

Hamm Bone

The questions that have been haunting soccer fans worldwide:
Why is she leaving and what will women's soccer do without her?

By: Leslie

Two girls sit on a sidewalk-shin guards and cleats fastened tightly. One sighs and says to the other, "So...Mia Hamm is retiring." "Yeah..." says the other.

"What is she going to do without soccer?" the first says.

"What is she going to do?" the second replies. "What is soccer going to do without her?"

* * *

BEFORE SUPERSTARDOM

These questions have been leaving soccer fanatics, male and female, young and old, stumped for months now. Mia Hamm is a name that echoes through the mind of any person who has ever remotely heard of the game soccer, but soccer was not always Mia Hamm's forte.

As a child, Hamm recalls, "I'd quit a lot of games because I hated losing so much." It got to the point where Hamm's five siblings would not allow her to play with them anymore. That is, until she discovered soccer at about age seven, and we all know



Hamm: celebrating one of her many

she has not quit since then.

TOTAL DOMINATION

Not only did Hamm not quit this time, no, this time she became the best of the best. Hamm made the United States Women's soccer team in 1987 at age fifteen, the youngest female to ever make it. And yes, the list of amazing achievements continues, including 4 NCAA titles at the University of North



Mia Hamm: kickin' it up.

Carolina, 2 Olympic gold medals, 2 World Cup championships and 5 U.S. Female Player of the Year Awards, and the list goes on.

But as time goes by, we find ourselves getting older and despite what we think are sometimes super-human powers, Mia Hamm is getting older, too.

LEAVING A LEGACY BEHIND

And this, among other reasons, is why Mia Hamm is retiring (GASP).

Retiring! I know! So, what will Mia be doing now that her days of training, conditioning and traveling worldwide to play soccer are over?

Well, not quite over. Mia will be touring the U.S. for a final "Good-Bye". This



Hamm's husband, Nomar Garciaparra.

"Celebration Tour" consists of matches featuring Hamm, Julie Foudy and Joy Fawcett. But Hamm's life of soccer will not end there. Hamm says she plans to stay involved in the game. She wants to teach kids about the importance of staying fit and is thinking about possibly coaching. What would soccer players worldwide give to have Mia Hamm as a coach?...

"...I want to participate in their lives..." -Hamm, on family time

But Mia has other plans, too. She wants to spend more time with her husband, Nomar Garciaparra, shortstop for the Chicago Cubs. She is even thinking of having kids!

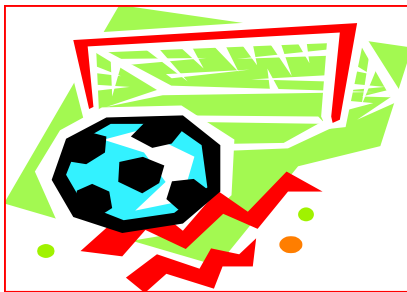
She wants to spend more time with her siblings and their children, also.

SHE'S GOT THAT FEELING

"I'm excited about not getting kicked for a while!"
-Mia Hamm

Why? You may be asking. Why would she do this to me? After all I do; supporting her, watching every game...buying every souvenir! Well, maybe that's just me, but still! Why would Mia Hamm retire?

"It's just a feeling-you just have it and you know it," Hamm says about retiring. And it's not like Hamm is a rookie or anything. She has played with the U.S. Women's soccer team for almost 18 years!



Hamm also claims to see her family only one month out of the year and says, "...I want to participate in their lives rather than saying, 'I saw you on TV.'"

Well, it seems Mia just may be settling down, but only after one exciting

summer. The Olympic Summer Games in Athens were the least to say, gut-wrenching. The U.S. women's team sneaked its way, game after game, to the finals. They left Athens with a gold medal, a final hoorah for Hamm and her other retiring teammates, Julie Foudy and Joy Fawcett.

Yes, Mia Hamm is getting old (huh hum, she's 32) and she's leaving professional soccer for some health reasons, too. "I'm excited about not getting kicked for a while," Hamm says.

LEAVIN' US IN THE DUST

So there you have it. Mia Hamm is retiring from professional soccer after almost 18 years of it.

Sorrowful soccer fans await the day when Hamm will play her final game. People of all ages will gather around the TV or radio and say a final good-bye to the woman that single-handedly (but with both feet) changed women's soccer around the world.

Fear not, though, soccer fans, for there is new talent arising in women's soccer. Abby Wambach, 24, is said to be the next Mia Hamm. Will there ever be another Mia? you may ask. Maybe not, but whether or not we like to believe it, life will go on without Mia Hamm.

New soccer stars will rise and fade through time,



Mia Hamm at game time.

but the truly great like Mia Hamm will stay imprinted in soccer fans' hearts forever.

So, on December 8, 2004 when Mia Hamm plays her final professional soccer match, will the world stand still? Will the development of the human race cease? No, but soccer fans worldwide will tip their hats to the true queen of soccer and say, "Thanks, Mia, for changing soccer forever."

www.nbcsports.com

www.thestate.com

www.ussoccer.com

www.womenssoccerworld.com
www.knoxstudio.com

http://www.netglimse.com/celebs/pages/mia_hamm/1.shtml

www.miafanclub.com