

Houston Dynamo Media Conference

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Houston, Texas, USA

Don Garber

Lisa Baird

Ted Segal

Sylvester Turner

Press Conference



partner investors, and I look forward to continuing with the city's partnership seeing more victories and the club's operation of the Aviva Sports Bank, over 250,000 youth each year.

A lot of people may not know the Dynamo operate the rugby field and operate the seven soccer fields and the stadium, and so I'm excited, Ted, for our city, in addition to being the majority owner, you will serve on the MLS board of governors, the city is committed to bidding to become one of ten U.S. host cities for the 2026 World Cup.

And lastly, welcome to the city. This is a sports town. We love to win, hate to lose, and a city filled with people young and old who love soccer and we look forward to helping you achieve your goal in building the next chapter of the Houston Dynamo Football Club. Welcome to Houston.

THE MODERATOR: We are very, very honored to have commissioner of the National Women's Soccer League, Lisa Baird with us, as well as Commissioner Don Garber from Major League Soccer to help announce Ted as our new owner. So I will turn it over to you, first, commissioners and we'll start with Lisa.

LISA BAIRD: Thank you, Houston. It's a thrill to be back. I was here a couple weeks ago and I couldn't be more excited to welcome Ted and his team to the family. Ted has a passion for the sport and is a proven leader and for me, I'm thrilled to have him because he has a leg up with not one but two soccer-playing daughters.

Our goal at the National Women's Soccer League is to showcase and uplift the talent, the rock star talent in our league. I know Ted and his team are going to take us to the next level. I am so excited because Houston is such a great sports town, as the mayor has indicated, and for us, it's a particularly proud moment to acknowledge the fact that the Houston Dash won the 2020 Challenge Cup last year and were recognized as Houston's sports moment of the year.

So we are excited to have you continue to winning tradition with the MWSL.

MAYOR SYLVESTER TURNER: I'm honored to be here with you for an exciting announcement about the Houston Dynamo Football Club's new ownership and I want to welcome the new owner, Ted Segal, along with MLS Commissioner Don Garber and Lisa Baird, MWSL Commissioner to our wonderful, wonderful city.

The Dynamo club has been an important part of this city for many, many years. We cannot ask for a better partner and the players who have worn the jersey and build the soccer fan base in the greater Houston region. The players and the championship trophies have won the heart and minds of Houstonians over the years and from the two MLS Cup championships, U.S. Open Cup and not to mention the conference championships, and in the end despite the pandemic last year, I was out here with the Houston Dash at the drive through celebration after the team clinched the 2020 MWSL Challenge Cup. We are proud owners along with the Harris County Houston Sports Authority of BBVA Stadium where we are today and ever since we recruited the team to Houston in 2008 the Dynamo organization has been an integral part of this community.

The players have given back on and off the field, engaged with youth and soccer camps and activities that have all been immeasurable. So as Mayor, it is my honor to welcome Ted Segal to the City of Houston as a new majority owner of the Houston Dynamo Football Club.

Ted, congratulations on your investment of the club, which includes Houston Dynamo FC, Minor League Soccer, the Houston Dash of the National Women's Soccer League and the leasing rights to BBVA Stadium. I am pleased to hear that former Rockets star James Harden, Oscar de la Hoya, Gabriel Brener, Ben Guill will be involved as limited



COMMISSIONER DON GARBER: Welcome, everybody. It's good to be back in Houston and Mayor, thanks for your leadership of the city and to those that are involved in the city and the county and your efforts to bring the World Cup here to Houston. That will be one of the great sporting events in the history of North America; the fact that it's México, Canada and the United States I think will add even more drama and excitement to the sport.

President George Herbert Walker Bush, 41, your favorite Houston son once said, "In crucial things unity, in important things, diversity, and in all things, generosity."

And on this very historic day for Houston and for the sport of soccer in this city, it's a fitting, fitting quote to talk about how we are going to move forward in a great and exciting dynamic way with new owner of the two sports teams in this great city. Because it's in the spirit of unity, diversity and generosity that Ted is now officially the owner of the Houston Dynamo and the Houston Dash and will be a leaseholder in this stadium.

I've gotten to know Ted quite a bit over the last year or so and I can tell you that he epitomizes the new generation of owners in our league and the new generation of owners in Lisa's league. He's got a passion for the sport. He's young, as Lisa said, has young kids that are playing the game. His family cares about the sport. He's a true believer in what this sport could do to help lead and transform and create great role models for all of our kids, both in the city and state and throughout the country; it's a game that is played for everyone and by everyone, and I think you're going to see when you meet Ted that he epitomizes what that really means.

For us, Ted's a person that's going to lead the team on and off the field. He's going to become the guy that's going to try to drive championships. This team, as the mayor mentioned, has two of them, but very importantly, this is a team that's been very embedded in the community and knowing his family and knowing what Ted motivates him and inspires him, I think you'll see lots of things happen off the field for this team as well.

I'm also pleased that Ted is purchasing the Dash. Lisa has done an unbelievable job leading women's league in this country. It's defying all of those who were really questioning what professional women's soccer could be and they are breaking all those barriers and doing wonderful things. Been in this sports business a long time, and I have to say the league has a great future, a great leader in Lisa, and I think that this club with the ownership with the coach is going to be a continued great steward for the game.

Ted's acquisition of the team comes at a great time for our sports. We are on the path to the World Cup. Our league is expanding fast and furious. We just opened up a new stadium this past weekend in Austin. We now have three teams in Texas; so I know you're going to see lot of great rivalries that are going to happen on and off the field here in the State of Texas.

Houston is a great soccer town; Mayor, I think you said it well. It's got great sports teams but a great soccer culture. Many, many events, in a couple weeks we have a couple Gold Cup matches taking place in the stadium; an active bid to bring the World Cup here. We have hosted many, many international games including 90,000 people that played when Jamey was at the football team, 90,000 people seeing Major League Soccer's All-Stars play against Manchester United. Unfortunately we lost that game but it was a great game for our league and great for our sport.

So our best days are still ahead for the entire sport of soccer, for our two leagues, I think the best days are still ahead for the Houston Dynamo and Houston Dash. I can't say enough about how excited we are for soccer fans across our two leagues.

Welcome to professional soccer in North America, welcome to the MLS family, and now, Ted, it's all yours.

TED SEGAL: Thank you, Commissioner. I want to thank the City of Houston for the warm welcome I've received over the last several weeks as we worked to close this transaction. Thanks to Mayor Turner and the Houston County Sports Authority for being here today. I want to thank Commissioners Garber and Baird for their leadership and the assistance of their offices as we worked towards today's announcement. I want to thank John Walker and their entire executive team in getting me up to speed on the club and their potential. I want to thank my new partners, Gabriel Brener, Oscar de la Hoya, Ben Hill and James Harden for their confidence in me as their new managing partner.

I would be remiss if I didn't especially recognize my parents on this day. They immigrated to the United States from the Soviet Union in 1978 with \$100 and my then three-year-old brother in tow. With education, hard work and good luck, they achieved extraordinary success and laid the foundation for me and my brother to bid on the business they created. They epitomize the American dream and their achievements allowed me to humbly join you here today on behalf of our family, an unmanageable position only a generation ago.

Being here today is extremely gratifying for a number of



reasons. I've been a soccer fan all my life. I was raised in New Jersey, a soccer hotbed and have fond memories of the 1994 World Cup. I witnessed soccer's explosion and popularity in the wake of that World Cup and the founding of the MLS. I believe soccer is on the precipice of another step-change in popularity in the run-up to and hosting of another World Cup in North America in 2026.

More recently, I have proudly watched the sustained excellence of our women's national team. As the father of three, including two young daughters, I've watched them play in youth soccer programs and see the love of the sport take hold with them. As a family we watched every minute of the 2019 World Cup run and had the good fortune of attending women's national team games. Like the MLS, there's extraordinary potential for growth in the MWSL.

I recognize that to assume majority ownership of a professional sports club is to assume the role of a lead steward of a vital community asset. Having the opportunity to help lead this club in Houston, a dynamic, diverse and growing city with such a storied history in professional sports is truly exciting.

Indeed, Houston is a world-class city that I deserves world-class teams. I believe the Dynamo and the Dash should represent the very best of Houston, and I recognize that my role in contributing to the club's success is to provide the teams with the resources necessary to succeed on and off the pitch. This will be an evolving process, as I familiarize myself with the operations of the

Club but I'm pleased to announce the following actions today: A three-year contract extension of Tim Parker. As you know, Tim is a stand-out center back that is a cornerstone of the Dynamo on the pitch, in the locker room and around the training grounds; the signing of Teenage Hadebe as a designated player, pending his obtaining a U.S. Visa and passing a physical this week. Teenage joins the Dynamo from the Turkish League and is a talented center back who will complement Tim Parker; the addition of Jamey Rootes to our organization in the newly-created position of chief executive officer. Jamey is a highly accomplished sports executive with more than 25 years of experience leading business operations for teams both in the NFL and the MLS. While many of you know Jamey as the former president of the Houston Texans, prior to that, he spent time as president and general manager of the Columbus Crew in the MLS. Jamey will bring valuable insight and deep connections to the Houston community to enhance the efforts of John Walker in the execution of the club's growth strategy and strengthening of our strategic partnerships.

Most importantly, the club's ability to influence the

community through good work is a powerful tool few organizations outside of sports can rival. The impact of the club can extend far beyond the results in the field. To that end, I am proud to announce the following: A \$100,000 contribution to Dynamo charities to cover the 2021 costs to support their ticket with the Boys & Girls Club, Signs of Soccer and Soccer Starts At Home; a \$100,000 contribution to the Houston Food bank, a cause important to the club and to me personally.

Lastly and in a similar vein, I plan to take an active role in Houston's bid to be selected as a 2026 host city. In connection with this as the Commissioner mentioned, I have taken a seat on the committees of directors. I have joined numerous other committee leaders to financially support the bid committee's operation with a \$100,000 contribution and I have pledged one \$125,000 to launch and fund through the 2022 season the bid committees grass roots soccer programs, Free Kick Soccer in partnership with the greater Houston Boys & Girls Clubs and Girls Introduction to Soccer in Partnership With the Houston Independent School District.

These programs will help grow the game in Houston and provide underserved youth throughout our community with more access to the sport. These are the first of many actions that we plan to take over the coming weeks and months to position the club for success.

Everything we do will be with the goals of building a championship club and fostering the ties to the community our club is lucky enough to call home. As a new member of this community, I wholeheartedly welcome the input of our supporters and community members as to how to best achieve these goals.

With that, I'll say, let's hold it down and get to work. Thank you.

Q. What is your commitment to improving the roster, and did you play a role in signing Teenage Hadebe?

TED SEGAL: My commitment as I mentioned in my opening statement is to provide resources to the club on and off the pitch to succeed and so I will provide the adequate resources to make them a winning team. With respect to Teenage Hadebe, I would say that I was involved. I was consulted with Matt Jordan and Coach Ramos, and I would say that that is an example of how I intend to be involved.

I am not going to be the guy who is selecting the 11 men or women to take the pitch but I'm going to defer to the experts and their expert input and in collaboration with them give them the resources in this case, teenage, to



succeed on the pitch.

Q. Can you discuss the hiring of Jamey Rootes and what attracted you on this day to announce his hiring and bring him into this organization?

TED SEGAL: Well, I announced it on this day because, as I mentioned in the very last words, my statement, we're ready to get to work and Jamey has a proven track record in the NFL and deep ties to the Houston committee that were very appealing to us in addition to his past MLS experience.

So I think that Jamey in a now position, consistent with how a lot of organizations are organized with a CEO and team president, working with tandem with John Walker, and each of those gentlemen enhancing each other's abilities is going to position this club for long-term success.

Q. I have a question about improving standards in the League. Since you've been commissioner, we've seen improvements for player salaries, conditions, stadium facilities. But fans and players and coaches are still looking for more, like license level for referees, goal line technology. Can you talk about what your focus is with Ted seeing he will and maybe all of the new group of owners in the MWSL in San Diego, L.A. and Kansas City, what's your focus for the standard you want to improve?

LISA BAIRD: You said it. We are nine years old. We're a league that's nine years old and we are incredibly proud of the progress that we've made in the last nine years with the ownership we have, including dramatically increasing women's pay, including getting new owners such as Ted in the League with the help of MLS. But there's more work to be done.

And the work really is going on right now within the ownership group regarding our governance systems, team standards. We are engaged with the PA in a new collective bargaining agreement. We are putting forth a strategic plan for growth, and a lot of that is going to be a very comprehensive look at what it takes to continue to be the best women's professional soccer league in the world.

So there's a lot of work going on on a lot of levels. Some might say it's overwhelming. That's why I'm glad to not only have Ted with me here on the dais but to have Jamey here as well working with John, because the combination of their two sports experience across many leagues is really going to help us to get to that next level of excellence, which is what our goal is.

Q. For both of the Commissioners, I'd like each of to

you give your perspective on just how involved were you two personally in this process of vetting a new owner, and then aside from personally just your leagues in general, what are some things you prioritize in a situation like this?

COMMISSIONER DAN GARBER: So there's nothing more integral to the success of a pro sports league than its owners. We know that not just from our league but every league in North America. We are very involved. Ted's process lasted a year. It was complicated because very fortunately Gabriel Brener and Ben and Oscar and James Harden will stay in the ownership group. I neglected to give Gabriel and his partners a real shot of congratulations for being stewards of the club being up to now.

So it's a vetting process that includes what their passion is for the sport, what their commitment is to the sport financially, what their views are about the future of the club that they are purchasing but also their views about the league that they are investors in.

At the end of the day, it is a bit of a family. It's a marriage. Major League Soccer is a company and Ted and his family are shareholders in that company. So he spent quite a bit of time meeting with other owners and getting understanding of our governance and very importantly deciding whether this was right for him. Because at the end of the day, this is a very long-term family generational experience and we want them to be comfortable with that not just from their own become but also having our owners, their partners, comfortable as well.

LISA BAIRD: Without duplicating it, we go through a similar process. I spent some time on the phone with him and understood his vision for the community. But I'll also add to this, in addition to it being an investment, as Don said, a generational investment, we look for owners that fundamentally have in their DNA to treat the women's team the same as the men's team. And I can assure you, he will.

Q. Ted, you talked about a series of initiatives that you have already implemented bringing in Teenage Hadebe and Jamey and all those other things. What type of owner will you be in the long run? How can you describe to all of the people here who don't know a single thing about you, what kind of owner will you be in the long run? And Commissioner, you talked about how important it is for where soccer is in America right now; talk about Houston returning to a place of prominence in football.

TED SEGAL: So sure, I think the initial part of your question, I am relatively unknown. I think what I think that

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

exemplifies with respect to my ownership is I'm going to take an understated but active approach.

So what my intention is to provide the resources to the experts on the players' side and on the business side to maximize the opportunity for success.

As some of you may know, I do work primarily in the real estate industry but I'm not the individual who is surveying a given plot of land. Look, you defer to the experts and work with them and collaborate with them to best put yourself in the position to succeed, and that's my intention here.

COMMISSIONER DAN GARBER: I'll just add from Ted's perspective, every journey start with a small step when you're a sports team owner. Did Bob McNair know a lot before he came in; look at what he was able to achieve in this city. It always starts somewhere.

I like to say, as we look around, and this is year 23 for me, the owners that were around in the early days are not necessarily the most influential owners today. It's the new owners who are bringing in new perspective and have a new vision, passion and experience and have a thought about what they want to do; in essence, make a mark on the sport.

Fortunately for the city and fans here, Ted has decided to do that in Houston. There were a number of other opportunities, and he said, "I want to come here."

So for the second part of your question, this is a massive city with an incredible passionate sports following in all of the various leagues, and it's always been known as a great soccer town. That wasn't part of the original MLS launch of the eight to ten teams in the early days but when we came here we knew we needed to have a great facility located downtown. I said to Ted right when we came on, it's probably the best location in Major League Soccer.

It has the right facility, it has the right location and it has a passionate, passionate group of supporters. What needs to happen now is how do you connect all those dots and how do you have the new ownership group and its vision put its mark on the team and the Dash moving forward and I have great confident that the best days are ahead. Their plan and vision and commitments he's made already are pretty remarkable.

I've been in a lot of press conferences and not too many people announce what they are doing on day one with charitable contribution, player signings, key employee signings, how that's going to work with the existing employee base. This is something that I think is going to be enormously important for what we are trying to do to

grow the sport in this country and this part of the country.

Q. So the Commissioner kind of alluded to this but you're relatively young to own a team and you bring a fresh perspective. How do you think that's going to help and you how will that impact your decisions?

TED SEGAL: Well, it's just day one, as I was speaking with the commissioners here, I still have a lot to learn.

So I'm going to throw myself into it and work hard with both leagues to implement best practices and all I can say is you have my commitment that I will be an active and involved owner in giving our organization the resources it has to succeed.

Q. Forgive Dynamo fans for being skeptical. The same thing you're saying they have heard from the previous ownership and failed to see the follow-through. How much are you willing to commit? Are you able to make the Dynamo at least midway through the MLS payroll? Are you willing to provide a star player? For example, I drove in this morning I see a decal with a car that has an Astros sticker and a sticker from the Mexican league. Do you seen care about making the Houston Dynamo the No. 1 team?

TED SEGAL: I absolutely care about making the Houston Dynamo the No. 1 team in the MLS and one can aspire to make them the No. 1 team globally. I'm not going to make a specific commitment to payroll. I made a couple of day one initiatives and that will serve as an example of how I intend to work going forward.

I intend to work with Matt Jordan and Coach Ramos that are in the best interests of building a winning side. You do have my commitment that I will be providing resources for the club to succeed and it's going to be a collaborative effort working with them to make those expert decisions.

Q. Where do you see the State of soccer in Texas and are you worried with the attendance numbers in Houston and Dallas?

COMMISSIONER DAN GARBER: I wouldn't say I'm worried. I would say this is a crowded sports market and it's one to your point that has a number of different offerings for fans. I'll make a comment on the question you had for Ted; there are quite a few MLS teams that don't have any stars on their jersey and this team has two. Fans expectations of high. They want to win every year and every owner and player and technical person wants to win every year.

What you need to do is provide your fans with hope. You



need to give them the sense that on any given start of the season they are going to make the playoffs and maybe make a run all the way to MLS Cup and put another star on the jersey. That's the commitment that this owner has and frankly I would say that's the commitment that every owner has.

As it relates to attendance in Dallas and attendance here, I know in speaking with Ted and speaking with John, there's a number of initiatives they have been launching, the game before the beginning of the pandemic was a sellout. We have a number of new initiatives and activities that were taking place and they have to re-energize that and I have confidence that they will be able to do that.

Q. Can you expand on treating the mens same as the women and how the team can hold the accountable on that front?

TED SEGAL: Sure, No. 1, part of what drew me to this opportunity was that there is an MWSL team here. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I'm the father of two young daughters and we are deeply enthusiastic about the sport.

With respect to equal treatment, my intention through my three main pillars is to live up though both of those on the MLS and MWSL side and that's providing adequate resources and enhancing the fan experience and that goes across both clubs and fostering ties to the community, and I think if you can execute on those goals, both clubs are in a position to succeed.

LISA BAIRD: I will say when you meet a new owner for the first time, and Ted all of a sudden in our first phone call started asking exactly the right questions that I as commissioner would want to see him ask about our league: Where are you, what's the long term plan, how are you doing this. You could tell from the moment he talked about it he was already deeply invested.

Speaking for the Dash and Houston, I just want to say one word. I mean, this is a team that this city has built from the ground up with the help of James and John and everybody. I mean, you're starting to see your players here emerge, not only on the U.S. sports landscape and become stars, but internationally as well, two players in summer camps this summer, and that was built from the ground up here in Houston.

So I am just really excited about this team at this time becoming a global powerhouse for women's professional soccer. That is going to take dedication and resources and actually the support of the community in which I think this team already has.

Q. How do you feel like you are going to be a good steward for the messaging both the city and team often put as a huge important part of the club in?

TED SEGAL: So I don't know that there's any distinction in terms of how I approach this between the two clubs. My position to the crux of your question is that I support players in their right to express themselves on important community, national and global issues.

Q. My question is for Commissioner Garber. You referred to this a little bit in an earlier answer, but many see Houston as this sleeping giant when it comes to MLS as a market. Would you agree with that characterization, and what do you think the ceiling is for Houston in terms of an MLS market?

COMMISSIONER DAN GARBER: I think calling it a sleeping giant is appropriate. We have always had high expectations for this market, and have had a path to get to a point where we can feel that it is delivered on our expectations.

I can only say that the previous ownership group was focused, did everything that they believed they were capable of doing to take this team to a couple of championships, U.S. Open Championship and to invest in the team to get it to where it is today. But now it's awe new whole world and the next -- call it Houston Dynamo, Houston Dash 2.0, Ted and his vision for taking it to higher levels that ultimately will allow this club to achieve its goals and frankly deliver on our expectations on what the Houston market should be delivering from a fan perspective, from a corporate partnership perspective, from a community perspective. This is an important city in our league and we are excited and hopeful about what the future lies with Ted and his new group.

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