

Soccer star travels many miles to spread faith

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

WEBSTER — Tom Ferland's soccer skills have enabled him go beyond winning championships and earning college scholarships.

Those talents have also enabled Ferland to spread the word of God.

The 30-year-old Ferland, a former star player at R.L. Thomas High School, is a member of Missionary Athletes International. The California-based organization unites professional and amateur athletes to travel around the world for a program that combines exhibition games and promoting Christianity.

During the spring of 1991, Ferland spent three weeks in the former Soviet Union, playing a total of 10 games against various professional teams. His Missionary Athletes International squad, known as the Eagles, recorded a respectable 5-3-2 record.

According to Ferland, the American club consisted of current and past professional players as well as some collegiate standouts. "There were seven or eight All-Americans," he said. "The level of play would be close to a Division I college team."

Great success also came about on the streets of Kiev and Moscow. When they weren't playing, members of the soccer team spent long hours distributing several thousand New Testaments and complete Bibles to some very receptive natives.

"They're so hungry for faith. Most of the people don't know about God, but they want to know," said Ferland. "If we did what we did there on the streets in New York City, people would laugh at us — we'd get maybe three people to talk to us. But (in the Soviet Union), we'd be talking to maybe a couple of hundred people at a time. And it didn't stop; it went on day after day."

Ferland remarked that the natives' curiosity stemmed partly from the intrigue of meeting American citizens. In addition, he noted, "for 70 years they weren't allowed to practice religion in that country up until a couple of years ago."

Since the soccer team consisted of Christians from varying denominations, Ferland found himself getting an education, too. "We had a lot of questions within our own group," he said.

Some of the citizens of Kiev and Moscow did not warmly embrace the



Courtesy of the Ferland Family

If we did what we did there on the streets in New York City, people would laugh at us.

Tom Ferland

team's presence, however. "We had (police) cars follow us around everywhere we went. It was pretty funny, because we were just a soccer team having a good time, spreading the good news," Ferland remarked.

Ferland had learned about Missionary Athletes International while serving as women's soccer coach at Catawba College in Catawba, N.C. Although he was required to raise \$3,200 for his expenses by collecting donations from family and friends, Ferland viewed the trip to the Soviet Union as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

"I had always wanted to do missionary work part-time; I put a lot of stake in my faith," he said. "And I thought I might not get another chance to do something like this."

A 1985 Catawba graduate, Ferland earned NAIA All-American honors with his defensive skills. After playing his freshman and sophomore years at Indiana University, Ferland transferred to Catawba and was reunited with Ralph Wager, his old varsity high school coach at R.L. Thomas, who had taken over the Catawba men's soccer program.

Ferland, who attends St. Rita's Church, 1008 Maple Drive, moved



Catawba College
Tom Ferland (center, #6) powers off an attempt at goal during the Catawba Indians' 1984 season. Ferland, a 1985 graduate of Catawba College, learned about Missionary Athletes International while serving as women's soccer coach at his North Carolina alma mater.

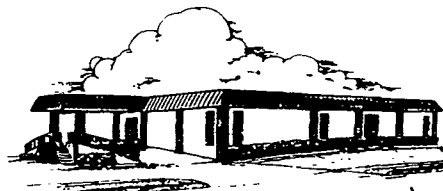
back to Webster this past January with his wife, Anne. He is currently pursuing a career in chiropractics.

Scheduling conflicts prevented Ferland from joining the soccer team on its return trip to Eastern Europe this past spring. But he does maintain monthly contact with Missionary Athletes International, and would eventually like to make another excursion with the group.

Ferland noted that his 1991 squad's effort to advance Christianity is already showing signs of paying off.

"This year was the first that a team has ever gone (to the former Soviet Union) a second year," said Ferland. "And we've had families over there doing follow-ups."

BARTOLOMEO FUNERAL HOME, INC.



Peter W. Guillani, Jr. Philip P. Perotto Michael P. Perotto
Personalized service in the community since 1922.

1425 Lexington Avenue Rochester, NY 14606

conveniently located near 390

(716) 254-5400

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		Holy Apostles St. Francis Xavier 1 St. Stanislaus Our Lady of Mercy	Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels 2 Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	St. Anne St. James St. Mary Our Mother St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	Good Shepherd 5 St. Thomas the Apostle
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	6	7	8	9	10	11
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	13	14	15	16	17	18
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	20	21	22	23	24	25
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	27	28	29	30	SEPTEMBER BINGO CALENDAR	

SEPTEMBER BINGO CALENDAR

SPECIAL PAID ADVERTISEMENT

BINGO TIMES & LOCATIONS

Bishop Kearney
125 Kings Hwy. S.
671-1065 Wed. 8p.m.
Good Shepherd
3288 E. Henrietta Rd.
334-3518 Sat. 7:30pm
Guardian Angels Church
2061 E. Henrietta Rd.
334-1412 Wed. 7:30pm
Holy Apostles
6 Austin St. 254-7170
Tues. 7:30p.m.
Holy Family Church
899 Jay Street
328-3110 Sun. 7:30pm
Holy Family Home School Assoc.
899 Jay St. 328-4800
Wed. 7:30p.m.
Holy Ghost
220 Coldwater Rd.
247-3535 Fri. 8p.m.
Most Precious Blood
179 Stenson St.
458-6079 Fri. 7:30p.m.
Our Lady of Mercy
600 Denise Rd.
865-0775 Tue. 7:30pm
Our Lady of Perpetual Help
923 Portland Ave.
467-2725 Wed 7:30pm
St. Anne
1600 Mt. Hope Ave.
271-3260 Thur. 7:30pm
St. Boniface
15 Whalin St. 271-1468
Sun. 7:45p.m.

St. Cecilia's
2732 Culver Rd. 467-4286
Fri. 8p.m.
St. Charles Borromeo
64 Maiden Lane
663-3230 Mon. 8p.m.
St. Francis Xavier
316 Bay St. 482-3211
Tues. 8p.m.
St. James 119 Brockley Rd.
482-9796 Thur. 7:30p.m.
St. Jude the Apostle
41 Lyell Rd.
247-4322 Thur. 7:45p.m.
St. Mark's 54 Kuhn Rd.
225-3710 Fri. 8p.m.
St. Mary Lyceum Hall
Auburn 315-252-9545
Mon. 7:30p.m.
St. Mary Our Mother
811 Westlake St.,
Horseheads
607-739-3818
Thur. 7:30p.m.
St. Michael's
869 Clinton Ave. N.
325-4040 Thur. 7:30 & 9pm
St. Rita's 1008 Maple Dr.
671-1100 Sun. 7:30pm
St. Stanislaus
1150 Hudson Ave. 467-1472
Sun. 6:15p.m.,
Tues. 7pm & Thur. 8pm
St. Theodore
170 Spencerport Rd.
429-6811 Sun. 7:30p.m.
St. Thomas the Apostle
41 Colebrook Dr. 342-2323
Sat. 8p.m.

CLIP & SAVE