

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Wednesday, August 3, 2022

Rebecca Lowe

Peter Drury

Tim Howard

Pierre Moossa

Press Conference

DAN MASONSON: Thank you. Hello, everybody, and thanks for joining us on today's Premier League conference call. This Friday, August 5th, NBC Sports begins its 10th season as the exclusive US media home of the Premier League.

As we've done in the prior nine years, we will present all 380 matches live, as well as extensive studio and shoulder programming across the platforms of NBC Universal, including the NBC Broadcast Network, Peacock, USA Network, Telemundo, and Universal, as well as on NBC Sports social media and audio channels.

Joining us on today's call are Rebecca Lowe, the host of NBC Sports Premier League coverage since we kicked off in August 2013.

We welcome the newest member of our team, a legendary voice many of you are familiar with, the lead play-by-play commentator Peter Drury.

Next, we have our studio analyst Tim Howard, the great Premier League and U.S. Men's National Team goalie, who actually began his broadcasting career while he was still playing at Everton, and that was at an analyst on NBC Sports Chelsea-Man United match in October 2013.

Finally, we have the leader and architect of NBC Sports Premier League coverage over the last decade, coordinating producer Pierre Moossa.

Each of the speakers will make an opening comment, and then we'll take your questions, and then we'll have a transcript of the call available later today on NBCSportsgrouppressbox.com.

With that I'll turn it over to our coordinating producer, Pierre



Moossa.

PIERRE MOOSSA: Thank you so much for your time. First off, all of us here at NBC are thrilled to continue our partnership with the Premier League for another six seasons.

Our team considers it an honor and privilege to be ambassadors for the Premier League. Rebecca, the two Robbies, Tim, Lee, Graeme are all back and have a very special connection with our audience.

We really feel it's a special time for soccer in the United States, especially for the Premier League. We've been a part of this since 2013. We've seen families and young kids now become college-age kids, and those college-age kids are now watching Premier League with their friends. We have seen college-age kids now become adults and start watching the Premier League with their family.

As we enter our 10th season, we look to grow the Premier League for generations to come, but there is one new addition to our team, our big offseason transfer, and that's Peter Drury.

Peter is the soundtrack for millions of Premier League viewers around the world. He has called some of the most iconic moments in the Premier League history. We're so excited he will be now the narrator of the Premier League for future generations of American supporters.

With that, I'm going to do my best Rebecca Lowe impersonation and do a throw to her. In typical Rebecca Lowe fashion, I'll say, you'll hear from Tim Howard and Peter Drury in a moment, but first Rebecca Lowe.

REBECCA LOWE: It's good. I was waiting for the accent. That didn't come, but it's still good.

Thank you so very much, and thanks, everybody, for tuning into the call today. There's something different about this season coming up. I've been trying to work out what it is, and I've come to the realization that the reason that this season feels different is because of a number of reasons. Whether it's our 10th year on NBC, which is a nice and round number. Maybe it's the silverware with the Women's Euros, and so the whole of the country is on a high.



In fact, last weekend was the opening weekend of the Football League, and this is a league that is growing. I think attendance is 17% year-on-year, and at the weekend last weekend it had its biggest attendance across all the days of over 10 years.

Football is somehow in this country where if you (inaudible) -- people that view the game, somehow it continues to grow year-on-year. Maybe it's also because we have this World Cup coming up halfway through the year, which changes everything and makes a difference.

Maybe it's because the transfer window has been humongous for some of these clubs. The likes of Arsenal has really spent some money. Manchester City as well. Maybe it's because the title race last season was so tight, and we're hoping for another. Maybe it's because (inaudible) -- in the country are finally back after 23 years.

That's just a few of the reasons why heading into this coming Friday it certainly feels different. Another reason -- and Pierre has already mentioned it already. We have a new man on our team. He is a man that I've known for nearly two decades, I think really, and he is a mainstay of every Premier League's fan's experience of the league over the last 20 years.

The number of times he has given us chills while we're in the studio are too many to count. Maybe more important than all of that, Peter Drury is one of the greatest humans that you'll ever meet, and that makes us all so excited to have him a part of our team. I can't wait to introduce him to the fans and the viewers on Friday, and with that, Peter, for the first time of the season, over to you.

PETER DRURY: Rebecca, thank you so much. That's a lovely introduction. I loved your long list of maybes there. Perhaps could have survived without the last one because there are so many reasons to be excited about the Premier League.

For me, obviously, it's partly because I am the humble, excited new boy, the latest name to be scribbled on this established team sheet. And it's a massive privilege for me to be joining NBC at this time.

I've looked from the outside at the way it has cultivated this remarkable chemistry and relationship with the Premier League and has developed an American audience, which I know now is a mature football audience, an audience not in any sense to be talked down to, not to explain to, an audience which embraces our fabulous Premier League and engages it emotionally in a way that we all identify with.

I always say, as someone whose job it is to sit in the best seats in the house and shout the names as the ball careens around the field, that it is all about the action. Those of us that are the mere storytellers need to constantly remind ourselves of that.

It's just a great joy to be involved with this team and to continue a relationship with this league, which I began when it began back in 1992, 30 years ago.

Like everyone in my job, really I'm someone who wishes when they grew up that they had been good enough to play the game. I wasn't, but in the years, my teenage years, that I tried to play football, I was a really poor goalkeeper, which means that I am now in awe of someone who is anything but poor but played in the same position several thousand times better than I did, and that is Mr. Tim Howard. Tim, it's yours.

TIM HOWARD: Peter, thank you. Following you and Rebecca is nearly impossible, but I will try. Welcome to the team. We are ecstatic to have you.

Thank you all for being on the call. I echo what Rebecca mentioned before. This season seems so, so big, and I don't think anybody could argue that the Premier League is stronger than it's ever been.

I was in awe of it, maybe in fear of it, as a player that every time I came back to preseason, it was better and better, and the league was always better than it was the last year. When I look at it this season, I think can anybody catch Manchester City or Liverpool? I'm not sure, but I do know the Big Six is back.

When I was playing all those years ago, the Big Six was untouchable, and it just feels like that again. Rebecca talked about the spending of Arsenal. What does Chelsea do? Do they continue to spend as they have down the years? I'm not sure. It just feels like that Big Six is so solid once again.

And I think about kicking back and taking a few weeks off this summer and getting away for a bit, but the fans haven't. My social media has been going bonkers with all the fans, all the people that we stay in touch with talking about their team and the transfers and the fixtures that are coming out, and they can't wait. The excitement just seems so incredibly high.

This is my third year consecutively, as mentioned. I worked with NBC while I was still playing in the Premier League, but it is just an honor to be a part of this wonderful team.

DAN MASONSON: Thanks, Tim. We will take questions now.

Q. Good afternoon, everyone. My question is in regards to "Ted Lasso". Season 3 starts this fall, and it really has had an impact on the mainstream in the United States and trying to get new people into watching soccer or learning about the game itself. For season 3, are there any plans for cross-promotion, or is there any cast that's involved in that series. And if the answer is no to that question, could someone talk to kind of the impact that "Ted Lasso" has had perhaps personally to you in terms of that connection to the Premier League from just everyday Americans?

PIERRE MOOSSA: Maybe I'll start off, and Rebecca, you may want to jump in here as well.

When we got the rights to the Premier League in 2013, I think we all know the general perception of the American soccer fan. It wasn't an accurate perception, but it was the perception.

And the genesis of "Ted Lasso" was to have a little bit of fun, poke a little bit of fun at ourselves, and almost at the same time create awareness about the Premier League. The gentleman who created it took that and ran with it, and it became something that ultimately set the tone for our coverage in so many different ways.

I got a bunch of phone calls from colleagues over in England at Sky, and they said they were belly-laughing watching it, and it was a great way to establish how much fun we were going to have with the Premier League and also at the same time poke a little fun at ourselves. It's been so awesome to see how it's had such a great impact on things. You may or may not see our colleagues on upcoming episodes.

With regards to our plans, there's always different plans, so those are still to come. But generally speaking, I think it was such a great, for lack of a better term, anthem as we established our intent and the way we were going to approach and cover the Premier League.

REBECCA LOWE: Yes, Pierre, I'll follow up on that. It's so interesting to me because I have a group of school moms, if you like, who don't have an interest in soccer other than their kid who plays it, but they all watch "Ted Lasso". So suddenly they know what I do for a living. They say, oh, my goodness, that's the game that you go and do.

To be honest, if anything can help us spread the word about the beautiful game and spread our coverage, we'll take it. We work our back sides off to do it ourselves, but

"Ted Lasso", not only are we so proud of it being something that we began all those years ago, as Pierre said, and then a couple of times it all went viral, which ultimately led to a TV show. We're so proud that we were linked to that.

Then if it's effective that it's helped us to spread the word for our show and for our product, it's only been a brilliant thing. Overall, I think we're just all really, really proud of it.

Q. So, Rebecca and Tim, just your thoughts on how much the coverage has evolved in the United States in ten years. And kind of when NBC got the rights, how groundbreaking it was that all the matches were available in the United States and just maybe how coverage in the U.S. has kind of evolved maybe what's happening everywhere else?

REBECCA LOWE: Tim, do you want to go first, and I'll go after you?

TIM HOWARD: Sure. Yeah. It's groundbreaking in the sense that for all the matches to be available -- I'm 43 years old, and I started off as a little kid in New Jersey playing soccer. By the time I was 23, I signed for Manchester United. I can count on one hand how many games I saw live on television. Let that sink in. Our coverage, it was not only groundbreaking, but it was so captivating to an audience.

I go back to the last question with "Ted Lasso". We consume soccer or football in America differently. We just do. For so many years it's been talked about and laughed at. We consume it differently.

The way we learn about the game now at NBC, we teach the game, we show the game, but before that I had friends in the NBA and still do and friends in the NFL, they play a video game and jump on a plane in the offseason and go to Chelsea to watch football matches.

That's how we grow the game in America. When we look at our coverage, people get up at all hours of the morning to watch us, whether it be at Fan Fest at 3:00 a.m. in the morning or every single Saturday and Sunday at 4:00 or 7:00 in the morning. It's become our niche. It's become our thing. It's very American, and we do it in the right way. When I look at it, I'm incredibly proud to be a part of that.

REBECCA LOWE: Just following on what Tim said, I think the difference between now and nearly ten years ago is it doesn't feel niche anymore. It doesn't feel like this kind of exclusive, little elitist, soccer-loving club. This is mainstream now. For many, many decades we all know that America has been saying soccer is coming, soccer is



coming. Soccer is now here. There is no doubt about it.

I do think that our coverage and the comprehensive nature to it, the reliability of it every single week, pretty much same place, same time, same people, same approach to it has really given people consistency. Humans love consistency. We love a routine.

To give people a routine for nine months of the year against very little competition, let's be honest, from other sports, which is why it's so wonderful. On a Saturday or Sunday morning where if you have kids you are, like, what are we going to do this morning? Football is on. Let's watch football. And bond these families together. It's almost never been done before.

Over the last ten years I really believe that NBC's coverage has taken this game to a place nobody thought it would ever go to. There's no doubt about it now. It is thoroughly mainstream, and it's a huge part of people's lives.

I mentioned this many times, but when I moved over in 2013, the odd football shirt maybe in a park, maybe in an airport. Now I would say going about my daily life here in Northern California, I see Premier League shirts on a daily basis. A Man City fan just walked into the Starbucks where I am sitting. It happens all the time.

That's NBC's approach. It's epic. Just understanding how big this game can be and putting everything they had into it, that's what we've done, and it's reaping the rewards for NBC, but for the country in general because this game gives so much joy to so many who I am not even sure realize it was out there ten years ago. Now I feel like we're giving so much joy for so many people.

Q. The question is for Pierre. I want to ask you about the 4K presentations. Can we expect anything new from that, or are you guys still going to be just taking the product from Premier League Productions and offering that up to the providers that make it available?

PIERRE MOOSSA: So you can expect something new. It's going to be actually UHD/HDR this season. The Premier League has elevated to HDR, high dynamic range. That's the big, new change.

There will be increased amount of broadcasts from it than the past, but generally speaking, we will still be taking the fully produced world feed from the Premier League and be distributing that to many different aspects.

There is plans in place coming up for it to be made available on other platforms as well, but that is the general start of the season plan.

Q. Just a quick follow-up. Will you put your own graphics on that, or will you keep their graphics the way they display them?

PIERRE MOOSSA: It would be fully produced by the POP, so it would be the Premier League Production graphics and their commentators.

Q. To Rebecca's point about this season feeling different, as she noted, one of the main reasons is the timing of the World Cup. What do you all see as the disadvantages and/or advantages of the World Cup being played in the middle of the season?

REBECCA LOWE: Peter, you want to go with that first?

PETER DRURY: Yeah. Thank you, Rebecca. I would say there are pros and cons. I think the great pro from our point of view is we get two cracks at launching it. I think there's going to be a great sense after Christmas on Boxing Day of a rebirth of the same season. Picking up where we left off. Picking up the sort of the tail end of the stories that we left behind for the World Cup.

I think it helps us enormously, too, that England gets to play the USA in Qatar, which provides months -- these next three or four months of fun for us, particularly English people broadcasting in the United States.

And there will be a dialogue around the many, many players in the Premier League who are at this point going to play in the World Cup and from December will have played in the World Cup.

It provides a fresh narrative either side of that competition. I suppose if you are looking for cons, the natural one is going to be player fatigue. It would not be unnatural for the top stars, having played an intense Autumn program and then the World Cup, to feel a bit weary by the time they reach January.

I was doing some homework today ahead of a Chelsea-Everton game on Saturday, and I read somewhere that Chelsea played 18 games up to the middle of November last season, and this season they will have played 23 before the World Cup. That's as a result of the fact that the Champions League has to squeeze in all six of its weeks much, much earlier. The Cup competitions have to be around ahead of themselves and so on.

I guess player welfare would be the biggest worry, but for those of us who are the storytellers, I think the story lines around either side of the World Cup are going to be compelling.



REBECCA LOWE: Tim, do you want to go?

TIM HOWARD: Yes. Thanks, Rebecca. What interests me the most around the World Cup break is this: The challenges that managers face are going to be incredible regarding how they rest players because World Cup fatigue, as Peter talked about, is a real thing.

I had managers say it to me, and I scoffed at it and hated it. I always wanted to play. Both seasons after the World Cups I played in, I had terrible seasons, so it's a real thing.

The World Cup is such a high for any footballer that it drains you mentally and emotionally, which is fine when it happens in the summer because you can easily get back into preseason.

Arsène Wenger did it with van Persie. He was a big believer that World Cup hangovers were real. So he kind of slow-dripped van Persie back into the starting line-up. So what he missed a couple of games in August or September.

You're going to bring these players back now at the start of the second half of the season where there's going to be title races on, There's going to be relegation races on, top four, et cetera.

How do these managers manage World Cup fatigue, which we obviously know is a very real thing? They may not have the luxury of resting the players as they would coming out of preseason. That part will be interesting.

I spoke to Frank Lampard, the Everton manager, this summer about how he is going to manage the players who don't go away. He is likely to give them a couple of weeks off after having a few games and then get back to training.

I would imagine most managers would handle it similarly in terms of the break, but how do they manage the big players who particularly go into the late rounds in the World Cup?

REBECCA LOWE: I think there are so many ways of looking at it. On the whole I'm excited for it in terms of more pros than cons. However, if you are a Premier League manager, maybe a Thomas Tuchel or Frank Lampard, your chances of being fired in mid-November I think are higher than they were with no World Cup. The number of firings I think will increase. It will be like a mini season because there will be some panic, big panic, by owners. They'll know they have the six weeks to change manager.

The other problem they've got is that not every player is going. You're going to have a whole -- not loads, but a significant number of players, especially young players, that are going to have to try to keep their fitness up over that six weeks, which is really going to be challenging.

I know they've given them permission to do friendly games, but it's not ideal, is it, but it's something. When they come back in January, fatigue is going to be a problem for top level players, they're going to have to use the rest of the squad that hasn't played properly, not properly, for six weeks. That's going to be an interesting take as well.

I think the fatigue is going to be a factor, but the only way I look at it because as Peter was saying, the story -- we think there are story lines every week in the Premier League, but with the World Cup there's going to be a ton more going into it and coming out of it. There's going to be all sorts of controversy and brilliant narratives.

One of them coming out, if the fatigue hits some of the top, top players, I wonder whether it will slightly alter the gap between the Big Six and the rest because if Harry Kane is spent and he just can't get to the level that he got to before the World Cup, which is completely understandable, I wonder if those middle ranking teams, maybe the likes of Villa, who knows, West Ham, maybe those kind of teams are going to be able to take advantage of the fatigue, which will then make the second half of the season fascinating.

I don't want this every four years, so I'm delighted it won't be, but for this one-off particular season I find it mainly positive.

Q. And Pierre?

PIERRE MOOSSA: I'll speak to it from a broadcasting challenge, and I think that there's a lot of pros and cons. I would say the pros are a rising tide lifts all boats and the awareness around the World Cup, the passion around the World Cup, the soccer fans around the World Cup will really create a lot of energy and excitement.

Then for us we're going to really, really focus on that second restart, Boxing Day. We have some very exciting production plans around that, and Boxing Day will be a very special day. It's a big tradition, and it's something that we're going to really get people back into the festive picture.

That to me is really the pros around it. I think the challenge is obviously starting the season and stopping again, there's always a little bit of momentum you get going that you have to pick up again, which goes back to my original point of the real focus and the emphasis around Boxing Day being

the second restart of the season.

DAN MASONSON: I think we have time for one or two more questions, so let's take one now.

Q. This question is for Peter. What are you most looking forward to about broadcasting to an American audience?

PETER DRURY: Thank you for your question. In a sense, I'm looking forward to the continuity because calling Premier League games is what I've done, and it's a part of the rhythm of my life, and nothing is changing, but I'm in a very fortunate position because whilst continuing to do what I do do, I'm being freshened up. That is a really great professional challenge. We all need freshening up from time to time.

I'm having to think seriously about a new audience. Not that seriously, to be honest, because it's just another football audience. And I'm excited because I'm joining a winning team.

My biggest concern is that I'm the new boy on a winning team, and they have done all right without me. Now I come in, and I know that a lot of trust has been put in me, and I've got to live up to that trust.

Those are the things that get you out of bed in the morning. Let me tell you, adrenaline is pumping through my veins right now and will be up to and including Friday night at Crystal Palace and the six, eight, nine months that go beyond that.

It was just an incredible swell to be invited to be part of the NBC team. I took, as Pierre will tell you, very little seducing. It wasn't a hard thing to say yes. And now, you know, once this bit of talking is over, it's going to be down to me and the whole team to try and deliver the storytelling as best we possibly can.

DAN MASONSON: We'll take our last question.

Q. First, my condolences to the family of Vin Scully. He was part of NBC Sports for many years. Many iconic moments calling Major League Baseball. The one that brings to my mind would be 1988 World Series game one. Kirk Gibson, bottom of the ninth with a bad hip hitting that 3-2 backdoor slider. Picture Dennis Eckersley over the fence. My father and I turned off the television and didn't speak a word afterwards. You can imagine. First question will be for Pierre: The -- (inaudible) Philadelphia Fan Fest, any chance that will be brought back in April of 2023 after the updated COVID-19 booster vaccines from Pfizer,

Biontech and Moderna have proven efficacy against the new variant? And a second question is mostly for Rebecca: As Rebecca knows by now, the England versus USA Women's Friendly at Wembley on October 7th was sold out in less than 24 hours. NBC Sports has agreed to do 16 Olympic Association football matches on site at --

DAN MASONSON: We're going to let Pierre answer the question now, okay? Thank you.

PIERRE MOOSSA: Thank you for your question. Do you mind repeating your question? My apologies.

Q. The Philadelphia Fan Fest that was postponed April of 2020, any chance that will come back in April 2023?

PIERRE MOOSSA: We do have some plans about some Fan Fests. We haven't announced the dates yet publicly, but I can kind of give you an exciting news that we are looking at many different places, and I think people will be very excited about those Fan Fests.

We know how special the Fan Fests are. We know how it creates a match day atmosphere and the excitement around it. And especially when we had done Philadelphia and created Philadelphia Fan Fest, and unfortunately the pandemic hit at that time, but there was such excitement and passion in the Philadelphia area, so we would be crazy not to return there. We have promised that we will return there. Stay tuned. There will, obviously, be a lot more information to come.

We really do feel what makes Fan Fest so special and the genesis of it was that one of the things -- we were sitting around and saying, hey, listen, if we could only take every Premier League fan over to England and let them experience it once, let them experience that atmosphere. Peter went to the Watford game, and I know they are not in the Premier League anymore, but just that experience is so amazing. If we could take every Premier League fan over there and they could experience it, we know they would be hooked.

We're sitting around and saying to ourselves, why don't we bring the match day experience back to the United States? So with that, we created the Fan Fest to create a match day experience and really celebrate the U.S. Premier League fans and create that communal experience.

For us it's really a great opportunity, and the Philadelphia fan base is unreal. So I'm dancing around the answer to the question, but I think that everybody will be pleased once they hear about our plans for the fall and we really do believe the Fan Fests are special.



Just, again, want to thank everybody for taking their time to jump on this call. Really, really do appreciate it. We're really excited, and, again, we feel it's such a privilege to be ambassadors for the Premier League.

Thank you for your call today and thank you for jumping in and letting us know and reach out to Dan with any more questions.

DAN MASONSON: Thanks very much, everybody. There will be a transcript later on this afternoon. We'll see you on Friday.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

