



ELÍAS FIGUEROA



“SCORING THE GOL ILUMINADO EVERY DAY THROUGH FOOTBALL FOR PEACE FOR THOSE DIVIDED BY THE SHADOWS OF HATE, HISTORY AND PREJUDICE”

Born in Valparaiso on 25 October 1946, Figueroa had quite a happy childhood, notwithstanding persistent health issues. At 11, doctors diagnosed the onset of polio, which he would eventually overcome, but not before practically having to learn to walk all over again. “All that made me stronger,” he has always said of that experience. “I changed my mindset and set myself short-term goals. In the end I overcame all the challenges.” By the time he was 14, he was already making a name for himself on the right side of

midfield with Club Deportivo Liceo. The following year Figueroa sailed through a trial with local side Santiago Wanderers, where he first began playing in central defence. Fast forward to the 1974 FIFA World Cup in Germany, and that promising 15-year-old was by then a proven winner and every bit a man. At that juncture in Elias Figueroa’s career, few would have disagreed with the assertion. His anticipation and reading of the game was already beyond reproach, while his leadership skills,

ability in the air and composure on the ball were recognized by the world over. “Figueroa is the best Chilean player of all time, and probably the finest central defender in the history of football in the Americas,” - Pele has gone on record as saying. That debate aside, no one could dispute that, from the centre of defense, he revolutionized football in his homeland, winning praise and personal accolades both with his country and the clubs he represented, where he invariably became captain. What the legend has given to the game of football and to the development of the game in Latin America-it deserves a book! Once he decided to pack off his boots and debut – as promising as it was in the game – to an altogether different “playing condition”, a different “field” and a different “opponent”.

In 2006, Figueroa and his long time friend and collaborator in Futbol Masters, Steve Leighton undertook a new challenge. Their vision was to create a Charity Foundation and Goodwill Organization which would provide ‘Education Through Sport’ programs and initiatives to families and children in need and at risk. Thus The Gol Iluminado Foundation was established as a Not For Profit Organization in June 2007 and in a short period of time has evolved into a dynamic and prolific force, recognized by world leaders and the most credible individuals and Organizations involved in the ‘Sport For Development and Peace movement’, worldwide. The inspiration behind the project was the concept of utilizing SPORT as a catalyst to create, implement and sustain a network of LEGACY initiatives for children and families in need and at risk. The origin of the foundations’ core beliefs dates back to 1984, when a group of legendary footballers gathered in Amsterdam and formed ‘FutbolMasters’. Elias Figueroa has been appointed as a Champion For Peace and Ambassador of Peace and Sport.

In the year 2013, the GOL ILUMINADO FOUNDATION hosted a Sport For Hope Indigenous Football Tournament for the National Tribes of The Americas in association with and support of the Chilean Government. The inaugural Indigenous Copa Americana took place prior to the Copa America 2015 CHILE, from June 11 – July 4, 2015. The Indigenous Copa Americana is a LEGACY project resulting from the GOL ILUMINADO’s efforts to bring awareness and support to Indigenous history, culture and sport, the outcome of which was the “Elias Figueroa Sports Law”, which recognizes Ancestral Sport as “Official Sport” of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This now provides Federal funding opportunities to Indigenous Tribes in order to perpetuate the history, culture and fabric of the Indigenous People of Chile.

“for being the perfect defender, of sporting brilliance and spirit as one of the greatest from the greatest era of the game, of all that is good and great about football as an impeccable administrator of the game and of the rights and opportunities of children and communities suppressed by fear, distrust and impoverishment; for scoring the Gol Iluminado every day through Football for Peace for groups and individuals divided by the shadows of hate, history and prejudice.”

