

## US CUP NEWS (April 21, 2015)

# Jim Rally, co-founder of two-time US Open Cup champion Greek-American AC of San Francisco, passes away

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John Rally (blue) and Jim Rally (right) founded the Greek-American AC back in 1949 and won two US Open Cup titles (1985, 1994). Photo: Greek-American AC

<http://thecup.us/thecupnew/2015/04/21/jim-rally-co-founder-of-two-time-us-open-cup-champion-greek-american-ac-of-san-francisco-passes-away/>

Last Monday, April 13, Jim Rally, a towering figure in Bay Area soccer and US Open Cup history, passed away. He was 85. In 1949, Rally, then just 19 years-old, founded Greek-American Athletic Club (AC) with his older brother, John.

In its 56 year history, Greek-American AC advanced to the US Open Cup Final three times, winning in 1985 and 1994. The club first reached the Open Cup Quarterfinals back in 1963 and over the next three decades would finish with 12 Round of 8 appearances, which remains tied for the third-most in tournament history. They also won the San Francisco Soccer Football League championship 16 times.

During those Open Cup years, Greek-American AC had a roster that included Nigerian internationals Andy Atuegbu and Godwin Odiye, Honduran Salvador Bernardez, Iranian Hadji Rahimpour and American players like John Doyle, Paul Bravo, Mark Semioli, and Tim Martin.

The Rallys were able to assemble such a talented roster because they treated their players with a respect uncommon even in the professional ranks.



Greek-American AC: 1994 US Open Cup champions. Photo: Greek-American AC

“There was an allegiance and affiliation with John and Jim that existed at the club level that did not exist at the professional level,” said midfielder Derek Van Rheenen. “There was a clubhouse. There were fans of Greek origin. And John and Jim were very beloved. We had a real desire to play for them, and as quirky as they were, there was a real affinity that didn’t exist at the professional level.”

“(The players) liked the group,” Rally said in an interview last year. “They liked the way that the spectators and fans treated them. They were all on a pedestal. They didn’t get that kind of treatment from any other team. We took care of them. We took them out.”

The players returned their owners’ affections.

Said Greek-American AC goalkeeper Aram Kardzair: “John and Jim were like my dad. They were like my father. It was just because of their passion for not only the game, but for the Greek-American (team). They were very proud of us.”

“I have a tremendous amount of respect for John and Jimmy and their love of the game and what they did with that club and with the players,” said forward Mike Deleray. “You’re talking about hundreds of people that went through the club over the years. It was a special environment.”



Greek-American AC celebrate their 1994 US Open Cup championship. Photo: Greek-American AC

Among the players, Rally was also infamous for writing long letters to the team after every match. In them, he would often make jokes at the players’ expense. About Deleray he once wrote: “Mike never lost a step because he never had one.”

But Jim Rally fought hard for his club off the pitch, even in adverse circumstances.

When a team from Seattle once tried to use legal action to stop Greek-American AC from playing in a national tournament, Rally did everything in his power to help his team get on the field and back into the tournament. He even went so far as to convince spectators to pose as Greek-American AC players so that the Seattle club couldn't take the pitch.

Rally's craftiness and knowledge of the game, together with his brother's bonhomie and largesse, fashioned Greek-American AC into one of the best amateur club teams in the entire country.

It's fitting then that Greek-American AC, a club that embodied the familial and friendly spirit of the amateur game, were the last such club to win the US Open Cup in 1994.

But tragedy struck in 1997, when a massive fire broke out at an industrial laundromat managed by John Rally. The fire destroyed much of the memorabilia and trophies that the brothers had acquired through their many decades of patronage. All that was left to them were their memories.

Yet, when asked why he and John devoted so much of their time and money to Greek-American AC, Rally didn't even hesitate with his reply.

"That was our life," he said.

*Originally hailing from the Bay Area, Tim Froh is now a Digital Content Writer for the Portland Timbers and has also written for SoccerWire and MLSsoccer.com.*