

# Major League Soccer Media Conference

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## Sean Johnson

Press Conference



**Q. Congratulations on the two wins you guys just had. What differences do you think L.A. is going to bring to you than you faced facing this Costa Rican team?**

SEAN JOHNSON: I think L.A. is going to be a different challenge. It's a team that's going to have a lot of energy. Obviously, with the new signing in Douglas Costa, Chicharito. It's a big market. Obviously, there's going to be a buzz around their team and around their stadium. I think it's going to be a little different than the last two games we faced in terms of atmosphere, in terms of the quality of the opponent as well. We know they have quality all over the pitch.

So for us these past few games have been about just maintaining a professional approach, getting through the games, and really finishing the job, and then now we can look to shift our focus for L.A. on Sunday.

**Q. I wanted to ask a little bit about Seattle. Sometimes players talk. They have a strong roster that people are talking about. Is your style to know about that? And if you do, do you have an opinion about the way that they're lined up this season?**

SEAN JOHNSON: About L.A.?

**Q. No, Seattle, the Sounders.**

SEAN JOHNSON: The Sounders, okay. Yeah, the Sounders are a great team. They obviously have a rich history of winning and of championships as well. They have quality on the pitch. They're in line with the national team, Cristian Roldan. He's a quality player as well and a good friend. They've built their roster well.

So quality all over the league really, and the quality's gotten better every single year. So, yeah, I think I think they're another good opponent in the West. It will be interesting to see how things unfold this year in both conferences. Again, I think most of the focus for us has kind of been on ourselves and preparing for what we need to go into the first couple of games on the road and get results.

**Q. Sean, first of all, congratulations again on the championship. As you said, L.A. will bring a different quality than what you just faced in Santos, but you did get two clean sheets, and you did get one on the road where it's always tough to do that. What have you seen defensively that you like so far from those two clean sheets, and do you think you can carry that over into this match against L.A. on Sunday?**

SEAN JOHNSON: Absolutely. I think our focus on both sides of the ball was to make sure that we're doing all the steps necessary and all the things necessary to come out of the game. The first game with a win. Then being on the road, like you said, it's difficult to get results. Then coming back to play the home leg, making sure we take care of business in a professional manner.

Getting two clean sheets and winning both games was important for us, I think, setting the foundation and just getting the mentality right first and foremost. Wins are most important. Clean sheets are an added checking the box, if you will. We just wanted to make sure we approached it with the right mentality, and I think the guys did that.

We're excited we came out. We're on to the quarter finals. Then we've got to set our focus on the league, take care of business, and then we'll get back to Champions League.

**Q. You guys are just competing on so many fronts this year between MLS, CCL, Open Cup, Campeones Cup. How much does that challenge of the multiple fronts impact the team's day-to-day preparation, and how do you feel this team is prepared for that challenge?**

SEAN JOHNSON: That's a good question. I think for me last season the playoff run, making it past the first round of the playoffs all the way to the end, those are experiences that you have to go through and navigate to understand. We're now in a position that we want to be in, right? We're playing more games, meaningful games -- Campeones Cup, Open Cup, Champions League -- having the ability to repeat the MLS Cup as well. So putting yourself in that position is the most important thing. I think the character of the group is going to carry us a long way.



You can't really plan for what's going to happen in the future. Understanding that this is a territory that we haven't been in before. Last year we won a championship being in unfamiliar territory. So I think those experiences we can lean on, but just maintaining what's valuable to us as a group and then moving forward with confidence and attacking every situation with humility, I think, is going to get us where we need to be.

**Q. Sean, congrats on the win last night. I wonder how integrating a new center back and a DP center back in Thiago Martins has been in the brief time you had with him and what your experience is. I know you have a really solid back line with Callens and Chanot, and bringing someone new in, how has that been for you?**

SEAN JOHNSON: Thiago's been great for the group, quality player. We stress bringing quality people as well. From some of the press you guys may have read, everywhere he's been, everybody speaks very highly of him, and I can attest to that. He's a great guy, great for the locker room. He's fit in straight off the bat.

It's good. We're adding depth to the roster. I think we'll need it, playing in multiple competitions. And now, if we want to achieve things and sustain this level of success as a club, that's going to be really important for us, and Thiago's a really important piece to that. So, yeah, I'm happy to have him and happy that he's fit right into the group.

**Q. Thanks for your time, Sean. Héber is kind of an interesting player in the squad in that he was the top scorer before you won the MLS Cup a couple years ago, got hurt obviously, and then managed to come back a little bit last year, towards the end of that stretch run and was on the sideline a bit coming back from that injury. What have you seen from him in this preseason, and just knowing his quality, what are your expectations for him as he kind of gets maybe closer to 100 percent in fitness?**

SEAN JOHNSON: Héber's been a guy, whether he was injured or healthy, has been a shining light in the locker room. He's always bringing good injury. He's a quality player. To have him back -- like I said, speaking about depth, having multiple options that are a threat to opponents, they can play in the field at the same time. We have two quality lines. So it's exciting to have a roster where we can step into any environment and any player on the team can step up at any moment. That's what we're going to need.

Yeah, Héber's solid. Happy that he's back. I don't really have expectations for Héber. He's a player where his past

has spoken for itself. He approaches every game with the right mentality, every training session. For him, it's just getting back playing games. He's contributed to the team in the first couple games now with Champions League. I'm looking forward to what the season holds for him as well.

**Q. Staying with players now for a second, talk a little bit about Talles in this case. Now it's his second year. He had a couple of goals yesterday. Obviously, very, very encouraging. But in his particular case, what are you guys expecting from him year two? And what kind of growth are you expecting from him?**

SEAN JOHNSON: Talles is a young player. He's talented. We know his quality. When you talk about expectations, for me, it's important to understand we're a group that works extremely well together. We wish each other well when we step on the pitch. As a club, we have the expectation of winning. That is the goal.

Having individual expectations for players, for me, I don't think it's fair in terms of myself to judge a player and say what their expectations are because we have such a talented group and everybody is committed to working hard. Everybody has ups, has downs. At the end of the day, I think everybody brings a different quality to the team, and Talles is a special talent.

So, yeah, I'm looking forward, again, to how this group meshes, how we navigate the season. There will be moments of brilliance, but ultimately it's a lot of the things that you guys don't see or hear about in terms of togetherness of the group. I would say the cohesion and the chemistry as well is massively as important as the product on the field.

We've achieved big things last season. We're looking to build on that, and Talles is going to be a big part of that this year as well.

**Q. Sean, you'll be facing Chicharito in your inaugural game this season. Can you talk about the player and what he brings to the L.A. Galaxy squad and how you can prepare for him.**

SEAN JOHNSON: On a day-to-day, I'm not with Chicharito, so I can't really tell you what he brings to their locker room. He's a talented player on the field. Obviously, his career and what he's done on the pitch speaks for itself. He's a talented nine. He's a player that's done it on different stages.

So we know Chicharito and his quality, and we respect him as a player. But I think going into the game against L.A., we have to really hone in on what it's going to take to go on

the road and get a result. I think there's no better as well of that than playing the playoff games last year in very tough places -- Philly, New England, Portland, and managing to navigate those and come out victorious.

So leaning on those experiences going to L.A., knowing their quality, preparing as we do and preparing properly to go into a tough place to play and then come out with a result. Yeah, we know Chicharito is a big piece for them, but we have to maintain a certain level of focus and intent on going into the park and getting a result.

**Q. The final question is about national team and balancing your club competitions with the national team. Can you talk about your final preparations of heading into the final round of qualifying for Concacaf?**

SEAN JOHNSON: Yeah, that's a good question. For me, it's been about being super present at whatever moment I'm in. Whether it's with the club now and focusing on Champions League, now the regular season. Then when that time comes, shifting focus to qualifying for World Cup, I think obviously is the goal.

The first goal for us is the national team and Federation, and we put ourselves in a really good position to do that. Now we have the three-game window with three tough opponents, but ultimately we put ourselves in the best position to qualify. Now it's just taking care of what we need to going into those games with the right mentality. Yeah, we need to come out having qualified for the World Cup. That's our expectation. That's the goal we set when we started out in the qualification process. So looking forward to those three games at the end of March.

THE MODERATOR: Sean, thank you so much for your time. Best of luck this season. We appreciate all of your answers.

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