

Major League Soccer Media Conference

Thursday, May 18, 2023

Don Garber

Mohamed Mansour

Cody Martinez

Tom Vernon

Manny Machado

Adela de la Torre

Todd Gloria

Victor Montagliani

Tom Penn

Press Conference

ROB STONE: Good morning, San Diego, how are we today? Thank you for this beautiful sunny morning in greater San Diego, for those who don't know, this is May Gray and you will also enjoy June Gloom. This is not normal territory for this beautiful part of the country.

We want to welcome you for this historic announcement inside this beautiful Snapdragon Stadium. How many have attended an event in Snapdragon Stadium already? Whether it's football, soccer; it was built with soccer in mind. There is the standing section to my left, a wonderful attribute for any stadium that hopes to host professional soccer.

My name is Rob Stone and I work with FOX Sports and I've been honored to be part of this league for decades. I remember the initial launch of this league when they were handing out team names and team uniforms. Tampa Bay Mutiny, anybody remember? Anybody remember the good 'ole Tampa Bay Mutiny? Well, this league has grown leaps and bounds since that moment all the way back in the mid nine tees. We want too welcome all of those watching on some of the local broadcasts here in San Diego.

Also we are live on MLS Season Pass going out to 108 countries, amazing, a Major League Soccer announcement going out to 108 countries. To kick things off, we always like a little sizzle, so we are going to turn your attention to



my left, to your right, as we take a look at the video board.

It's coming, San Diego, 2015. We have so many wonderful people in attendance. Did I see Manny Machado floating around? The most scrutinized left hand in the San Diego area right now, caught him on a day off. Thank you, Manny, for joining us as well.

We have supporters, we have soccer supporters from around the greater San Diego area here as well, thank you, guys, for taking time off on this Wednesday to join us.

Soccer, what an amazing sport. Guys don't even quote, unquote, have an MLS team yet, and you're already out here cheering us on.

And it is surreal and it is incredible to think just how far this league has come since its inception back in 1996, ten teams, just two hands, ten teams were in the League right now and amazing statement about its growth, we are now at 29 clubs for -- this the 2023 season. As you know, there will soon be 30 teams across the United States and across Canada as well, and soon, number 30 will be playing right here in San Diego.

Yeah, you should be proud. Just like all of the expansion clubs we've witnessed come through Major League Soccer in the last few years, your team, your team here in San Diego, owned by not only some of the leading entrepreneurs and business owners around the world, the world, but you're also backed by complete support of the political leaders, corporate community here of your city, your county and your state of California.

So me, and to the people who have been around MLS for decades that says everything you need to know about the growth the growth of this wonderful league here in North America.

San Diego, your moment is here. It is my pleasure right now to welcome our featured speakers to the stage. First off, long-time friend, one of the greats in the soccer business, an absolute legend, the Commissioner of Major League Soccer, Mr. Don Garber; the chairman, San Diego, MLS and Man Capital, Mr. Mohamed Mansour; and the co-chairman, San Diego MLS and Sycuan Tribal Chairman, Cody Martinez.

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So many other guests, we'll hear from many of them throughout the course of this morning's program but first up, the man who leads this league, the Commissioner of Major League Soccer, please welcome, Don Garber.

COMMISSIONER DON GARBER: Thank you, Rob. As everybody knows, Rob is a great friend and supporter of our league, so Rob, we appreciate you making a quick trip down from Los Angeles and joining us here today for this really historic and momentous occasion, and to all of you, thank you for joining us on this sunny day in San Diego.

I was told that it's always sunny here but then I was learning about the May -- what is it, Rob? May Gray and June Gloom.

This is an historic day for our league and our city here in San Diego, but more importantly, this is a big day for soccer throughout the North America region.

Major League Soccer's 30th team will be kicking off right here in 2025 in this spectacular and beautiful facility, Snapdragon Stadium. This city has been a target expansion market for us since our earliest days. We simply needed the right ownership group that really believed in this city, that believed in the sport and that believed in our league, and we needed the perfect stadium.

And all of that, and so much more, has come together thanks to the hard work, the commitment, the passion of everyone who believed in the idea that a world-class city and a world-class stadium could enjoy and embrace a world-class league, the fastest growing professional soccer league in the world.

From my earliest days in the sport, it's year 24 for me, I've been told what a great soccer city San Diego is. It started with a call I received 20 years ago from a guy named Ron Newman involved in the NASL, and he called me up and said, "You've got to come to San Diego."

In the years that followed, Marcelo Balboa, Frankie Hejduk, Jovan Kirovski and national team stars just recently at our preseason, Brandon Vazquez and our LAFC coach Steve Cherundolo all said, how could you have a league fully expanded and not be here.

But today, all of that hope and all those dreams really comes to a fruition. They pointed out that this is a place that had sold-out mens and women's national team games, packed houses for the Mexican national team and other international matches; the success of the wave, and they really deserve a great round of applause from everybody here in the audience.

And as all of you know, this is one of the fastest-growing and largest and most competitive youth soccer markets anywhere in the United States. It's not only an essential part of the lives of so many people from so many different backgrounds. For San Diego, football is truly life.

There were so many moments over the last ten years that we were really close but the timing was never really right, but our interest and our desire never wavered. To everyone that believed in San Diego as an MLS city, they never wavered and I want to say thank you to everybody, not just those on the stage and in the front row but everybody who cares about the sport, for your desire and belief of what this could be because as of today, Major League Soccer has finally arrived in San Diego.

We are here today because of the fortitude and the belief and the commitment of so many different people. But it really starts with the dedicated, the respected and the forward-thinking ownership that you're going to hear from today, traits that have always been part of one of the key drivers of the success of any other professional sports league.

We could not have any better, more committed, more passionate group of owners to help us build the momentum to capture this opportunity for what the excitement is in this city for our sport and for what the opportunity can be to build one of the great soccer teams in our league.

It starts with Mohamed Mansour. Mr. Mansour, I speak for all of us when I say how much we look forward to working with you, your son, Loutfy, the rest of your family to build a club that represents the value of what your family represents for so long in your home country and here in the United States with your great experiences here, the incredible work that you've done to build an international business powerhouse.

It's been a great pleasure to get to know you and Loutfy over the past year. When you see them, you'll know that these are truly run-silent, run-deep guys. They know and they believe what a great asset you can be for our league and what a great partner you can be here in this community and what a great support you'll be teaching our MLS board of governors what you can bring with your experience to our great league.

We are honored to have you and your family and the right to dream that you'll hear about, being part of the MLS family.

To Tom Vernon, who you'll hear from later, I have no doubt, Tom, that your vision, your leadership, everything that you've done to build the right to dream will be a model



here in the United States. I can't wait to see what you're going to do, you and your partners who once you get into action starting today.

To Chairman Cody Martinez and the Sycuan Tribe, to all their council who are here today, we are so proud to have you e part of our family and to understand what truly local means to be involved with a community that's been here for 12,000 years. Now if that's not local, I don't know what local is.

We can't wait, Cody, to have you be a part of the MLS board. We have been through so many trials and tribulations to get this deal finalized. Your patience, your grace, you have really been an inspiration to all of us. We can't wait to have you be part of our family.

And it's no wonder those qualities are the qualities of the Tribe, the Hoban, why you're so respected in this community, not just for what you do in the community but what you've done in sports and now you're bringing that to Major League Soccer.

And to Manny, we are so excited to have you part of our ownership group. You're a Padres hero. You really do what sports are all about, not just being a great player on the field but being a great role model off the field. You and your family's commitment to the community are really going to resonate with our family first and community first brand offering.

So, excited to hear from you, and thank you for joining our ownership group.

And for Tom, Tom, for what you did with LAFC, a team that you built into being one of the great sports teams in our country, on and off the field; the day you left that team, you called up and said, "Hey, man, I want to bring MLS to San Diego," you've done a wonderful job. Can't wait to have you back on our board of chief business officers." You're a good friend, Tom, and you're going to be great for this city.

Mayor Gloria, thank you for your support and the support of the City Council.

My real gratitude goes out to you, Victor, to you and to Tanya and the rest of the FIFA and CONCACAF family. You've been an invaluable supporter for MLS over so many years. Your leadership and your leadership for the World Cup in 2026 is going to help give us the rocket fuel that our soccer nation and our soccer nations in Canada, México, really need to show the rest of the world what we can do behind our sport. So I look forward to hearing from you. Thank for your belief in us.

And to President de la Torre, it's been a pleasure to meet you even though it was very briefly. What you've done here in this university, everything that you've done -- without you, we're not here, by the way. Thank you to your university, and can't wait to see what we can do to build a great partnership together.

And to Snapdragon Stadium -- where is JD? JD is always in the back. You know, the athletic directors are always in the back. You believed in Major League Soccer the day we lost a referendum, and you know, sometimes failure is not final. Failure just gives you the opportunity to have courage to take a step back and move forward in ways that be even better than your original plan. You did an unbelievable job in this stadium. It's MLS-ready the days you opened your doors. This is as good as any stadium of its size, anywhere in the world, not just in the college community. So congratulations to you.

Lastly to soccer fans here in the community, I want to thank you guys. You don't know us that well yet. But you're going to get to know the excitement, the passion of what Major League Soccer is. We are going to bring a brand of soccer and football to this community in ways that are going to make you all proud. You've got a great ownership group. You're going to have a great team. Can't wait to be here for the kicking off of this team in 2025.

So it's been quite a journey, and the day is finally here, so ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the 30th team in Major League Soccer, the largest professional soccer league in the world, has been granted to the City of San Diego. Welcome. (Applause).

And now it's my honor to welcome Mr. Mansour up to the stage. You're going to be really impressed with this guy's story, his football knowledge and experience and most importantly one of the great businessmen that exists in the world that we live in and does it with grace and does it with a real commitment to the community, and the community is really fortunate, as is Major League Soccer to have you join this ownership group.

MOHAMED MANSOUR: Thank you, Commissioner Garber. Chairman Martinez, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, this is truly a moving moment for me and for my family, and for all of us who are now San Diego.

We have worked so hard to make this happen. We scouted the globe for the right opportunity with soccer, and San Diego ticked all the boxes, back to the net, as we soccer players say.

As to our paragraphs, the Sycuan Tribe, we immediately bonded. We knew we could work together. They share



our values and commitment to investing in the future by supporting our youth.

Chairman Martinez, thank you for your leadership and your vision. It is amazing to think that the Sycuan Tribe has lived in this part of the world for 12,000 years. As an Egyptian, I thought I knew something about ancient communities and civilizations, but 12,000 years, that's something else.

But first, one thing to make clear, this soccer club is your soccer club. It belongs to this city. We are merely custodians. It's your community, and this soccer club is going to be here in San Diego for a long, long time.

Our aim is simple: To build the winning team for which you will be proud. Our organization has been connecting and engaging with the community. You will be seeing a lot of me from now on and the launch of the team in a little under two years, 2025 San Diego Soccer Club will be here in this stadium.

Today to me feels like in some ways a thousand birthdays have come together. I am so happy and honored to kick start this venture. Why? For one, soccer is in my family's blood. My uncle played for soccer; my uncle was my mentor. He played for Egypt in the World Cup in the 1930s. I am a lifetime supporter of Manchester United. Small problem. My son, Loutfy, who is sitting here, he is a big Chelsea fan. Anyway. Now we will find peace at home because we are all San Diego.

As a family, we don't just cheer from the stands but we put our money where our mouth is when it comes to soccer. This was too good an opportunity to miss. We have already invested in soccer through the amazing right to dream organization which is all about finding and nourishing young talent.

Tom Vernon, who is sitting with us here today, will be telling us a lot about it.

But I can tell you, in October when I had the first -- when we had the first meeting with Commissioner Garber, we met with three graduates of the Right to Dream Academy. I had dinner with them. One was a young kid from Benin. He got a scholarship here in the United States, graduated from Stanford and drafted No. 7 in the MLS. Another young kid has graduated from Wharton University in U-Penn, and he is probably going to work for one of the top investment firms in the world. Another young lady graduated -- is currently in Harvard to be a lawyer. They had no opportunity. And through Right to Dream, some through the education route and some through the sports route, have made a great life for themselves which really

fits the boxes and helps us. I see that we are doing that helps us to see that we are doing something that builds the right thing for young people, which we intend to do here in San Diego.

I feel I have to quote Bill Shankly, Liverpool manager who famously said, some people think football is a matter of life-and-death; I can assure you, it's much more serious than that. Well, maybe he's half right. With a desire to score goals and have goals all inspired by the American dream, I was born in Egypt, I am based in London, I have a British-Egyptian citizenship, but I always felt part-American.

I lived here in the '60s and that made me to be the man I am. I came to this country when I was 15 years old, went to university, almost flunked out and then made a life for myself because one teacher gave me a second chance. And he said, "Son, because I was failing a physics course," he said: "I'll give you an incomplete but you come and you sit in the front row the next semester. If you do this, then you can change your life," and that was the changing point for me.

For more than ten years I lived in this country. I studied at North Carolina State University. I did an MBA at Auburn where I also taught. Upon moving to America, beginning at the age of 15, can you imagine a young kid coming from sort of a conservative society in Egypt, and moving to the United States on his own. I had my two brothers here, so it was tough. It was an opening for me to see a different world.

And when I left Egypt, I asked my dad. I said, "Dad, what should I learn by going to the United States?"

He said, "Son, learn how to communicate with people and learn how to understand." And this has helped me so much in my life.

So on moving to this country, I struggled initially but I was told that in no certain terms I made something out of this second chance I had in my life, that you see above you here today, something that I feel so gratified for me and my family to be able to build something here with our partners, the Sycuan Tribe here at San Diego and I owe that, honestly, to America, and I thank you all for that.

At the same time in Egypt, I came from a well-to-do family but we had a Soviet-leaning government at the time and they confiscated all our family's wealth because Egypt was under the influence of the Soviet regime at the time. All our money dried up. I was born with a silver spoon, so to speak, but this taught me how to be a man, at the age of 15.

So I worked in a restaurant in a pizza parlor, which I went and visited with my son a few years later, and the owner, who was an Italian American football player, he was a linebacker, a big man, intimidating. But when I say him 30 years later, when I took over with my son, there he had grown old with white hair. I said, to the waiter, which was like myself, I said, "Is Dick here?"

He says, "Yeah, I'll go see if he's there."

He came, walked over, yeah -- I said, "Dick, this is Mo."

"Mo?" He hugged me. I was walking around the table of the students and it reminded me of my youth. He told me, "See this guy? When he worked here, and I taught him everything, and now he's will he rich, he learned it from me."

So at that time, I didn't have money, so I had to work on cars to make life and I moved into a very cheap house with seven fraternity brothers, I think it was \$50 a month divided by seven, you can imagine what kind of apartment that was. But I got through it. I was far from home but America helped me through. In Egypt, I went into my family's business which we had to start all over again after President Nassar died, Sadat came into power and we were able to go back after ten years. I had a second chance to build my country, Egypt.

So you see why I love new beginnings; it's where goals are scored and dreams achieved. Sometimes I have to pinch myself that what happened afterwards, Mo the waiter, as I was known in college, now employs 60,000 people around the world.

So today, Mansour sells cars, manufactured cars, bulldozers. We have offices in over a hundred countries. We have partnerships with Caterpillar, General Motors and many other American brands and we are big investors in the State of California. We are very early investors in Facebook, Uber, AirBnB. We have a venture capital firm in San Francisco. We own one of the world's largest logistics companies which is located in Long Beach.

I also created a nonprofit organization which is something that makes me very proud, in Egypt, to give loans to over 4 million women in Egypt to start a business. I tell you, the percentage of non-performing loans is less than one percent.

We had been incredibly lucky and I am so grateful but being here today, is perhaps the most exciting challenge; the greatest chance to live my dream. I want to also make it your dream. San Diego is my dream, my new American dream, and I thank you all so much for making this happen.

ROB STONE: From selling slices to owning a Major League Soccer team. Not a bad story. Mr. Mansour, welcome to the family.

Commissioner, these never get old, do they. This is amazing.

The Ron Newman shout out, how many people got fired up about hearing Ron Newman's name? Rest in peace, Ron, 14 great years in San Diego with the Soccers.

We would now like to welcome Chairman Martinez to the stage. This is a unique partnership, and he is going to talk more about it.

CHAIRMAN CODY MARTINEZ: Good morning, everyone. So wonderful to see so many familiar faces and friends of the Tribe.

They say good things come to those who wait, so I cannot clearly state how much, how proud and how fortunate we are to be standing here with you today. I want to give a lot of thanks. I've got to thank my tribal council that are here.

These are determined individuals with a vision for our Tribe and for the community that we all share. You know, we want to take -- we think about seven generations in the future in Native American culture, and this is another effort in securing seven generations for the Sycuan Tribe.

I have to give a lot of thanks for this path that we got here successfully today. First and foremost I want to thank Commissioner Garber. The Commissioner has never wavered in his support and his belief that an American Indian Tribe had a place at the table in this opportunity. Thank you, commissioner.

I also want to thank Mr. Mansour and the Right to Dream organization. As was mentioned before, our vision and our values for community and for sport have aligned and I think as it was mentioned before, the relationship seemed to be successful right from the very beginning. When you share a passion and when you share your reason for why, you're doing things. I think there is no end to the future and the success that this club will bring.

I also want to extend thanks to San Diego State to President de la Torre, and JD Wicker. We are so proud of our relationship and support with San Diego State University, and of course, this beautiful Snapdragon Stadium we are going to call home starting in 2025.

Most of you, if not all of you know, Sycuan Tribe. You know about our history, our region. As was mentioned,

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you can't get more local than the indigenous people that have been in this area for thousands of years, and for the last 400 years, with the success of our business, we have continued to give back in what we call the Kumeyaay spirit of giving to the region of San Diego.

We are so excited to be a part of this opportunity, and for the last 400 years we have supported professional sports in this town, and this is a natural evolution to go from sponsoring to sitting at the ownership table.

I'll keep it short. With partners like this, with the experience and our passion for the City of San Diego, there will be no stopping the success of this club, and we can guarantee that the Sycuan band of the Kumeyaay Nation is not going anywhere.

So we will be here and we promise to dedicate all of our time and resources to helping this club succeed. So thank you very much, Mr. Garber, Mr. Mansour, thank you very much for your support.

ROB STONE: Thank you and congratulations to all the gentlemen here in this community here today.

We would now like to introduce a man who has created a unique soccer model that has launched soccer talents across the globe from Africa to Europe to North America while also prioritizing education and opportunity, if you are not familiar with the concept of Right to Dream, write it down, Google it, search it, watch the videos, you'll be inspired and you will have such an uplifting moment in learning more about Right to Dream so we want to bring up the Right to Dream founder right now, Mr. Tom Vernon.

TOM VERNON: 23 years ago we started an under football team in Ghana, and today we are here launching a team in the most exciting and progressive league in the world. We have always operated on the belief that the passion and power of football is unique in the world, and that it has the ability to change lives and build communities, and we prioritize that over winning and that's led to winning beyond our wildest dreams. Our incredible staff in Ghana, Egypt, here in the United States, and in Denmark, have always been inspired by the American values of sport.

They have shaped who we are, even though we have not been operating here for the last 20 years. That is the belief that sport is the greatest teacher of character, and our programs integrate character at every stage of our development. It's the belief that academics and sport can live hand-in-hand which amazingly is still a uniquely American concept.

The importance of Title IX, our Right to Dream academy

here, will have girls, even though we are playing in a men's league and we have girls academies around the world, and most importantly, the belief that no matter where you come from in this world and no matter how you start, if you have the right work ethic, you can make it to the top. Those are the things that are unique to the sports culture of this country and they are the things that will form the foundation of the club that we are building here.

What we know is that some of the best players in the world this weekend will be playing on soccer fields in San Diego and Tijuana. And our club is here and committed to the youth and the development of youth. The greatest football clubs in the world from Barcelona to Man-United are built on that simple principle and philosophy that you give youth and opportunity, and that's what our club is going to be doing here.

But what we also know is that there is no cookie cutter model and every market we go into, we have to respect the local community and the local values, and we couldn't have a better captain to steer our understanding of the local culture and values than the Sycuan Tribe.

The tradition and history, combined with the crazy ambition you've shown, Cody, is going to drive this club forwards. Yesterday on the reservation when Uncle Jaime gave the speech to us that outlined and reflected the tried and tested values of the Tribe, I knew that those were the foundational values of our project here, the values that will shape what we do here will be local and will be tried and tested and brought to life to create an incredible football team in this community.

Thank you so much, Don, for allowing us into this league and giving us this opportunity to bring a fresh and new approach and thank you, San Diego, for welcoming us. We couldn't be more excited. Thank you.

ROB STONE: Where you go, the club in Denmark, where are they sitting in the standings right now? Close to the top? The what team in the world? Say it loud. Youngest team in the world, sitting in a battle for first in Denmark. How many players have you sent to Major League Soccer?

TOM VERNON: 13.

ROB STONE: Get used to it and look up Right to Dream. It is an amazing, amazing organization. Thank you, Tom, for everything you have done.

Let's get some sex appeal up here. Not that you guys aren't sexy, don't get me wrong but my volume turns up to 11 here and we are going to turn up to 11. We are proud to introduce San Diego MLS partner, six-time Major

League Baseball All-Star, current member of your San Diego Padres, Mr. Manny Machado.

MANNY MACHADO: What a great moment for San Diego. Great day. Thank you, Major League Soccer for recognizing this amazing, incredible city. I'm grateful for the opportunity to join MLS ownership group along side Mr. Mansour, Chairman Martinez. Thank you guys. It means so much to me and my family to continue to plant roots in this community that we have been doing for the last couple years, and continue to grow communication and that connection with all you San Diego sports fans and the communities around San Diego.

So I'm really looking forward to that. What really attracted me to this organization was the commitment and the experience of developing young athletes personally, academically and obviously athletically through the right of dreams foundation which is something in a obviously as a baseball player, you know, we really truly care about. It's not only about playing the sport but academically and personally, there's a lot more to life than just a sport.

But going through the sport, leads you to the right direction and leads to you bigger things in life. So you know, it's awesome to be partners with right of dream foundation and Sycuan, and the City of San Diego in the MLS.

So I'm excited to continue to grow, excited to continue to grow for soccer and the soccer in San Diego, as well. Thank you guys, again.

Thank you, Commissioner, for bringing soccer to San Diego, and looking forward to hopefully bringing a championship here as well.

ROB STONE: Manny Machado, everybody, come on. Did I hear MVP already? All right. He'll take it. He's not going to walk away from that.

We would now like to introduce the president of San Diego State University, Dr. De la Torre.

ADELA DE LA TORRE: I'm so happy to be here today and I want to thank all of our colleagues from MLS, especially commissioner Don Garber and Chairman Cody Martinez of the Sycuan Tribe and the Kumeyaay Nation who are partners of the new club and of course all our elected officials who are here today and everyone who has helped us get this done in San Diego. I have been waiting for this exact moment and it seems like five years ago when I came to campus and this initiative was moving forward, there are many who felt that we could not get an MLS team, and indeed, when you look at what we've done here at Snapdragon Stadium, we have really developed a

world-class stadium for our community that has direct impact on the economy and has been really an incredible unifying power for this great city.

It's always fitting in my opinion that we now have San Diego State, one of the globally focused and California's major transborder University on the U.S. Mexican border hosting this partnership, and supporting this incredible team.

I'm here today, also, to thank many people who were also critical to getting to us to this important day. So I want to just mention them quickly.

I want to highlight Adam Day, JD Wicker, Agnes Wong Nickerson, Derek Rice, Ron Fowler and Jack Berboray and many other supporters who believed in this dream and allowed us to move forward with the community. You know, they did not realize when the pandemic hit that we could build this stadium. They did not believe us when we said we would build it on time, and they did not believe us when we said we would build it on budget.

And now we have an incredible team, an MLS team, that's going to transform this region, that's going to create the cultural and economic benefits. For us, the region and the door to Latin America.

You know, we have been San Diego with the San Diego waive, the San Diego legion and multiple concepts and now is our time and now sour moment. Years ago my grandma used to have (Spanish) and that means you need to close things with a golden broach. So today, we are closing a wonderful opportunity with a golden broach, and that is with San Diego's MLS team. Congratulations to us all.

ROB STONE: Thank you, Doctor. Amazing work your university has done and this stadium is just gorgeous and by the way you are rocking those colors. You know what colors to wear. So thank you, Doctor.

Now like to introduce a gentleman who has spent his entire professional life serving his community and a man who played a major role in bringing Major League Soccer to your City of San Diego. Please welcome City of San Diego may I don't remember, Mr. Todd Gloria.

TODD GLORIA: Thank you for that introduction. Good morning, San Diego. This is an exciting day for America's finest city or what? This is absolutely incredible and I am so proud to be able to welcome Major League Soccer to our remarkable city. As a third generation San Diegoan, more times in my life I have heard the phrase that maybe San Diego is not a sports town.



When you look at how this city has embraced the Padres, and the incredible season they gave us last year, to the Aztecs Men's Basketball teams, trips to the NCAA finals, the Wave playing in this stadium breaking records all around the country what we see time and again is that San Diegoans not only support our teams but rally around them, cheer for them, beam with pride.

My friends, San Diego is a sports town, am I right? So we look forward to adding MLS to this incredible long list of sports accomplishments in our city, and I want to point out that we are making this announcement right here at Snapdragon Stadium. This facility in and of itself is a testament to what San Diego can do. It was just a couple years ago that the City and San Diego State had to work out a complex deal to transfer this property over to the University, and what it has turned into is a world-class stadium that is up and running and enjoyed by Aztec and Wave fans alike, and now we are adding Major League Soccer to this team right here at Snapdragon Stadium.

I think that this announcement provides us with two lessons that I want you to consider going forward: One is that San Diego can do big things, and number two, never count us out.

In the economic recession of the early 1990s when our economy was rapidly changing, we didn't accept the status quo. We evolved into one of the most dynamic innovation economies in the world.

When folks said that we couldn't do things like PETCO Park and the Central Library downtown, now today our skyline is defined by both of those iconic projects. I'm looking forward to adding to that list a new sports arena and neighborhood in the Midway community, as well as a new vibrant civic center in downtown San Diego.

Listen, I'm so grateful to all of the folks who had the vision to see what this could become and made it a reality. Mr. Mansour, to you and to your family, thank you so very much.

To Chairman Martinez and our cherished at the Sycuan Tribe thank you for always believing in our city and always helping to support it. We look forward to welcoming MLS -- San Diego MLS, to the pitch in 2025, and you can be sure that San Diegoans will be there in force to lead you all on and cheer you on to victory. Congratulations San Diego. Great day.

ROB STONE: Mr. Mayor, thank you. If only you were a little bit more upbeat and optimistic. We'll work on that with you.

Last night in Los Angeles, oh, nobody is booing -- this is your rival right now, right? Let's start over.

Last night in Los Angeles (boos) it's a great city, but you're rivals now, you have two teams now that you have to start kicking butt in 2025. Last night in Los Angeles, FIFA unveiled the logo for the 2026 Men's World Cup. That event will be the largest sporting event this planet has ever witnessed, okay.

It is going to be beyond massive, right, and one year prior to that, you guys kickoff your successful run here in Major League Soccer in the year 2025. One of the gentleman that was there in Los Angeles kind enough to join us here in the great City of San Diego today is FIFA vice president and CONCACAF president, Victor Montagliani. Victor?

VICTOR MONTAGLIANI: Thank you very much. It's a real honor and pleasure to be here and I want to first congratulate, I think football is not football with all fans so I want to congratulate the fans first and foremost. I want to congratulate MLS and I think it behooves me to congratulate what I always call pound-for-pound the best commissioner in world sports, Commissioner Garber, so congratulations. You have a tremendous team, and as president of CONCACAF, I always say, it's my league, because you're only as good as your best league, and this thing is growing tremendously as we all know and congratulations to MLS and its ownership and its staff.

Mr. Mansour, your story is unbelievable inspirational and I want to, first of all, wish you and your family (Arabic). I picked up a little bit of Arabic traveling over to your part of the world the last few years.

But it's a tremendous story, and it's a story that I think resonates with what football or soccer is really all about, and to have the Sycuan Tribe and the first people's involved in the global game is a tremendous story but a tremendous message, because I think 12,000 years ago, you were probably playing with La Pelota, so you were doing it before any of us were doing it. To have that link between the world, between your family, the Sycuan Tribe, to join here in what is always called the future of the sport, which is North America, MLS.

But as I would like to always tell my commissioner, the future is now. The future is now for this sport. And last night, we unveiled the brand for the 2026 World Cup, which is just around the corner, and yes it will be the greatest show on earth, a great global event. It will be a platform for our sport, for your team, for your fans, for us to grow to the next level.

But the one that I think is the greatest thing about our sport, which is really evidenced by the partnership you have here, right, is that this ball here doesn't speak a long. It doesn't recognize race, creed, religion, none of that. Why? Because it is the greatest game on earth and it brings people together. Look at the people it's brought here together, amazing, all crosses of life. To me, that is heartwarming. Very emotional for me when I heard your story.

To me, that's what I love about this sport. This is why I'm involved in this sport. It has nothing to do with wins and losses, although I'm sure, you're going to want to have those wins and losses, and also the amazing story of Tom, that your foundation has done, it's really an amazing story. Yes, it's great putting players on the pitch but at the end of the day it's the journey that you've given these young people, and I think that's amazing. I think your success, you've already had tremendous success and you have not even kicked a ball.

But I look forward to coming back for your first game. I hope I get invited back and I'm also looking forward to coming back to this great stadium, first I'm I've been here, and also had my go-kart semifinal here, so also looking forward to that. Any predictions who is in the semifinal? Okay. I thought you were going to say that. I'm neutral, right. But we could talk privately after.

But I wanted to congratulate everyone involved. I really look forward to coming back, and this is the greatest game on earth and I really think the greatest game on earth deserves what I think will be the greatest league in the world, and I also think with some of the greatest clubs, all best to you, thank you.

ROB STONE: Thank you, Victor, a busy summer for CONCACAF.

So today is a day of celebration for soccer fans, not only here in the great City of San Diego but also across North America and as we mentioned the world, 108 countries viewing this presentation right now. We have one final video to help us celebrate.

(Video played.)

ROB STONE: 2025 can't get here soon enough. Once again congratulations San Diego, and as we get set to conclude this historic announcement --

TOM PENN: From the beginning, it's been two years, I can't think the Tribal Council enough, the leadership of the Sycuan Tribe, Adam, it's terrific working with you, and a special shout out to Brad Termini, the founding partner who

launched this effort with Cody and has been in this over two years to make this truly local.

Commissioner Garber, I want to thank you for executive vice president Charles Altchek, Anastasia Danias, the general counsel who is here, really a great pleasure and you are great stewards of this league.

Madam President, if you build it, they will come. You guys built this house. Thank you to your board, your executive team and your -- you guys put it together and we are just thrilled to be here and be partner the with the university.

I want to mention Brent Lawrence and Accelerate Sports. Brent, we started this together over two years ago. Thanks for your partnership and for leading the way.

For those who have done such great work in this community for this sport, the San Diego Loyal have embraced this community, Andrew, Brandon, huge shoutout to what they have done as an organization.

How about the San Diego Wave led by Jill Ellis? And what they have done for this community, the San Diego Soccers, the San Diego Flash, all that work that's been done, we look to embrace and build on. And it's not the organizations. It's the supporter leaders. It's the supporter groups that give of their time and their talent and their passion.

Special shoutout to the locals, Chavos did Loyal, to the Sirens, to the American Outlaws, all the passionate supporters groups. We want to hear from you and we want to learn from you and we want to work with you and we want to build something special to go after Los Angeles. And I'm talking to both of them up there.

And then for the youth development platforms, 50-plus youth development clubs in this region. Developing the best talent in the world. We would love to come embrace and take it to the next level and partner with all of you.

So what's next? Yeah, you may wonder about the ball. This chrome ball. We had this vision to have this club be reflective of this community, and it started with Cody. He said, everybody thinks of San Diego and they think of the coast. It's not just the coast. Or they might think of the city. It's not the city. Cody said, "I'm from East County. Man, it's the county."

So this ball has all 18 cities in the county. If you're from this county, your city is on here.

So over the next 18 months, we are going to go sit toy city as we roll to kick off, and we are going to embrace with an



artist or a school district or someone from each of these cities, and their charge is to take their name and turn it into an artistic expression of soccer culture from their community.

So at the end of those 18 months, we are going to have this work of art from the community that is reflective of this community and establishes what our club is all about. So we will be coming to your town sometime soon.

What's now? Now we listen. We have been engaged in focus groups quietly. We have been listening to what this town what this community is all about. What does our club stand for? What should it be? What should our name be? We are going to go out and listen, beginning tonight, we are going to Chula Vista tonight with our street team. We are going to engage the community.

Tomorrow we will be on the coast in north county and Mission Beach and tomorrow night we go out to he will can a shown and will listen and engage and it all culminates back here on Saturday night, we are having a party and you're all invited, on the Eastern Conference course we are doing a Let's Kick It. The first thousand folks that come get a scarf like this, and we want to engage and listen to you there and just celebrate this moment.

I'd like to at this point invite the members of the ownership group, please come up, all the other owner partner, come join us on the stage and we are going to do a countdown to the Let's Kick It Party. As they make their way up, I'll tell you that you need to reserve your spot. You need to reserve your spot, \$18 donations at SanDiegoFC.com, will get you your opportunity for one of these glorious seats here in this building and we really look forward to working together.

So as everybody joins, come on up. It is my great privilege and honor to be able to at this moment count down, we are kicking it to the Let's Kick It party, in five, four, three, two, one.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...

