Washington Diplomats
R.F.K. STADIUM East Capitol & 22nd Streets, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20003
Telephone (202)544-KICK

FOR RELEASE: Tuesday, Feb. 26, 1980
1:00 p.m. EST

WASHINGTON DIPLOMATS
SIGN SUPERSTAR CRUYFF

The Washington Diplomats announced today the signing of soccer superstar Johan Cruyff. Considered the best player in the world today and one of the greatest in the entire history of the game, Cruyff was acquired for future considerations from the Los Angeles Aztecs after "long and arduous negotiations," according to Madison Square Garden Corporation chief executive David A. "Sonny" Werblin.

Signed to a multi-year contract with the Diplomats, Cruyff was named the North American Soccer League's Most Valuable Player in 1979 and was also honored as the league's top offensive player.

Cruyff came into the NASL last season after a spectacular career in Europe. The 5-9, 150 pound Dutchman was a three-time European Footballer of the Year and was named Dutch Footballer of the Year five times. No other player in soccer history has ever won the prestigious European honor three times.

The 32-year old native of Amsterdam began his professional career with the Ajax club of that city and rapidly made Ajax the most powerful club in the world. His first team debut in 1964 began a lengthy string of unprecendented accomplishments both for himself and his team. He led Ajax to three consecutive European Cup championships, four Dutch Cup titles, and six Dutch League crowns.

Behind Cruyff's magic, Ajax also took the World Club championship, which is contested between the champions of Europe and South America. Ajax toppled powerful Independiente of Brazil in the two-game series in 1972 to reign supreme as the best team in the world.

The Dutch National Team also rose to worldwide fame behind Cruyff's talents. A nation which had not engaged in World Cup activity on a high level until the early 1970's, Holland powered its way to the finals in 1974 and was considered by many observers to be the finest national team in the tournament despite its loss to West Germany in the championship. Cruyff played all seven games of the tournament, scoring two goals against Argentina and adding one against Brazil.

(MORE)

In 1973 Cruyff was purchased by Barcelona of Spain and the following year led the team to the Spanish League championship. He remained with Barcelona until June of 1978. Continuing his career, Cruyff made two "guest" appearances with the New York Cosmos in the Fall of 1978 and then came to the NASL on a fulltime basis with Los Angeles in late May, 1979.

With his arrival in Los Angeles, he drew immediate acclaim. In his debut game, May 23, 1979, Cruyff took just seven minutes to notch his first two NASL goals. He went on to score 13 goals and 16 assists during the season. Five of those goals were game-winners for the Aztecs.