

Los Angeles Football Club Media Conference

Monday, July 11, 2022

Gareth Bale

John Thorington

Larry Berg

Press Conference



LARRY BERG: Thank you, Max.

On behalf of Bennet Rosenthal, our other managing owner Brandon Beck, our executive chairman who is here today and all of our other partners, it is my honor to welcome you here for one of the most exciting days in LAFC's short history.

I would like to start by welcoming and acknowledging some special guests in attendance, starting with Emily Cloke, Consulate General of the British Consulate, welcome. Lara Hallett, Deputy Consulate General of the British Consulate, welcome. George Pla, Coliseum Commission president, welcome, and welcome Noah. And council member Curren Price, I'm not sure if he's here or not.

Since we started this project, we have often talked about our vision and what we hope this club could eventually become. Of course we want to win trophies and championships but we also want it to be a destination for top players from around the world to bring legendary players to what I believe is one of the top cities in the world, I think the top city in the world.

Bringing in world-class players like Giorgio and now Gareth is the next step in the growth of the club. Being able to bring a player, and more importantly a person of Gareth's calibre to LAFC is not only historic moment for Los Angeles and MLS, but for the sport in the United States.

Throughout this process in talking to Gareth and his wife, Emma, we have been able to get to know this incredible family and we are so honored to have them all here in Los Angeles. We are confident that you'll you will fall in love with our incredible city and fans, if Gareth has not already.

Thank you, Gareth, and officially, welcome to Los Angeles.

THE MODERATOR: Feels real now. Now let's hear from the man who we learned last week is not completely responsible for these latest additions to LAFC, but certainly has some interesting stories to tell to his family in the future about what has happened here over the last two weeks, and a man who did play a huge role in the addition of our two newest players including the new one we are introducing here today, LAFC co-president, general manager, John Thorington.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome once again to the heart of Los Angeles where we are gathered at the Banc of California Stadium for another historic moment for LAFC. Incredible to think what has happened in this building in that stadium over the last two weeks, seismic not just for our club, for our city but also our league. It was just over a week ago that I said something similar here introducing Giorgio Chiellini; that was a pinch-your-arm moment, and I'm having another one here with our latest announcement.

12 days later on the heels of an impressive victory over the rivals, the Galaxy, I'm sure everyone enjoyed that. These last two games at home have been something spectacular. We are now here for the next introduction.

I would like to extend a welcome to all the media members gathered here in person and also those joining us around the world, especially in Wales and the United Kingdom where we know today's news carries a little extra weight. Through our digital platform, thanks to all of you who are watching on LAFC.com, on our LAFC YouTube channel, hello everybody.

We will first hear some opening statements from our special guests and then open up to Q&A before we end with some photos off the stage.

Since joining Major League soccer in 2018, LAFC has continued to raise the bar on what a club in the United States can look like. From how they interact with the fans to the style of play to the ambition of an ownership, group, and everyone that's in it to help build this club, this brand here in this incredible city.

Today is another step in that process, as the team with the best record in the league is excited -- facts, facts -- is excited to continue to welcome yet another addition and the unveiling of a new super era for the Black and Gold. First, let us get started with a few words from LAFC's managing owner, Larry Berg.



JOHN THORINGTON: Thank you, Max. Thank.

You for all being here. It's my privilege to welcome you here today as we formally introduce another exciting player to our club and I'd like to start by thanking those who make days like this possible and I'd like to start with our owners, some of whom are here in attendance today.

I'd like to thank our staff, I would like to thank our players, I would like to thank Gareth's management team at CAA Stellar, I would like to thank our supporters, all of whom worked to build LAFC into what it is today as a destination of choice for star players like Gareth.

When it comes to Gareth I do not need to speak of his resumé, so I will leave that portion of it. What I will tell you is that in conversation, it became very clear, abundantly clear, that Gareth shared LAFC's ambition to win trophies. For us as a club, when the opportunity came, what better way for us to win trophies than welcome a player who has won 19 trophies at his previous club, Real Madrid. So in short we saw this as a special opportunity to welcome a special player to a special club.

So with that, I would like to welcome Gareth Bale.

GARETH BALE: Thank you, John. Thank you, everyone for being in attendance here today. Yeah, it's an amazing HONOR to be here to watch the 3252 chant the whole game the other day was pretty special. Probably one of the most exciting nights of being at a football game. It was incredible to experience, and I'm looking forward to playing in front of you and hopefully giving you many moments to cheer about.

So yeah, this club is an amazing project, after speaking with John and Larry, it became very clear to me that this was the place that I wanted to be at. Yeah, an incredible club. They have created an amazing environment for the fans, for everything around what you see is incredible, and yeah, hopefully now I can play my part and take this club hopefully to the next level and try to win a trophy.

So thank you everyone for being here, and yeah, all the best.

(Crowd chanting).

THE MODERATOR: The best in the business, our beloved 3252 as you heard made a huge impression. For me personally to be able to cover Gareth Bale for however long this lasts is truly exciting and to be along the ride with him as he prepares for one of the biggest days in his country's history, Wales, going back to the World Cup in 64 years.

Q. So happy that you're here, and looking forward to calling your goals in the next coming days. Curious about your plan here, you knew you were coming here and it was a long ride what went through your head and what did you visualize and how did those feelings and thoughts change once you got here, being able to enjoy a victory along with the fans and your current teammates?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, obviously I knew about the move awhile before I got here. I was waiting on the visa, so yeah, I was just excited to get out here, excited to get to the stadium and watch the fans I obviously saw on TV. I've seen videos of how incredible they are, and it doesn't do justice how good they actually are in the stadium.

I've had a great welcome from everyone at the club from John, Larry, the fans, the reception I got before the game on Friday was, yeah, words can't describe and yeah, everyone at the club has been incredible, welcomed me so well. Everyone is so friendly.

So yeah, I'm looking forward to getting properly started, enjoyed my first training session with the team today, and yeah, can't wait to get going.

Q. You mentioned your first training session, first chance to go out to the performance training centre get a feel for what the locker room, and can you talk about the engagement of with the players today, being on the field and exchanging passes and showing what you can do and what they can do as well? How do you think it's going to come together for you?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, it was nice to get started. It had been a while. I had been kind of eager to get going. Obviously I need to get some training under my belt first and foremost to get ready but like I said, the players were really welcoming today.

Yeah, I had a great reception on the pitch after the game as well which was a good initiation. Yeah, I'm excited. I'm looking forward to playing with them all. Hopefully I can help improve the team as well, and like we all say, our main goal is to try and win a trophy, a championship, and we'll give everything we can to do that.

Q. I just want to know a little bit, Giorgio spoke with us last week, and he gave us a little bit of a picture as to what he knew about Major League soccer and LAFC prior to his arrival here. The club is young, just in its fifth season, so what have you known about MLS? Time difference makes it more difficult to watch the matches but what have you known about the club and

league prior to coming here?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, I've watched the MLS for a long time. Obviously the time difference makes it difficult. But whenever I was able to watch a game, I used to try and watch it on the TV. The standard here is really increasing. I think it's a lot better than the people in Europe really think. The quality is improving. The league is improving. The stadiums are improving. The teams are improving.

It's a league that's really on the rise. This club, yes, it's knew, but feels like it's been here forever. The job that Larry and John and the rest of the guys have done to create such an amazing fan base so quickly is remarkable. Yeah, I think it's a testament to them how well this club is run and looking forward to be a part of it.

Q. So I just wondered, there's been a lot of great players who have come and played here, and from Zlatan and to Beckham and David Villa, Keane, Pirlo, who have left their mark. One of the things I think that a lot of fans here get upset about is that this is a so-called retirement leagues, and with signings, the league is elevated and growing even more regardless of that. Are you prepared for the travel, the time zone difference, the weather, elevation, all of those hard-working grafted kind of moments that are required to play here? Because it's not an easy league, and having covered Gerrard here for the Galaxy here, he realized that, too, as did many others coming here. So has someone talked to you about that? Are you prepared for that slog?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, of course I wouldn't be here otherwise. Of course I'm up for everything here. I'm still 32, like it says on the board, 33 at the end of the game week. I still have many years to come. I haven't come here just to be six months, or 12 months. I've come to try to be here as long as possible. I want to do as well as I can and make my mark on this league, on this team.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to the future. It's not just a short thing, as I said. Also gives me the best opportunity to keep going to the next Euros, maybe further, so my plan is to really work hard. It's a great physical team, medical staff, performance traffic at the training ground, and yeah, we've got a great plan going forward to get me up to speed and hopefully last as long as possible.

Q. I can only imagine how many offers you received but why Los Angeles?

GARETH BALE: Like I said before, speaking with Larry and John on Zoom, straightaway it felt like the right destination to be at. Just the exciting project, the club

that's growing, obviously they are doing well as well at the moment, and yeah, the city's not bad as well.

So yeah, it's just an exciting project to be a part of. I want to try and help grow football in the U.S., as well, as a part of it I want to try and help the youngsters grow. I was speaking to a couple of them this morning, and yeah, if I can help them in any way possible, I will, and yeah, I think for players who have experienced a lot in their career, I think we have a responsibility to grow the game all around the world as well. That plays a big part in it, as well.

Q. How much time have you spent in the United States and maybe in Los Angeles in particular, and what made living in this country kind of appealing for you and your family?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, prior to COVID I used to come over every summer for two to four weeks on vacation here. Yeah, I know the city a little bit. I have some friends here also, which is helpful. So yeah, just an exciting time to be in the MLS. As I said, this club is really on the rise. It's amazing to be here and witness what the club is all about, and like I said, I keep reiterating it but I'm just excited to get started and to try and help this club.

Q. You made my ears prick up by talking about the Euros in one of your answers. I think there's a common conception at home that this is about just playing in the World Cup. But is the Euros after that a real goal for you and also just how confident are you that you're going to be in the best possible shape now for the World Cup?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, like I said, I haven't come here for the short-term. I want to make my mark on this league like I've said, and I think by being here, gives me the best possible chance to get to the Euros and maybe even one more.

That's my goal. I feel like I'm here to play a big part, and like I keep saying, I'm really looking forward to getting started to play with my teammates and go from there.

THE MODERATOR: Incredible success for Gareth and making the semifinals in the second-to-last edition.

Q. I know you just talked about being excited but what are you most excited about now that you've been here a couple days ask gone to meet your teammates and you've met the 3252, what's the most exciting thing so far?

GARETH BALE: I'm just excited to get playing football. I think every player will tell you, they want to play football.



They want to win games, win trophies, and yeah, to have my first training session today was amazing. The first step in hopefully a long journey, and yeah, just everyone's been so great in in the welcome.

Like I said, 3252, the welcome they gave me the other night was incredible. Makes me feel at home and hopefully when I'm happy, I play my best football.

THE MODERATOR: You also got your feet wet in the game on Friday.

Q. We've covered you since you were at Spurs in England and now you're out here and you could be joined by Wayne Rooney, as well. What does it say about this league that it can attract players and sports men of that calibre and how excited are but that?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, definitely. Like I said, this is a league that's really growing that's come a long way in maybe the last ten years, and everybody is striving to try and improve this league. I think the players that come over see that as well. I don't think anyone sees it now as a retirement league. They see it as a league that's physical, that's demanding. Like I said, the weather changes and travel are difficult but it's something that's really exciting to play in front of fans, like the 3252, is what you play football for. I think the atmosphere over here is really incredible in these stadiums and it will be great to witness it.

Q. What do you think about Wayne Rooney coming?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, I think it's great for the MLS and the sport in the U.S., to get big names and people watching across the world is going to do great things for the MLS and yeah great to be a part of it.

Q. Your thoughts on playing with Carlos and building a partnership with him?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, really excited. Really looking forward to it. What he's done for this club since he's been here has been amazing. He's been a big player for this club and just training with him this morning and chatting with him this morning, I've known him and played against him in the past. Yeah, we get on very well and looking forward to light up a partnership with him and hopefully like I said, win some games and win some trophies.

Q. How well do you know Giorgio?

GARETH BALE: Sound like a robot (Laughter).

Yeah, I've played against Giorgio many times in Europe when we played Juventus and the national teams when

we've played against each other, so yeah, a great player, a great professional, a great ambassador for the game.

He's only going to help this team bring his experience, and yeah, I think he's the same as me. He wants to give everything possible to try and win games, trophies, and looking forward to playing with him as well.

Q. How will the transition be from Real Madrid to LAFC both on and off the field?

GARETH BALE: Yeah, the transition is not, I guess, an easy one but one I'm looking forward to the challenge. Obviously being in the middle of a season is a bit different but yeah, I feel like I've been keeping myself fit in Europe's off-season, and yeah, hopefully I can hit the ground running.

But yeah, this club has made the move already so much easier for me, so I can just concentrate on my football, and yeah, hopefully get on with doing what I do best.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Gareth, welcome to our wonderful city and wonderful club. Upwards and onwards from here.

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