

## 1996

The state of Colorado welcomed a brand new franchise to its sporting landscape on October 17, 1995 when the Colorado Rapids were named as one of Major League Soccer's original 10 franchises. In the six months before their first game, the Rapids were able to completely build a franchise from scratch, bringing in a veteran coaching staff and a solid core group of players that included many well known international stars.

Under head coach Bobby Houghton, the age of the Rapids officially began on April 13, 1996 as they fell 3-0 on the road to the Kansas City Wizards in the first match in franchise history. Eight days later, in front of a crowd of 21,711, the Rapids earned their first ever win with a 3-1 triumph over Dallas. Marcelo Balboa scored a pair of goals on that day, including the first one in team history, while Shaun Bartlett scored the game-winning goal on that day in the club's first-ever home game at Mile High Stadium.

But despite having established foreign stars like Bartlett and goalkeeper Chris Woods, as well as U.S. National Team players Chris Henderson, Domenic Kinnear, Steve Trittschuh, Roy Wegerle and Balboa, Houghton was unable to turn Colorado into a winner.

The Rapids lost nine of their final 11 games and finished in last place in the Western Conference. Colorado ended its inaugural campaign with an 11-21 record for 29 points, 10 behind San Jose who grabbed the fourth and final playoff spot in the West.

