

Los Angeles Football Club Media Conference

Wednesday, June 29, 2022

John Thorrington

Giorgio Chiellini

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, here to Bank of California Stadium. I know it's been an incredible couple weeks, and now it feels real, Giorgio Chiellini here in Los Angeles.

We're gathered for an incredible announcement for LAFC, for the City of Los Angeles, for Major League Soccer. I would like to extend a welcome to all of the media members here gathered in person, the members of the LAFC supporters, 3252, always here, and in great numbers.

I'd also like to thank all of the media joining us around the world, especially in Italy. I have a special greeting for you. Buonasera. Un saluto speciale alla stampa e a pubblica italiana. Benvenuti alla nostra chita e la MLS, con nomi come Andrea Perlo, Sebastian Giovinco, Alessandro Nesta, Lorenzo Insigne e Giorgio Chiellini. Grazie.

Welcome to our Italian public. We're very happy to have you here joining us on the Zoom call and joining us on our stream on our website as well as on YouTube. We are going to hear some opening statements from our special guests and then open it to Q & A for the media that has joined us here, and then also those that are joining us internationally.

Since joining Major League Soccer in 2018, LAFC has enjoyed unprecedented success both on and off the field in its very short history. There have been a lot of special moments. We've shared them all together right here in this building, in this room and certainly in this stadium.

This season LAFC currently owns the best record in the league, and that feels like it's only going to keep getting better. We're excited to be here to help introduce a new super era for the club that has put the black and gold back in the spotlight here, throughout the country and throughout the world.

First let's get started with a few words from the man who is responsible for much of the excitement today. I know it's

been a whirlwind. He's getting a lot of face time on TV, as well, LAFC co-president and John manager John Thorrington.

JOHN THORRINGTON: Thank you for those kind words. I'll just correct you, it is not me who is largely responsible, but everything that happens at this building starting with our staff, our great supporters that makes these days possible.

On behalf of our ownership group led by lead managing owners Larry Bird, Bennett Rosenthal, Brandon Beck, Peter Guber, our other owners, some of whom are in attendance here, co-president Larry Friedman, our staff, it is an incredible pleasure to welcome you all here today, which is a day that clubs dream of, to welcome a player like Giorgio to our club, and it is a pleasure to do so here at our stadium in Los Angeles, welcoming Giorgio to LAFC.

I'd like to thank a few people for their being here and for their help in getting us to today. I would like to thank Pietro Bellinghieri, the Italian Deputy Consul General, and Emanuela Boni, the Director of the Italian Tourism Board, for being with us today.

I'd also like to thank some key members of our staff who, as I corrected Max, were largely responsible for getting us to today. I'd like to thank our assistant general manager, Will Kuntz; our scouting department, who are busy getting the next signing done so they're not here; our head coach Steve Cherundolo. I'd also like to thank Giorgio's representative Davide, your brother Claudio, as well, for the help in getting us to today.

As I said, this is a day clubs dream of, and it's a day I have dreamt of since I've started here at LAFC. We're welcoming a player that has had unprecedented success in the global game, and we are here today to welcome Giorgio. He is a coach's dream. He is a club's dream.

We know exactly what Giorgio will bring to LAFC because it will be what he has always brought to every single team he played on, which is to do absolutely everything he can to lead his team to victory, to championships. We have never seen a player like him in our league, and it is my absolute distinct pleasure in the presence here of our amazing supporters, 3252, to give a warm welcome: Benvenuti a Giorgio Chiellini.

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GIORGIO CHIELLINI: Hello, everybody. I want to say thank you to John and to all of you for being here. Excuse me for some mistakes surely I do in English, but I really would like to talk in English.

I'm excited. I'm happy. Surely it's a new chapter of mine, but for the first time I started to talk with Will and John, I'm fairly convinced to this club -- that this club is perfect for me. I start to understand the organization behind the club, and they really want me, and I understand this feeling from the beginning, and I am really happy and proud to be here.

I hope to -- I'm sure I can bring something to this club, but I am fully convinced that I receive more than what I bring. I hope to lift some trophy because it's my goal, it's our goal. It's the team's, the club's goal.

I just want to be recorded as a good guy who give 100 percent of him every day, and I don't know what will happen in the next month, but I surely will mean for all my life. Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, John. Thank you, Giorgio, welcome to our city. We're now going to open it up to our media.

Q. What have you seen of LAFC, of their style that you were attracted to and that you like? Second, historically in MLS we haven't seen big signings on the defensive end of the field. It's been more on the attacking end. What are you hoping to bring with your experience as an elite defender to MLS?

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: I start to see the MLS from many years ago because in my life when I start to grow up, every summer I can, I come in U.S. in holiday. In my mind I start to think the thoughts of finish my career or have a break in my career in MLS. I think the league is going up in the MLS. LAFC this year, I start to see all the matches from the beginning of the season, and I think it's one of the best. I'm very happy it's at the top of the league.

I don't want to change the team. I just want to bring some answer, some experience I can give, and surely I want to come in the group step by step.

The other question you said me?

Q. About being an elite defender.

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: Yeah, yeah, it's normal. We have just three designated players, and the forward. But I read on the U.S. that the forwards, that the attackers sell tickets, that the defense win the league. Then this is my goal and

my target.

Q. Giorgio, how much do you speak to other Italian players who played in this league and try to understand what you're coming to?

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: I spoke with Andrea and Alessandro Nesta, and they always talk very well about this league. Surely there is some differences, and then I have to help saying last time it's possible to different way of play, also to different way of life and arrive to the match. I'm talking with the administration manager. I am happiest to go to the hotel the night before. Also I am told they arrive one hour before the match. Some differences that surely there is, but I am open mind and I really want to receive everything from this club and from this league.

Q. What do you expect by this event? Did you watch? Did you prepare some MLS game? The game is different compared to how we play. I'm sure you talk about Alessandro del Piero that lives here since longer. What Ale told you about LA?

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: I saw all the LAFC matches from the beginning of the season. I'm in contact with the coach from many weeks ago and start also to have some video of the relation after game. The level is good. It's increased. It's a different football from the Italian, but every team has its style, and surely I know that knowing the players, knowing the teams, it's very important in order to perform well, and I continue to prepare as I do in all my career.

I talked with Alessandro about LA, and he suggest me to come because he live here from many years, and he love this city.

THE MODERATOR: You've watched every LAFC game? It's amazing.

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: Yes, when the time is possible, live. Instead I watch the day before because the time is not perfect. During night it's impossible.

Q. Giorgio, just wondering now that you've seen the roster and everything, your thoughts of playing with Carlos Vela, Maxime Crepeau, and also with Gareth Bale coming on board in a couple weeks.

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: Yeah, I'm very happy to Carlos re-sign and also talked with John and Steve, and surely it's a signal he wants to stay here and win with his team. Carlos was the first player of this club, and he made the history of the club and I'm very happy for he's re-sign, and I hope to have a good relationship with him in order to help how our young team needs to raise their level.

We have a very good player in all the position, many young players, they -- I hope to help them to improve, but I think the most important thing is that the organization be behind the team and behind the club. I've learned that in Italy, in Juventus, it's the most important thing because maybe a player or a coach can win in one year, two years, but at the base of every success there is the club. I've found a very good organization in this one, and surely I will discover in the next year or so everything about this fantastic club.

Q. What makes LAFC the perfect team for you at this time in your career?

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: I say that LAFC is the perfect team for me because I have sat down for the organization, but also in the team because is full of young players. I think they can help me. Surely it's impossible for me to have the same physical characteristic like 10 years ago, but I can bring also something to them, and we have to create a good mix with experience, with enthusiasm, with younger players in order to become a winner.

But the team is fantastic. As I said before, I don't have to change something or to bring something special. Just to add what I am and hope to continue in this way because we are at the top and we have to finish at the top, but it's a long trip.

Q. I wanted to ask you, LAFC has one of the best young center backs in the league in Mamadou Fall, so I wanted to ask about the kind of mentorship that you'd be able to provide him and some of the other younger players as you come in?

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: I want to be honest. When I start to see the team, I said, they have a fantastic defender; why they call me? Because everyone talks about Mamadou Fall, but I can say Jesus Murillo, Ibeagha, who played the last matches and also on the wing. LAFC has a fantastic defender and it's a fantastic team. Surely I can help them.

I can help the team, not just playing but leading every day the group, and this is my game and what I think. But I have fantastic teammates, and this is important. This is important because alone it's impossible to win, but alone don't when matches. Surely for me it's impossible.

Q. In the history of the league, a lot of players, international players, have come to this league, and after they leave they say that they underestimated some things like playing the altitude like in Salt Lake or Denver or playing in a lot of places where it's very humid like Houston or the long plane rides. You said that you talked to a lot of players before; did they

mention those things to you?

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: Yeah, I know about the difficulty across different conditions, and those are problems. I think also the artificial grass is still a problem, which could be solved as soon as possible because for football we need a stadium and pitch like this. Surely as I've said before, I hope to reduce the time I have to adapt because surely I need, and the most important thing is my teammates have to help me in the first time.

But I want to improve every day. This is my value from the beginning of my career, from the beginning, and then I hope also in this league to continue to improve and add something more to my -- sorry. It's not perfect but you understand.

Q. You've talked about the depth and quality of the defensive line here, and obviously the fans here are very excited to have you and want you on the pitch immediately. How much of a comfort is it to come into a roster that doesn't need you to become the best player on the back line immediately and you can kind of take your time getting into the roster? How important is that for you?

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: I don't want to become the best player or to -- I want to be Giorgio. I want to help the team. I want to not change, as I said before, the group, but just to add my skills and my energy, my experience.

I think it's something that happens normally, not forced. Then if we need one week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, I am available. I am just one of 25, not the first, the second, the third. This is the most important thing. This value is important in all our group in order to arrive and maintain the top. We are not one, we are one together.

Q. It's very strange for us in Italy to see you in a different part of the world.

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: Honestly, I also think about the time, and just an important offer, an important club could change my ideas. I understand that my time in Juventus was at the end and I would like to finish on a high level, but I feel I could maintain this level for some years.

As I've said before when I start to talk with John and Will, I understand the strength of this club, and I'm fully convinced from the beginning honestly it was not so easy to also convince Juventus, convince my wife to do this big change. But in the end I am here and very happy also to speak at midnight in Italy and have 13 hours of flight today, wake up at 3:00, but I am very happy to be here, excited, and I am really looking forward to sharing all my emotion with you.



This is more -- I believe that emotion is the most important driver of the life and would like to share with all of you.

Q. Why did you and your family want to experience the United States, and why Los Angeles in particular? Did you have other options for this new chapter, and what sealed the final decision?

GIORGIO CHIELLINI: I was convinced from the beginning from this club, surely I would like to understand if some important clubs in the U.S. are interested, in the United States to me. The week after my -- in general someone asked if I'm interested in LAFC, and it's the first call I ever received. That was many, many months ago.

The weeks after we lose against North Macedonia for the World Cup qualifiers, they start their first call.

I think for me, is a fantastic experience in and out of the pitch. Surely Los Angeles is a fantastic city. I am very curious to live because I went here on holiday about 10 years ago. I was along with my actual wife but it was a girlfriend. I take a Mustang Cabriolet and go over all of California. Now it's totally different. I have two daughters and I want to discover the California in another way.

But I'm sure at the end of this period I grew up. I grew up surely, and I became better.

THE MODERATOR: You're going to enjoy our city. You're going to enjoy our state. There's a lot to see. Enjoy the adventure. We can't wait to see you on the field here at Bank of California Stadium.

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