCCER TO INNER-CITY

By **Bill Buchalter Of The Sentinel Staff**

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Charged with finding a lasting legacy **World Cup** can bring to Central Florida, Joanie Schirm turned her thoughts to youth, the future and the inner-city.

"What a better legacy," Schirm said last January, "than to bring the world's most popular sport to children who haven't had an opportunity to enjoy it."

Saturday at the Florida Citrus Bowl, United States National Soccer Team defender Desmond Armstrong hopes to become an athletic spokesman in behalf of Schirm's legacy.

Armstrong, 27, already has articulated his dream and last week received a special corporate award from World Cup sponsor Master Card for his work with inner-city kids.

He founded the Inner City Soccer Beats program in Washington D.C. in 1990 "to give school-age youngsters an opportunity to learn and play soccer." He has organized clinics in the District of Columbia, in Boston, Columbus, Ohio, and Charleston, S.C. He is ready to hold a clinic in Orlando if somebody would just said, "Go."

Armstrong, an English major at the University of Maryland who will complete his degree after World Cup, has traveled the world playing soccer. His travels have taken him to Europe and to Brazil where he has played for the famed Santos team where the legendary Pele once starred. One of his teammates was Edinho, son of Pele.

Bora Milutinovic, Armstrong's National Team coach, calls his defender "charismatic."

"How do you say it in English " Coach Bora asked? "You like guys who would die for the shirt they wear."

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am (which plays Australia Saturday night in the Florida Citrus Bowl), I'm a hard
ayer, but to maintain my position and to maintain what I have achieved, I must work

harder."

It's doubly important because of his inner desire to bring this game to the inner cities. He looks at this opportunity as a hands-on effort to provide a refreshing role model.

"Soccer is a suburban sport in America," Armstrong said. "But around the world, it's a poor man's sport. I was able to witness that first hand in Brazil. I want to be able to take back to the inner city that you can get an education from this sport, you can travel through this sport, you can gain self respect from this sport."

Desmond Armstrong is used to responding to challenges. He is described by the U.S. Soccer Federation as the first African-American to play in World Cup. And he unashamedly points out he is a suburban black, blessed with opportunities to play sports like soccer and tennis as well as basketball.

"I don't want to be shunned for being a suburban black," he said. "I want to bridge the gap we have in the black community. We have something to offer to bridge that gap."

The inner city leagues provide a solid base of bridge-building, and it began when he and Jimmy Banks were World Cup team roommates in 1990. Armstrong took his dream to D.C. from Columbia, Md., 25 miles down the beltway, a dream that has mushroomed into the reality of 16 teams with 320 athletes participating. Banks started a similar league in Milwaukee. Armstrong hopes the two can play each other this year.

"Kids are searching for positive role models," Armstrong said. "They are looking for leaders. I want kids to experience something of that magnitude, what soccer did for me. We want to take them out of the city and into the suburbs, out of the suburbs and into other states, out of the states and into other countries."

Armstrong wants to use his soccer career as an opportunity to become a voice for helping the inner city. He sees Asian-Americans working together as family to build a new life and wants the suburban black community to rally in similar fashion in the inner city.

He can envision the day when black entertainers and black athletes - who all command top dollar - come together to create a credit union for black small businessmen.

community can learn from the Asian Americans how they help one another. This is what I

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"My stage is coming up in 1994. With World Cup, we can get the word out."

World Cup Orlando/Kissimmee/St. Cloud volunteers, headed by John Rinehart, already have begun discussions with four Orlando elementary school principals to start an inner city program. Sponsorships are needed, whether at Orlando's local level or Armstrong's national level, to make things happen.

Saturday at the Florida Citrus Bowl, you can sense Rinehart's volunteers cheering for Armstrong, and vice-versa.

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