

# Major League Soccer Media Conference

Thursday, February 24, 2022

**Ferran Soriano**

**David Lee**

**Brad Sims**

**Taylor Twellman**

Press Conference



video recording of the discussion. That will be sent via email and also available on the MLS media resources page on [MLSSoccer.com](http://MLSSoccer.com).

Let's intro the speakers and get to it. City Football Group CEO, Ferran Soriano; New York City Football Club president, Brad Sims; and New York City Football Club sporting director, David Lee. Gentlemen, I appreciate you joining me today. Let's get right into it. This should be fun with real good insight into how all of you operate things from a global perspective and here in the United States.

Ferran, I want to start with you. And, naturally, because I think City Football Group owns so many clubs in the world: New York, Manchester, Australia, Italy, Spain, France, India, Uruguay, Japan, China, Belgium. Four league champions in four different countries. Two of those leagues feature salary caps, MLS and Australia, and your clubs won championships in those leagues.

I'm just curious, with so many different ways, what's the biggest secret behind your success?

FERRAN SORIANO: Thank you, Taylor. Obviously, we're very happy. We now are present in 11 soccer teams in 11 different countries, and last year in 2021, we won the top league in four of them. And that's amazing, right? We're very happy and very proud, and there's no magic secret behind it. It's about, first, having an approach. We have a view of how the game should be played or how we want to play the game. We call it beautiful football, and our view is that this game is to entertain people, and to entertain people, we have to play attacking football. We have to have the willingness and the spirit and make the effort to try to score goals. Not to defend.

That's what we do in all our teams. We have an approach. There are other approaches to soccer, but this is ours, and we believe in it all of our coaches and all of our football directors and our players around the world and then it's about hard work. This is very difficult. We know that we will lose more than win. This is the nature of the sport, but we work hard. We work hard with the talent that we have. We try to attract the best talent in the world. We use the best technology that we can, and we try to stay humble.

This is very important. I have some experience in football, in soccer, and I know that winning is easier than winning

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Welcome, everyone. Welcome to all the media that are joining us from all over the world. We will have an opportunity today to hear from the leadership of MLS Cup reigning champions, New York City Football Club. Before I get started, I think I speak for all of us in this league and this sport and on this call today that obviously our thoughts are with those in Ukraine this morning.

Major League Soccer is extremely excited to kick off its 27 season of play this weekend that, in part, with the explosive growth that will culminate with the debut of expansion club Charlotte FC. And I think the '22 MLS regular season is a big year with the World Cup coming up. But also with the May 1st opening of Nashville FC, that will be the largest soccer stadium in the United States. That will be on our air on ESPN.

And I mention that World Cup that kicks off on November 21st. There's a record number of MLS players that are in position to qualify, and I think all of us that cover this league and cover this sport in this country are looking forward to that because each and every game is going to be highly scrutinized with heightened expectations from the individual players that look to stay on form ahead of that event.

But today is a special day. I was there, December 11, 2021, where New York City won their first MLS Cup trophy, and they will be looking to defend their title. Just a reminder, New York City will take on the LA Galaxy, Sunday. ESPN, ESPN Deportes and also throughout all of Latin America and ESPN with coverage kicking off with our pregame show at 4:30 Eastern Time, 5:00 kickoff.

As MLS just stated, just one housekeeping item for those of you that just joined us, today this discussion, MLS Communications will make available the transcript and

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again. When you win, naturally, there is a bit of relaxation, and for NYCFC to win again will be difficult as it is difficult for all our teams, but we've made it. We've made it, as you said, in Australia, in India, in England, in the U.S., but also recently in Japan, in Uruguay, and other places.

I have to say, however I just want to say my last point. With all of my experiences in football where I won and lost some games, a lot of games, nothing beats the experience of that day in December in Portland where somebody took me up from the box to the pitch. It was raining and windy. It was awful. And they took me in the minute 88 because I was going to get the cup, right? By the time I got to the pitch, it was minute 92, just to see how Portland equalized. And one of our players came to me I was there on the pitch and throw the gloves at me showing his desperation.

So that was this minute that I was there, raining, watching how we are not we were not winning. It's one of the most singular minutes in my professional career.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Real quick, Ferran, did you stay on the sideline for the entire extra time or go back up?

FERRAN SORIANO: No, I took a minute to think, to recover my strength, and then I went back up.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Okay. Smart man, because the weather was brutal. Smart man.

FERRAN SORIANO: Yes.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Ferran, there were two things that you said that stood out to me. One, you could tell by the way you spoke from top to bottom, there's a synergy by which City Football Group operates all of its clubs. But, two, and I think maybe more importantly, but it's got to be in line with the synergy, is the data and the technology. How has that influenced the strategy and the execution of City Football Group's global model?

FERRAN SORIANO: It is a tool, right? I have seen in soccer in my career, I have seen coaches that didn't know what a computer was and didn't want to do anything. Some of the them then started to use spreadsheets, and they thought that it was rocket science. There are more and more coaches that embrace technology. There's no substitution of human talent. You know that. It's just another help. We have invested a lot of time and effort and money in data and in insights. We do lots of things with our tech partners and that includes companies like Cisco or Qualtrics or Wix or Sony, and we develop tools to help our football people.

We do simulations of games. When we play a game, we might not have played the same game in our systems a million times to see how could it go, what could go wrong. At the end of the day, there is a human at the top, right? It's a calculator. It's something that helps you think better and faster. We are convinced about the use of this and more importantly, we are convincing our coaches to embrace the technology.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: David, I want to stay with that same type of conversation. My question is two parts. The first part, and I want you to answer it first, is how has New York City used City Football Group's scouting system and data that Ferran just talked about to sign players and replace players?

DAVID LEE: Yeah. I think the reality is our scouting network is one of the most fundamental parts of what we do. Every transfer window, we're in the market to sign players, sell players. And so we're very fortunate that we get access to a lot of folks that have fantastic local knowledge. And I think it's been a hallmark of the team that won last year, and frankly every New York City team over the past six or seven years that we've kind of gone to unconventional places or signed unconventional players from different markets because we have knowledge about those from our scouting system.

And so it's a massive part of what we do. It's obviously a part of my job that I spend a long, long, long time with, particularly in the middle of the transfer windows like we're in now. But they're still crucial to everything we do, and we've got I think it's also fair the scouts have a really tough job. We've got 11 clubs. We're trying to recruit players for 11 clubs. It's difficult. It's a lot to do. We get so much fantastic benefit from all those guys and people helping us on the ground to really make sure we're identifying the right players that we believe can help New York City go and win.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: I think I would make a real argument that last year the biggest reason why you won the championship is the ability to find players in different areas; whereas opposed to coming into this league, maybe you went for the big name player. Now the success has come from the younger player. Now in this upcoming season, though, things change a little bit for you. James Sands has departed for Rangers. Taty Castellanos is garnering a lot of attention and some real offers. You recently signed against the trend of Major League Soccer a designated player at center back in Martins.

So I'm just curious, how are you preparing to try to defend your Major League Soccer cup title, and more importantly, congratulations, you won 6 0 in the two games of your

Concacaf championships league run. Can this team maybe make a real run in that exhibition?

DAVID LEE: I think, first off, we've managed to keep a majority of our group together, which was really important. Obviously, a group we really think is well positioned to have success again. We've had a very short offseason, which I think has its strengths. It means that the players came back in fantastic shape. Also, has challenges. You know, we've got a very heavy schedule at the beginning part of the year. Especially with Champions League coming up. More games to come. It adds some challenges to us.

But I think we're well prepared. I think we have a lot of belief in our roster. I think we've managed to keep some important players. Obviously, adding Thiago, we think is a really important signing for us, and somebody who will help take our team to another level. And I think that's really important when you do have success, you have to make some changes because it adds a freshness, it adds something new to the group.

We're also not finished. I think there's probably still another couple of players that we would like to add to our group before the end of the transfer window, if we can. I hope we'll be able to get another couple of players in as well to help the group, and I really feel like even more depth. But I think we've seen from the team the games against Santos and how difficult the Champions League games are at this time of the season for every MLS team. You saw it last night with Colorado.

There are stories every year. It's just so difficult to play at your peak when you are in preseason against teams that are in their season. And so I'm really proud of the performances the last couple of weeks against Santos, and excited for it to go into the quarterfinal now and get ready to play that game.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Brad, welcome. Coming off a championship season, I know it has to be exciting times for you. What's in store for New York City Football Club off the field?

BRAD SIMS: Thanks for having, us, Taylor. It's going to be another great year for us. I mean, we have to stop sometimes and think we're only now in our eighth year. We won our championship won the MLS Cup in the seventh year of the club's history. And we still are building momentum in our market. We're building our fan base, and I think this championship for us is a real accelerator, an opportunity for us to accelerate the growth of the club overall.

So ultimately I would say even though the question is about off the field, you know, on the field, winning is the most important thing for our club. And so from my standpoint and the rest of the business operations side, whatever we can do to support Dave and Ronny and our team to win and hopefully take home some more silverware this year, we're going to do that.

Off the pitch, you know, I think really kind of three main areas I would say we're focused on. One is fans, growing our fan base, getting new fans. We saw something that we hadn't seen in the seven years of the club before during our playoff run, and that's kind of the casual fan starting to get engaged with the club. And in Manhattan and Queens and the Bronx and everywhere in the five boroughs, seeing restaurants and bars that had our games on, and people gathering together to watch the game. For the championship game in Portland, we had Hammerstein Ballroom. We rented out an iconic spot in Manhattan.

And when you our team came to me and said we're going to do this, I said that place is huge. Are we going to fill it? Not only did we fill it, 4,000 plus people, it was sold out in a matter of minutes. And so it was something that we hadn't really seen before, and so it's just all kind of bubbling up. And we know that this is a chance for us to really take advantage of that and capture new fans. Our core fans have been with us for a long time, and they are really the lifeblood of the organization. We've had record renewal rates for our season ticket base over the last two years, well over 90%. Historically we've been around the league average, which is probably high 70s, low 80s, and then all of a sudden 90%. This is before the championship. Now we're looking at can we get to 95%, 98%? Those kind of numbers will really allow us to grow our overall membership base as well.

The fan base is important for us, where community, I would say says is the second one. Building off of the amazing and award winning community and work that we've done. It's been kind of well documented. Our 50 Pitch Initiative that we wrapped up this past year, but we've made a further commitment to build 26 more pitches across the five boroughs leading up to the 2026 World Cup. So a lot of amazing work we've done with partners throughout, especially focused on the Bronx. A lot of our great work that we're doing in the Bronx.

And then the commercial last thing I would say is commercial side of the business. This is an opportunity we need to grow we need to capitalize. When we win the championship, we need to capitalize in terms of, like I said, growing our ticket base, growing our roster of partners, which we had a record year last year. We had again, leading up to the championship we had 15 new partners.

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It's our best year that we've had ever in 2021. I think we're going to have another year like that again in 2022. We're pacing to have by far the best year we've ever had from a commercial standpoint. Adding new disrupters in the space and some interesting categories, selling jewel inventory. We sold our patch to Dude Wipes, a disrupter in their category. And the first two games that we've had with Dude Wipes on the sleeve, we've had two clean sheets.

(Laughing).

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: You're writing commercials now.

BRAD SIMS: Right? We have great stuff planned. Not even to mention MLS NEXT Pro, launching our team there. That's another big piece that I know Dave and the sporting guys are exceptionally excited about, just giving a great pathway for our academy of players and others to grow and grow that player pathway. And we want to make a commercial effort out of that too. We announced this morning we'll be playing our home games at St. John's University and expanding our current place at St. John's. So a lot of great things to look forward to in 2022.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: I'm going to get into the academy and homegrown in a minute. But I think what you guys have done with the building the fields around New York in the five boroughs is simply remarkable. It's amazing. But, Brad, there's only one field that anyone in this league, anyone in this sport is curious about. Where are we with the soccer specific stadium in New York City?

BRAD SIMS: It's a process, as everyone knows. I would say there's two things above all when you if you have to boil it down from a club standpoint, there's two things above all that we want to accomplish in the most our top two ambitions of the club. And, one, is winning trophies, plural. Keep going. We've got a couple of them from last year, but keep them going, and then build a stadium. Those are the two things that stand above all.

Right now we had some we had some challenges last summer with a site that we had been most focused on, but people say sometimes when one door closes, another one opens, and then in our case actually maybe more than one door opened when that happened. And so now we're really enthusiastic about a potential of a few different locations within the five boroughs. We're committed to being in the city, but we're committed as ever to working with our fans, local elected officials. And we have some new leadership, some new elected from an elected officials standpoint, a new Mayor and Governor in New York, and so we're excited to work with these elected officials and community leaders throughout the five boroughs to get something over the line.

We've got to make it happen. We know that it's going to be incredibly transformative for our club, for our fan base, and quite frankly, for the community that we end up in. The community that it's going to be a hugely impactful, positive impact in the community that we end up in within the five boroughs.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Real quickly, how much pressure is there on you and City Football Group to get this done before the World Cup in '26?

BRAD SIMS: I think there's a lot there's been a lot of pressure this year, before this year. I mean, we've had, I would say, about as much urgency as you could possibly have to make this happen. It's not like we won the championship and now all of a sudden we have urgency. We've always had that urgency. Or because there's a World Cup in '26 that we have to have extra urgency. We've had an extreme amount of urgency. It's a very challenging market to get something done in, and we continue at it.

I think is there kind of a magical line of World Cup? Yes. We definitely feel like that's a huge opportunity that we wouldn't want to miss out on and be able to capitalize where there's a kind of fever pitch peak of having the interest of soccer. The eyes of the world on North America, on the U.S., and on New York, being the biggest and most important market in North America. We definitely that's something that's in our mind for sure. But I can assure everyone that we have the maximum level of urgency and continue to have maximum level of urgency to make this happen as soon as is possible.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Ferran, I want to come back to you because I think it's interesting how Brad brings up the academy and commercializing that. And, yet, I think there's a real trend within Major League Soccer and quite honestly, North America, when you look at the numbers that were released by FIFA at the end of January at the transfer window, MLS ranked among the top four leagues globally in terms of transfer fees receipts. You're in these conversations, you're having these conversations. You are listening to the agents, to the scouts and whatnot. Why is it that all of a sudden, these homegrown players coming out of Major League Soccer, these young talented players, is this a real pivotal moment for the game here in this on this continent?

FERRAN SORIANO: Yeah. I think it is. And the first answer to your question is the players are better because the players are coached better. So I've been involved in the MLS now for a number of years, maybe eight or nine. And the quality of the academies and the coaching has

improved dramatically. Dramatically. The young players, the young American players have been coached now for years since they were young with the best methodology that exists.

So I can talk about our players in New York, the players that are today 15, 16, 14. In the past maybe some American players didn't have good coaching or even some of them had coaches that would be coaching baseball in the morning and soccer in the afternoon.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: I was one of those, so thanks, Ferran.

FERRAN SORIANO: Not anymore. Not anymore. If you play at NYCFC or others at a young age, you will get the same level of sophisticated training that you get in Manchester or anywhere else in Europe. And in general, the boys the American boys, they work hard. They have a very good work ethic. They're interested in sports, so it's only natural that talent will come.

Then, it's only natural that some of the talent will go to develop in Europe, and that is natural. It's natural because today, yet maybe not in the future but markets in Europe, football markets in Europe, are bigger, and it's natural that players that do very well in the MLS, they want to continue their career in Europe. The same way that happens exactly the opposite in basketball. You might be a great basketball player playing in Spain or in Greece, but then if you want to get to the top, you have to move to the U.S. to the NBA.

So it's happening for a good reason, because the players are very good players, and we as clubs and the league, we're more and more inserted into the global market, and we can attract good players. We can sell good players. This helps develop the business, the teams, and it's good for everybody.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: I think it is a pivotal moment because I think over the next 5, 10, 15 years, now all of a sudden when you are watching the games at the highest level, Major League Soccer is in that conversation of in development of these players and being a part of that.

Stay on the flip side of that, though, because it still is a league where now all of a sudden the methodology of acquiring players have changed a little bit. It started with David Beckham, and David Beckham's acquisition changed this league. Now all of a sudden, Ferran, it's getting younger, and there's players that are looking at this and saying, you know what, I can use Major League Soccer to then get to Manchester City.

What has that been like in your experience and in those kinds of conversations that now some of these players are making Major League Soccer their league of choice where maybe seven, eight years ago that wasn't part of the conversation?

FERRAN SORIANO: Let me say, first, that there was a logic of what happened before with star players coming, and I can talk about NYCFC. David Villa, and then Pirlo and Lampard, they did help us a lot. So, remember, this club was born from nothing, from scratch. The club did not exist. The name did not exist. The badge, nothing. We needed to call the attention of New Yorkers and tell them, "We're here; please, we want to be the team of the city." That helped us.

But after that, it's about playing good football and winning. We choose the right players for that. The fact that young players come into the U.S. is based on very simplistic things. First of all, America is a great country. It's a great place to live and work. That is clear, right?

Second, the level of the league is improving, has improved a lot. The level of the coaching has improved a lot, so it's a good place to come and develop, and you can see it with the young Brazilian players that we have at NYCFC. In the past they might have thought, I would rather go to Portugal or to the Netherlands. Now they think that this is a good place to play and to enjoy the football and to play in front of great crowds, but also to develop.

The proof is that some of these players developed here to be great players or they go to Europe, and that system is working, and it's working, and it's attracting players. Quite frankly, if I could be a young player in, let's say, Costa Rica, or even in Argentina, and I need to choose between going to a small league in Europe or to the MLS, I would choose the MLS.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: I think you're starting to see that trend. And even now with players, Ferran, looking at Liga MX or going to Major League Soccer, now all of a sudden, all I hear from scouts and agents where eight years ago I didn't hear Major League Soccer mentioned now Major League Soccer is mentioned all the time.

And, David, that becomes the interesting aspect of this because I don't think you guys have gotten enough credit being nowhere, starting up from scratch to now starting an academy. You have had some unbelievable players come out of that academy and move on and players that have been winning MLS Cups like James Sands. You have seven homegrown on your first team roster. One, how important is your academy? I know that answer.

Two, I'm more curious about MLS NEXT Pro? How important is that for you guys because of your style of play and your synergy from the academy to the first team instead of now loaning players out? You're now in charge of that messaging. I would argue that's probably going to be a huge tool for you, no?

DAVID LEE: Yeah, completely. I think to answer the first question, the academy is fundamental to everything we do. It is a major part of what we think about every day is how are we going to develop and maximize the potential of the wonderful talent that we have in our academy? We're very fortunate to be in New York and have so many talented players that we're able to recruit. And it's our duty to make sure we can develop those to play on our first team, to have careers beyond in Europe, if that's something they're interested in. And I think we've done a fantastic job of that.

There are so many success stories already, and we are still so young in our academy. And I'm fortunate. I get to see our academy teams play a lot, and there's just so much talent in there that you start to look three, four, five years out of the types of players that we've been able to have, as Ferran mentioned, from age 9, 10 in our system. It's really, really exciting. I know it's something that Ronny really cares about, and we all do here, is making sure that we make the most of the talent that we have within our academy.

MLS NEXT Pro, I think we've been waiting to really kind of jump into this space, and I think now with the launch of MLS NEXT Pro, it's the right time for us. As you say, we've had some sort of successes where we've loaned players out, but the methodology of how we work is critical. The players are brought up through under 12 all the way through our first team with a similar style of play, similar methodology. And being able to control that environment, manage that environment, give players professional opportunities to develop before they go into a first team is critical.

I think we will always have players who are capable of jumping straight into a first team. I think that is natural. I think it's normal. You'll have very top talents. For us it's then making sure that we're getting the next two, three, four, five, six players from each age group really fantastic development opportunities, playing games, playing senior football so they can get ready to play in our first team. Tayvon stepped into our first team last year and did such an unbelievable job throughout the playoffs when Anton unfortunately got injured.

I'm looking at this year and probably the Tayvon equivalent this year may have played 12, 14, 15 next games in MLS NEXT Pro getting ready to come into the team, and just

what a difference that will make to our player development goals. It's something we're really excited by, and I think it will be fantastic in 2022. But I think you start to look out two, three, four, five years from now what MLS NEXT Pro will be, and I think it's going to be a really fantastic thing. Critical part of every MLS team and how they develop talent.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: I'm on the record and I'll say it here as well. I think the development of James Sands, the transparency by which you operated with him, I think there should be a study on that. And I think Major League Soccer clubs in this league should look at how you handled James Sands and see exactly how it was done. I felt like it was done perfectly, and I think you guys reaped the benefits along with James Sands as well.

Brad, I want to end it on this. You mentioned a little bit of it, but I want to go back to it. I think it's vital for what you guys are still doing. I know you are chasing the stadium of your own, but to have 50 mini soccer fields as part of New York Soccer Initiative and then to announce last year we played a little bit of a bit on ABC for the Eastern Conference Championship Game against Philadelphia you guys announced, what, 26 before World Cup. Just how important is this for you guys getting engrained within the community of New York City?

But more importantly, I'm going to ask the obvious question. Maybe finding players that maybe you wouldn't have found because now you're getting yourself into some areas that you wouldn't have been in six, seven years ago.

BRAD SIMS: Definitely. I think the kids from New York City for decades and maybe generations and not just New York City, most cities. There's basketball courts everywhere, right? You can just grab a ball and go play basketball courts. Maybe you have kids that naturally gravitate towards that sport or different sports versus soccer. And as Dave mentioned earlier, you think about the demographics of New York City and the five boroughs and even the greater tri state area and how just the sheer number of people, first of all, but then just the backgrounds and people. It's a melting pot. It's a true melting pot.

And you get soccer loving countries and people that are here, where do they play? To have these opportunities where you can grab a ball, and you don't need an 11v11. You don't need a 7v7. It's 5v5, 4v4, 3 on 3, whatever that looks like. You know, being able to play and just pick up and go to your neighborhood mini pitch, definitely I think it's a great opportunity for us.

A big focus going forward is on programming. We've been programming these pitches, but we want to kind of double

down on that programming and give more instruction. We announced a community cup, so we're going to be doing a tournament this year where all of the 50 mini pitches will be activated and kind of essentially each one will have their own little champion, and it will be like a tournament of champions type thing, which we think, again, will get more kids involved.

Who knows down the line? Is there going to be a league around that? Obviously, that takes incredible resources to pull off, but something that us and our partners in the New York City Soccer Initiative have talked about. It's really interesting. We talk about academy, but we do camps and clinics. We do other and we have people who are talent ID that do talent ID at these things, and they'll raise it up to one of our academy scouts and say, hey, there's this kid at this pitch in Queens this weekend that we should take a look at. I think it does help, and there is a pathway there potentially.

That's not the reason we do it. The reason we do it is to provide safe places for kids to play. I mean, I think if there's a talent ID component to it, that's definitely a secondary. It's something that we want to be at the club engrained in the city in where we do it. And, by the way, City Football Group clubs all around the world are doing similar great things in their communities as well, so it's kind of core to the DNA of our group to be very involved, you know, in the community. It's great. It's amazing.

I'll share one quick story. I went to a tournament that we had at one of our pitches in Queens, and this was just before the pandemic started but and we still have been able to do some levels of activation during the pandemic but before this. And as I was talking to parents and some of the parents this was in Queens, and it was a tournament for all five borough kind of champions. And there's people who said, my child has never left their borough. We live in Brooklyn, and we have never been to Queens. I said you've never been to Queens? It's just something I wouldn't have thought about now, like, we don't ever leave our neighborhood. And like this is a tournament this is our first time here, and we did the big tournament, and they're, like, this is incredible, and thank you for putting this on. It's something that will always stick with me as the impact that we can have on these kids and their families and soccer being something that's bigger than just a game.

I love what we're doing. We want to double down on it. We want to do more activation and more programming so we can really get more kids involved in the sport of soccer, and also, just being fit, being safe, you know, and having those safe places to get out and play.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Making the game more inclusive, which will be a huge part of the group.

Ferran, I want to end it with this, and as David will probably tell you off the record, I always like an interesting fun question to look down the road. The World Cup happened in '26. You and I are doing this exact same conversation at the beginning of 2032 of Major League Soccer. What does the league look like, and what does New York City Football Club look like ten years from now?

FERRAN SORIANO: Sorry. I think we want the MLS to be one of the top leagues in the world of soccer, and this is possible. Sometimes we forget facts that are real today. That for us, let's say, for the City Football Group, the U.S. is a bigger market than the U.K. There is more people, more Americans watching soccer on a given weekend around 70 million to 80 million Americans than there are in the U.K. Of course, the Americans have a wider choice, and they can watch the MLS, but they can also watch the Premier League, so they might watch New York City, but also Manchester City.

In reality, the market is huge. The World Cup is going to have a magnifying effect, like it did in 1984. I was in the U.S. in 1984, and I saw it, so that is going to help. When I said the league has to be a very good league, I mean that we will play very good, we will have big teams that will have revenues to recruit some of the best players, and we will be competing one to one at the same level not only with the Mexican teams, but also with European teams.

If I think about NYFC, what will happen is that a very simple thing. We will have a stadium. We will have a soccer specific stadium in New York. We will have a women's team. We will play beautiful football, the kind of football that we like, the kind that is sort of an art that expresses the beauty of playing this game. And also that we will be totally, totally embedded into New York, into its social fabric. That is the final dream, right?

I am from Barcelona. I was born there. I'm a Catalan, and FC Barcelona was part of my life, and it's part of the life of everybody that lives there. That's what we want for New York, and it's actually happening.

Brad mentioned some examples. I want to mention a very, very small story that happened to me one day years ago. I was on the subway going to Yankee Stadium, and I saw a father and a son. The son would be maybe 6 or 7 years old, and they were wearing the NYFC shirt. And the son asked his father it was one of our first games what is this shirt? He said is this the Argentinian team? Because it's more or less the same color. The father said to the boy, no, no, no, no, no. This is the team of your city. This is

your team.

I heard that, and I said, that's it. That's it. That's what we want. Nothing else. We want to be in a position where New York City Football Club is something that New Yorkers like, love, embrace, that delivers passion and a reason to be together and to root together for something. Like all the big soccer teams in the big cities in Europe do. That's the dream.

TAYLOR TWELLMAN: Well said. Very well said. Ferran, Brad, David, I appreciate it. David, I'll probably see you this weekend. This weekend, remind everyone, Sunday, February 27, New York City starts their regular season campaign against the LA Galaxy in Los Angeles live on ESPN, ESPN Deportes and throughout Latin American on ESPN, 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time; pregame show, 5:00.

For the media, just a reminder, there will be a quote sheet and video clips that will be made available to you shortly after this. I appreciate you joining us, and we'll talk to you guys soon.

DAVID LEE: Thanks, Taylor.

BRAD SIMS: Thank you.

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