

## Beckham Family Values

David Beckham and his famous family found a new life in America, helping him become soccer's most prominent ambassador in the U.S.



Photograph by George Tiedemann/Corbis

By Karla Swatek

International soccer star David Beckham has seldom escaped the limelight. From his flashy Manchester United debut in 1992 to his July 1999 wedding to Victoria “Posh Spice” Adams (complete with his-and-hers golden thrones) and his star-studded “Welcome to L.A.” party in 2007 that was hosted by BFFs Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes and other Hollywood’s A-listers, the paparazzi has kept close watch on Beckham. While glory on the pitch is tapering off for the almost-37-year-old midfielder known for his physics-defying passes, Beckham, No. 58 on the 2012 Power 100 list, is only beginning to hit his business mark.

In November, Beckham added a Major League Soccer championship with the Los Angeles Galaxy to the league titles he’d already earned with ManU and Real Madrid. But the MLS franchise, owned by billionaire Philip Anschutz’s Anschutz Entertainment Group, had already won long before Beckham’s assist on the lone goal scored by teammate Landon Donovan (Power 100 No. 55) to win the MLS Cup. Thanks to Beckham’s influence, Galaxy was able to land a \$20 million shirt sponsorship deal with Herbalife, as well as sell out its luxury suites and add thousands of new season ticket holders each year.

Beckham is a marketing machine, scoring annual deals with the likes of Adidas, Coty, and EA Sports estimated to total \$27 million. Like most good team sport players, he's not acting alone. In Beckham's case, however, it is family members rather than soccer mates that have elevated his business game.

"The Beckhams are clearly America's 'First Family' of soccer," says **Gerry Philpott**, chief executive officer of **E-Poll Market Research**. "Their appeal goes well beyond the sport, with even their kids having a measurable impact on popular culture. This makes the Beckhams a valuable asset to MLS in their efforts to promote the sport to a wider audience."

### Celebrity Children, too

Indeed, since the Beckhams came to America, their entertainment endeavors have landed the couple coverage on such diverse lifestyle platforms as *W Magazine* and *Access Hollywood*—unheard-of turf for a soccer player in the U.S. The Beckhams' four children post higher E-Score Celebrity "Appeal" numbers than most pro athletes (right behind Suri Cruise). And wherever Beckham has played in the U.S., audiences have swelled, as has youth participation, for he has made a point to spend time with youth soccer teams across the country in mini Beckham Academies.

Beckham recognizes the star power he and his family have brought to MLS. "When I was playing in Real Madrid or Manchester United, you hardly ever—if ever—heard about MLS games," he told the *New York Times* shortly before winning the MLS Cup title in November. "Now you see it all over Sky Sports, ESPN, Fox Soccer. You've got so much coverage of the game in this country now. That says a lot. And I definitely take a lot of pride of being part of that."

The Beckham craze will continue in America. On January 18, the future Hall of Famer announced that he will remain with the MLS Galaxy through 2013 in a deal reportedly valued at \$15 million, an MLS record. Beckham's new deal with AEG also includes an option to buy a future MLS expansion club at a discount. For Beckham, 2012 also brings cross-promotion in Super Bowl ads—underwear shots for H&M—and Olympic coverage, as he is a top-level ambassador for the London Games. Wife Victoria's debut clothing line was well-received at Fashion Week, and eldest son Brooklyn plays for the Galaxy's U-13 academy team.

Hollywood will continue to be hard-pressed keeping up with Becks.

Karla Swatek is vice-president of Horrow Sports Ventures and co-author of *Beyond the Box Score: An Insider's Guide to the \$750 Billion Business of Sports*.