

# Major League Soccer Media Conference

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

**Don Garber**  
**Mikel Arriola**  
**Erik Garcetti**  
**Larry Berg**  
**Larry Freedman**  
**Jaime Camil**  
Press Conference



and of course I'm talking about (Speaking in Spanish), LAFC. Thank you. I mean, okay, rough season, no? (Speaking in Spanish.) But let me remind you that in 2019 we broke every single MLS record in a single season, and with the help of three-time MLS Coach of the Year, Bob Bradley, who will be coaching the MLS all-star team this year, we brought home the 2019 Supporters' Shield. We have had iconic games here, like when we beat the Galaxy 5-3. That's the other L.A. team, no? And I had a personal thing, which (Speaking in Spanish), which I'm not going to go into detail right now.

We also came back from behind when we beat Lyon 3-0, which of course took us to the CONCACAF champions final against Tigres, defeating in the way two more LIGA MX Giants, America and the current champion finally (inaudible) and of course the north end over there is home to my family, the 3252, the LAFC fans and supporters. That's not only a supporter section, but it's the community and soul of this stadium, our team and every single LAFC fan out there. If you experience a game here at the Banc, you know what I'm talking about, and precisely we are here today for a very special announcement that is a celebration of this stadium, and with that, I would like to introduce MLS commissioner Don Garber.

(Applause.)

DON GARBER: I promised Mikel that we were going to have a host that knew as much about LIGA MX as he did MLS, but I didn't know that he was a season ticket holder for LAFC. So great. Great to have you, great to have you here. Boy, it is hard to believe that it's been a year, a little bit over a year since we were here talking about bringing this unprecedented All-Star Game here to the city of Los Angeles. We have always believed that the MLS All-Star Game is unique because it is a game that really does matter. We played against world class clubs. We played in so many different unique formats. And as we have been working for so long to develop this really powerful, really valuable, and really important partnership with LIGA MX, we thought the best way to show the best of soccer in this part of the world was to get our best players together and play in the MLS All-Star Game, and then obviously the pandemic hit, and we had to take a year's break.

We came to Los Angeles with this concept because this is a city that has soccer or football at its core. It is one of the

JAIME CAMIL: As you can see, we all, well, first of all, my name is Jaime. Welcome to media members and guests that are here with us in person at Banc of California Stadium in Los Angeles, and also welcome to those joining from around the world through our digital platform. We are all here together because we have, (inaudible) yes, so we can mingle and touch and hug each other. So, please, I encourage you all to get the vaccine so we can get back to normal and go back to full stadiums in order to return to experience football the only way it should be, with full stadiums and supporters chanting and rooting for their teams.

I would like to introduce the speakers for today's event, and I'll appreciate if we could hold the applause until end of the list, please. Thank you. We have MLS commissioner Don Garber; LIGA MX president, Mikel Arriola; L.A. mayor, Eric Garcetti; LAFC owner Larry Berg; LAFC president and CEO, Larry Freedman; and city council member for District 9, Curren Price, also the leader of the District 9 Ultras.

Well, this wonderful stadium brings so many memories. First and foremost, as you know, it's pride month, and as many of you know the Banc, as we locals like to call it, has to be one of the most inclusive and welcoming stadiums in the world. And just like this incredible city does, we open our doors, especially our arms and hearts, to every religion, sexual orientation, color, and cultural background you can imagine. So everyone should know that every single day, and especially on August the 25th, each and every one of you will be welcome to the Banc of California stadium.

Also, this is home to the best football team in the world,

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great soccer cities in the entire world. Some of the biggest events that have ever taken place in our sport have happened right here in Los Angeles. Two World Cup finals in '94 and in '99 with the Women's World Cup championship. We have had all-star games. We have had Gold Cup finals. We have had multiple championship games. And we obviously have two great teams, L.A. Galaxy and our great host, LAFC, and two beautiful world class stadiums with Dignity Health and the Banc.

This is one of the most spectacular showcases for our sport, and I will say it's one of the great stadiums of its size anywhere in the world, and I can't think of a better place to have this special showcase for the best in our two leagues, Major League Soccer and LIGA MX.

I want to say that to my friend and partner, Mikel Arriola, we learned so much from LIGA MX. This is a league that has been developing the game and being such a popular league and such an important league driving this sport globally for so many, so many years. Over the years we ever been working together to try to see how we can bring our two leagues together and do things that will be beneficial for the sport to take this region and make it one of the more powerful regions in the world, how could we make our confederation more influential and how could we cater to this incredibly passionate fan base.

So I think you'll see in the end of August a game that will show the best of our sport, the best of our two leagues. It will be a celebration for many many days. It's not just the game. There will be charitable events. There will be a showcase of our all stars doing things in skills and showing what we can do off the field, and I think it will bring to your great city, Mr. Mayor, and to my friend, the councilperson, the best of our sport.

So I want to say on behalf of everyone at Major League Soccer, Mikel will do the same on behalf of LIGA MX, we're so excited to be back. Our leagues are back. We're back on field. We have fans in our stadiums and the best is yet to come. So I really thank everybody for their support.

So now I'm supposed to be, I think, introducing -- is it you or Mikel? You know what, you are the super fan and nobody is like -- I'm going to bring you back on stage.

JAIME CAMIL: Yes. We have a full stadium June 19th, right, June 19th a full stadium. Yes. Buy your tickets now. This is not an advertising, Larry, but thank you. Yes, go buy your tickets.

Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner. Sounds exciting, that game. Now I want to bring to the stage LAFC owner, Larry Berg. I'm sorry, Mikel. I think it's your tournament.

I'm sorry.

MIKEL ARRIOLA: Thank you. It would be great to own the team, Larry, so (laughing) thank you very much. Thank you very much to everyone. Mr. Mayor, thank you. It's a pleasure to be here in the wonderful city of Los Angeles where the warm reception makes me feel just like home. We are here to announce the 2021 All-Star Game between LIGA MX and MLS all-stars on August 25th, 2021. Two of the most important leagues in the world. Today's announcement is an important step in enlarging LIGA MX's international agenda and to strengthen that by national relationship in sports and specifically soccer between Mexico and the United States.

The All-Star Game will join Campeones Cup launched in 2018 and Leagues Cup launched in 2019 in the roster of soccer events between MLS and LIGA MX. We are establishing collaboration bonds with MLS, one of the most important football leagues in the world. MLS has experienced sustained growth in size and popularity as a consequence of Commissioner Garber's leadership and this of course makes us feel very proud.

Soccer is the world's most popular sport with about 2.5 billion fans. It connects communities, generates emotions, and breaks cultural barriers. Players are its goodwill ambassadors representing childrens' dreams and countries' hope for greatness. Mexico and LIGA MX is one of the most important leagues worldwide with respect to number of fans, television viewers, contributions to the country's GDP, and promotion of the sport nationally and globally. LIGA MX clubs' assets and fans has a total value of 2.2 billion dollars. This numbers locate our industry within the top 10 industries contributing to Mexican GDP. It is the 10th largest worldwide league regarding fans with 188 million and more than 242 million TV viewers in Mexico and in the U.S.

Every season LIGA MX shows its administrative muscle by organizing almost 1,000 matches, which represent a daily average of 2.5 games. The All-Star Game will make LIGA MX's numbers even higher. It will allow a deeper reach towards new audiences and increase penetration in the U.S. market where 18 percent of the population, 60 million people, declare themselves fans of LIGA MX.

In the U.S., the majority of Mexicans stand behind team America, Los Angeles, with 13.6 million fans and Club Guadalajara with about four million fans, yet both numbers are also driven by the great players who used to play in LIGA MX, such as Javier Chichartos Hernandez and Carlos Vela. Both of them play here in Los Angeles. Others, such as Jonathan dos Santos, Raul Ruidiaz, (inaudible), are doing their job in putting LIGA MX's name

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high in the sky.

This All-Star Game is highly anticipated by fans as it will bring together the best players from both leagues allowing for an exciting game and a spectacle.

(Speaking in Spanish.)

JAIME CAMIL: I would like to introduce Larry Berg of LAFC.

LARRY BERG: Thank you, Jaime, and thank you for being LAFC's No. 1 super fan. And thank you, Mr. Commissioner and Mr. President. It's truly an honor to be here.

On behalf of Brandon Rosenthal, Brandon Beck, Peter Guber and all of our other partners, it is my privilege to welcome you all to the Banc for another historic moment. When we invested in Major League Soccer and decided to build this stadium right here in the heart of Los Angeles, we knew we would have the opportunity to host major exciting events such as the MLS All-Star Game, but being able to host this game under these circumstances exceeds all of our expectations. This will be the 25th All-Star Game played in MLS history, and to have it be the best of both great leagues playing in Los Angeles, just makes this so special, especially when the MLS wins. What really excites me is the opportunity for all of our fans, supporters, and everyone who loves the game and our city to celebrate and showcase the Los Angeles football experience to the world. We are excited and grateful for the opportunity to host this one-of-a-kind event. Thank you.

Speaking of one of a kind, I would now like to introduce you to the great mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti.

(Applause.).

ERIC GARCETTI: Well, very good morning, Larry, and thank you so much. It's great to be in the Banc here today, to be able to come together and to see each other face-to-face, to be able to feel the progress that we have made after a painful and traumatic year. I couldn't be filled with more joy in this glorious stadium that frames the downtown the heart of this amazing city. Thank you to you, to all the owners, to the other Larry I'm about to introduce, for the great work that you have done to really inspire this city and to help us get through this pandemic.

And you mentioned, Jaime, my dear friend, about get vaccinated. It is so important for us each to get our vaccines and, in fact, this week, if you've put it off, you can win season tickets to LAFC if you get vaccinated, and, no, you can't come back for another vaccine if you've already gotten it. But come, tell your friends, those folks who have

been working so hard. We have got locations, including Union Station we just set up yesterday from 8 to 8 Monday through Saturday. We have got mobile clinics. We want to see more and more people hugging, celebrating, businesses reopening. We want life back. The only silver lining of this pandemic is we get to announce this All-Star Game twice. And for me, it's near and dear because it really represents who we are in the heart of a city. As a fan, as a proud mayor, we learned so many things in this year past of what we missed, being together in spaces and places like this, human contact and competition. It was here at the end of 2019 that America's newly crowned top soccer city, the No. 1 football city in America, announced that we would have the MLS All-Star Game here in Los Angeles, but we had no idea what was right around the corner. We had no idea the year of loss that we would feel. The All-Star Game, like so many things in our lives, was put on hold, but now we are back.

And by the way, this town has stepped up. It's been great to see partners like LAFC help us with the pandemic response. About 65 percent of this city of folks over 12 years old have gotten at least one shot, on their way to two for a few. We are reaching a place where we have 98 percent fewer cases each day than we had at the peak just a few months ago. So we are preparing for the world to come here to see our top players take the pitch and put on a show and for the game. And we had a preview and my dear friend Consulate General Celorio, I know we were both cheering this week, but what a great victory. It was great play on both sides at CONCACAF and to see the U.S. win for the first time since 2013, thank you for sharing a little with us, because it's been a long time, but what an amazing victory, classical for sure.

And the outstanding leaders that are here today, including Curren Price, who's been an exceptional leader for this district, when we think about the wholly hallowed space that we're in, not only because of the memories inside this stadium, but the coliseum, which has hosted two Olympics and will host a third in just a few years, this All-Star Game coming, then a Super Bowl coming, then a MLB All-Star Game coming, this is going to be a great year for Los Angeles and (Speaking in Spanish.) This is a Mexican and an American city. As a Mexican American, I'm proud because we're going to win no matter what, and it's confusing, we're going to have Mexicans playing on the American side. We might have some Americans playing on the Mexican side. And Angelenos will win no matter what, even as we root for MLS to win. Don't worry, Commissioner.

And thank you, Commissioner, for all the times you've been here and all the love and support you've given this great city over the years. We're so proud that with two



great teams here in Los Angeles, one -- only one in the city of Los Angeles, I will say that, that have for a long time brought young people into the sport, that have shown also now with Angel City coming to this stadium, girls and women. It's such a great moment for us all and I want to thank Kathryn Schloessman, the president and CEO of LASEC, Adam Burke, our president and CEO of LATCB, and our consulate general. Thank you for the way that we have worked together to make sure we're going to bring people to Los Angeles and from Los Angeles to the world.

So, finally, let me just say this, we know the healing power of sports and we need it now more than ever. We need to feel that spirit (speaking in Spanish.) That fraternity that we can come together and see each other, see folks exploding smoke bombs in the far reaches of the Banc, make a deposit in this bank of goodwill of love, of restoration, and of health. And, trust me, Los Angeles is ready. So with that, let me hand it over to a great friend and a man who makes LAFC work and, yes, it is the most exciting team in the most exciting stadium anywhere in America. Please welcome the co-president and chief business officer of LAFC, Larry Freedman.

LARRY FREEDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you, Commissioner Garber, President Arriola, and all of our elected officials who have joined us here today, as well as our neighbors here in Expo Park, the Coliseum Commission, and the Consulate General for Mexico for Los Angeles.

From our club's inception, we set out to unite people in this city through the sport of football and to be a force for good in everything we do. For our club, in that context, it is very exciting to think about what this event means for our community. This event, which will be the first major international event in Los Angeles at full capacity in well over a year.

(Applause.)

It will unite people and leave a legacy of positive community impact in a way that only football can. And not only will this be a showcase of the best in our game from the top leagues in North America, it will be a showcase of what we believe to be among the best independent supporters unions in global football, the 3252 -- and I see you -- who always bring 90 plus minutes of unbridled passion to the celebration of football, its diversity, the community it builds, and the pride that comes with being an Angelino. For our club and our community, we look very forward to that highly emotional moment in just 10 days, when (Video screen froze.)

From when it was just a dream and has been in lock step

with us ever since. The leader of the New Ninth, City Councilman, Curren Price.

CURREN PRICE: Thank you, Larry. Good morning. I am proudly serving as the representative here in the New Ninth, the 250,000 citizens and of course that includes folks from the 3252 Club and the Ultras, of course. But I just want to start by giving a special shout out to the commissioner, our LAFC friends, our mayor, of course and our special guests, LIGA MX.

You know, as the saying goes, good things comes to those who wait. And after the past year we have had, I believe that we certainly are deserving, well deserving of the announcement that we're making today. The magnitude of having the MLS All-Star Game played for the first time here is just what we need, don't you agree? That's just what we want to hear. What my district became the official home of a Major League Soccer franchise in 2016 we knew that it would bring about an incredible opportunity for the community and, fast forward to today, it presents itself even more significance. Again, one filled with hope and a sense of revitalization for all of us that are here today. This game is already marked as a history of, as a game that never gives up. Because our people never give up when faced with unparalleled challenges. Again, while bragging rights are on the line, one thing we know for certain and that is this is not just a game for us, but it's a symbol of our ability to face challenges and to emerge even stronger for it. So for the all-star team and all stars from LIGA MX, we want to look forward to your making history right here in Los Angeles again and again we just want to say may the best league win. Thank you.

(Applause.)

JAIME CAMIL: Thank you, Councilman Price. Thank you so much. All right. For our media members, before we open it up to questions from our media here on site, and also those on line we will first have a photo opportunity on staying with all of our distinguished speakers.

(Photo op taken.)

JAIME CAMIL: We'll take questions.

**Q. We have been talking about it over and over finding ways of just having this strong bond between MLS and LIGA MX, where do you assess this new event, the All-Star Game and what do you look for in the future as well to keep on building this relationship? (Answer is Spanish.)**

DON GARBER: Let me start by saying that every great journey starts with one small step. This small step started



with Jorge Campos, the connection between our leagues and the culture of our two countries goes back since the early days of Major League Soccer. It was just a few years after our founding when we had Super LIGA and InterLiga, this was before the CONCACAF Champions League when we had authentic competition amongst our clubs and other clubs in the region. So for many, many, many years we have been working on ways that we can bring our leagues together to deliver on an opportunity that could allow LIGA MX and MLS to grow our fan bases to learn from each other on and off the field and I think very importantly, as I said in my remarks, to have our region become more important, more influential in the world of global football. There's no reason why CONCACAF can't at some point be as big as Conmebol or as big as UEFA and in order for that to happen the two big leagues in this region need to collaborate together and you'll see more and more opportunities for that whether that's an expanded Leagues Cup, whether it's things that we'll do with our second teams, whether it's things that we'll do at the grass roots level or great events like our All-Star Game.

**Q. Don, one, the timing is a little curious seeing that the MLS schedule there's big rivalry games coming up a few days after, I just wanted to know a little bit behind the timing and, two, what is the build of the roster, how is that going to go?**

DON GARBER: Well the timing is intentional. I mean, what could be a better way to capitalize on rivalry week than make it a rivalry, period. We're talking about the rivalry between our two leagues. And that rivalry I think is reflected on the game that you saw this past weekend, you see it when we play in the Campeones Cup and you're going to see it even more in the All-Star Game. I think it's important to note that while the All-Star Game has always been earlier in the year we didn't know 30 days ago whether we would be able to have one so we had to organize it in a team where we were right prior to the FIFA window where it worked for the LIGA MX schedule and worked for our schedule. Mikel will talk about how their players are selected, our players have been selected the same way for many many years, our fans, our media, Bob Bradley, who will be the coach as the hosting coach, and together will put a team on the field that we hope will be a great competition and hopefully will bring some hardware home for MLS MLS.

(Question and answer in Spanish.)

**Q. We have seen in recent all-star games a young All-Star Game usually the night before. Is there a plan to do something similar to that and if so will it follow a similar format of MLS versus LIGA MX?**

DON GARBER: So there's going to be a number of different events that will take place. There will be a skills competition, we now as you know have our MLS Next tournament, so that the youth program won't take place in and around the All-Star Game for a wide variety of reasons, that doesn't mean forever it's obviously related to the fact that we're still winding out of the pandemic. There will be another, a number of parties and other events, we're going to bring our owners together, which will be unprecedented we're going to have a dinner the night before with their ownership and our ownership. We're going to get the players together from both leagues and who is a bunch of events in town so it will be a celebration of our two leagues, the culture of football and I think very importantly too the community events that we do every year with MLS Works will now be coordinated with LIGA MX and we'll get our players, we'll get Mikel and myself and our respective staffs and we'll announce a number of things that we'll do in the community.

JAIME CAMIL: Thank you. We'll move to questions from the zoom.

**Q. Is this partnership at the All-Star Game level between MLS and LIGA MX, is it a long-term plan, can we expect to see this sort of partnership and this match be played in other U.S. cities, perhaps could we see this game be played in Mexico City, what are the long-term plans. And then for Mikel, the same question, like how do you picture this, the development of the All-Star Game coming through (speaking in Spanish.)**

DON GARBER: The best way I can answer that is that this is just one leg on a stool that is going to be rolling out over the next couple of months and years with examples of the close collaboration between the two leagues. And whether the All-Star Game continues or a very expanded LIGA Leagues Cup comes out of this or things that we might do together with our development clubs, things we might be able to work together on youth programming and youth competitions, there's a wide variety of activities and to me the MLS All-Star Game is just one aspect of that. But listen, if this works out really well, as we continue to grow out and expand our relationship, there's no reason to think that it shouldn't continue, whether it's every year or it's every number of years, we'll just have to wait and see.

(Mikel's answer in Spanish.)

**Q. Obviously as you've mentioned several times in your time here this afternoon the growth in the relationship between LIGA MX and MLS, of course with the Leagues Cup and Campeones Cup and its inception there have been multiple teams that have**



**obviously expanded into MLS, which means growth for the league and more talent across the country and since they were last played obviously you have three teams that have expanded to the league since 2019. So I'm just curious for you, commissioner, on how this partnership could eventually expose, not only MLS, but LIGA MX in new markets and do you think there's a fine line in perhaps giving some of their top players an opportunity to compete in this game, not only for the sake of their own performances throughout this season but also for representing their new clubs?**

DON GARBER: Well, there's always a careful balance on these things when you try to get the right formula together on how players are selected, how do you have a great game for fans and for global audience and how do you insure that you're profiling your players. We'll work together with LIGA MX on the rules, how many substitutions will there be and what kinds of things can we do to provide more opportunities for players to be exposed to a global audience. It should be noted that this game will be broadcast in almost 200 countries around the world and that it will be the only game of its type, there's no other league that's done anything like this, our two leagues coming together. So we have a lot of work to do over a very short period of time, the next couple of months, to figure out way that is we can insure we get all of the on field aspects right to achieve our goals, but certainly the off field aspects as well.

JAIME CAMIL: Well, thank you very much, Commissioner Don Garber, and President Mikel Arriola. Thank you actual of those in attendance with that we will conclude our formal program. Thank you, also to those joining on-line.

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