



News Release
Thursday, April 2, 2026

Contact:

Karis Erwin, National WWI Museum and Memorial, 816.888.8122, kerwin@theworldwar.org

“The Beautiful Game” Opens April 2 at the National WWI Museum and Memorial

A new exhibition explores the extraordinary intersection of football and the Great War — timed to Kansas City’s role in the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – The National WWI Museum and Memorial announced its newest exhibition, *The Beautiful Game*, opening Thursday, April 2. As Kansas City welcomes the world for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, football (soccer) fans from every corner of the globe will discover *The Beautiful Game*, an extraordinary exhibition revealing the profound connections between the world’s most beloved sport and the Great War.

In the summer of 1914, football leagues and competitions across Europe were abruptly suspended as nations mobilized for war. The sport had been experiencing a period of rapid growth in popularity, and its sudden interruption reflected the scale of disruption the war brought to everyday life.

Yet football had its role to play during World War I. Many countries involved in the war used the sport as a recruitment tool, leveraging its broad appeal to help raise citizen armies. Militaries had already incorporated it into training regimens for fitness and unit cohesion. And for soldiers at the front and civilians on the home front alike, the game offered a meaningful sense of normalcy and shared identity during unprecedented hardship.

“The Beautiful Game offers a remarkable perspective on the First World War that will resonate with visitors from around the globe and across generations,” said Dr. Christopher Warren, Chief Curator of the National WWI Museum and Memorial. *“Football has a unique power to bridge divides and sustain hope, and that was as true in the trenches of 1914 as it is on the world stage today. This exhibition invites visitors to see both the sport and the war through a new lens and to find in that history a reflection of our shared humanity.”*

Among the exhibition's highlights is the "Loos Football," kicked ahead of the London Irish Rifles as they charged German lines on the opening day of the Battle of Loos in September 1915. Visitors will also encounter original artifacts, photographs and first-hand accounts spanning the prewar rise of football

through the armistice. Jerseys from Kansas City Current's Lo'eau LaBonta and Sporting Kansas City's Dejan Joveljić round out the connections to the modern-day game.

The Beautiful Game runs through Sept. 14, 2026, and admission is included in a General Admission ticket. A variety of engaging programs will support the exhibition. Stay tuned to theworldwar.org for more information.

About the National WWI Museum and Memorial

The National WWI Museum and Memorial is America's leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum and Memorial holds the most comprehensive collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum and Memorial takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice. Designated by Congress as America's official World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National WWI Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.

###