

# Houston Dynamo Media Conference

Friday, July 1, 2022

Houston, Texas, USA

**Owner Ted Segal**

**GM Pat Onstad**

**Coach Paulo Nagamura**

**Hector Herrera**

**David Robinson**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Hello, my voice is a little different than Zach's, a little bit stronger. Thank you very much for being here today. I'm very proud to be part of the Houston Dynamo and a very special day. My name is Luis (indiscernible). And we have a big day.

This is big. When I say big, I remember that my grandson, before I took the flight, he said, oh, you're going to Texas? Everything is big there.

So I said, well, I think it's a myth because the car is the same size as in Miami. So, but after today, having Hector Herrera here is something big for the state of Texas.

Joining me today, it's the coach Paulo Nagamura; the Dynamo controller/owner Ted Segal; Hector Herrera; and Dynamo general manager Pat Onstad.

Also with us today we have the Houston City Council member, David Robinson; Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce CEO Dr. Laura Murillo; Jose Jimenez, representing Harris County Commissioner Adrian Garcia; and Valeria Ramirez Siller from the Mexican consulate; a representatives from a number of the club's corporate partners.

And, of course, Hector's family is here present with all of us. Thank you for joining us. This is a big history moment for the state of Texas for fútbol, for soccer.

I would like to invite Councilmember Robinson to present the proclamation on behalf of the city of Houston.



DAVID ROBINSON: Good morning. My name is David Robinson. I'm the city councilmember for the city of Houston that has been sent here today by our mayor, Sylvester Turner, and all of my colleagues on Houston's city council, Hector, to celebrate your arrival. And we're indeed extremely excited about this.

It is a big state. It is a great state. And the biggest city and the biggest state is Houston, Texas. And we are so glad to have you here. And Mr. Segal, Mr. Onstad, (indiscernible), so good to have you here. And, Hector, [Spanish].

But this is such an incredible time for us. We do have a proclamation that we will be giving Hector, but that will be tonight at POST Houston during the official welcome party for our new esteemed member of the city of Houston.

And we're so excited about this. Not only does Hector's career presence in the world of fútbol, the game of fútbol, but on through his wonderful career, his presence on the concha, his understanding of how to play the game and lead the game, these are things we know he'll excel in the city of Houston and with the Houston Dynamo.

[Spanish].

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Councilmember Robinson. We'll begin now with a few opening remarks from each of the individuals up here. We'll start with Ted Segal.

TED SEGAL: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome, visitors and press, from around the world to Houston, a host city for the 2026 World Cup. And welcome to PNC Stadium, home of the Houston Dynamo Fútbol Club.

Special welcome to Hector's wife, Chantal, and their children. Like any good father and husband, I know that Hector wouldn't be joining us here if he didn't have the love and support of his family. So thank you for sharing Hector with the Dynamo and the city of Houston.

I know how welcoming the city can be to newcomers and I think you've gotten a sense of that based on the warm greeting you received at the airport upon your arrival on



Wednesday.

Yo soy Ted Segal -- somebody in the press office just won a bet whether I would attempt to speak in Spanish. [Laughter].

"Yo soy Ted" -- for all the reporters trying to get a scoop today, those were the first words I uttered to Hector Herrera when we first spoke in February.

[Spanish] I was able to fumble through a discussion with Hector. We discussed our shared our love of Madrid, our families, our mutual desire to do our part to return the Dynamo to their past successes, and to do it for our soccer-craved fans in Houston.

Before Hector and I connected on Zoom in February a tremendous amount of work was done and time was expended by Pat Onstad, Asher Mendelsohn, Paulo Nagamura to not only convince Hector that Houston was right for him, but to confirm that Hector was right for Houston.

As an aside, as we start this July 4th weekend, and with all due respect to our many international visitors, it's here, only in America, that a native of Canada, a native of Brazil, a couple of guys from the northeast here in the U.S. in me and Asher, could work to convince a native of Mexico based in Europe to come play for a local fútbol club here in Houston. I just wanted to point that out on the eve of the 4th of July.

What Pat, Paulo and Asher came to realize is what you'll hear time again about Hector from fans and teammates from around the world -- be it in Pachuca, Porto, Atlético de Madrid, and of course as a stalwart for the Mexican National Team. And that is Hector is hardworking, a leader, has made his teams a winner in every post in his career, and an intense competitor for his clubs and country who holds himself and his teammates to a high standard. And that last bit of the description is especially important. Soccer is obviously a team sport. Hector is one of 11 men on a pitch, one of a couple dozen players on a roster.

A team succeeds when players elevate one another, when they're all invested in the success of the team over the success of the individual. And our players are excited and ready to rise to the occasion and meet this moment.

Notwithstanding his singular talents, we're under no illusion that Hector alone is responsible for the team's success. These turnarounds don't happen overnight, as much as we're trying. But all of us, Coach Nagamura, Pat, Asher, our entire roster, including Hector, are committed and determined to do something special here in Houston.

Hector wouldn't be here if he didn't think -- if we didn't think that he was all in on building this in Houston.

How do I know he feels that way? During that February Zoom I had with Hector, there was only one part of our conversation when I spoke entirely in English. And I did that because, as I said to Hector and as his agent dutifully translated, I wanted to be abundantly clear and not misunderstood. And I said, I'm committed to this team. I needed to know: Are you committed to this team?

He enthusiastically said, yes, and here we are.

[Spanish], Hector. And as I said about a year ago, when I took over, as I said, about eight months ago when Pat joined the club and as I'll say again right now, let's hold it down and get to work. Welcome.

PAT ONSTAD: Thank you all for coming. It's nice to see such a great turnout today. And I know with this weather sometimes that pushes it a little bit. Thank you for your patience as well for coming here.

Interesting, Ted kind of touched on it a little bit, talking about Independence Day in a few days. But most of you that know me, I'm Canadian and of course today is Canada Day. A little bit of irony here that you have a Canadian introducing a national captain of the Mexican National Team here in Houston, Texas and this great state of Texas. I thought that was kind of fitting.

I just want to talk a little bit about the signing. I think you've heard we've talked about culture of our group. And I think this signing epitomizes everything about the culture we're trying to build here at our club.

Team first. We know that Hector has won championships. He's the type of guy that will improve our team. We know that. He's a captain. He's a leader everywhere he's been.

We talk about the respect, respect for our fans. We listen to our fans. We listen to the community. Hector has embraced us when we spoke to him. He embraced the fact he wants to be a representative of the Houston Dynamo and a representative of this community and this city. We're excited about that.

Accountability, Ted, you touched on it a little bit. But Ted came here and said, I'm going to invest in this team. I'm going to spend money that's going to help make this team better and we're going to invest. Ted's holding us accountable. He's giving us an opportunity to sign a player of Hector's quality. And we've been able to do that.

I think then the big one for us is the pursuit of excellence. I

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said from day one and I know Ted has said this as well, we want to win multiple championships here. We want to compete for trophies. That's our goal and I can't think of a better guy than Hector sitting beside here to help us lead down that pathway.

The deal itself, I'll get to thank yous, but it was fairly simple. I think as Ted talked about this famous phone call and the Zoom call, there were some other calls behind. But I think with his agent, Gabriel, we had a really good conversation. And it was I think for both of us it was to see if it was the right fit.

It's not just about our city. Make sure that Hector was comfortable coming here with his lovely family. But more importantly that we believed in each other. And that didn't take very long. We got there pretty quickly. But it was important.

And I would say, and I've talked to Gabriel about this and hopefully he's translated for me with my horrible Spanish to Hector, but I think the big one was when we got to Madrid and sat down and had a couple of glasses of water mixed with a little wine -- we had a few glasses of wine, I think -- we actually hit it off and asked each other some honest questions about where we were at.

In his stage of the career, and the club's stage, our kind of rebuild and where we're at. And it was a perfect fit.

So with that in mind, I want to thank a few people, because I think he wouldn't be here without the work of some of these people and I'll thank them again, Ted Segal, thank you very much for backing us and believing in our group here. That means a lot.

And I think it means a lot that you would believe in a player like Hector Herrera that he is going to help us transform this franchise.

The entire Herrera family -- Chantal, Mia, David -- thank you so much. You guys welcomed me into your home. That was very nice. And a very nice bottle of wine as well, thank you for that. I owe you a bottle of wine.

Gabriel Moraes from Ocelot Sports, an agent -- and some of these deals are very difficult, when you do deals and you bring players over and there's a lot of infighting, and I think we actually just sat down and had a conversation to get this done.

And it was probably one of the easier deals that certainly I've been involved with -- and Gabriel is shaking his head, he might say no -- but, no, it was great. Very honorable and easy to talk to and understanding, and I think that's

where we came to an agreement right off the bat what the best interests were for both parties.

I want to thank Asher Mendelsohn. He brought this to the table for us. I think it was really important in terms of where we got to. And I think for him it was instrumental in getting this deal done. If it's not for Asher I don't think this deal gets across the line.

Nick Kowba -- where is Nick? He's in the back. What Nick really helped in the deal for us was putting it in historical context. Nick has been here since day one. And I think for him to see that a player of Hector Herrera's level and where we're trying to build and go with this club, it was good for us to hear -- for Asher, myself, for Paulo -- to figure out where we wanted to go. And I think that historical perspective, thank you, Nick. That was important.

Paul Caffrey, for your leadership with the performance department, to be able to take the time to watch him, watch his movement, take a look at his injury history. Quickly said, listen, this guy can play forever. I don't know about forever because I tried forever it didn't work.

But the one thing he did say is, okay, enough of wasting my time. If this isn't for real, stop pulling me. But we got there. So thank you, Paul, for that.

And then before I pass it over there's one big person here at this table I want to thank. But I want special thanks for a couple of people that have really helped the transition here.

Allen Hopkins, who has been looking after the Herrera family, making sure their transition has gone well. Val Holland, for your work behind the scenes helping make sure they were set up. Jesus Zamorano and Dorian Valenzuela, thank you, all of you, for helping make this a smooth transition.

And lastly I want to thank Paulo Nagamura. I think Hector doesn't come here without Paulo. Paulo sat there, spent the time to talk to Hector, and they had a good connection. Paulo, thank you very much for doing that. Meant a lot.

PAULO NAGAMURA: Welcome. For me it was a no-brainer decision. Since my first interaction with Hector, it was clear that he checked all the boxes while we were looking for a profile of a player that we looked to add to the club -- in terms of culture, in terms of technical ability, tactical ability, physical, mental.

But one thing that really turned our head on Hector was that he was really committed and really, really enthusiastic about the project that we have here in Houston.



So again, I think I'm lucky to be working with a player of such a caliber and we're looking forward to bring this club where we believe it deserves to be, that is on top of MLS. And work has already started and we're going to keep going.

Welcome, Hector, and welcome to your family, everyone, and thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Paulo.

I've been around three decades, if we start counting, around fútbol. And I had the privilege of calling a lot of games in which the superstar that we have here today was on the field.

There's one thing that comes from my heart that I want to tell the people from Houston, not only Houston but from the people of Texas. This gentleman that you're bringing to the city has a lot of heart. So from today on, Houston should not have any problems. Here's Hector Herrera.

HECTOR HERRERA: [Speaking in Spanish].

**Q. Pat, with everything you've done here, you're so proud of the signing and the significance. And at no point does it seem like you're tempering the expectations for how much of a difference maker Hector can be on the field, off the field. What have you seen from him to kind of excite and ignite these fans and say, hey, July 9th is the day? We're not tapping the brakes. We're going for broke.**

PAT ONSTAD: I think for us we're excited, obviously. I think for us a big piece of it is leadership qualities, which it's difficult when you walk in a door and become a leader. And he's been in enough dressing rooms and locker rooms to know how that plays out.

That's something that I think will take place over time, his natural leadership qualities will come through.

But most importantly, for us, he's a very good soccer player. And he brings a lot of quality to our team and allows Paulo to do a lot of different things with the players he has now.

So we're trying to get better every day. We're still trying to work in this window as best we can to try to improve this team. But obviously this is a big one for us.

**Q. Ted, obviously your actions speak louder than words. But if you put it into words, what statement do you want to make about this signing and what it means**

**for the relevancy to the general sports fan in Houston?**

TED SEGAL: It's a very, very significant signing. You mentioned actions speak louder than words. This city is familiar with Hector before. Only a year ago, in the Gold Cup, in a full NRG Stadium, did he score the game-winning goal. And the whole stadium, much larger than this one, actually, erupted.

And in that case video speaks louder than words. And so his significance is already known to a large segment of our community, our soccer fans and our city. And I think we're expecting to continue that level of quality and build off of that level of quality for this year and many years beyond.

**Q. You're not going to tell us where he's going to play yet, hopefully in the future, but for now, what are your expectations for Hector these first months and thinking about planning ahead of the World Cup, because you're going to miss him a few times for the national team?**

PAULO NAGAMURA: We knew that, there's international breaks, of course. But I think first and foremost, like Pat mentioned, his leadership skills, I think, are going to be huge for our group.

We have pretty much a very, I would say, big, young group in our squad. So I think he'll be a huge help in terms of mentoring players and helping with the leadership skills he has.

But I can just list a lot of little things he will be huge in our group. We're looking forward to having him on our field and start working.

**Q. You are one of the biggest Mexican (indiscernible) in Europe. Madrid, FC Porto, and I know that other teams, signature when Dynamo came, what would you say was the attraction to this program, and how difficult or easy was it for you to make up your mind to come to Houston?**

[Spanish].

HECTOR HERRERA: With the administration, everyone at the table convinced me, because of the project they had for this team, and I believe it's a perfect fit for what I wanted for me and for my family.

**Q. I've been around MLS for a long time -- sometimes the press, especially the Hispanic-speaking press, they underestimate the MLS. They question the players that come from overseas, they come here basically to retire, or because they're not at the best level to be**

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**overseas. What does the MLS have to do finally to let the Latin America media know it's taken seriously, that it's competitive, that a player doesn't come here to retire?**

PAT ONSTAD: I think there's a few kind of parts to that. I think the big one is that we've taken the first step in MLS was to win Concacaf Champions League. That was a massive step for us to prove that we could compete with Liga MX. That was the first step.

But it's interesting because I think you see different profiles that are coming to the league, whether it's a Gareth Bale or Chiellini.

So there's some other guys coming. But I think for us, it's funny, when we were talking about Hector, the game I'm going to watch and see him and play in two games, is he's playing in the quarterfinal of the Champions League and he's starting against Manchester United.

So I think the level of player that is being attracted by this club but also this league is top level now. We're not getting guys who are 37, 38, although Chiellini is obviously going against that, but is also probably one of the best defenders in the game.

But I think this is what we're trying to do with this league. And certainly from our club, we're trying to attract the best players we possibly can here to try to be successful.

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