

MLS marks 30th year with new team, more games, more Messi

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
AP SOCCER WRITER

While the main attraction is still Lionel Messi, it's perhaps fitting that for Major League Soccer's 30th season the league is welcoming its 30th team.

Led by winger Hirving "Chucky" Lozano, San Diego FC is among the teams to watch this year, along with the expansion club's first opponent, the defending MLS champion LA Galaxy. And, of course, Inter Miami.

Miami has sold out its season tickets as fans clamor to get an in-person look at Messi and fellow former Barcelona standouts Jordi Alba, Luis Suarez and Sergio Busquets.

Miami will be looking to again finish atop the Eastern Conference and repeat as Supporters Shield winners. Messi, the league's reigning MVP, should once more be a top candidate. But the Herons' 2024 season was marred when they were surprisingly eliminated by Atlanta in the first round of the playoffs.

"We had broken the points record, but football is not about awards, it's about what you do on the field," Suarez said at the league's media day. "We were the best team the entire regular season, we needed to show that in that playoff game against Atlanta, and we didn't. We have to learn from that and be reminded that nobody gives you anything. It was very difficult to achieve what we did all season, but we are left with a bittersweet feeling."

LAFC, the West's top seed, fell in the conference semifinals to the Seattle Sounders.

The Galaxy won their sixth overall MLS Cup title last season with a 2-1 victory over the New York Red Bulls, a dramatic turnaround for a team that finished 26th in the league the year before. But the Galaxy embark on this season without dynamic midfielder Riqui Puig, who injured his ACL in the playoffs.

The addition of the San Diego balances MLS at 15 teams per conference. The league's newest club is owned by billionaire Mohamed Mansour and the Sycuan Tribe, the first Native American tribe in the country to have an ownership stake in a professional soccer team. The team's first season kicks off on Sunday.

TURNOVER AT THE TOP

There are 12 coaches embarking on their first full seasons in 2025. Notable among them is Gregg Berhalter, the former U.S. men's national team coach who is now leading the Chicago Fire.

In perhaps one of the most shocking coaching moves in the offseason, the Philadelphia Union dismissed Jim Curtin, a two-time MLS coach of the year who had spent 11 seasons with the team. He was replaced by Bradley Carnell, a former St. Louis coach.

Inter Miami's coach, Geraldo "Tata" Martino, departed the club in November for personal reasons after one season. He was replaced in days by former Argentina great Javier Mascherano, another Messi teammate at Barcelona.

And finally, the San Jose Earthquakes brought in the league's all-time winningest coach, Bruce Arena, after the club finished last in the standings with only six wins.

COMING AND GOING

MLS clubs were bullish in scooping up international talent in the offseason. Some of the notable additions were striker Emmanuel Latte Lath, who joined Atlan-



Mike Carlson/Associated Press photo

Lionel Messi of Inter Miami FC acknowledges a save during the second half of a preseason MLS soccer match against Orlando City on Feb. 14 in Tampa, Fla.

ta from Middlesbrough, and Kevin Denkey, who arrived in Cincinnati from Cercle Brugge.

Perhaps the biggest departure was Cucho

Hernandez, who left the Columbus Crew for Spanish club Real Betis. Austin FC sent midfielder Sebastián Drussi to Argentine team River

Plate for a reported \$10 million fee. Sporting KC transferred Alan Pulido to Mexican club Chivas Guadalajara.

Within the league, the Sounders scored Jesus Ferreira from FC Dallas, while Dallas got Luciano Acosta from FC Cincinnati. The Timbers sent Brazilian midfielder Evander to Cincinnati, while Houston picked up Jack McGlynn from Philadelphia.

BUSY SEASON

It will be a busy season for MLS teams, with a number of tournaments in addition to the regular season.

Miami and the Sounders will get international attention as the league's two participants in the FIFA Club World Cup. The event for an expanded field of 32 international clubs will be played across the United States from at June 14 to July 13.

The league will take a bit of a break during the

tournament. At the same time, some players players will be with their national teams for the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

There's also the U.S. Open Cup, the Leagues Cup with teams from both MLS and Liga MX, and the CONCACAF Champions Cup. MLS teams can only participate in two tournaments to help alleviate the load on the players.

BUILDING TOWARD THE WORLD CUP

The United States, Mexico and Canada will co-host the 2026 World Cup and MLS is hoping to capitalize as soccer's biggest tournament looms.

The addition of Messi has already brought new attention to MLS. Attendance at games last season hit a league record 12.1 million, second only to the English Premier League. Five MLS teams are now valued at \$1 billion each.

MLS is in the third year of a media deal with Apple

TV, but there have been concerns about audience growth on the streaming service. Viewership numbers have not been made available.

This year Apple TV's MLS Season Pass is available to Comcast and DirecTV subscribers — still at a fee but accessed via those platforms. Season Pass is also free for a season to T-Mobile phone service customers.

"Over the next two years, North America will be the epicenter of global soccer, our league, our clubs, our players and our fans are all committed to working together on this path to the world's biggest sporting event," Commissioner Don Garber said during his state-of-the-league address in December. "We have an unbelievable opportunity to create this great trajectory and create even more momentum as we continue to grow our sport and our league for the years to come."

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Advertisement for Bid

The Addington Field Airport Board is seeking rebids for construction of an addition and renovation to the Addington Field Airport Terminal, which is located at 1828 Kitty Hawk Drive, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, 42701. This is a Re-bid of the same project bid in July 2024 with revisions. There will not be a pre-bid meeting. Plans and Specifications can be obtained by contacting High-Note at 11750 Diode Court, Louisville, KY 40299 (502-895-1530) or by downloading electronically from the secure FTP site as follows:

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*Note: user and password are case sensitive. Please enter exactly as they appear.

Bids must be submitted no later than 2:00pm on the 14th day of March, 2025 at Addington Field Airport Terminal, 1828 Kitty Hawk Drive, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, 42701 where they will be opened and read. Any questions or need for clarification during the bidding process should be submitted to Jennifer Nix with Bayus Design Works via email only at: jennifer@bayusdesign.com. The winning bidder will be the lowest qualified best bidder. The Board reserves the right to reject any and all bids.



LEGAL NOTICE

ANNEXING PROPERTY LOCATED AT NORTHWEST CORNER OF GAITHER STATION ROAD AND SOUTH RING ROAD
ORDINANCE #05-2025
SUMMARY

This Ordinance annexes property along Gaither Station Road and South Ring Road and portions of the right-of-way of Leitchfield Road and Gaither Station Road owned by the City of Elizabethtown, Elizabethtown Hardin County Industrial Foundation, Big Four Star Properties, LLC, Hardin County Government, and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet totaling approximately 153.944 acres. The property will be zoned General Industrial (I-1) and Suburban Residential, limited (R-1) upon annexation based on the Planning Commission recommendation. The owners gave written consent to the annexation. The City of Elizabethtown gave the required 45-day notice to Hardin County.

Please find the full Ordinance on the website: www.elizabethtownky.org or by contacting the City Clerk: jessica.graham@elizabethtownky.gov

Summary prepared by:
/s/ Ken M. Howard

Ken M. Howard
City Attorney

MAP



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