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Former U.S. Defender Goes on Offense With Project

By GRAHAME L. JONES
Times Staff Writer

On the eve of the United States selecting its 2006 World Cup roster, veterans of the last European campaign in 1998 find themselves scattered around the globe, pursuing a variety of careers.

Some, such as **Kasey Keller**, **Brian McBride**, **Brad Friedel** and **Claudio Reyna**, still are playing in Europe. Others, such as **Cobi Jones** and **Tony Meola**, are playing in Major League Soccer.

Quite a few have retired and gone on to new pursuits. **Preki** is an assistant coach with Chivas USA. Alexi Lalas is general manager of the Galaxy. **Marcelo Balboa** and **Eric Wynalda** are color commentators on television.

And then there is **Thomas Dooley**.

Captain of the 1998 U.S. squad in France, Dooley has, in the famous "Monty Python" phrase, embarked upon "something completely different."

It's a hybrid called soccer-tennis, and Dooley, the calmest and most elegant of defenders during his 81 international matches for the U.S.,

becomes positively giddy when talking about the prospects for a new sport that he will introduce Sunday at the Los Angeles Tennis Center on the UCLA campus.

As founder of the American Soccer-Tennis Organization (ASTO), Dooley, who lives in Mission Viejo, has called upon players from four continents to help him launch the 2006 U.S. Invitational, featuring teams representing Argentina, Brazil, Canada, El Salvador, Germany, Iran, Mexico and the U.S.

Among the players scheduled to take part in the noon-to-5 p.m. event are such widely known soccer figures as **Mauricio Cienfuegos**, **Karlheinz Riedle**, **Alberto Garcia Aspe**, **Khodadad Azizi**, **Luis Hernandez**, **Hugo Perez**, **Aldair**, **Julio Olartecoechea** and **Lyndon Hooper**.

Dooley will play, of course, as will Balboa, Lalas and Wynalda.

How to describe the sport? Think of tennis with a soccer ball, but with no hands allowed, only head and feet. Soccer skills very definitely come into play.

The afternoon of round-robin games isn't an exhibition, either. There is

\$30,000 in prize money at stake. Fans attending also will receive free tickets to a Galaxy game.

Dooley hopes soccer-tennis will capture the imagination of fans and talks optimistically about establishing a league, locally or regionally at first and then expanding nationwide.