

United States to host special edition of Copa America

Matt Cutler

The South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) has announced that the United States will host a special edition of the Copa America in 2016 to celebrate the organisation's centenary.

CONMEBOL announced on Wednesday that the tournament would include the 10 South American confederation teams, plus the United States, Mexico and four others from the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) region. It will take place between the 2015 Copa America in Chile and the 2019 tournament, which is yet to be assigned. CONMEBOL also announced that Japan and Mexico will play in the 2015 Copa America as guest teams.

Talk of a special edition of the Copa America has been ongoing for months and Wednesday's announcement represents a further thawing in relations between CONMEBOL and CONCACAF. CONCACAF president Jeffrey Webb in July revealed he held talks with counterparts from CONMEBOL over the 2016 tournament following on from his predecessor, interim president Alfredo Hawit, in February claiming that negotiations were underway to create a Pan-American championship. Both confederations have extended invitations to national teams outside their boundaries in recent years, while Mexican clubs have competed in the Copa Libertadores since the late 1990s and Major League Soccer franchise D.C. United played in the Copa Sudamericana in 2005 and 2007.

However, the national team competitions have caused the most friction with CONMEBOL unhappy at the United States fielding an under-strength team in the 2007 Copa America, while CONCACAF last year forced Mexico to send an Under-23 team to the tournament. CONCACAF stopped inviting South American nations to its Gold Cup in 2007. The staging of the 2016 Copa America in the United States is set to be the first time the tournament is held outside South America and could prove to be a commercially lucrative prospect for CONMEBOL.

The Confederation said in a statement: "In July 2016, the CONMEBOL will be a century old, so to celebrate it with the pomp it deserves, the presidents of the (national) associations and members of the Executive Committee decided to hold a tournament with teams from throughout the Americas." Uruguay won the 2011 Copa America, which was played in Argentina.

Fonte: SportBusiness International. Disponível em:
<<http://www.sportbusiness.com/news/186537/united-states-to-host-special-edition-of-copa-america>>. Acesso em: 25 Oct. 2012.