



2021

MEDIA GUIDE



@USLCHAMPIONSHIP



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2021 ALIGNMENT

The USL Championship's 10th anniversary season will see the league's 35 teams divided into two conferences, with the clubs set to embark on a 34-game regular-season schedule that will be conducted over 33 weeks and open on the weekend of March 6-8, 2021.

There is one new arrival in each conference, with Miami FC joining the Eastern Conference and San Diego Loyal SC joining the Western Conference.

2021 CONFERENCE ALIGNMENT

WESTERN CONFERENCE

MOUNTAIN DIVISION

Austin Bold FC
Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC
El Paso Locomotive FC
New Mexico United
Real Monarchs SLC
Rio Grande Valley FC
San Antonio FC

PACIFIC DIVISION

LA Galaxy II
Las Vegas Lights FC
Oakland Roots SC
Orange County SC
Phoenix Rising FC
Sacramento Republic FC
San Diego Loyal SC
Tacoma Defiance

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC DIVISION

Charleston Battery
Charlotte Independence
Hartford Athletic
Loudoun United FC
Miami FC
New York Red Bulls II
Pittsburgh Riverhounds SC
Tampa Bay Rowdies

CENTRAL DIVISION

Atlanta United 2
Birmingham Legion FC
Indy Eleven
Louisville City FC
Memphis 901 FC
OKC Energy FC
Sporting Kansas City II
FC Tulsa

KEY DATES

April 24 – 2021 Season Kickoff
July 10-Aug. 1 – 2021 Concacaf Gold Cup
September 24 – USL Championship Roster Freeze
October 30 – Final day of regular season

SEASON STRUCTURE

Regular Season Structure

The 2021 USL Championship season will see every team play 32 regular season contests, facing every team in its division four times, twice at home and twice away. The remaining games will be made up of non-division contests against teams from the remaining three divisions.

2021 USL Championship Playoffs

The top four teams from each division in the regular season will advance into a regionalized single-elimination bracket. The top two clubs in each of the Atlantic, Central, Mountain and Pacific Divisions will earn hosting rights in the Eastern and Western Conference Quarterfinals, regardless of total points.

Division winners will be matched with the fourth-place team, while second-placed teams will meet third-placed teams from the opposing division in the Conference Quarterfinals, matching up teams from the Atlantic Division and Central Division in the Eastern Conference and the Mountain and Pacific Division in the Western Conference.

Following the Conference Quarterfinals round, home advantage will be determined by total points earned, regardless of division rank, for the remainder of the postseason.

The Championship season will conclude with the USL Championship Final on Sunday, November 28 with kickoff set for 8:30 p.m. ET on ESPN or ESPN 2 and ESPN Deportes.





ATLANTA UNITED 2

1 AMB Dr NW,
Atlanta, GA 30313
www.atlutd.com/2
P: (470) 341-1500

TEAM OUTLOOK

There were some memorable games and moments for Atlanta United 2 during the 2020 Championship season, including the emergence of Jackson Conway as a young forward to watch for the future, but in a group featuring the eventual Eastern Conference Title winner Tampa Bay Rowdies and perennial playoff side the Charleston Battery, the side wasn't able to string together enough results to seriously challenge for the postseason.

There are changes for 2021, first on the sideline where former Head Coach Stephen Glass accepted the same position at the Scottish Premiership's Aberdeen FC, but interestingly in the club's recruitment of new arrivals. Incoming are loanees including goalkeeper Rocco Rios Novo from Argentine club Lanus, and Manchester United prospect Connor Stanley, which offers some intriguing potential to the side.

Another new arrival is midfielder Robbie Mertz, who performed well for Pittsburgh Riverhounds SC for the past two seasons and will be hoping to grasp his opportunity in Atlanta's system. The challenge as always will be to find a consistent level, but there is talent here to take in as the season progresses.



HEAD COACH



Tony Annan

CONTACTS

OWNER
Arthur Blank

PRESIDENT
Darren Eales

**VICE PRESIDENT OF
BUSINESS OPERATIONS**
Catie Griggs

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Chris Winkler

COMMUNITY RELATIONS MANGER
Marissa Ahrens

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
Johannes Schneider

PRIMARY CONTACT
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
Chris Raimondi
craimondi@atlutd.com
(678) 491-6321

KEY PLAYERS



Rocco Rios Novo
Goalkeeper

Atlanta fans have already had the chance to see Argentine U-20 international Rocco Rios Novo in action, with the 18-year-old having been called on as an emergency call-up to the club's First Team in the Concacaf Champions League where he rose to the occasion in helping the side advance against Costa Rica's Alajuelense. If Rios Novo lives up to the potential he flashed there, he could be one of the high-profile young players in the Championship this season.



Robbie Mertz
Midfielder

The Pittsburgh native bid adieu to his hometown Riverhounds SC this offseason after a second pro campaign that saw him record five goals and four assists while appearing in all 17 games. Mertz should be a central piece for Atlanta this year and will be hoping for similar productivity that could put him on the radar for a First Team contract with United.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/24/2021	LOU	V	ATL
05/01/2021	OKC	V	ATL
05/16/2021	OKC	V	ATL
05/19/2021	ATL	V	TUL
05/23/2021	ATL	V	MEM
05/30/2021	ATL	V	BHM
06/06/2021	ATL	V	LOU
06/09/2021	ATL	V	SKC
06/16/2021	MEM	V	ATL
06/27/2021	ATL	V	OKC
06/30/2021	BHM	V	ATL
07/03/2021	ATL	V	MEM
07/07/2021	ATL	V	IND
07/10/2021	ATL	V	SKC
07/17/2021	LOU	V	ATL
07/28/2021	ATL	V	TUL
07/31/2021	BHM	V	ATL
08/08/2021	ATL	V	IND
08/11/2021	ATL	V	OKC
08/14/2021	SKC	V	ATL
08/22/2021	PIT	V	ATL
08/28/2021	TUL	V	ATL
09/04/2021	IND	V	ATL
09/15/2021	ATL	V	CHS
09/18/2021	ATL	V	TBR
09/22/2021	ATL	V	BHM
09/25/2021	RGV	V	ATL
09/29/2021	ATL	V	LOU
10/02/2021	IND	V	ATL
10/13/2021	SKC	V	ATL
10/16/2021	MEM	V	ATL
10/20/2021	TUL	V	ATL

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AUSTIN BOLD FC

9201 Circuit of the Americas Blvd,
Austin, TX 78617
www.austinboldfc.com
P: (512) 872-8700

TEAM OUTLOOK

Austin Bold FC was in the middle of the race for the postseason with three games to go, but came up short as it could only muster four points from its remaining outings while FC Tulsa swept to three consecutive victories to earn the upper hand and second place in Group D. Now the third-year club will be looking to rebound and has reloaded with some notable new arrivals in its bid for a return to the playoffs.

Leading the way is a substantial emphasis on attack with 2016 Championship Golden Boot-winner and MVP Sean Okoli arriving from Orange County SC. He's joined by Stefano Pinho, whose record includes 38 goals in 79 appearances previously in the American lower divisions, and the Jamaican duo of Jason Johnson and Omar Gordon. The club has also looked to add experience defensively with Kofi Sarkodie returning to action in addition to the re-signing of Jermaine Taylor and Amobi Okugo.

That experience, which also includes influential midfielder Xavier Baez, is added to by some interesting young talent including New York City FC loanee Juan Torres and local product Beto Avila. If it all comes together as planned, Head Coach Marcelo Serrano's side should be entertaining, and competitive.



HEAD COACH



Marcelo Serrano

CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN
Bobby Epstein

ACTING GENERAL MANAGER
Rick Abbot

DIRECTOR OF GAME DAY OPERATIONS
Ric Granryd

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF GAME DAY OPERATIONS
Catalina Berry

SALES & TICKETING
Quinn Branson

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS AND SALES
Ane McPike

PRIMARY CONTACT
DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGER
Julien Llerena
julien.llerena@austinboldfc.com
(352) 346-3920

KEY PLAYERS



Amobi Okugo
Defender

With 50 appearances across Bold FC’s first two seasons, Amobi Okugo has been one of the mainstays that has helped guide its success. The 30-year-old continued to be consistent in either the center of defense or midfield during the 2020 season, completing 82.8 percent of his passes overall and winning 71.4 percent of tackles, in addition to 26 interceptions in 16 games. Maintaining that level while helping raise the game of others around him should help keep Austin in the think of the postseason race once again.



Sean Okoli
Forward

Returning from a stint overseas with Orange County last season, Sean Okoli put together a solid season with seven goals in 15 games, averaging a goal just over every other game (191 Mins/Goal). He’ll be hoping to improve on that scoring rate as he lands in Austin, and with the other attacking pieces around him there could be not only opportunities, but space to work in the final third for the powerful striker to work.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/15/2021	NM	V	ATX
05/21/2021	SLC	V	ATX
05/26/2021	ATX	V	SLC
05/30/2021	ATX	V	TAC
06/03/2021	ATX	V	ELP
06/06/2021	PIT	V	ATX
06/12/2021	NM	V	ATX
06/16/2021	RGV	V	ATX
06/19/2021	BHM	V	ATX
06/22/2021	ATX	V	COS
06/26/2021	OAK	V	ATX
07/03/2021	SA	V	ATX
07/10/2021	ATX	V	RGV
07/18/2021	ATX	V	SLC
07/24/2021	RGV	V	ATX
07/31/2021	ATX	V	SA
08/04/2021	ATX	V	COS
08/07/2021	ELP	V	ATX
08/14/2021	ATX	V	MIA
08/17/2021	ATX	V	RGV
08/22/2021	ATX	V	NM
08/28/2021	COS	V	ATX
09/07/2021	ATX	V	SA
09/10/2021	ATX	V	NM
09/18/2021	TUL	V	ATX
09/22/2021	ATX	V	ELP
09/25/2021	COS	V	ATX
10/10/2021	ATX	V	OKC
10/16/2021	SLC	V	ATX
10/20/2021	ELP	V	ATX
10/23/2021	SA	V	ATX
10/30/2021	ATX	V	CLT

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BIRMINGHAM LEGION FC

2213 1st Ave. S,
Birmingham, AL 35233
www.bhmlegion.com
P: (205) 600-4696

TEAM OUTLOOK

Birmingham Legion FC was cruising to first place in Group G and the first home playoff game in the club's short history in 2020, but a late-season dip in form that saw it win only once in its final six regular season games sent the side on the road and a second consecutive exit in the Eastern Conference Quarterfinals.

To have earned back-to-back postseason appearances in the club's first two years in the professional ranks is no mean feat, though, and Legion FC appears set for more success this year after retaining much of its key talent and adding some notable names for the new season. At the top of the incoming list is 2020 Championship Golden Boot-winner Junior Flemmings, and he's joined by J.J. Williams – now signed to a permanent deal after spending time on loan with Legion FC on loan previously.

That duo joins Neco Brett, who has notched 41 goals over the past three seasons across the regular season and playoffs, while Legion FC also has 2020 Championship All-League selection Bruno Lapa back in the fold after his outstanding rookie season. Add in the defensive pedigree brought by Phaniel Kavita and Ryan James, and there should be reason for optimism at BBVA Field once again.



HEAD COACH



Tom Soehn

CONTACTS

PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER
Jay Heaps

VP OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS
Morgan Copes

VP OF SALES & SERVICE
Michael Emert

DIGITAL MEDIA COORDINATOR
Massimo Nuzzo

**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE
PARTNERSHIPS**
Brandon Conner

**FRONT OFFICE OPERATIONS
COORDINATOR**
Molly Olsofka

PRIMARY CONTACT
**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING &
COMMUNICATIONS**
Clayton Humphries
chumphries@bhmlegion.com
(334) 740-9986

KEY PLAYERS



Bruno Lapa
Midfielder

Bruno Lapa's rookie season started with a bang, and barely slowed down the rest of the way. His eight goals and five assists earned the Brazilian Championship All-League honors as he proved one of the best newcomer stories in the league throughout 2020. With a new multi-year contract extension in hand, there will be plenty of eyes on the Wake Forest University product – who also featured in USL League Two for the North Carolina Fusion – as he enters his second campaign.



Neco Brett
Forward

The abbreviated season meant Neco Brett couldn't return his third consecutive season of double-digit goals as he arrived at Legion FC, but a team-high nine goals at a strike rate of 125.8 minutes per goal were exactly the return Birmingham was hoping for when they brought the Jamaican aboard last offseason. Now Brett will have more attacking weapons around him, which could see his creativity around the penalty area get a bigger chance to shine. In addition to his 41 goals, the 29-year-old has also notched 16 assists in the past three seasons, making him a valuable contributor.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	BHM	V	IND
05/08/2021	LOU	V	BHM
05/15/2021	BHM	V	MEM
05/22/2021	SA	V	BHM
05/26/2021	BHM	V	OKC
05/30/2021	ATL	V	BHM
06/06/2021	BHM	V	TUL
06/12/2021	OKC	V	BHM
06/16/2021	LOU	V	BHM
06/19/2021	BHM	V	ATX
06/23/2021	MIA	V	BHM
06/30/2021	BHM	V	ATL
07/03/2021	IND	V	BHM
07/10/2021	BHM	V	MEM
07/18/2021	SKC	V	BHM
07/24/2021	IND	V	BHM
07/31/2021	BHM	V	ATL
08/07/2021	TUL	V	BHM
08/11/2021	BHM	V	SKC
08/14/2021	MEM	V	BHM
08/22/2021	BHM	V	TUL
08/28/2021	BHM	V	LOU
09/04/2021	MEM	V	BHM
09/11/2021	TUL	V	BHM
09/18/2021	BHM	V	OKC
09/22/2021	ATL	V	BHM
09/26/2021	BHM	V	CLT
10/01/2021	SKC	V	BHM
10/10/2021	BHM	V	IND
10/17/2021	OKC	V	BHM
10/24/2021	BHM	V	SKC
10/30/2021	BHM	V	LOU

 /bhmlegion

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CHARLESTON BATTERY

85 Patriots Point Rd,
Mt Pleasant, SC 29464
www.charlestonbattery.com
P: (843) 971-4625

TEAM OUTLOOK

If you're a USL Championship fan – and if you're reading this, you definitely count – the three reliable things you can count on are death, taxes, and the Charleston Battery in the USL Championship Playoffs. Head Coach Mike Anhaeuser's side put together another stellar regular season in 2020 to maintain its record as the lone side to reach the postseason in every year of the Championship's history, and almost pipped the Rowdies for first place in Group H before being eliminated in the Eastern Conference Semifinals in a 1-0 defeat at Al Lang Stadium.

The Battery should be right back there again this season with the majority of their key players returning. The club boasts a strong spine up the middle of the field, with goalkeeper Joe Kuzminsky, defenders Leland Archer and AJ Paterson, midfielders Robbie Crawford and Zeiko Lewis and forward Nicque Daley. New arrivals have been more limited this offseason, but Houston Dynamo loanee Erik McCue could be one to watch on the back line, as could 21-year-old Geobel Perez as he looks to continue the line of Cuban success stories in Charleston's colors.

Charleston's returning core, however, will give this side continued stability as it looks to make another postseason trip and challenge for its first title since 2012.



HEAD COACH



Mike Anhaeuser

CONTACTS

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Mike Kelleher

CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER
Scott Krenitski

OPERATIONS MANAGER
Wade Crutchfield

MARKETING MANAGER
Ben Clemens

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Ryan Knapp

**TICKET SALES AND BOX OFFICE
DIRECTOR**
Amanda Gorman

PRIMARY CONTACT
**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING &
COMMUNICATIONS**
Peter Boggeman
peter@charlestonbattery.com
(314) 809-6568

KEY PLAYERS



Zeiko Lewis
Forward

The impact made by Zeiko Lewis on the Battery’s fortunes over the past two seasons has been arguably the most significant to the club’s sustained success. The Bermuda international leads the club in both goals (13) and assists (7) in the regular season over that span and has produced some magical moments among them to keep Charleston’s attack ticking over. Re-signing the 26-year-old this offseason was an important piece of business for the club and stands to keep the Battery in good stead in the attacking third.



Leland Archer
Defender

The path for Leland Archer is one that’s been well trod before. The 25-year-old came to the Battery from the College of Charleston three seasons ago and was gradually worked into the lineup over his first two years. As it had in previous instances – see for example, Forrest Lasso – Year 3 proved the breakthrough for Archer at the club level as he became a staple in the Battery’s lineup and earned his first Championship All-League selection. Now a regular part of Trinidad & Tobago’s National Team, the upcoming year could see Archer take another big step forward.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/07/2021	NY	V	CHS
05/14/2021	CHS	V	CLT
05/23/2021	CHS	V	NY
06/04/2021	CHS	V	LA
06/08/2021	LDN	V	CHS
06/12/2021	CHS	V	NY
06/18/2021	CHS	V	MIA
06/23/2021	CLT	V	CHS
06/26/2021	CHS	V	LDN
07/02/2021	TBR	V	CHS
07/07/2021	CHS	V	PIT
07/12/2021	NM	V	CHS
07/17/2020	CHS	V	HFD
07/23/2021	CHS	V	CLT
07/27/2021	LDN	V	CHS
08/01/2021	MIA	V	CHS
08/06/2021	CHS	V	PIT
08/13/2021	CHS	V	LDN
08/17/2021	HFD	V	CHS
08/20/2021	NY	V	CHS
08/28/2021	CHS	V	OC
09/01/2021	HFD	V	CHS
09/07/2021	CHS	V	TBR
09/15/2021	ATL	V	CHS
09/18/2021	MIA	V	CHS
09/25/2021	PIT	V	CHS
10/02/2021	CHS	V	TBR
10/07/2021	TBR	V	CHS
10/10/2021	CHS	V	HFD
10/16/2021	CLT	V	CHS
10/23/2021	PIT	V	CHS
10/30/2021	CHS	V	MIA

f /charlestonbattery

🐦 @Chas_Battery

📷 @Chas_Battery



CHARLOTTE INDEPENDENCE

1523 Elizabeth Ave. Suite 120,
Charlotte, NC 28204
www.charlotteindependence.com
P: (704) 206-1515

TEAM OUTLOOK

The Charlotte Independence's return to the USL Championship Playoffs after a two-season absence – and earning their first home playoff game in the process – saw a welcome return to form for numerous players at the club. Now, as the side moves into its new 10,000-seat home at Memorial Stadium, finding a way to build on that to bigger and better things, like for example that elusive first playoff win, is going to be the goal in 2021.

The Independence will have a good number of familiar faces back. Most notably, goalkeeper Brandon Miller is set for his fourth season with his hometown club after a stellar campaign that saw him earn Championship All-League honors for the second time in 2020. Also back are defender Hugh Roberts, who played every minute of the season, and playmaker Enzo Martinez, both of whom will be looked at for major minutes and contributions at their respective ends of the field.

Martinez's production in particular could need to increase following the departure of 2020 leading scorer – and Championship all-time leading scorer – Dane Kelly overseas, but the reinforcements the Independence have added have some interesting pedigrees. To aid the attack, there's Irvin Parra, most recently of San Diego Loyal SC, and in defense Colombian defender Kevin Riascos could make a great partner for Roberts. If it all comes together, something good could be brewing here.



HEAD COACH



Mike Jeffries

CONTACTS

CEO & MANAGING PARTNER
Jim McPhillamy

COO & PRESIDENT
Tim Schuldt

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
Rich Posipanko

DEVELOPMENT AMBASSADOR
Matt Spear

PRIMARY CONTACT
**DIGITAL MARKETING &
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER**
Ashley Osiecki
marcom@queencitysc.com
(252) 675-2291

KEY PLAYERS



Brandon Miller

Goalkeeper

The road had been an interesting one for Brandon Miller after he was awarded the 2015 Championship Goalkeeper of the Year crown for the Rochester Rhinos, but last season the veteran showed he was back among the best in the Championship with a 73.5 save percentage on 61 saves, the most of any goalkeeper in the regular season. If Miller can maintain that level, the Independence will be in the middle of the playoff race once again.



Irvin Parra

Forward

It's no small thing to try and fill the shoes of the Championship's all-time leading scorer, but that's going to be the task for Irvin Parra as he joins the Independence this season. The California native brings a different style of game than Dane Kelly did to Charlotte, but there's no refuting Parra's effectiveness with two of his three seasons in the league having seen him record double-digit goals. The Independence will be hoping for more of that this season.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	TBR	V	CLT
05/14/2021	CHS	V	CLT
05/22/2021	PIT	V	CLT
05/29/2021	MIA	V	CLT
06/05/2021	CLT	V	TBR
06/13/2021	CLT	V	HFD
06/16/2021	NY	V	CLT
06/23/2021	CLT	V	CHS
06/26/2021	MIA	V	CLT
07/03/2021	PIT	V	CLT
07/07/2021	CLT	V	NY
07/10/2021	CLT	V	PHX
07/17/2021	CLT	V	NY
07/23/2021	CHS	V	CLT
07/31/2021	CLT	V	TBR
08/06/2021	LDN	V	CLT
08/14/2021	CLT	V	PIT
08/21/2021	CLT	V	COS
08/28/2021	TBR	V	CLT
09/04/2021	CLT	V	MIA
09/08/2021	LDN	V	CLT
09/11/2021	CLT	V	HFD
09/18/2021	CLT	V	PIT
09/22/2021	CLT	V	MIA
09/26/2021	BHM	V	CLT
09/30/2021	HFD	V	CLT
10/03/2021	CLT	V	LDN
10/08/2021	NY	V	CLT
10/16/2021	CLT	V	CHS
10/22/2021	HFD	V	CLT
10/27/2021	CLT	V	LDN
10/30/2021	ATX	V	CLT

 /cltindependence

 @Independence

 @cltindependence



COLORADO SPRINGS SWITCHBACKS FC

234 N. Tejon St,
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
www.switchbackscf.com
P: (719) 368-8480

TEAM OUTLOOK

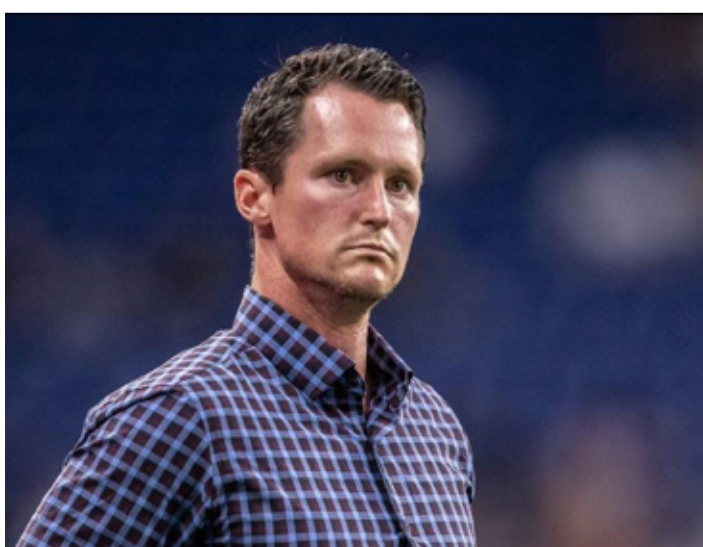
It's the start of a new era at Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC, which this year moves into its new 8,000-seat stadium in the city's downtown. Part of the City for Champions project in Colorado Springs, the \$35-million venue will be home to a side looking to turn the corner under new Head Coach Brendan Burke, who has brought with him plenty of new faces to the club.

Burke has achieved success in the Championship before with the Philadelphia Union II, and will now get the chance to see how far he can take a Switchbacks side that is ready to make its first postseason appearance since the 2016 season. He'll have veteran help, too, with former U.S. Men's National Team player Jose Francisco Torres among the Switchbacks' offseason arrivals along with players Burke is previously familiar like former Union II forward Michee Ngalina and defender Jimmy Ockford, who played for Burke prior to joining the professional ranks in USL League Two.

There are still familiar faces as well. Jordan Burt returns as the longest-tenured member of the organization on the field, while Jamaican midfielder Andre Lewis is also set for the new campaign. There are some intriguing prospects arriving on loan from the Colorado Rapids, too, with Abraham Rodriguez set to battle veteran Sean Melvin for the starting position in goal. It might be asking a quick turnaround to reach the playoffs, but the Switchbacks are certainly ready for what 2021 is going to bring.



HEAD COACH



Brendan Burke

CONTACTS

OWNER
Martin Ragain

PRESIDENT
Nick Ragain

EXECUTIVE VP
Nick Ragain

**PROMOTIONS & MEDIA CONTENT
MANAGER**
Dilland Wavra

DIRECTOR OF TICKETING
Josh Middleton

DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS
Derek Hanson

PRIMARY CONTACT
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Cody Costra
ccostra@switchbackscf.com
(719) 244-6965

KEY PLAYERS



Michee Ngalina
Forward

It's been three seasons since Kevauhn Frater recorded just the third double-digit goal season in Switchbacks history, a signifier of the problems Colorado Springs has had in finding the back of the net consistently in its history. 21-year-old Michee Ngalina could be the person to make that breakthrough this season, with the DR Congo forward having notched 13 goals in 46 prior appearances as a teenager with the Philadelphia Union II. If Ngalina can take the next step forward in his progression, the Switchbacks will have a central scorer it can build its attack around.



Jose Francisco Torres
Midfielder

One of the more eyebrow-raising signings of the offseason, Jose Francisco Torres' arrival in Colorado Springs after sitting out the 2020 season was a statement of where the Switchbacks are hoping to go in their new home. Torres made 26 appearances for the United States between 2008 and 2013, and has made more than 250 appearances in Liga MX as well. The question will be how much the 33-year-old has in his tank at this point of his career.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	SA	V	COS
05/14/2021	SKC	V	COS
05/21/2021	COS	V	NM
06/05/2021	COS	V	SA
06/12/2021	ELP	V	COS
06/16/2021	COS	V	TAC
06/22/2021	ATX	V	COS
06/25/2021	COS	V	NM
07/01/2021	COS	V	OC
07/04/2021	COS	V	SLC
07/09/2021	NM	V	COS
07/17/2021	COS	V	SA
07/23/2021	COS	V	LOU
07/31/2021	LDN	V	COS
08/04/2021	ATX	V	COS
08/07/2021	COS	V	HFD
08/10/2021	MEM	V	COS
08/14/2021	RGV	V	COS
08/21/2021	CLT	V	COS
08/28/2021	COS	V	ATX
09/04/2021	NM	V	COS
09/08/2021	COS	V	SLC
09/11/2021	COS	V	RGV
09/15/2021	COS	V	ELP
09/18/2021	RGV	V	COS
09/25/2021	COS	V	ATX
10/02/2021	COS	V	ELP
10/08/2021	SLC	V	COS
10/13/2021	ELP	V	COS
10/16/2021	COS	V	RGV
10/22/2021	SLC	V	COS
10/30/2021	SA	V	COS

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EL PASO LOCOMOTIVES FC

123 W Mills, Suite 550,
El Paso, TX 79901
www.eplocomotivefc.com
P: (915) 235-4625

TEAM OUTLOOK

With back-to-back Western Conference Final appearances in the club's first two seasons, there has been plenty to admire about the way El Paso Locomotive FC has performed under Head Coach Mark Lowry, where the team's ability to produce results when it needs them most has quickly vaulted it into the top tier of the Championship's title contenders.

What's arguably as notable about Locomotive FC as its success is the feeling that the team is very much bigger than the sum of its parts. Despite the club's impressive results, no El Paso player has been selected to the Championship's All-League Team so far in its short history, but the quality that permeates the side has been visible in players like goalkeeper Logan Ketterer, defender Mechack Jerome, midfielders Yuma and Nick Ross, utility player Bryam Rebellon, and playmaker Dylan Mares, who caught the eye in his first season at the club.

That group has been supplemented by some intriguing attacking options this offseason, including the arrival of Argentine forward Luis Solignac, who notched eight goals in the Championship last season for San Antonio FC. Aidan Apodaca and Jose Aguinaga will also be new arrivals to watch as Locomotive FC tries to claim its first silverware in club history this season.



HEAD COACH



Mark Lowry

CONTACTS

PRESIDENT
Alan Ledford

**GENERAL MANAGER,
BUSINESS OPERATIONS**
Andrew Forrest

**DIRECTOR, CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS
& SUITES**
Becky Lee

**SENIOR DIRECTOR, TICKET SALES &
SERVICE**
Nick Seckerson

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Derick Fox

**SENIOR DIRECTOR, FINANCE &
ADMINISTRATION**
Pamela De La O

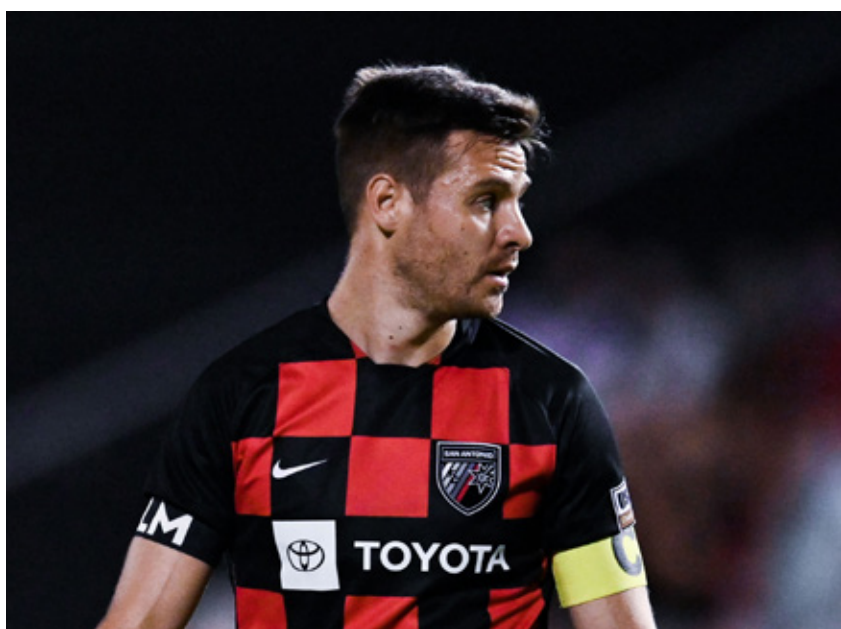
PRIMARY CONTACT
**DIRECTOR, MARKETING
& COMMUNICATIONS**
Sarah Nollner
snollner@eplocomotivefc.com
(502) 741-9549

KEY PLAYERS



Dylan Mares
Midfielder

Reunited with Head Coach Mark Lowry at Locomotive FC, Dylan Mares became the focal point of El Paso's attack as his creativity in the final third helped drive the club's attack. Mares ranked seventh in the Championship with 2.45 Expected Assists according to American Soccer Analysis, ranked third in the regular season with 38 Key Passes and tied for first with league MVP Solomon Asante with nine Big Chances Created. Maintaining that standard could bring bigger numbers than the four goals and four assists Mares notched in 16 games last campaign.



Luis Solignac
Forward

There was a question of how quickly Luis Solignac would be able to get back up to speed, leading San Antonio FC's attack after taking 2019 to recover from injuries. Those concerns proved unfounded as the Argentine recorded eight goals in the regular season – including tying the Championship's record for the fastest goal in league history – as he helped SAFC finish top of Group D. El Paso will be hoping for more of the same this season, which could help lift the club's attack to new heights after finishing below league average with a 14.8 shot conversion rate in 2020.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/08/2021	ELP	V	NM
05/22/2021	ELP	V	RGV
05/30/2021	SKC	V	ELP
06/03/2021	ATX	V	ELP
06/09/2021	ELP	V	IND
06/12/2021	ELP	V	COS
06/18/2021	SLC	V	ELP
06/30/2021	RGV	V	ELP
07/03/2021	ELP	V	NM
07/09/2021	SLC	V	ELP
07/17/2021	ELP	V	LV
07/24/2021	NM	V	ELP
07/28/2021	SA	V	ELP
07/31/2021	ELP	V	SLC
08/04/2021	ELP	V	SA
08/07/2021	ELP	V	ATX
08/14/2021	NM	V	ELP
08/21/2021	ELP	V	RGV
08/28/2021	SA	V	ELP
09/03/2021	OC	V	ELP
09/11/2021	ELP	V	SAC
09/15/2021	COS	V	ELP
09/22/2021	ATX	V	ELP
09/29/2021	ELP	V	SLC
10/02/2021	COS	V	ELP
10/06/2021	ELP	V	SA
10/09/2021	TUL	V	ELP
10/13/2021	ELP	V	COS
10/17/2021	LA	V	ELP
10/20/2021	ELP	V	ATX
10/24/2021	ELP	V	OKC
10/30/2021	RGV	V	ELP



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HARTFORD ATHLETIC

1010 Day Hill Road,
Windsor, CT 06095
www.hartfordathletic.com
P: (860) 298-9233

TEAM OUTLOOK

Season 2 produced a major step forward for Hartford Athletic as it not only reached the USL Championship Playoffs for the first time, but also hosted its first postseason game at Dillon Stadium. Movement this offseason, however, could mean a serious challenge to repeat that success after departures – most notable on the sideline with the return to England of former Head Coach Radhi Jaidi – left some big shoes to fill.

Jaidi has been replaced by former Chelsea and West Ham Academy Head Coach Harry Watling, who takes the reins with a professional First Team for the first time in his career. He has some key players from the success of 2020 back to work with, including playmaker Danny Barrera, and there are some interesting new arrivals including former Reno 1868 FC defender Thomas Janjigian, forwards Sebastian Elney and Bradford Jamieson IV, and Puerto Rico international Nicolas Cardona.

Those new arrivals – particularly Elney and Jamieson – will need to click given the departure of Ever Guzman – who led Hartford in goals a season ago – and Alex Dixon from the attack and midfielder Mads Jorgensen. How the new-look Athletic fare is going to be one of the big questions going into the new season.



HEAD COACH



Harry Watling

CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN
Bruce Mandell

CEO
Jim Burda

DIRECTOR, INTEGRATED SALES
James Warner

VP, REVENUE & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
Jordan Charlupski

VP, MARKETING & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
Joe Calafiore
jcalafiore@hartfordathletic.com

MANAGER, OPERATIONS AND MERCHANDISE
Morgan Kuehnle

PRIMARY CONTACT
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
MANAGER
John Ponziani
jponziani@hartfordathletic.com
(860) 707-0087

KEY PLAYERS



Danny Barrera
Midfielder

Scorer of one of 2020's most ridiculous goals (which earned more than 2.5 million views on Twitter alone), Danny Barrera's influence for the Athletic was a major factor in the club's success under Head Coach Radhi Jaidi. As one of the team's veterans, the 31-year-old is going to have to maintain that standard while getting used to his new surrounding cast in the attacking third. It's a big load to carry, but the 5-foot-6 Barrera is used to being the center of attention.



Bradford Jamieson IV
Forward

During six seasons with the LA Galaxy after signing as a Homegrown Player, Bradford Jamieson IV consistently showed glimpses of what he could bring to the field, but injuries – most notably concussion problems – waylaid his promising career that had seen him compete for the United States at the FIFA U-20 World Cup in 2015. Still only 24, Jamieson returns to the U.S. after spending 2020 with Danish club Vendsyssel FF looking to fire his new club to success.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/30/2021	NY	V	HFD
05/08/2021	MIA	V	HFD
05/15/2021	HFD	V	PIT
05/29/2021	HFD	V	SLC
06/05/2021	HFD	V	NY
06/13/2021	CLT	V	HFD
06/19/2021	HFD	V	LDN
06/26/2021	HFD	V	TBR
07/04/2021	LDN	V	HFD
07/10/2021	HFD	V	NY
07/13/2021	TBR	V	HFD
07/17/2020	CHS	V	HFD
07/24/2021	HFD	V	MIA
07/31/2021	PIT	V	HFD
08/04/2021	HFD	V	MIA
08/07/2021	COS	V	HFD
08/13/2021	TBR	V	HFD
08/17/2021	HFD	V	CHS
08/22/2021	MIA	V	HFD
08/28/2021	HFD	V	PIT
09/01/2021	HFD	V	CHS
09/04/2021	NY	V	HFD
09/07/2021	HFD	V	LOU
09/11/2021	CLT	V	HFD
09/18/2021	LDN	V	HFD
09/25/2021	HFD	V	TBR
09/30/2021	HFD	V	CLT
10/06/2021	NM	V	HFD
10/10/2021	CHS	V	HFD
10/15/2021	HFD	V	LDN
10/22/2021	HFD	V	CLT
10/30/2021	PIT	V	HFD

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 [@hfdathletic](https://www.instagram.com/hfdathletic)



INDY ELEVEN

47 S. Pennsylvania Street, Suite 611,
Indianapolis, IN 46204
www.indyeleven.com
P: (317) 685-1100

TEAM OUTLOOK

Having advanced to the Eastern Conference Final in 2019, Indy Eleven's flying start to the 2020 season that saw it win four consecutive games and five of its first six supplied the belief that the side could go one better last year. Instead, a second-half swoon that included three consecutive defeats to rival Louisville City FC and two to Sporting Kansas City II helped the postseason slide away after a final-game defeat to Saint Louis FC.

It's hard to figure where things went wrong, but regardless the Boys in Blue are going to have plenty of new faces for the 2021 season after a busy offseason in the transfer market. Both leading scorer Tyler Pasher (Houston Dynamo FC) and goalkeeper Evan Newton (Vancouver Whitecaps FC) were sold to Major League Soccer clubs, while potential newcomer Cal Jennings was sold to Los Angeles FC before playing a game for Indy after signing as a free agent earlier in the offseason.

That said, there's plenty of new talent coming on board, especially to replace Pasher's absence in attack. Fellow Canadian Jordan Hamilton has produced impressively in previous stints on loan in the Championship from Toronto FC, while Gordon Wild and Manuel Arteaga also look like solid options to join the returning Nick Moon. Another new arrival is defender AJ Cochran, who could team with Karl Ouimette and Neveal Hackshaw to make a solid back three. After last year's disappointment, things are set up for a positive rebound for Head Coach Martin Rennie's squad.



HEAD COACH



Martin Rennie

CONTACTS

OWNER
Ersal Ozdemir

PRESIDENT
Greg Stremelaw

VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGY & MARKETING
Josh Mason

SENIOR DIRECTOR, FINANCE
Erin Weesner

MANAGER, CONTENT COMMUNICATIONS
Trey Higdon

SENIOR DIRECTOR, CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS & BROADCASTING
Larry Linde

PRIMARY CONTACT
SENIOR DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING
John Koluder
jkoluder@indyeleven.com
(463) 212-5244

KEY PLAYERS



Jordan Hamilton
Forward

Looking to replace Tyler Pasher – who notched 21 goals over the past two seasons – Indy brought in another forward from north of the border who could have just as large an impact on their attacking fortunes. Jordan Hamilton never quite found a breakthrough in Major League Soccer, although he did notch 11 goals in more than 50 appearances between Toronto FC and Columbus Crew SC. While on loan in the Championship, though, he proved he’s capable at this level. Hamilton recorded eight goals in 10 games in the 2019 season, averaging a tally every 92.4 minutes. Indy will be hoping their new arrival is up there with the Golden Boot contenders.



Ayoze
Defender

The Spaniard may now be 35 years old, but his ageless ability to create and defend makes him an ideal fit as the left-sided wing back for Head Coach Martin Rennie’s system. Ayoze has notched 16 assists over Indy’s first three seasons in the Championship and has continued to shine so far in preseason ahead of the new campaign. Ayoze’s ability to create will certainly be welcome for Hamilton, Gordon Wild and Manuel Artega as they look to make their mark on Indy’s attack.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	BHM	V	IND
05/08/2021	IND	V	TUL
05/22/2021	IND	V	SKC
05/29/2021	LOU	V	IND
06/02/2021	IND	V	OKC
06/05/2021	IND	V	MEM
06/09/2021	ELP	V	IND
06/15/2021	IND	V	PIT
06/20/2021	SKC	V	IND
06/26/2021	LOU	V	IND
07/03/2021	IND	V	BHM
07/07/2021	ATL	V	IND
07/10/2021	OKC	V	IND
07/17/2021	IND	V	MEM
07/24/2021	IND	V	BHM
08/04/2021	TUL	V	IND
08/08/2021	ATL	V	IND
08/14/2021	IND	V	OKC
08/18/2021	LDN	V	IND
08/22/2021	SKC	V	IND
08/28/2021	IND	V	SLC
09/04/2021	IND	V	ATL
09/08/2021	TUL	V	IND
09/11/2021	IND	V	SKC
09/18/2021	IND	V	LOU
09/22/2021	MEM	V	IND
09/26/2021	OKC	V	IND
10/02/2021	IND	V	ATL
10/10/2021	BHM	V	IND
10/16/2021	IND	V	LOU
10/23/2021	IND	V	TUL
10/30/2021	MEM	V	IND

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LA GALAXY II

18400 Avalon Blvd. Suite 200,
Carson, CA 90746
www.lagalaxy.com/2
P: (877) 342-5299

TEAM OUTLOOK

It may have flown under the radar at the time, but the LA Galaxy II's progression to the USL Championship Playoffs for a second consecutive season showed the progression and nerve of the club's squad to hold off its more experienced counterparts in California over the course of the season. Clutch goals in matchups against San Diego Loyal SC and Orange County SC in the final month of the season saw Los Dos finish second in the group, and while their postseason journey wasn't long, it did show the promise many in the club have.

Leading the way in that category is defender Mauricio Cuevas, who having just turned 18 might be on the verge of making a big step forward in his career in the coming year. The full back posted impressive numbers on the back line, and while Los Dos' defense wasn't always reliable, it did also feature other notable youngsters like Jalen Neal – now signed to a Galaxy First Team contract this offseason.

The other breakthrough performer was in attack, with Augustine Williams scoring a career-best 13 goals to take Championship All-League First Team honors. More could come from the forward, who earned his first call-up to the Sierra Leone National Team this offseason, but there will also be a spotlight shining bright on two players in Alex Alcala and Miguel Avalos whom both currently are part of Mexico's Youth National Team program.



HEAD COACH



Junior Gonzalez

CONTACTS

OWNER
Philip F. Anschutz

PRESIDENT
Chris Klein

SENIOR MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS
Vicky Mercado

COORDINATOR, DIGITAL MEDIA
Christina Archer

SENIOR DIRECTOR, MARKETING & DIGITAL MEDIA
Chris Thomas

DIRECTOR, TICKET OPERATIONS
Hillary Hodding

PRIMARY CONTACT
SENIOR MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS
Chris Glidden
cglidden@lagalaxy.com
(561) 459-0025

KEY PLAYERS



Augustine Williams

Forward

Augustine Williams produced a breakout campaign with 13 goals to lead the Galaxy II to the postseason, claiming the Championship's Player of the Month award for the final month of the season after a torrid stretch in front of goal powered the side's success. That was also rewarded with Championship All-League First Team honors, and a first call-up by Sierra Leone, both achievements the 23-year-old will be eager to build on in his third season with Los Dos.



Alex Alcalá

Midfielder

When you've trained at both La Masia with FC Barcelona's Academy and with Manchester City, your first professional contract is going to turn heads both nationally and internationally. That's the resume that 15-year-old Alex Alcalá brings with him to the Galaxy II, and the expectations that come with it. If Europe is in the Mexico Youth International's future, there could be plenty of excitement to come in the upcoming season for Los Dos.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/30/2021	LA	V	SAC
05/05/2021	LA	V	LV
05/09/2021	LA	V	TAC
05/14/2021	SLC	V	LA
05/19/2021	LA	V	SKC
05/23/2021	LA	V	OAK
05/29/2021	OC	V	LA
06/04/2021	CHS	V	LA
06/12/2021	SD	V	LA
06/16/2021	LA	V	LV
06/23/2021	LA	V	OC
06/27/2021	TAC	V	LA
07/03/2021	PHX	V	LA
07/11/2021	LA	V	TAC
07/17/2021	PHX	V	LA
07/25/2021	LA	V	OAK
08/01/2021	LA	V	SD
08/07/2021	OC	V	LA
08/14/2021	OAK	V	LA
08/27/2021	LV	V	LA
09/01/2021	LA	V	SAC
09/05/2021	SD	V	LA
09/11/2021	LA	V	PHX
09/18/2021	OAK	V	LA
09/26/2021	SAC	V	LA
09/29/2021	LA	V	PHX
10/02/2021	LA	V	SD
10/08/2021	LV	V	LA
10/13/2021	SAC	V	LA
10/17/2021	LA	V	ELP
10/24/2021	TAC	V	LA
10/30/2021	LA	V	OC

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@lagalaxyII



LAS VEGAS LIGHTS FC

850 N. Las Vegas Blvd,
Las Vegas, NV, 89101
www.lasvegashlightsfc.com
P: (702) 728-4625

TEAM OUTLOOK

The biggest news of Las Vegas Lights FC's offseason was the club's partnership with Major League Soccer's Los Angeles FC, which saw LAFC install United States Men's National Team legend Steve Cherundolo as the club's new Head Coach and begin to build a roster that includes some intriguing names at Cashman Field this season.

Most attention, however, may be trained on Cherundolo, who since the end of his playing career has moved into the coaching ranks both at Hannover 96 - where he spent the duration of his playing career in Germany - and VfB Stuttgart. Working alongside LAFC's coaching staff, led by his former National Team Coach Bob Bradley, Cherundolo's approach to try and bring success to a Lights FC side that has struggled for consistency will be fascinating to watch.

The acumen LAFC has shown in acquiring players from the lower divisions in their short history is a major reason for optimism for Lights FC. From former Louisville City FC standout Mark-Anthony Kaye - now a stalwart in LAFC's midfield since joining the club for its expansion season - to more recent arrivals such as Danny Musovski, LA's staff has identified talent well, which could make Lights FC a surprise package in the Pacific.



HEAD COACH



Steve Cherundolo

CONTACTS

CEO & OWNER
Brett Lashbrook

SOCCER OPERATIONS
Stephen Campos

MANAGER OF PARTERSHIP MARKETING
Christian Garcia

CONTROLLER & OFFICE MANAGER
Jeremy Kinkaid

DIRECTOR, TICKET OPERATIONS
Aaron Mason

VICE PRESIDENT, REVENUE
Paul Mendes

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Peter Russo

KEY PLAYERS



Michael Yeboah

Midfielder

Arriving on loan from his native Ghana's Accra Great Olympics, Michael Yeboah has already seen top-flight action and will be hoping to work his way up the professional ranks with Lights FC. The 19-year-old recorded four goals in 16 appearances for the Great Olympics, including a pair of tallies in February that helped him earn nomination for the Player of the Month award in the Ghana Premier League.



Daniel Crisostomo

Midfielder

One of the players with USL Championship experience arriving at Lights FC for the new season, Daniel Crisostomo joins the club from Orange County SC, where he spent the first two seasons of his professional career. A former college player at UC Irvine, Crisostomo has notched more than 40 appearances in the Championship, split between starts and appearances off the bench. His prior experience could be very useful to his new teammates as they get acclimated to their new club and league.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/05/2021	LA	V	LV
05/12/2021	SAC	V	LV
05/22/2021	PHX	V	LV
05/29/2021	SD	V	LV
06/05/2021	LV	V	TAC
06/11/2021	LV	V	SA
06/16/2021	LA	V	LV
06/19/2021	LV	V	OC
06/25/2021	LV	V	SD
07/03/2021	LV	V	TAC
07/10/2021	OAK	V	LV
07/14/2021	LV	V	SAC
07/17/2021	ELP	V	LV
07/23/2021	SLC	V	LV
07/27/2021	LV	V	OC
08/07/2021	LV	V	PHX
08/14/2021	SAC	V	LV
08/18/2021	SD	V	LV
08/21/2021	LV	V	OAK
08/27/2021	LV	V	LA
09/02/2021	TAC	V	LV
09/05/2021	LV	V	SAC
09/08/2021	LV	V	OAK
09/11/2021	OC	V	LV
09/15/2021	PHX	V	LV
09/25/2021	LV	V	SD
09/29/2021	TAC	V	LV
10/02/2021	OAK	V	LV
10/08/2021	LV	V	LA
10/16/2021	LV	V	PHX
10/23/2021	OC	V	LV
10/30/2021	LV	V	TBR

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 @lvlightsfc



LOUDON UNITED FC

2400 East Capitol Street, S.E.,
Washington, D.C. 20003
www.loudoununitedfc.com
P: (520) 600-3095

TEAM OUTLOOK

Nothing seemed to go right for Loudoun United FC in the 2020 season, from a lack of results to the premature conclusion of the club's abridged season. Finding a way to rebound from that disappointment is going to be the biggest test for Head Coach Ryan Martin's squad this year, and some new, veteran faces could help turn things around.

One of those is former Sacramento Republic FC midfielder Drew Skundrich, who made 42 appearances in the center of midfield over the past two seasons. Another is Wahab Ackwei, who spent the past two seasons in USL League One with the Richmond Kickers. Both players have logged close to 5,000 minutes of action in their careers, experience that should prove invaluable for the lineup around them.

United will be without its most experienced figure from 2020 with defender Peabo Dove calling time on his career. As you'd expect, though, the major spotlight is going to be on youngsters like Ted Ku-Dipietro as Loudoun looks to find a way up the standings.



HEAD COACH



Ryan Martin

CONTACTS

**FINANCE AND SPECIAL PROJECTS
DIRECTOR**
Sam Zweifach

BUSINESS OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
Adam Fremd

PARTNERSHIP SALES COORDINATOR
Chase Leighton

PRIMARY CONTACT
**VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS &
CONTENT**
Zach Abaie
zabaie@dcunited.com
(540) 207-7931

KEY PLAYERS



Kairou Amoustapha
Forward

If there was a slight bright-spot in Loudoun’s 2020 season, it was the performance in limited action of Niger U-20 National Team member Kairou Amoustapha. He notched three goals, one assist, eight shots on goal and 16 key passes for United in nine appearances and returns this season looking to add to those numbers. If he does, bigger things could quickly arrive for the 20-year-old.



Drew Skundrich
Midfielder

When Drew Skundrich first broke into the Championship with the Philadelphia Union II after a successful college career at Stanford University, he had by his side the veteran presence of James Chambers in the lineup. Now Skundrich may be needed to fulfill a similar role for this young Loudoun lineup. He should be capable of doing so – last season in Sacramento he posted an 85.2 passing accuracy rate and made 13 interceptions while scoring a pair of goals – but it’s going to likely be an uphill battle for the 25-year-old.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/02/2021	MIA	V	LDN
05/18/2021	LDN	V	NY
05/29/2021	NM	V	LDN
06/02/2021	LDN	V	PIT
06/08/2021	LDN	V	CHS
06/11/2021	TBR	V	LDN
06/19/2021	HFD	V	LDN
06/26/2021	CHS	V	LDN
06/30/2021	LDN	V	PIT
07/04/2021	LDN	V	HFD
07/11/2021	LDN	V	MIA
07/17/2021	PIT	V	LDN
07/24/2021	TBR	V	LDN
07/27/2021	LDN	V	CHS
07/31/2021	LDN	V	COS
08/06/2021	LDN	V	CLT
08/13/2021	CHS	V	LDN
08/18/2021	LDN	V	IND
08/23/2021	LDN	V	TBR
09/04/2021	RGV	V	LDN
09/08/2021	LDN	V	CLT
09/11/2021	PIT	V	LDN
09/18/2021	LDN	V	HFD
09/25/2021	MIA	V	LDN
09/30/2021	NY	V	LDN
10/03/2021	CLT	V	LDN
10/10/2021	LDN	V	MIA
10/15/2021	HFD	V	LDN
10/20/2021	NY	V	LDN
10/23/2021	LDN	V	TBR
10/27/2021	CLT	V	LDN
10/30/2021	LDN	V	NY

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LOUISVILLE CITY FC

110 W. Main St, Second Floor,
Louisville, KY, 40202
www.louisvillecityfc.com
P: (502) 384-8799

TEAM OUTLOOK

For a sixth consecutive season – every year of the club’s history – Louisville City FC advanced to the Eastern Conference Final in the USL Championship Playoffs. There would be no celebration to cap a successful first campaign at Lynn Family Stadium, as the Tampa Bay Rowdies spoiled the party for the hosts and leave LouCity without silverware for the first time in a season since 2016.

There’s no reason to believe Louisville won’t be back for more this year, however. Head Coach John Hackworth’s squad has retained almost all of its key players, including a permanent deal for standout striker Cameron Lancaster after his year on loan from Nashville SC in 2020. Also back are frontrunning allies Antoine Hoppenot and Brian Ownby, a midfield group including Paolo DelPiccolo and Corben Bone and defender Sean Totsch, whose career season earned his first Championship All-League honors.

There are notable departures, though, maybe most importantly that of midfielder Speedy Williams to Miami FC. Also gone – albeit more expectedly – is goalkeeper Ben Lundt, who claimed Championship Goalkeeper of the Year honors while on loan from FC Cincinnati a year ago. The arrival of Tyler Gibson from Indy Eleven should help mitigate Williams’ departure, and we may see some of the youngsters in the squad – most notably defender Jonathan Gomez – take a big step up in minutes.



HEAD COACH



Danny Cruz

CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN & CEO
John Neace

TEAM PRESIDENT
Brad Estes

**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF
DEVELOPMENT**
James O'Connor

**SR. VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND
MARKETING**
Mitch Ried

SR. VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS
Davena Vowels

DIRECTOR OF TICKET SALES
David Walkovic

PRIMARY CONTACT
VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS
Jonathan Lintner
jlintner@louisvillecityfc.com
(502) 930-7271

KEY PLAYERS



Cameron Lancaster
Forward

Over the past three seasons in the Championship, no-one has scored with the prolificacy of Cameron Lancaster. The 2018 Golden Boot winner – during which he set a single-season record of 25 regular season goals – has averaged a goal every 97.6 minutes of action in the league, the only player to sit below the 100-minute mark among players with at least 10 goals. That efficiency in front of net makes Lancaster one of the best forwards the league has seen, and promises plenty more to come this year.



Sean Totsch
Defender

Previously a three-time winner of the USL Championship Final, Sean Totsch's progression as a player hit new heights in 2020 as he put in the most noteworthy individual season of his career. The 29-year-old played 17 games, sat above 62 percent in success rates for tackles, duels and aerial duels, while helping Louisville post a league-best nine clean sheets. With a new contract signed this offseason, it appears Totsch will be holding it down on LouCity's back line well into the future.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/24/2021	LOU	V	ATL
05/08/2021	LOU	V	BHM
05/22/2021	LOU	V	SD
05/29/2021	LOU	V	IND
06/06/2021	ATL	V	LOU
06/12/2021	LOU	V	MEM
06/16/2021	LOU	V	BHM
06/19/2021	TUL	V	LOU
06/26/2021	LOU	V	IND
07/02/2021	SKC	V	LOU
07/10/2021	TUL	V	LOU
07/14/2021	LOU	V	OKC
07/17/2021	LOU	V	ATL
07/23/2021	COS	V	LOU
07/28/2021	SKC	V	LOU
07/31/2021	LOU	V	OKC
08/07/2021	LOU	V	SKC
08/14/2021	LOU	V	TUL
08/22/2021	OKC	V	LOU
08/28/2021	BHM	V	LOU
09/03/2021	LOU	V	TUL
09/07/2021	HFD	V	LOU
09/12/2021	OKC	V	LOU
09/18/2021	IND	V	LOU
09/25/2021	MEM	V	LOU
09/29/2021	ATL	V	LOU
10/03/2021	LOU	V	NM
10/09/2021	LOU	V	SKC
10/13/2021	MEM	V	LOU
10/16/2021	IND	V	LOU
10/23/2021	LOU	V	MEM
10/30/2021	BHM	V	LOU

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MEMPHIS 901 FC

200 Union Ave,
Memphis, TN 38103
www.memphis901fc.com
P: (901) 722-6000

TEAM OUTLOOK

It might have been a small sample size, but the final three games of Memphis 901 FC's 2020 season – overseen by then interim and now permanent Head Coach Ben Pirmann – offered a glimpse of hope for what might come in the future for the Bluff City's club. Taking the first wins in club history against both Birmingham Legion FC and the Charlotte Independence – the two clubs that would go on to represent Group G in the postseason – provided a major boost for a side that had struggled previously.

Those performances had a bit of a dampener placed on them during the offseason, during which time some key players departed – most notably forward Cal Jennings, who was signed by Indy Eleven and then sold to Los Angeles FC in Major League Soccer. After a delayed start to the club's offseason business, though, there are some interesting names set to arrive at AutoZone Park this season.

Among that group are forwards Michael Salazar and Kyle Murphy. Salazar brings experience both from Major League Soccer with Houston Dynamo FC and the Belize National Team as well as a solid pedigree from his time with Rio Grande Valley FC, while Murphy notched 13 goals for Loudoun United FC two seasons ago before spending 2020 with Eastern Conference Title-winner the Tampa Bay Rowdies. With a core of defensive stalwarts returning including Zach Carroll and Mark Segbers, Memphis is going to be a project this year, but one that could be building toward a brighter future under Pirmann.



HEAD COACH



Ben Pirmann

CONTACTS

PRINCIPAL OWNER
Peter Freund

PRESIDENT / OWNER
Craig Unger

DIGITAL MARKETING COORDINATOR
Kayla Hezel

DIRECTOR, TICKET SALES & SERVICE
Aaron Johnson

MANAGER, GUEST SERVICES & MATCH OPERATIONS
Marissa Zvolanek

VICE PRESIDENT, STADIUM OPERATIONS
Mike Voutsinas

PRIMARY CONTACT
COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT
Ethan Triebsch
etriebsch@memphis901fc.com
(404) 987-5969

KEY PLAYERS



Zach Carroll

Defender

Memphis had its struggles defensively as a side in 2020, but individually Zach Carroll put up some impressive numbers that he'll be hoping correlate to improvement as a side in the new season. A former Championship All-League selection in 2016 with the New York Red Bulls II, Carroll sat above 63 percent success rates in tackles, duels and aerial duels individually while making 51 clearances and 28 interceptions. As 901 FC looks to build, the 27-year-old could be a foundational stone.



Michael Salazar

Forward

When he last saw action in the USL Championship, Michael Salazar averaged better than a goal every other game for Rio Grande Valley FC in the 2019 season as he notched 10 goals at a rate of a finish every 169.3 minutes. That drew the attention of Houston Dynamo FC, which signed him to an MLS deal, but after eight appearances he returned to the free agency market and now lands in Memphis. If Salazar can recreate his form with the Toros, he could provide the attacking punch Memphis will be missing from the departed Cal Jennings.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/15/2021	BHM	V	MEM
05/23/2021	ATL	V	MEM
05/29/2021	OKC	V	MEM
06/05/2021	IND	V	MEM
06/12/2021	LOU	V	MEM
06/16/2021	MEM	V	ATL
06/19/2021	MEM	V	OKC
06/26/2021	MEM	V	SKC
07/03/2021	ATL	V	MEM
07/10/2021	BHM	V	MEM
07/17/2021	IND	V	MEM
07/24/2021	MEM	V	TUL
08/01/2021	SKC	V	MEM
08/07/2021	OKC	V	MEM
08/10/2021	MEM	V	COS
08/14/2021	MEM	V	BHM
08/25/2021	TUL	V	MEM
08/29/2021	SKC	V	MEM
09/01/2021	MEM	V	OKC
09/04/2021	MEM	V	BHM
09/11/2021	MEM	V	MIA
09/19/2021	NY	V	MEM
09/22/2021	MEM	V	IND
09/25/2021	MEM	V	LOU
10/02/2021	TUL	V	MEM
10/06/2021	MEM	V	SKC
10/10/2021	SA	V	MEM
10/13/2021	MEM	V	LOU
10/16/2021	MEM	V	ATL
10/23/2021	LOU	V	MEM
10/27/2021	MEM	V	TUL
10/30/2021	MEM	V	IND

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MIAMI FC

11200 Southwest 8th Street,
Miami, FL 33199
www.miamifc.com
P: (305) 371-9760

TEAM OUTLOOK

Expectations were high for Miami FC as it joined the Championship for the 2020 season, but the newcomers were unable to match up with the Tampa Bay Rowdies or Charleston Battery in Group H consistently, which meant the side dropped well off the playoff pace before the end of the season.

So, what's a side with a big budget and desire to be a title contender to do? Assemble a collection of new faces that could have Miami rubbing shoulders with the Championship's elite by the end of the season, is what. The offseason signings of free agents Paco Craig and Speedy Williams – both two-time USL Championship Final winners at Louisville City FC – as well as the arrival of former Italy international Luca Antonelli and the transfer of Bolu Akinyode from Birmingham Legion FC were among the eye-opening new arrivals at Riccardo Silva Stadium this winter.

Head Coach Paul Dalglish will look to mold the new pieces into a cohesive unit, but there should be plenty of flash and style on display with players like Christiano Francois, another newcomer, as well as a return trip for his second stint at the club for Ariel Martinez. The expectations are going to be high, once again. This time, Miami is going to want to deliver.



HEAD COACH



Paul Dalglish

CONTACTS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Michael Williamson

HEAD OF REVENUE
Carlo Castilla

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
Daniel Metrie

**SR. MANAGER OF COMMUNITY AND
CORPORATE RELATIONS**
Patricia Cabrera

**SR. MANAGER OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT**
Gonzalo De Mujica

OPERATIONS MANAGERS
Vanessa Ramos

PRIMARY CONTACT
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Nico Castillo
nico.castillo@miamifc.com
(813) 527-1376

KEY PLAYERS



Speedy Williams

Midfielder

Speedy Williams has been successful consistently in the Championship, but his 2020 season might have been his best all-around season individually as he proved the catalyst in the center of Louisville City FC's midfield. The Jamaican international arrives in Miami with expectations of a similar level of performance, and with the goal to aim for of selection for the 2021 Concacaf Gold Cup in his sights, Williams should be at the top of his game once again.



Christiano Francois

Forward

If you're looking for a player who could become an immediate fan favorite in Miami, look no further than Haitian international Christiano Francois. A dynamic winger, Francois has recorded 19 goals and 24 assists over the past four seasons in 88 regular season contests, including a stellar campaign with six goals and seven assists for Reno 1868 FC in 2020. Joining an attack that appears set to be built for speed with Adonijah Reid and Billy Forbes also in tow, Francois could be the main attraction for Miami's new-look attack.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/02/2021	MIA	V	LDN
05/08/2021	MIA	V	HFD
05/14/2021	NY	V	MIA
05/22/2021	TBR	V	MIA
05/29/2021	MIA	V	CLT
06/06/2021	MIA	V	RGV
06/12/2021	PIT	V	MIA
06/18/2021	CHS	V	MIA
06/23/2021	MIA	V	BHM
06/26/2021	MIA	V	CLT
07/02/2021	NY	V	MIA
07/07/2021	MIA	V	TBR
07/11/2021	LDN	V	MIA
07/17/2021	MIA	V	TBR
07/24/2021	HFD	V	MIA
08/01/2021	MIA	V	CHS
08/04/2021	HFD	V	MIA
08/11/2021	PIT	V	MIA
08/14/2021	ATX	V	MIA
08/22/2021	MIA	V	HFD
08/29/2021	MIA	V	NY
09/04/2021	CLT	V	MIA
09/11/2021	MEM	V	MIA
09/18/2021	MIA	V	CHS
09/22/2021	CLT	V	MIA
09/25/2021	MIA	V	LDN
10/02/2021	MIA	V	PIT
10/10/2021	LDN	V	MIA
10/17/2021	MIA	V	PIT
10/20/2021	TBR	V	MIA
10/24/2021	MIA	V	NY
10/30/2021	CHS	V	MIA

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NEW MEXICO UNITED

3500 Central Avenue SE, Suite 2
Albuquerque, NM 87106
www.newmexicoutd.com
P: (505) 209-7529

TEAM OUTLOOK

After reaching the postseason in the club's inaugural season, New Mexico United took the next step by earning its first victory in the USL Championship Playoffs last season, a remarkable feat given the circumstances it was achieved under. Due to local health and safety restrictions in place across New Mexico, United played its full 2020 campaign on the road, and will be looking forward to returning home to Isotopes Park this year.

A notable contingent of players from the club's first two seasons will return, too, led by talisman forward Devon Sandoval and fellow New Mexico native Josh Suggs, who enters the 2020 season sitting second in the Championship all-time in minutes played. Also back for another season is attacking midfielder Amando Moreno, who made an impressive impact in his first season, and center back Kalen Ryden, whose stabilizing presence in the back line saw a major improvement in United's defensive play, and earned Ryden Championship All-League honors.

There are some notable shoes to fill, however, with attacking midfielder Chris Wehan having joined Orange County SC and goalkeeper Cody Mizell making the move to Major League Soccer with New York City FC. There appears to be a contest for the starting goalkeeping position between the returning Philip Beigl and newcomer Alex Tambakis, while new arrivals Brian Brown, Harry Swartz, Ilija Ilic and Isidro Martinez offer a variety of options to fill the gap in production left by Wehan.



HEAD COACH



Troy Lesesne

CONTACTS

OWNER & PRESIDENT
Peter Trevisani

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
Desiree Kim

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Josh Lane

DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION
Lukas Cash

SPANISH MEDIA SPECIALIST
Menny Esquivel

CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER
Dustin McCorkle

PRIMARY CONTACT
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & FAN EXPERIENCE
David Carl
david@newmexicoutd.com
(856) 361-4323

KEY PLAYERS



Amando Moreno
Midfielder

Making the move to New Mexico from the New York Red Bulls organization, Amando Moreno proved an ideal fit for United's attacking philosophy, finishing second on the team in both goals (6) and assists (4) in 17 appearances. Moreno's ability to find space and then make the right decision on the ball is going to be key for United to maintain its upward trajectory this season, but from all appearances he's already beginning to develop a good understanding with some of the newcomers to the squad this preseason.



Micheal Azira
Midfielder

A former Championship Final-winner in 2012 with the Charleston Battery, Micheal Azira used that start to his career to propel him to the next level. With 130 regular-season appearances in Major League Soccer, he now joins New Mexico United for what could be the final move of his career. At 33 years old, Azira will bring a veteran presence to United's midfield alongside Juan Pablo Guzman that will help protect the back line, but the former Ugandan international will also move possession effectively to get New Mexico on the attack.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	RGV	V	NM
05/08/2021	ELP	V	NM
05/15/2021	NM	V	ATX
05/21/2021	COS	V	NM
05/29/2021	NM	V	LDN
06/04/2021	SLC	V	NM
06/12/2021	NM	V	ATX
06/16/2021	NM	V	SA
06/25/2021	COS	V	NM
06/30/2021	SLC	V	NM
07/03/2021	ELP	V	NM
07/09/2021	NM	V	COS
07/12/2021	NM	V	CHS
07/21/2021	SA	V	NM
07/24/2021	NM	V	ELP
08/01/2021	TAC	V	NM
08/14/2021	NM	V	ELP
08/18/2021	NM	V	OAK
08/22/2021	ATX	V	NM
08/28/2021	PHX	V	NM
09/04/2021	NM	V	COS
09/10/2021	ATX	V	NM
09/18/2021	NM	V	SLC
09/22/2021	NM	V	RGV
09/25/2021	SA	V	NM
10/03/2021	LOU	V	NM
10/06/2021	NM	V	HFD
10/09/2021	NM	V	RGV
10/17/2021	SD	V	NM
10/20/2021	NM	V	SA
10/23/2021	RGV	V	NM
10/30/2021	NM	V	SLC

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NEW YORK RED BULLS II

One Harmon Plaza,
Harrison, NJ 07094
www.newyorkredbulls.com/2
P: (201) 583-7000

TEAM OUTLOOK

For the first time in their history, the New York Red Bulls II failed to reach the USL Championship Playoffs in 2020 as defensive issues couldn't be overcome by an attack that still maintained its usual prolificacy. That's meant changes for Head Coach John Wolyniec's squad as the club's emphasis on understanding how to win as part of its development model saw only three players retained for the new season.

Two of those are attacking pieces, with Omar Sowe having notched a team-best seven goals in 14 appearances last season and Jake LaCava putting away five goals in 15 games. Also back is midfielder Kyle Zajec, who was limited to four appearances but averaged 61.6 passes per 90 minutes – the highest rate on the team – and had one assist and 10 Key Passes and will likely play a big role in the center of the field.

The Red Bulls II also added to their squad with former Indy Eleven forward Jeremy Rafanello coming aboard. Meanwhile, 15-year-old Curtis Ofori also signed his first professional deal with the club, becoming the youngest player in Red Bulls II history. Given New York's past success with talented teenagers, Ofori should be a player to keep an eye on in the upcoming year.



HEAD COACH



John Wolyniec

CONTACTS

GENERAL MANAGER
Jamie Ponce

SR. MANAGER OF COMMUNICATIONS
Gordon Stevenson
gordon.stevenson@newyorkredbulls.com
(973) 432-2583

BUSINESS OPERATIONS SPECIALIST
Christopher Schenck

SENIOR MANAGER, MATCH PRESENTATION
Richard Kaufmann

SENIOR MANAGER, MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS
Jamie Sussman

SALES ACADEMY REPRESENTATIVE
Michelle Neto

PRIMARY CONTACT
COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT
Zach Lahey
zach.lahey@newyorkredbulls.com
(908) 763-7421

KEY PLAYERS



Omar Sowe
Forward

The Red Bulls II have produced a pipeline for attacking players to reach the next level, with players such as current Red Bulls strikers Tom Barlow and Brian White having made their start in the Championship with the club. Sowe could be the next to join them after impressing in his first – albeit abbreviated – full season of action, notching seven goals at a strike rate of a goal every 107 minutes. If he keeps that pace up for 30-plus games this season, New York could be back in a big way.



Curtis Ofori
Defender

Just 15 years old, Curtis Ofori was signed to the Red Bulls II roster a season ago but didn't see action during the campaign. Now signed to his first pro deal, that's almost certain to change this year with the Red Bulls Academy product. According to Head Coach John Wolyniec, his experience training with the squad last season led Ofori to up his game impressively this offseason, and that means there could be plenty of opportunity ahead.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/30/2021	NY	V	HFD
05/07/2021	NY	V	CHS
05/14/2021	NY	V	MIA
05/18/2021	LDN	V	NY
05/23/2021	CHS	V	NY
05/28/2021	NY	V	PIT
06/02/2021	NY	V	TBR
06/05/2021	HFD	V	NY
06/12/2021	CHS	V	NY
06/16/2021	NY	V	CLT
06/25/2021	PIT	V	NY
07/02/2021	NY	V	MIA
07/07/2021	CLT	V	NY
07/10/2021	HFD	V	NY
07/17/2021	CLT	V	NY
07/23/2021	NY	V	PIT
07/31/2021	SAC	V	NY
08/06/2021	NY	V	TBR
08/14/2021	NY	V	SA
08/20/2021	NY	V	CHS
08/29/2021	MIA	V	NY
09/01/2021	PIT	V	NY
09/04/2021	NY	V	HFD
09/11/2021	TBR	V	NY
09/19/2021	NY	V	MEM
09/26/2021	SLC	V	NY
09/30/2021	NY	V	LDN
10/08/2021	NY	V	CLT
10/15/2021	TBR	V	NY
10/20/2021	NY	V	LDN
10/24/2021	MIA	V	NY
10/30/2021	LDN	V	NY

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OAKLAND ROOTS SC

900 Fallon St,
Oakland, CA 94607
www.oaklandrootssc.com
P: (510) 488-1144

TEAM OUTLOOK

Founded in 2018, Oakland Roots SC makes its debut in the USL Championship in the 2021 season and has been busy building what looks on paper to be a solid roster with some notable names as it enters the campaign. Based at Laney Stadium in the heart of Oakland, the newcomers will be hoping to find quick success as they enter new rivalries regionally with Sacramento Republic FC and the rest of California's clubs.

Oakland made a major splash to begin its offseason, acquiring Oakland native Saalih Muhammad from New Mexico United, but the biggest signing for the club may have been Wal Fall, who is likely to join Muhammad in the center of Roots' midfield. Fall has impressed throughout his time in the Championship, last season leading Saint Louis FC to the postseason, and could be the dynamo that makes Oakland tick.

Other newcomers include Curacao National Team goalkeeper Zeus De La Paz, who brings experience from the Netherlands – his home country – and England in his career. He'll likely back a defense that includes former USL Championship Final-winner Tarek Morad and Akeem Ward, while another former Saint Louis player in Tyler Blackwood will look to provide the goals in attack.



HEAD COACH



Jordan Ferrell

CONTACTS

VP OF SOCCER
Eric Yamamoto

CHAIR
Steven Aldrich

CO-FOUNDER & CMO
Edreece Arghandiwal

CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER
Steven Powell

DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS
Taylor Beggs

DIRECTOR OF MEDIA
Alfonso Bui

PRIMARY CONTACT
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Tommy Hodul
tommy@rootssc.com
(510) 708-1797

KEY PLAYERS



Wal Fall

Midfielder

One of the best two-way midfielders in the Championship in recent seasons, Wal Fall arrives in Oakland as a potential centerpiece for the club's lineup as it arrives in the league. The 6-foot-3 German has recorded 28 goals and 11 assists in more than 100 appearances in the Championship's regular season since arriving in the league before the 2016 season, and has an impressive record of having been part of playoff teams every season. If Fall remains at the top of his game, Oakland could be a dangerous side.



Saalih Muhammad

Midfielder

A native of Richmond, Calif. just outside Oakland, Saalih Muhammad made history as the first signing in Roots' Championship history as he arrived from New Mexico United. The central midfielder had one of the great moments of the 2020 Championship season with an outstanding strike from long distance against Colorado Springs, but it's his ball-winning and distribution that will be most important for Roots in a tough Pacific Division.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/08/2021	PHX	V	OAK
05/23/2021	LA	V	OAK
06/02/2021	SAC	V	OAK
06/12/2021	OC	V	OAK
06/19/2021	OAK	V	SAC
06/26/2021	OAK	V	ATX
06/29/2021	SD	V	OAK
07/07/2021	SAC	V	OAK
07/10/2021	OAK	V	LV
07/14/2021	OAK	V	PHX
07/17/2021	OAK	V	TAC
07/25/2021	LA	V	OAK
07/31/2021	OAK	V	OC
08/04/2021	OAK	V	PHX
08/08/2021	TAC	V	OAK
08/14/2021	OAK	V	LA
08/18/2021	NM	V	OAK
08/21/2021	LV	V	OAK
08/28/2021	OAK	V	TAC
09/03/2021	TBR	V	OAK
09/08/2021	LV	V	OAK
09/11/2021	OAK	V	SD
09/18/2021	OAK	V	LA
09/22/2021	OAK	V	SD
09/25/2021	OC	V	OAK
10/02/2021	OAK	V	LV
10/06/2021	OAK	V	SAC
10/09/2021	PHX	V	OAK
10/16/2021	OAK	V	OC
10/20/2021	TAC	V	OAK
10/24/2021	SD	V	OAK
10/30/2021	OAK	V	SKC

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@oaklandrootssc

@oaklandroots



OKC ENERGY FC

1001 N. Broadway Ave,
Oklahoma City, OK 73102
www.energyfc.com
P: (405) 235-5425

TEAM OUTLOOK

It's probably fair to say little went to plan for OKC Energy FC in John Pascarella's first season as Head Coach. Struggles in front of goal resulted in a lack of wins at Taft Stadium for the Greens all season, and not much to celebrate otherwise for the club's devoted fans.

There are some familiar faces back with the side this season, and in some ways it's difficult to imagine a player like Frank Lopez – who shone in stints for the LA Galaxy II and San Antonio FC – struggling to find the net as he did in 2020. The arrival of players like attacking midfielder/forward Villyan Bijev and Canada U-23 international Aidan Daniels – acquired via transfer from Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC with Hiroki Kurimoto – should also help the side's creativity in the final third.

OKC has also looked to re-tool defensively, bringing in former Rio Grande Valley FC center back Robert Coronado and former Indy Eleven man Mitch Osmond to try and offer help to CJ Cochran in goal. There's going to be plenty of work ahead for OKC to make a bid for the postseason, but realistically the only way is up from last season's difficulties.



HEAD COACH



John Pascarella

CONTACTS

PARTNER
Bob Funk Jr.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Jeff Kretchmar

SVP, OPERATIONS
Mindy Lummus

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
Billy Walton
billy.walton@energyfc.com
(405) 593-2017

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS
Lee Cohenour

VP, TICKET SALES & SERVICE
Sam Bays

PRIMARY CONTACT
COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER
Tyler Vaughn
tyler.vaughn@energyfc.com
(405) 620-7661

KEY PLAYERS



Villyan Bijev
Forward

After four seasons with Sacramento Republic FC, Villyan Bijev joins Energy FC looking to find a return to the form that marked his first two seasons in the Championship. The 28-year-old recorded 17 goals and 12 assists between the 2016 and 2017 seasons, but since then has notched 11 goals and 10 assists in the three subsequent years. He certainly should get the opportunity for an OKC side whose attack struggled last season, the question will be whether he can take advantage.



Aidan Daniels
Midfielder

Coming off the opportunity to represent Canada's U-23s at Concacaf Men's Olympic Qualifying - where the side reached the Semifinals before falling to Mexico - Aidan Daniels will be looking to make a positive impact at his new club. Acquired via an offseason transfer from Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC, the 22-year-old had 27 Key Passes in the 2020 season and three goals on an 18.8 percent conversion rate. Daniels should be a pivotal figure for OKC's midfield this season and will need to come through with some big performances.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/24/2021	OKC	V	TUL
05/01/2021	OKC	V	ATL
05/07/2021	SKC	V	OKC
05/16/2021	OKC	V	ATL
05/26/2021	BHM	V	OKC
05/29/2021	OKC	V	MEM
06/02/2021	IND	V	OKC
06/12/2021	OKC	V	BHM
06/19/2021	MEM	V	OKC
06/23/2021	OKC	V	SKC
06/27/2021	ATL	V	OKC
07/02/2021	OKC	V	TUL
07/10/2021	OKC	V	IND
07/14/2021	LOU	V	OKC
07/17/2021	TUL	V	OKC
07/24/2021	OKC	V	SKC
07/31/2021	LOU	V	OKC
08/07/2021	OKC	V	MEM
08/11/2021	ATL	V	OKC
08/14/2021	IND	V	OKC
08/22/2021	OKC	V	LOU
08/29/2021	OKC	V	RGV
09/01/2021	MEM	V	OKC
09/04/2021	SKC	V	OKC
09/12/2021	OKC	V	LOU
09/18/2021	BHM	V	OKC
09/26/2021	OKC	V	IND
10/03/2021	OKC	V	SA
10/10/2021	ATX	V	OKC
10/17/2021	OKC	V	BHM
10/24/2021	ELP	V	OKC
10/30/2021	TUL	V	OKC

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ORANGE COUNTY SC

20 Fairbanks, Suite 181,
Irvine, CA 92618
www.orangecountysoccer.com
P: (949) 647-4625

TEAM OUTLOOK

Orange County SC entered 2020 with high expectations, but a lackluster attack and defeats in five of their final seven games of the regular season left the side on the outside of the playoff field, a defeat to the LA Galaxy II closing the door on the season with a game to play. The expectation will be for a bounce-back this season, and the side has been aggressive in retooling its attack to try and contest for top spot.

One of those will be a familiar face as Thomas Enevoldsen returns after spending the COVID-19 pandemic in his native Denmark on loan with Hobro IK. A finalist for the Championship's MVP award in 2018, Enevoldsen will be joined by Adam Jahn, who is set to spend the season with Orange County on loan from Major League Soccer after his release by Atlanta United FC during the offseason. Also arriving is 2019 USL League One Golden Boot-winner Ronaldo Damus, and Finnish forward Eero Markkanen, who at 6-foot-5 could be a serious handful for opposing defenses.

One key piece Orange County will have to replace is the departed Aodhan Quinn, now with division rival Phoenix Rising FC. His creativity could be replaced by former New Mexico United attacking midfielder Chris Wehan, who alongside former Reno 1868 FC defender Brent Richards make for two major additions to their respective parts of the field. Expectations, then, remain high, and this time OCSC will be aiming to come through.



HEAD COACH



Braeden Cloutier

CONTACTS

OWNER & CEO
James Keston

**ASST. GM & SVP OF PLAYER
RECRUITMENT & SOCCER OPERATIONS**
Peter Nugent

**CFO & VP OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS,
OCSC COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**
Lisa Keston

**PRESIDENT OF SOCCER OPERATIONS &
GENERAL MANAGER**
Oliver Wyss

CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER
Mark Entner

PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS
Jeff Garner

PRIMARY CONTACT
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
Chad Romiti
chad@orangecountysoccer.com
(949) 293-7781

KEY PLAYERS



Thomas Enevoldsen
Forward

Orange County's struggles in front of goal – which saw them score only 18 goals in 16 games – did leave the thought of how their season might have gone had Thomas Enevoldsen been available upon the resumption of the season. The Danish veteran scored 33 goals in his first two seasons in the Championship, posting a 21.3 percent shot conversion rate – well above OCSC's 11.8 percent mark in 2020. His return along with more attacking pedigree could propel Orange County to big things.



Chris Wehan
Midfielder

A native of Orange, Calif., Chris Wehan returns home for his fifth season in the professional ranks after making his case to be considered among the best attacking midfielders in the Championship. The 2017 Championship Rookie of the Year with Reno 1868 FC, Wehan has recorded 28 goals and 25 assists in 83 regular-season appearances, and led New Mexico United to back-to-back postseason berths in its first two years. OCSC fans will be hoping their native son can deliver the same for them.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/16/2021	TAC	V	OC
05/22/2021	OC	V	SAC
05/29/2021	OC	V	LA
06/05/2021	SAC	V	OC
06/09/2021	OC	V	SD
06/12/2021	OC	V	OAK
06/19/2021	LV	V	OC
06/23/2021	LA	V	OC
07/01/2021	COS	V	OC
07/06/2021	OC	V	TAC
07/10/2021	SAC	V	OC
07/14/2021	SD	V	OC
07/17/2021	OC	V	RGV
07/24/2021	OC	V	SAC
07/27/2021	LV	V	OC
07/31/2021	OAK	V	OC
08/07/2021	OC	V	LA
08/14/2021	PHX	V	OC
08/18/2021	OC	V	TAC
08/21/2021	SD	V	OC
08/28/2021	CHS	V	OC
09/03/2021	OC	V	ELP
09/11/2021	OC	V	LV
09/18/2021	PHX	V	OC
09/25/2021	OC	V	OAK
10/02/2021	OC	V	PHX
10/09/2021	TAC	V	OC
10/13/2021	OC	V	PHX
10/16/2021	OAK	V	OC
10/20/2021	OC	V	SD
10/23/2021	OC	V	LV
10/30/2021	LA	V	OC

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PHOENIX RISING FC

8010 E. McDowell Road Suite 103,
Scottsdale, AZ 85257
www.phxrisingfc.com
P: (623) 594-9606

TEAM OUTLOOK

Phoenix Rising FC claimed the Western Conference Title for the second time in three seasons, and while they were made to work hard for their success – being taken to penalty shootouts twice and extra time in all three postseason contests – on paper the club will enter the new season as the favorites to reach the USL Championship Final from the conference.

There have been changes, however, with 2020 Golden Boot-winner Junior Flemmings now with Birmingham Legion FC. Also departed is standout young defender Corey Whelan, who joined Wigan Athletic, as well as AJ Cochran, who moved to Indy Eleven, and Damion Lowe, now competing for Al Ittihad Alexandria Club in Egypt. Phoenix's back line will take a different form this season, then, with Noah Billingsley (Minnesota United FC) and Jeremy Kelly (Colorado Rapids) arriving on loan from Major League Soccer clubs, and new signings Deklan Wynne and Tobi Adewole both bringing solid professional experience.

What will remain consistent, though, is the likely output of Phoenix's attack. Led by now two-time Championship Most Valuable Player Solomon Asante, Rising FC also got strong production from newcomer Rufat Dadashov in his first year at the club, while Santi Moar will have the chance to build on what was an excellent second half of the campaign that saw him end with eight assists across the regular season and playoffs. Add in the arrival of Aodhan Quinn from Orange County SC and the club's new home at Wild Horse Pass should be one of the toughest places to visit once again this season.



HEAD COACH



Rick Schantz

CONTACTS

GENERAL MANAGER
Bobby Dulle

DIRECTOR OF TICKET SALES
Eric Barrera

PARTNERSHIP SALES MANAGER
Joey Castor

DIGITAL MEDIA MANAGER
H. Jose Bosch

OPERATIONS MANAGER
Annie Marum

DIRECTOR OF BOX OFFICE OPERATIONS
Judy Kirk

PRIMARY CONTACT
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
Jason Minnick
jason@phxrisingfc.com
(570) 764-0294

KEY PLAYERS



Solomon Asante

Forward

There have been several notable contributors to Phoenix Rising FC's success over the past three seasons, but none more consistent than Solomon Asante. The Ghanaian forward has recorded 41 goals and 34 assists in 78 regular-season games over the past three seasons, and last year came through in the postseason with two crucial goals on the side's run to the Western Conference Title. Voted the Championship's Most Valuable Player for a second consecutive year, Asante will be front and center once again in 2021.



Aodhan Quinn

Midfielder

The arrival of Aodhan Quinn at Phoenix Rising FC could feel like an example of the rich getting richer in the Western Conference with the former Championship MVP Finalist bringing a tremendous resume to the desert. A centerpiece for Orange County SC over the past three seasons, Quinn's ability to create from midfield – both in open play and from set pieces – has put him among the best in the Championship. Working in Phoenix's attacking system could produce more big numbers – and success – for the California native.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/30/2021	PHX	V	SD
05/08/2021	PHX	V	OAK
05/15/2021	TBR	V	PHX
05/22/2021	PHX	V	LV
05/29/2021	SAC	V	PHX
06/05/2021	PHX	V	SD
06/12/2021	PHX	V	TAC
06/19/2021	SD	V	PHX
06/26/2021	SAC	V	PHX
07/03/2021	PHX	V	LA
07/10/2021	CLT	V	PHX
07/14/2021	OAK	V	PHX
07/17/2021	PHX	V	LA
07/24/2021	SD	V	PHX
07/31/2021	PHX	V	RGV
08/04/2021	OAK	V	PHX
08/07/2021	LV	V	PHX
08/14/2021	PHX	V	OC
08/21/2021	PHX	V	SAC
08/28/2021	PHX	V	NM
09/05/2021	TAC	V	PHX
09/11/2021	LA	V	PHX
09/15/2021	PHX	V	LV
09/18/2021	PHX	V	OC
09/25/2021	TAC	V	PHX
09/29/2021	LA	V	PHX
10/02/2021	OC	V	PHX
10/09/2021	PHX	V	OAK
10/13/2021	OC	V	PHX
10/16/2021	LV	V	PHX
10/23/2021	PHX	V	SAC
10/30/2021	PHX	V	TAC

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PITTSBURGH RIVERHOUNDS SC

510 W Station Square Drive,
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
www.riverhounds.com
P: (412) 224-4900

TEAM OUTLOOK

For the first time in Pittsburgh Riverhounds SC history, the club earned its third consecutive trip to the postseason in 2020, but the enthusiasm around that achievement was somewhat dimmed as a late-season home loss to Hartford Athletic cost the Hounds first place in Group F and ended up with an early playoff elimination at the hands of Louisville City FC in the Eastern Conference Quarterfinals.

The early part of the offseason wasn't that kind, either, with established center back Thomas Vancaeyezeele (San Diego Loyal SC), wing back Ryan James (Birmingham Legion FC), midfielder Robbie Mertz (Atlanta United 2) and forward Steevan Dos Santos (Tampa Bay Rowdies) among the free agency departures.

But, as always, it would be foolish to write off a side coached by Bob Lilley, who has consistently shown the ability to re-tool and attract established and potential talent throughout his career. Two former members of Saint Louis FC in Todd Wharton and Russell Cicerone have made the move to Highmark Stadium, while Alex Dixon has reunited with Lilley from their days in Rochester after spending the past two seasons with Hartford Athletic. Most importantly, though, the Hounds re-signed midfield talisman Kenardo Forbes. Teamed up with Wharton, Pittsburgh could have one of the best midfield tandems in the middle of the park this season, and that could help secure a fourth consecutive trip to the postseason.



HEAD COACH



Bob Lilley

CONTACTS

OWNER & PRESIDENT
Tuffy Shallenberger

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
John Rotz

**SENIOR DIRECTOR OF TICKET SALES
AND SERVICE**
Jim Pappas

**SOCIAL VIDEO PRODUCER / IN-GAME
HOST**
Justin McCauley

GAME DAY OPERATIONS MANAGER
Chris DeVivo

**MANAGER OF NEW BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT**
Michael Panish

PRIMARY CONTACT
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Matt Grubba
mattg@riverhounds.com
(412) 325-7229

KEY PLAYERS



Kenardo Forbes
Midfielder

It might have taken a while, but most people around the Championship have been fully aware of what Kenardo Forbes brings to the table for a while now. That’s resulted in three consecutive Championship All-League selections in the past three years, and four overall for the Jamaican veteran’s career. The 32-year-old is going to be a central figure again for the Hounds after signing a new contract this offseason as he looks to add to his 39 career regular-season assists, the most in the Championship’s history.



Danny Vitiello
Goalkeeper

Coming in midway through the regular season as starter, Danny Vitiello made the most of his opportunity to narrowly claim the Championship’s Golden Glove with a 0.50 mark as he conceded only four goals in eight games. The former Nashville SC shot-stopper’s underlying numbers were also impressive – he outperformed his Expected Goals Against total by 1.82 xG. Now it’s a question of whether the 25-year-old can perform at the same level for a full season.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/08/2021	TBR	V	PIT
05/15/2021	HFD	V	PIT
05/22/2021	PIT	V	CLT
05/28/2021	NY	V	PIT
06/02/2021	LDN	V	PIT
06/06/2021	PIT	V	ATX
06/12/2021	PIT	V	MIA
06/15/2021	IND	V	PIT
06/19/2021	TBR	V	PIT
06/25/2021	PIT	V	NY
06/30/2021	LDN	V	PIT
07/03/2021	PIT	V	CLT
07/07/2021	CHS	V	PIT
07/17/2021	PIT	V	LDN
07/23/2021	NY	V	PIT
07/31/2021	PIT	V	HFD
08/06/2021	CHS	V	PIT
08/11/2021	PIT	V	MIA
08/14/2021	CLT	V	PIT
08/18/2021	PIT	V	TBR
08/22/2021	PIT	V	ATL
08/28/2021	HFD	V	PIT
09/01/2021	PIT	V	NY
09/04/2021	SA	V	PIT
09/11/2021	PIT	V	LDN
09/18/2021	CLT	V	PIT
09/25/2021	PIT	V	CHS
10/02/2021	MIA	V	PIT
10/10/2021	PIT	V	TBR
10/17/2021	MIA	V	PIT
10/23/2021	PIT	V	CHS
10/30/2021	PIT	V	HFD

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REAL MONARCHS SLC

9256 S. State St.,
Sandy, UT 84070
www.realmonarchs.com
P: (801) 727-2700

TEAM OUTLOOK

After reaching the mountaintop in 2019 by becoming only the second MLS-operated club to win the USL Championship Final, changes in personnel and squad restrictions on player movement saw Real Monarchs SLC return to earth with a bump last year. The first defending title-winner to fail to reach the playoffs will be hoping a new injection of talent can spur it back toward postseason contention.

The Monarchs will have to do so without former captain Jack Blake, who made the move to San Diego Loyal SC this past offseason, while Joe Gallardo departed for Liga MX side Queretaro FC. The side did retain a notable veteran presence in defender James Moberg, but it's the incoming crop of young talent that may grab most of the attention this season.

The Monarchs have looked from within the Championship and overseas to rebuild their squad, adding former Tampa Bay Rowdies winger Malik Johnson and former Rio Grande Valley FC defender Kyle Adams in domestically, while also adding 20-year-old Colombians Juan Vidal and Brayan Gomez to try and help boost their attack. Finding the spark that fueled the club's title run could be a challenge in what looks like a tough division, but Real should be up for the challenge.



HEAD COACH



Jamison Olave

CONTACTS

INTERIM PRESIDENT
John Kimball

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Tara Cupello

GENERAL MANAGER
Elliot Fall

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & CONTENT
Matt Gaschk

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF BROADCAST AND DIGITAL
Tyler Gibbons

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Meg Van Dyk

PRIMARY CONTACT
SENIOR MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS
Taran Meyer
tmeyer@rsl.com
(801) 657-2161

KEY PLAYERS



Malik Johnson
Winger

Possessing a great combination of speed and footskills, there were plenty of highlight-reel moments for Malik Johnson with the Tampa Bay Rowdies. During the 2020 season, he completed 34 dribbles in 10 appearances at a 64.2 success rate as opposing defenders had to be wary of the danger he posed, typically coming off the right flank. As he arrives at the Monarchs, the 22-year-old Canadian should have more opportunities for starters minutes, which could mean a whole lot more excitement in the upcoming year.



Sam Brown
Midfielder

One of the Monarchs' returnees, Sam Brown appeared in every game of the 2020 season for the side and was named its team MVP at the end of the season. A 25-year-old native of Michigan, Brown will have to serve as the experienced head in the middle of what appears set to be a young lineup once again, taking over the role that Jack Blake held as captain during his time in Salt Lake City.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/08/2021	SA	V	SLC
05/14/2021	SLC	V	LA
05/21/2021	SLC	V	ATX
05/26/2021	ATX	V	SLC
05/29/2021	HFD	V	SLC
06/04/2021	SLC	V	NM
06/09/2021	SLC	V	SAC
06/12/2021	RGV	V	SLC
06/18/2021	SLC	V	ELP
06/23/2021	TAC	V	SLC
06/26/2021	SLC	V	SA
06/30/2021	SLC	V	NM
07/04/2021	COS	V	SLC
07/09/2021	SLC	V	ELP
07/18/2021	ATX	V	SLC
07/23/2021	SLC	V	LV
07/31/2021	ELP	V	SLC
08/04/2021	SLC	V	RGV
08/07/2021	SD	V	SLC
08/21/2021	SA	V	SLC
08/28/2021	IND	V	SLC
09/08/2021	COS	V	SLC
09/11/2021	SLC	V	SA
09/18/2021	NM	V	SLC
09/26/2021	SLC	V	NY
09/29/2021	ELP	V	SLC
10/02/2021	RGV	V	SLC
10/08/2021	SLC	V	COS
10/16/2021	SLC	V	ATX
10/22/2021	SLC	V	COS
10/27/2021	SLC	V	RGV
10/30/2021	NM	V	SLC

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 @realmonarchs



RIO GRANDE VALLEY FC

1616 S Raul Longoria Rd,
Edinburg, TX 78542
www.rgvfc.com
P: (956) 562-7362

TEAM OUTLOOK

As new club President Ron Patel took charge of Rio Grande Valley FC last year, the new direction the club was heading in began to take shape. This offseason, it entered an exciting new stage as the Toros assumed technical control of the club's on-field product while retaining their partnership with Major League Soccer's Houston Dynamo FC. The aim is now to produce a team that can compete for a title as well as offer young talented players the opportunity to build their careers in the Rio Grande Valley.

Leading that new on-field build is Wilmer Cabrera, who was the Toros' first Head Coach in 2016 when he led the side to a second-place finish in its expansion season. Since then Cabrera has led both the Dynamo and Club de Foot Montreal, and won silverware at both in the U.S. Open Cup and Canadian Championship. Cabrera has begun to bring together a combination of experience and potential, including the notable signing of former Sporting Kansas City midfielder Wan Kuzain, who in 2018 was a Finalist for the Championship's Young Player of the Year award.

Joining Kuzain in the new-look Toros midfield are set to be experienced veterans such as Juan David Cabezas – whom Cabrera worked with at the Dynamo – and former Sacramento Republic FC midfielder Rodrigo Lopez. Pulling together a fresh group of players to contend in one season is always a tall order, but Cabrera's track record says it's a possibility.



HEAD COACH



Wilmer Cabrera

CONTACTS

PRESIDENT
Ron Patel

VICE PRESIDENT
Hondo Candelaria

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS
Karla Davis

**CORPORATE SALES & GAME DAY
OPERATOR**
Colby Fayyad

SALES REPRESENTATIVE
John Wermling

SALES REPRESENTATIVE
Savannah McCoy

PRIMARY CONTACT
MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGER
Amairani Ramirez
mediarelations@rgvfc.com
(956) 225-7028

KEY PLAYERS



Wan Kuzain
Midfielder

Still only 22 years of age, Wan Kuzain brings a tremendous skillset to the middle of the park for the Toros in what might prove one of the landmark signings for the club’s new era. Kuzain brings more than 50 games of Championship experience with Sporting Kansas City II, and also saw limited action in the top flight, and his ability to link play and deliver from set pieces should make him a key cog in the midfielder for Wilmer Cabrera’s side.



Tyler Deric
Goalkeeper

With more than 100 appearances for the Houston Dynamo under his belt, including in the Concacaf Champions League and U.S. Open Cup in addition to Major League Soccer, Tyler Deric’s experience should lend itself to helping form a cohesive defensive unit. There’s going to be competition for the No. 1 jersey with Colin Miller having arrived from Loudoun United FC, but Deric would seem to be the pick to start the season at least given his past experience.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	RGV	V	NM
05/06/2021	RGV	V	SD
05/15/2021	RGV	V	SA
05/22/2021	ELP	V	RGV
05/29/2021	SA	V	RGV
06/06/2021	MIA	V	RGV
06/12/2021	RGV	V	SLC
06/16/2021	RGV	V	ATX
06/19/2021	SA	V	RGV
06/25/2021	RGV	V	TUL
06/30/2021	RGV	V	ELP
07/10/2021	ATX	V	RGV
07/17/2021	OC	V	RGV
07/24/2021	RGV	V	ATX
07/31/2021	PHX	V	RGV
08/04/2021	SLC	V	RGV
08/07/2021	RGV	V	SA
08/14/2021	RGV	V	COS
08/17/2021	ATX	V	RGV
08/21/2021	ELP	V	RGV
08/29/2021	OKC	V	RGV
09/04/2021	RGV	V	LDN
09/11/2021	COS	V	RGV
09/18/2021	RGV	V	COS
09/22/2021	NM	V	RGV
09/25/2021	RGV	V	ATL
10/02/2021	RGV	V	SLC
10/09/2021	NM	V	RGV
10/16/2021	COS	V	RGV
10/23/2021	RGV	V	NM
10/27/2021	SLC	V	RGV
10/30/2021	RGV	V	ELP

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SACRAMENTO REPUBLIC FC

1040 20th St., Suite 200,
Sacramento, CA 95811
www.sacrepublicfc.com
P: (916) 307-6100

TEAM OUTLOOK

Sacramento Republic FC reached the postseason for the seventh consecutive season in 2020, but the club's search for silverware remained elusive as it was eliminated at the first hurdle in somewhat controversial circumstances by Phoenix Rising FC in the Western Conference Quarterfinals. After an influx of experienced talent this offseason, though, Head Coach Mark Briggs' side could prove the biggest in-division challenger to end Phoenix's reign at the top.

Leading the new arrivals are a pair of strong central midfielders, with Fatai Alashe and Luis Felipe Fernandes both arriving after most recently competing in Major League Soccer. Also new is Tucker Bone, who impressed last season with Reno 1868 FC, and Finnish attacking midfielder Petteri Pennanen. They'll join experienced veteran Jaime Villarreal and Andrew Wheeler-Omiunu in the center of the park.

There's a familiar returnee on Sacramento's back line for the new season, too, with Mitchell Taintor back in the fold after a season at San Antonio FC. The defense also added Duke Lacroix from the Charlotte Independence, who has developed into one of the better two-way full backs in the league. With the returning Jordan McCrary and Hayden Sargis – who last year was nominated as a Finalist for the Championship's Young Player of the Year award – and the familiar trio of Kharlton Belmar, Cameron Iwasa and Darisuz Formella up front, this should be a contending side once again.



HEAD COACH



Mark Briggs

CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN & CEO
Kevin Nagle

PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER
Todd Dunivant

CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER
Dustin Vicari

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING
Allison Yee-Garcia

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Will Strome
wstrome@sacrepublicfc.com
(412) 720-6912

VICE PRESIDENT, TICKET SALES & SERVICE
Ted Glick

PRIMARY CONTACT
COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA
John Jacobs
jjacobs@sacrepublicfc.com
(916) 548-8154

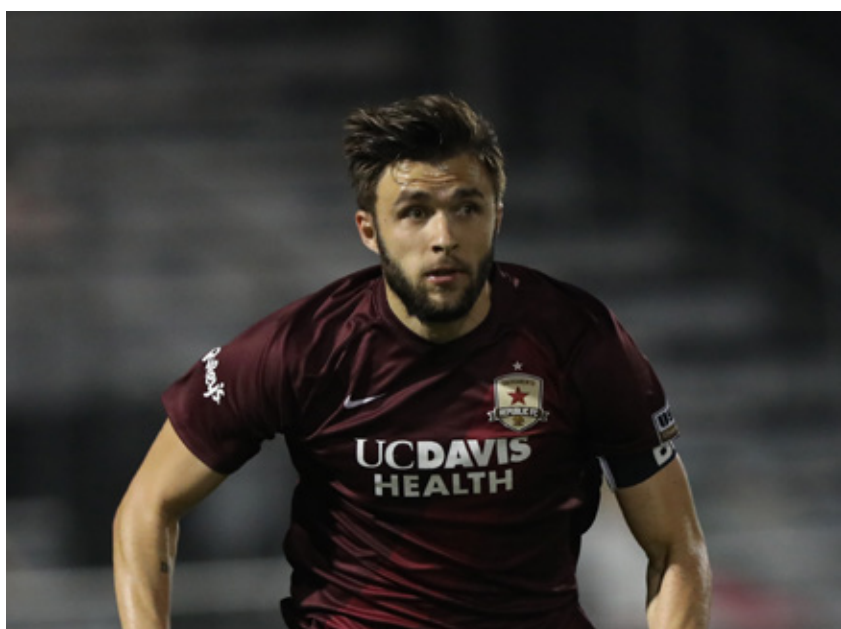
KEY PLAYERS



Fatai Alashe

Midfielder

Most recently part of Columbus Crew SC's 2020 MLS Cup-winning squad, Fatai Alashe brings a depth of experience to Sacramento's midfield that should help the side win and retain possession throughout this season. The 27-year-old Michigan native is no stranger to Northern California's soccer scene, having begun his MLS career with the San Jose Earthquakes, and his performance could be a major indicator of how Sacramento's season as a whole is going.



Dariusz Formella

Forward

After a quiet first season in Old Glory Red, Polish forward Dariusz Formella broke out in his second campaign to lead the team with eight goals in 14 appearances last year. Maintaining that pace for a full season should now be the objective for the 25-year-old, who will have ample support from Sacramento's all-time leading scorer Cameron Iwasa and newly-minted Grenada international Kharlton Belmar this season.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/30/2021	LA	V	SAC
05/12/2021	SAC	V	LV
05/22/2021	OC	V	SAC
05/29/2021	SAC	V	PHX
06/02/2021	SAC	V	OAK
06/05/2021	SAC	V	OC
06/09/2021	SLC	V	SAC
06/19/2021	OAK	V	SAC
06/26/2021	SAC	V	PHX
07/03/2021	SD	V	SAC
07/07/2021	SAC	V	OAK
07/10/2021	SAC	V	OC
07/14/2021	LV	V	SAC
07/24/2021	OC	V	SAC
07/31/2021	SAC	V	NY
08/05/2021	TAC	V	SAC
08/14/2021	SAC	V	LV
08/21/2021	PHX	V	SAC
08/28/2021	SAC	V	SD
09/01/2021	LA	V	SAC
09/05/2021	LV	V	SAC
09/11/2021	ELP	V	SAC
09/18/2021	SAC	V	SA
09/22/2021	TAC	V	SAC
09/26/2021	SAC	V	LA
10/02/2021	SAC	V	TAC
10/06/2021	OAK	V	SAC
10/09/2021	SD	V	SAC
10/13/2021	SAC	V	LA
10/17/2021	SAC	V	TAC
10/23/2021	PHX	V	SAC
10/30/2021	SAC	V	SD

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@SacRepublicFC

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SAN ANTONIO FC

5106 David Edwards Drive,
San Antonio, TX 78233
www.sanantoniofc.com
P: (210) 444-5657

TEAM OUTLOOK

San Antonio FC's 2020 regular season was an unequivocal success, which saw the club return to the USL Championship Playoffs in impressive fashion while finishing tied for the best defensive record in the Western Conference. Now the task for Head Coach Alen Marcina's side will be to build on that success with a good collection of reinforcement having arrived at Toyota Field to replace some key departures.

The biggest gaps SAFC may have to fill will be in attack, where Luis Solignac led the side with eight goals last season before ending up with El Paso Locomotive FC for the new season after a brief sojourn in Chile. 2019 Championship Young Player of the Year Cristian Parano has also moved on, signing with Portuguese top-flight club F C Paços de Ferreira.

The club's other young starlet, homegrown produce Jose Gallegos, is set to be back for the new season, although the potential of a move to Europe beckons after his two-week training stint with Bundesliga powerhouse Bayern Munich in March. There is plenty of new talent to move into the starting lineup should Gallegos depart midseason, though, with midfielders Chris Lema, Cam Lindley and Marcus Epps being joined by forward Justin Dhillon and Santiago Patino as part of the club's new recruits.



HEAD COACH



Alen Marcina

CONTACTS

**SAFC MANAGING DIRECTOR AND SS&E
VICE PRESIDENT**
Tim Holt

SR. COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
Luis Leyva

**SAFC SERVICE AND RETENTION
MANAGER**
Miguel Hopkins

**DIRECTOR OF TOYOTA FIELD & STAR
COMPLEX**
Jose Lizardo

**DIRECTOR OF FRANCHISE SALES &
DEVELOPMENT**
Frank Torres

SAFC GAME OPERATIONS COORDINATOR
Sarah Castro

PRIMARY CONTACT
SOCCER COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Preston Petri
ppetri@attcenter.com
(210) 365-9439

KEY PLAYERS



Jose Gallegos
Midfielder

One of the finalists for the Championship's Young Player of the Year in 2020, the question for Jose Gallegos now is not if he'll have the chance to move to a European club, but when. The 19-year-old showed massive potential in the Championship a season ago, enough that Bayern Munich brought him in for a two-week training stint in March. With that kind of spotlight on him, if Gallegos starts the season strongly, both he and SAFC are going to have a big decision to make.



Santiago Patino
Forward

Given what we've seen from Daryl Dike in the past 12 months, it's no surprise that Santiago Patino got the short end of the minutes with Orlando City SC in his first professional season. That said, there was a reason why the Colombian was the third pick of the 2019 MLS SuperDraft and could be a really sharp acquisition for San Antonio. Finding the same groove that saw him score 37 goals for Florida International University collegiately would be a big plus as SAFC looks to replace Luis Solognol's production up front.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	SA	V	COS
05/08/2021	SA	V	SLC
05/15/2021	RGV	V	SA
05/22/2021	SA	V	BHM
05/29/2021	SA	V	RGV
06/05/2021	COS	V	SA
06/11/2021	LV	V	SA
06/16/2021	NM	V	SA
06/19/2021	SA	V	RGV
06/26/2021	SLC	V	SA
07/03/2021	SA	V	ATX
07/17/2021	COS	V	SA
07/21/2021	SA	V	NM
07/28/2021	SA	V	ELP
07/31/2021	ATX	V	SA
08/04/2021	ELP	V	SA
08/07/2021	RGV	V	SA
08/14/2021	NY	V	SA
08/21/2021	SA	V	SLC
08/28/2021	SA	V	ELP
09/04/2021	SA	V	PIT
09/07/2021	ATX	V	SA
09/11/2021	SLC	V	SA
09/18/2021	SAC	V	SA
09/25/2021	SA	V	NM
10/03/2021	OKC	V	SA
10/06/2021	ELP	V	SA
10/10/2021	SA	V	MEM
10/16/2021	SA	V	TUL
10/20/2021	NM	V	SA
10/23/2021	SA	V	ATX
10/30/2021	SA	V	COS

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SAN DIEGO LOYAL SC

5998 Alcala Park,
San Diego, CA, 92110
www.sdloyal.com
P: (858) 465-4625

TEAM OUTLOOK

Spurred by a late-season attacking surge on the field, San Diego Loyal SC produced an impressive inaugural campaign that came up just short of the postseason. While there have been some key departures from Head Coach Landon Donovan's lineup that was buzzing at the end of 2020, the new arrivals should keep SD Loyal on course for a first postseason appearance this year.

Maybe the most notable departure is that of former U.S. Men's National Team forward Rubio Rubin, who notched five goals in the final stretch of the season, now at Real Salt Lake in Major League Soccer. To replace him, San Diego has brought in the Championship's third-leading goalscorer all time in Corey Hertzog, whose 67 goals rank only five back of second-placed Jorge Herrera. Also new to the attacking corps are Niki Jackson, formerly of the Colorado Rapids, and Ben Spencer.

The club has made notable additions in midfield, too, with Jack Blake arriving from Real Monarchs SLC to join key returning players Collin Martin, Charlie Adams and Alejandro Guido - now signed to a permanent deal after his time on loan from Los Angeles FC in 2020. If the defense continues its solid performances from a year ago - and with the addition of two-time Championship All-League selection Thomas Vancaeyezeele, it should - SD Loyal could be a serious threat when the postseason arrives.



CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN
Andrew Vassiliadis

PRESIDENT & CEO
Warren Smith

CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER
Pete Thuresson

MEDIA RELATIONS SPECIALIST
Ivan Orozco

**VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS &
GAMEDAY EXPERIENCE**
Ricardo Campos

VICE PRESIDENT OF PARTNERSHIPS
Nick Maranda

PRIMARY CONTACT
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
Jesse Beltran
jesseb@sdloyal.com
(559) 352-4613

HEAD COACH



Landon Donovan

KEY PLAYERS



Thomas Vancaeyezeele
Defender

In three seasons with Pittsburgh Riverhounds SC, Thomas Vancaeyezeele produced consistency on the back line that quickly vaulted him into the company of the league’s elite defenders. Selected to the Championship’s All-League Team in each of the past two seasons, SD Loyal will be hoping for more of the same from the 26-year-old, who has also seen international duty for French Guiana since turning pro. If Vancaeyezeele delivers, he’ll once again be in the picture for end-of-season honors.



Alejandro Guido
Midfielder

While Rubio Rubin may have grabbed the spotlight for his late-season performance with San Diego Loyal SC last year, flying slightly under the radar was the work put in by Alejandro Guido. The San Diego native, whose professional career began just across the Mexican border with Xolos de Tijuana, recorded two goals, two assists and four Key Passes in five appearances for SD Loyal in 2020. That pace will be hard to replicate, but the playmaking potential Guido brings could be huge over a full season in his hometown club’s colors.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/30/2021	PHX	V	SD
05/06/2021	RGV	V	SD
05/13/2021	TAC	V	SD
05/22/2021	LOU	V	SD
05/29/2021	SD	V	LV
06/05/2021	PHX	V	SD
06/09/2021	OC	V	SD
06/12/2021	SD	V	LA
06/19/2021	SD	V	PHX
06/25/2021	LV	V	SD
06/29/2021	SD	V	OAK
07/03/2021	SD	V	SAC
07/14/2021	SD	V	OC
07/24/2021	SD	V	PHX
07/29/2021	TAC	V	SD
08/01/2021	LA	V	SD
08/07/2021	SD	V	SLC
08/14/2021	SD	V	TAC
08/18/2021	SD	V	LV
08/21/2021	SD	V	OC
08/28/2021	SAC	V	SD
09/05/2021	SD	V	LA
09/11/2021	OAK	V	SD
09/19/2021	SD	V	TAC
09/22/2021	OAK	V	SD
09/25/2021	LV	V	SD
10/02/2021	LA	V	SD
10/09/2021	SD	V	SAC
10/17/2021	SD	V	NM
10/20/2021	OC	V	SD
10/24/2021	SD	V	OAK
10/30/2021	SAC	V	SD

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SPORTING KANSAS CITY II

2021 Baltimore Ave.,
Kansas City, MO 64108
www.sportingkc.com/sportingkcii
P: (913) 387-3400

TEAM OUTLOOK

Sporting Kansas City II missed out on a playoff spot for the second consecutive season since joining the Eastern Conference in 2019, but did have an important say in the outcome of Group G with its late-season victories against Indy Eleven proving a key spoiler in the postseason race.

That may be the level that SKC II rises to again this season, with an interesting collection of talent that includes new arrival Ropapa Mensah – who notched six goals in 14 games for Pittsburgh Riverhounds SC last season – and the return of experienced veterans Christian Duke and Danny Barbir.

There will be hopes for more, of course, and the success SKC II found against new Division-mates OKC Energy FC and FC Tulsa in 2020 – defeating both in back-to-back contests midseason – could offer hope for a rise back up the standings. How quickly Head Coach Paulo Nagamura's younger charges can find their level may be the key to that, meaning a strong start could bode well for the remainder of the campaign.



HEAD COACH



Paulo Nagamura

CONTACTS

EXEC. VP OF COMMUNICATIONS &
DIGITAL
Rob Thomson

COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL
COORDINATOR
Sam Kovzan

SENIOR MANAGER, SKC II OPERATIONS
Matt Fucaloro

PRIMARY CONTACT
PRESS OFFICER
Patrik Bergabo
pbergabo@sportingkc.com
(203) 300-9927

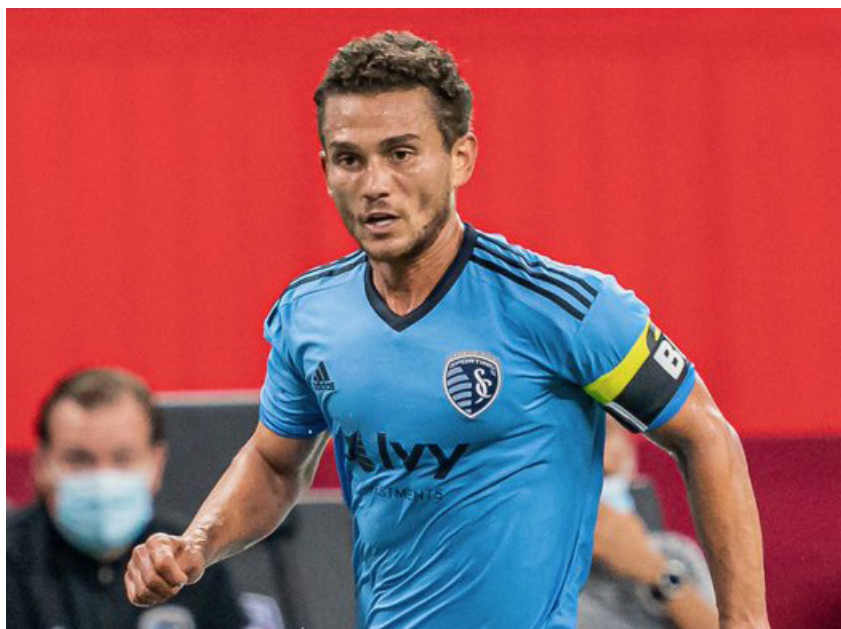
KEY PLAYERS



Ropapa Mensah

Forward

For four seasons, there's been a certain level of production from Ropapa Mensah in the Championship, notching at least five goals each campaign without quite finding the next level. That's what he and Sporting KC II will be hoping to unlock this year, with the Ghanaian forward possessing plenty to like in terms of attacking attributes, including speed and a powerful shot. At 23 years old, the time is now for Mensah to make the breakthrough.



Christian Duke

Midfielder

A Kansas native and the first signing in Sporting Kansas City II's history when it launched in 2016, Christian Duke returned to the club last season to provide a veteran presence in the club's midfield. Now 29 years old, Duke should continue that role this season in the middle of the field and has a chance to break a landmark individually by the end of the regular season. With 171 regular-season appearances in the Championship for his career, Duke needs only 29 more to add to the select list of five players to have made 200 appearances in the league.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	TUL	V	SKC
05/07/2021	SKC	V	OKC
05/14/2021	SKC	V	COS
05/19/2021	LA	V	SKC
05/22/2021	SKC	V	SKC
05/30/2021	SKC	V	ELP
06/02/2021	SKC	V	TUL
06/09/2021	ATL	V	SKC
06/16/2021	TUL	V	SKC
06/20/2021	SKC	V	SKC
06/23/2021	OKC	V	SKC
06/26/2021	MEM	V	SKC
07/02/2021	SKC	V	LOU
07/10/2021	ATL	V	SKC
07/18/2021	SKC	V	BHM
07/24/2021	OKC	V	SKC
07/28/2021	SKC	V	LOU
08/01/2021	SKC	V	MEM
08/07/2021	LOU	V	SKC
08/11/2021	BHM	V	SKC
08/14/2021	SKC	V	ATL
08/22/2021	SKC	V	SKC
08/29/2021	SKC	V	MEM
09/04/2021	SKC	V	OKC
09/11/2021	SKC	V	SKC
09/24/2021	SKC	V	TUL
10/01/2021	SKC	V	BHM
10/06/2021	MEM	V	SKC
10/09/2021	LOU	V	SKC
10/13/2021	SKC	V	ATL
10/24/2021	BHM	V	SKC
10/30/2021	OAK	V	SKC

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TACOMA DEFIANCE

2502 S. Tyler St,
Tacoma, WA 98405
www.tacdefiance.com
P: (253) 752-7707

TEAM OUTLOOK

An impressive run following the resumption of the 2020 season briefly left Tacoma Defiance with the possibility it could remain in contention for a postseason berth, but a run of six consecutive defeats that followed quickly put a pin in those ideas, even though there were morale-boosting victories against Reno 1868 FC and Sacramento Republic FC to highlight the season.

Finding a higher level of consistency, then, is going to be the aim under new Head Coach Wade Webber, who replaces the departed Chris Little on the sideline. There is still some veteran experience to build around, most notably center back Taylor Mueller, who having claimed top spot in the Championship's all-time leaders in regular season minutes could do the same this year in games played as he enters two behind Louisville City FC's George Davis IV on 231 appearances.

As always, however, the main focus for the Defiance will be the young talent in its lineup. Among those are Puerto Rico international Alec Diaz, who has recorded eight goals and five assists for the club in 34 appearances, while two more players to watch will be Carlos Anguiano, who made the offseason move from the Portland Timbers 2, and Issa Rayyan, previously of the Philadelphia Union II.



CONTACTS

GENERAL MANAGER AND PRESIDENT OF
SOCCER
Garth Lagerwey

DIRECTOR OF TEAM COMMUNICATIONS
Matt Winter
mattw@soundersfc.com

PRIMARY CONTACT
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF
COMMUNICATIONS
Alex Caulfield
alexcaulfield@soundersfc.com
(216) 978-7212

HEAD COACH



Wade Webber

KEY PLAYERS



Alec Diaz

Forward

Leading Tacoma Defiance with six goals a season ago, Alec Diaz put his name forward as the next potential player to make the step up to the top flight – either in Seattle or elsewhere – as his progression in the Championship continued. The 19-year-old produced a strike rate of a goal every 142.3 minutes in 2020 and will look to try and sustain that pace. Now appearing set to be a regular part of the Puerto Rico National Team set-up, this could be a big year for both club and country in Diaz's career.



Danny Robles

Midfielder

A former U.S. U-17 international, Danny Robles had a solid second campaign with the Defiance in 2020 as he led the side in both Key Passes (12) and assists (4) in the center of midfield. Where the 19-year-old is now going to look to improve is in his overall passing range and accuracy. Robles' passing accuracy rate of 71.4 percent was below average on the team, but the potential the club believes is there was reflected in his 12 starts in 14 appearances, tied for third-most on the team. Robles' progression this year will be a key to Tacoma finding success.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/09/2021	LA	V	TAC
05/13/2021	TAC	V	SD
05/16/2021	TAC	V	OC
05/30/2021	ATX	V	TAC
06/05/2021	LV	V	TAC
06/12/2021	PHX	V	TAC
06/16/2021	COS	V	TAC
06/23/2021	TAC	V	SLC
06/27/2021	TAC	V	LA
07/03/2021	LV	V	TAC
07/06/2021	OC	V	TAC
07/11/2021	LA	V	TAC
07/17/2021	OAK	V	TAC
07/29/2021	TAC	V	SD
08/01/2021	TAC	V	NM
08/05/2021	TAC	V	SAC
08/08/2021	TAC	V	OAK
08/14/2021	SD	V	TAC
08/18/2021	OC	V	TAC
08/28/2021	OAK	V	TAC
09/02/2021	TAC	V	LV
09/05/2021	TAC	V	PHX
09/19/2021	SD	V	TAC
09/22/2021	TAC	V	SAC
09/25/2021	TAC	V	PHX
09/29/2021	TAC	V	LV
10/02/2021	SAC	V	TAC
10/09/2021	TAC	V	OC
10/17/2021	SAC	V	TAC
10/20/2021	TAC	V	OAK
10/24/2021	TAC	V	LA
10/30/2021	PHX	V	TAC

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TAMPA BAY ROWDIES

230 1st St. SE,
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
www.rowdiessoccer.com
P: (727) 825-3253

TEAM OUTLOOK

Coming off the club's first silverware since the 2012 season, the defending Eastern Conference Title winning Tampa Bay Rowdies have a strong core set to return to Al Lang Stadium and the confidence that will come from the breakthroughs the club achieved last season. As such, they should enter the new year as favorites in the Atlantic Division and to be one of the serious contenders for the USL Championship Final.

That's in part thanks to the returning pieces that made Tampa Bay one of the best defensive sides in the league last season. Now a two-time Championship Defender of the Year, Forrest Lasso is joined on the back line by fellow returnees Aaron Guillen and Jordan Scarlett. The club also inked goalkeeper Evan Louro to a new contract after his career-best season in his first campaign as a Rowdie.

There are plenty of familiar faces elsewhere around the field as well. Captain Sebastian Guenzatti had another sterling campaign with 10 goals across the regular season and playoffs, while Leo Fernandes is set for his fifth season at the club. Newcomers include Steevan Dos Santos, former Atlanta United FC midfielder Laurence Wyke, and 2019 League One Defender of the Year Conner Antley, who should add more quality to that already at Head Coach Neill Collins' disposal.



HEAD COACH



Neill Collins

CONTACTS

VICE CHAIRMAN
Matt Silverman

PRESIDENT
Lee Cohen

SR. ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE, SALES AND SERVICE
Joseph Grossman

DIRECTOR, SALES AND CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS
Ryan Helfrick

MANAGER, MARKETING
Elisia Plunkett

MANAGER, OPERATIONS
Kyle Schackne

PRIMARY CONTACT
MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS
Jake Nutting
jnutting@rowdiessoccer.com
(727) 457-2320

KEY PLAYERS



Forrest Lasso
Defender

Forrest Lasso made history in 2020 as the first player to earn the Championship's Defender of the Year award for a second time. The 6-foot-5 center back has built an impressive reputation around the league – he also became only the second person to record four consecutive All-League First Team selection – and despite that his game has continued to grow. Another big year for the Rowdies will be expected.



Sebastian Guenzatti
Forward

You can look at the numbers over Sebastian Guenzatti's last three seasons for the Rowdies – which have seen him score 31 goals in 74 games – and come away impressed. What is more striking, though, is the way the Uruguayan approaches every game as you watch him work around the field. The 29-year-old is a hard opponent to handle with his physicality and energy, and the Rowdies have fed off that influence well.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
05/01/2021	TBR	V	CLT
05/08/2021	TBR	V	PIT
05/15/2021	TBR	V	PHX
05/22/2021	TBR	V	MIA
06/02/2021	NY	V	TBR
06/05/2021	CLT	V	TBR
06/11/2021	TBR	V	LDN
06/19/2021	TBR	V	PIT
06/26/2021	HFD	V	TBR
07/02/2021	TBR	V	CHS
07/07/2021	MIA	V	TBR
07/13/2021	TBR	V	HFD
07/17/2021	MIA	V	TBR
07/24/2021	TBR	V	LDN
07/31/2021	CLT	V	TBR
08/06/2021	NY	V	TBR
08/13/2021	TBR	V	HFD
08/18/2021	PIT	V	TBR
08/23/2021	LDN	V	TBR
08/28/2021	TBR	V	CLT
09/03/2021	TBR	V	OAK
09/07/2021	CHS	V	TBR
09/11/2021	TBR	V	NY
09/18/2021	ATL	V	TBR
09/25/2021	HFD	V	TBR
10/02/2021	CHS	V	TBR
10/07/2021	TBR	V	CHS
10/10/2021	PIT	V	TBR
10/15/2021	TBR	V	NY
10/20/2021	TBR	V	MIA
10/23/2021	LDN	V	TBR
10/30/2021	LV	V	TBR

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FC TULSA

1155 South Elgin Ave,
Tulsa, OK 74120
www.fctulsa.com
P: (918) 297-6808

TEAM OUTLOOK

After the ownership change that saw the Craft Brothers take control of the club, everything FC Tulsa put into place was geared toward creating changes, both in the club's perception in its community, its performance on the field, and establishing itself as an essential part of city life.

In no short order, President James Cannon, Head Coach Michael Nsien and the club succeeded. Earning the first trip to the playoffs since 2017, and second overall in the club's history, Tulsa became a must-see team with a collection of talent that came through down the stretch to earn runner-up spot to San Antonio FC in Group D.

With that baseline set, the club has set about moving to the next level on the field in 2021. Tulsa added former U.S. Men's National Team forward Jerome Kiesewetter, El Salvador international Joaquin Rivas and Cuban international Jorge Corrales while retaining 2020 leading scorer Dario Suarez and midfielder Eric Bird. The goal now is to claim the first postseason victory in club history, and challenge for silverware at the end of 2021.



HEAD COACH



Michael Nsien

CONTACTS

PRESIDENT
James Cannon

CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER
Michael Schetzel

VP, TICKETING & CUSTOMER SERVICE
Jake Shaw

**HEAD OF OPERATIONS & FAN
ENGAGEMENT**
Wayne Farmer

HEAD OF MARKETING & BRAND
Lucy Gonzalez

HEAD OF CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS
Richard McCutchen

PRIMARY CONTACT
HEAD OF DIGITAL & COMMUNICATIONS
Austin Gwin
agwin@fctulsa.com
(325) 370-3304

KEY PLAYERS



Jerome Kiesewetter

Forward

Tulsa was one of the better teams from long-range in the 2020 Championship season, finishing third in the league with five of its 21 goals coming from outside the penalty area. That lack of a consistent threat in the box, however, means Kiesewetter could have a major impact on his arrival from Inter Miami CF. All 12 of the former U.S. Men's National Team player's goals for El Paso Locomotive FC came from inside the box, and if he can clean up in a similar manner at his new club, Tulsa could push up the scoring charts, as well as the standings.



Lebo Moloto

Midfielder

Acting as the central hub for the side's midfield, the impact Lebo Moloto made for FC Tulsa might not have registered as strongly in terms of goals and assists in his first season at the club, but instead set the tempo for where the club was going. Moloto led Tulsa averaging 54.4 passes per 90 minutes playing a more withdrawn midfield role, but he still created chances consistently, leading the team with 28 Key Passes. If the South African veteran regains his scoring touch in his new role, it would be a major boost to Tulsa as a whole.

2021 SCHEDULE

DATE	HOME		AWAY
04/24/2021	OKC	V	TUL
05/01/2021	TUL	V	SKC
05/08/2021	IND	V	TUL
05/19/2021	ATL	V	TUL
06/02/2021	SKC	V	TUL
06/06/2021	BHM	V	TUL
06/16/2021	TUL	V	SKC
06/19/2021	TUL	V	LOU
06/25/2021	RGV	V	TUL
07/02/2021	OKC	V	TUL
07/10/2021	TUL	V	LOU
07/17/2021	TUL	V	OKC
07/24/2021	MEM	V	TUL
07/28/2021	ATL	V	TUL
08/04/2021	TUL	V	IND
08/07/2021	TUL	V	BHM
08/14/2021	LOU	V	TUL
08/22/2021	BHM	V	TUL
08/25/2021	TUL	V	MEM
08/28/2021	TUL	V	ATL
09/03/2021	LOU	V	TUL
09/08/2021	TUL	V	IND
09/11/2021	TUL	V	BHM
09/18/2021	TUL	V	ATX
09/24/2021	SKC	V	TUL
10/02/2021	TUL	V	MEM
10/09/2021	TUL	V	ELP
10/16/2021	SA	V	TUL
10/20/2021	TUL	V	ATL
10/23/2021	IND	V	TUL
10/27/2021	MEM	V	TUL
10/30/2021	TUL	V	OKC

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The Official Ball Supplier of the USL Championship
www.select-sport.com/us

USL EXECUTIVE STAFF

Alec Papadakis

USL Chief Executive Officer

Papadakis has served as the USL's top executive since 2009. A former franchise attorney with four decades' worth of domestic and international experience, Papadakis is the CEO and Managing Partner of NuRock Soccer Holdings and a Pro Council representative on the U.S. Soccer Board of Directors.

A former player for the Atlanta Chiefs and Boston Minutemen, Papadakis had a long, successful career in the U.S. at both the professional and collegiate level. He helped Atlanta to a 1971 regular-season championship and Boston to a 1974 regular-season crown. Papadakis was a three-time, First Team All-American at Hartwick College (New York) and he also attended Ibero-American University in Mexico City before receiving his law degree at the University of Akron in 1976.

Papadakis' legal focus has been U.S. and European franchise transactions. He also has practiced in the area of commercial real estate, acquisitions, development, financing and leasing. He was the founder and first president of the Hellenic Franchise Association and holds affiliations with the Board of Advisors of International Quarterly, the International Franchise Association, the State Bar of Georgia, the American Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Directors for the Hellenic American Institute in Washington, D.C. In 2019, through Papadakis' leadership, the USL teamed with the Economist to host the Sports Business Summit for Southeast Europe in Athens, Greece. During Papadakis' tenure as the USL's CEO, the organization has expanded its professional membership by almost 400 percent and produced growth in league attendance over the past decade of 1,125 percent as the USL Championship and League One welcomed more than 3,000,000 fans during the 2019 campaign before last year's pandemic-affected season.

Jake Edwards

USL President

Edwards has served as USL President since March 2, 2015. Since his arrival at the USL, he has played an integral role in creating and implementing the league's long-term strategic plan, Destination 2020, which focused on expansion, the launch of media and commercial properties, the league's partnership with Major League Soccer and stadium development. Edwards oversees a significant portion of the 60-plus staff at the USL HQ in Tampa, Fla., as well as the daily servicing of its 40-plus professional clubs.

Edwards, who joined the USL as the league's Vice President in 2013, is a Manchester native and former professional soccer player whose career spanned 11 years, mostly for England-based clubs as well as USL Championship side the Charleston Battery. Edwards played collegiately for James Madison University in Virginia.

After completing his MBA from Warwick Business School in 2009, while also serving as commercial manager for Solihull Moors Football Club, Edwards was hired by Octagon, the global sports sponsorship agency. Based in Octagon's London office, Edwards served as a business strategy consultant in the company's rights holder side of the business.

Robert Hoskins, Chairman

Alec Papadakis, Chief Executive Officer

Jake Edwards, President

Justin Papadakis, COO & Chief Real Estate Officer

Court Jeske, Executive Vice President

Brett Luy, Executive Vice President

Karen Gittens, Chief Financial Officer

Garrison Mason, Vice President, General Counsel

Robert Fountain, Associate General Counsel

Lizzie Seedhouse, Senior Vice President, Digital, Emerging Technology & Strategy

Steven Short, Senior Vice President, USL League One

Josh Keller, Senior Vice President, Corporate Development & Partnerships

Ryan Madden, Senior Vice President, Communications & Community

John Cochol, Vice President, Club Services

Domenic Notarfrancesco, Vice President, Consumer Products

Rachel Bukszar, Vice President, People

Dan Holman, Vice President, Club Expansion & Real Estate

Matt Reda, Vice President, Corporate Development

Liam O'Connell, Technical Director

Cory Bernstine, Senior Director, Strategy

Curtis Walker, Senior Director, Corporate Partnerships

Adam Satz, Vice President, Digital Solutions

Dan Lohrs, Senior Director, Operations, USL Championship

Casey Mills, Director, Operations, USL League One

Eric Centner, Director, Compliance

Kelly Kearney, Director, Business Development

Justin Papadakis

USL COO & USL Chief Operating Officer

Papadakis joined the USL in 2014 when he was named President of Commercial Ventures in December of 2014. In May of 2016, he began his role as the league's Chief Operating Officer before in the past year adding the title of Chief Real Estate Officer as he oversees one of the key areas of the league's growth in future years.

Arriving by way of DDR Corp, now called SITE Centers, Papadakis served as the real estate company's leasing director for three years before advancing as the company's business development director. Papadakis holds a Juris Doctorate from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law and earned a dual degree in Public Policy and Economics at Duke University, where he also played four seasons for the Blue Devils' Men's Soccer program. Papadakis is also a member of YPO, New York Metro Chapter.

Since joining the organization, Papadakis has led USL's expansion efforts across the USL Championship and League One. Over the past four years he has facilitated an unprecedented surge in soccer-specific and mixed-use stadium developments anchoring economic live, work and play projects across the country, extending far beyond the pitch while amplifying the fan experience for current and future USL communities.

Court Jeske

USL Executive Vice President

Jeske joined the USL as Executive Vice President in January of 2019, bringing his extensive experience in the North American soccer industry to the organization's senior management team.

Jeske previously served as both the Vice President of International Business for Major League Soccer & Soccer United Marketing, where for eight years he was a key figure in the organization's strategic orchestration of international events for CONCACAF, the Mexican National Team, the United States Men's and Women's National Teams and elite clubs throughout Europe.

Jeske then served as the founding Chief Executive Officer and a minority owner of Nashville SC as it launched its professional era in the USL Championship, during which time the club set Championship records for season ticket sales in an inaugural season and corporate partnership revenue.

Since joining the USL, Jeske has played a key role in positioning the organization for the new decade, including leading the completion of a new United States media rights agreement with ESPN and new agreements with Premier Partners to lead the organization's commercial representation.

Selected to the Sports Business Journal's prestigious Forty Under 40 list of leading young sports executives in 2018, Jeske is also currently a member of the Soccerex USA Advisory Board. He graduated with a degree in Business Management from the University of Oklahoma before earning the FIFA Master-M.A. in International Sports Business from the International Center for Sports Studies.

Scott Stewart, Director, Communications & Public Relations

Matthew Calvo, Director, Creative Services

Sam Schuler, Director, Digital Solutions

Nicholas Murray, Director, Editorial

Nick Papadakis, Director, Merchandising

Matthew Fischer, Senior Media Coordinator

Michael Cohen, Media Consultant

Marcus Myrick, Senior Director, Club Services

Shannon Amely, Ticketing & Club Services Manager

Kelsi Steele, Senior Manager, Social Media & Content

Cameron Koubek, Manager, Communications & Public Relations

Nina Cusmano, Specialist, Social Media

Tyler Tetzlaff, Coordinator, Social Media

Sonjai Persaud, Graphic Artist

TJ Grier, Graphic Artist

David Wright, Motion Graphic Designer & Video Editor

Clay Benjamin, Creative Services Coordinator

Natalie Longroy, Junior Video Producer/Editor

Sophia Carbone, Manager, Digital Services

Lianna Riley, Coordinator, Digital Services

Julie Fogarty, Coordinator, Digital Services

Tania Kerr, Director, Administration

Clare Glenn, Senior Manager, Contracts

William Gillette, Manager, Finance & Accounting

Samantha Killilea, Human Resources Generalist

Brittany Stolzenberg, Senior Manager, Events

CHAMPIONSHIP RULES

DISCIPLINE & CONDUCT

League Disciplinary Power

The League shall have the authority to suspend, fine, disqualify, or otherwise discipline players, team officials, or competing Teams for On-Field Misconduct and for off-field misconduct deemed by the League to be detrimental to the League, any Team, or the sport of soccer (“**Detrimental Off-Field Misconduct**”). “**On-Field Misconduct**” shall include misconduct that occurs in any stadium or playing facility, in and/or around the stadium or playing facility (involving any person(s) or property in or around the stadium or playing facility), including, but not limited to: the playing field, locker rooms, parking lots, spectator stands or other spectator facilities, and other back-of-house and underground areas, including those used by television production and other media), and which occurs at, during or in connection with any match or tournament in which the player competes.

The League Disciplinary Committee

The League Disciplinary Committee is a panel of League Directors covering the competition, operations, and compliance departments. As delegates of the President, this committee makes decisions about discipline for Detrimental Off-Field Misconduct and On-Field Misconduct, subject to the review of the President. The League Disciplinary Committee makes decisions with a view towards allowing for a competitive, but fair, environment for all Teams to compete against each other.

Independent Disciplinary Panel

The Independent Disciplinary Panel is comprised of three outside members, consisting of a former professional coach, a former professional referee, and a former professional player. This panel is charged with the responsibility of reviewing any disciplinary matters deemed worthy of increased disciplinary measures (i.e. escalating a yellow card to a red card). Any disciplinary decisions rendered by the Independent Disciplinary Panel will be final and cannot be appealed.

Disciplinary Process

The League Disciplinary Committee reviews disciplinary issues (including all send-offs) reported by the Referee, in addition to other incidents of On-Field Misconduct or Detrimental Off-Field Misconduct. The Disciplinary Committee conducts this review using match videos, official reports, individual accounts, and other pertinent information. Depending on the timeliness of the reports and match videos, the Disciplinary Committee will make every effort to issue rulings on cases in advance of the Team’s next League Game.

Player Caution Accumulation

Players exceeding the caution accumulation plateau(s) will begin serving their suspension in their next match. If a player receives two cautions in one match, these cautions will not count toward a player’s caution accumulation total. The USL also reserves the right to reevaluate player accumulation plateaus for player eligibility rulings, including playoffs, with the reserved power to postpone suspensions to the following season.

Players and staff accumulating the following number of caution/yellow cards throughout the season will be sanctioned as follows:

- Five total cautions - Fine
- Eight total cautions - one game suspension and fine
- 11 total cautions - two game suspension and fine
- 14 total cautions - three game suspension and fine

Caution accumulation suspensions can only affect regular-season games. For those players who reach a caution accumulation suspension at the end of the season that suspension will not be implemented in any potential playoff games that season. Accumulations will be wiped clean at the end of the season. If a player exceeds 14 cautions in a season, the league reserves the right to fine and suspend the player at its discretion.

Good Behavior Incentive

A player will automatically reduce his yellow card accumulation total by one yellow card each time he appears in five consecutive league games without a card or supplemental discipline. For clarity, a player cannot have a negative yellow card accumulation total; the Good Behavior Incentive reset can only reset to a zero-card total. This incentive will be automatically applied a maximum of three times through the course of the USL season.

For example, a player on his third caution of the season appearing in five consecutive league matches without receiving a card or supplemental discipline removes one (1) caution from his cumulative total, leaving the player with a total of two. This player now has two remaining Good Behavior Incentive opportunities for the 2018 Season. If that player completes five more consecutive league matches without receiving a card or supplemental discipline, one more caution is removed from his cumulative total leaving the player a total of one caution and one more Good Behavior Incentive opportunity.

Serving Suspensions During the Regular Season

Any player and/or coach sent off/dismissed during a regular season game will be fined and will be suspended from the next league regular season game. A person who serves as both player and coach may not return as a player or a coach until the suspension has been served. For the purposes of determining accumulations and game suspensions, any games that count as part of a team’s official League schedule shall be utilized.

Final Regular Season Game Send-off

Any player or coach sent off in a final regular season match must serve the suspension in the first playoff match, unless the season is over, in which case the suspension will be served in the team’s first League game the following season.

Suspension during the Playoffs

Any player and/or coach that is sent off or dismissed during the playoffs will be suspended from, at minimum, the next playoff game, unless the season is over, in which case the suspension will be served, at minimum, in the team’s first League game the following season.

Major Game Misconduct

The League Disciplinary Committee, in its sole and absolute discretion, may impose discipline (including fines and suspensions) against players, coaches or other team staff for Major Game Misconduct, regardless of whether the misconduct in question resulted in a card being awarded by the Match Official or was included in the Referee Game Report. "Major Game Misconduct" is defined by the League and may include, without limitation, fighting, provoking a fight, criticizing Match Officials with words or gestures, entering the Match Officials' locker room, physical contact with Match Officials separate from Referee Assault, using excessive force, deliberate attempts to injure, spitting, provoking crowd disorders, profane language that can be heard by the crowd or broadcast audience, obscene gestures, racist, homophobic, or derogatory comments, improper conduct during the national anthem, taunting, abuse of spectators and others, failure to leave the field when instructed by the Match Official to do so, improper conduct following the award of a card, excessive delay tactics, excessive and obvious feigning of injuries, or other unsportsmanlike conduct detrimental to the League and the sport of soccer in general.

Red Card and Second Yellow Card Appeal

Within 24 hours after the completion of a match, a team may request a review of a red card or the second yellow card, if a player or staff member receives two yellow cards in a match, to rectify a case where a serious and obvious error has occurred.

Suspension and Fine Appeal

Within 24 hours after the USL Championship distributes its Weekly Discipline Report, a team may appeal a suspension and/or fine that is greater than the established minimum fine and suspension amounts. The USL Championship must receive the appeal in writing via email.

Cross League and Competition Suspensions

Players joining the USL (on loan or through transfer) may be subject to any suspension that has been levied by other competitions. The USL shall determine if it will permit a player who receives a red card or other supplemental discipline in another competition for an egregious act to play in USL matches. As per USSF policy, supplemental discipline issued for referee assault/abuse shall preclude the suspended individual from participating in any soccer competition until the suspension has expired.

Players who are suspended in any cup competition such as the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, Canadian Championship or CONCACAF Champions League are not automatically suspended in the USL. The USL will independently review the action and suspension and have the right to implement supplemental discipline in the USL Disciplinary Committee, if it determines the player's behavior was deemed to be egregious.

CHAMPIONSHIP ROSTER REGULATIONS

Player Classifications

A. Professional Player

A professional player is a player who signs a professional registration form with the team's applicable Federation, a professional player contract with the USL Championship and receives, or has received, payment beyond actual and necessary expenses for playing soccer. Players on loan are not deemed professional players unless there is not a right to recall. A professional player may only be registered with one team and may play only for the team to which he is registered, except in the following two instances:

1. Team has filed a completed loan agreement and supplement with the League Office.
2. Player competes for another team in an exhibition, all-star, benefit or some other non-League game with the consent of the team holding his contract.

B. Academy Players

In addition to the 30 Active Players allowed on the Master Roster, a team may register up to five (5) active Academy Players, which do not count against the 30 players on the Master Roster and are allowed to participate in all competitions. After the first five Academy Players rostered, Academy Players will count against the Master Roster.

To be considered an Academy Player, all of the following must be in place: a) player is under the age of 21 as of the official start date of the current season, b) player cannot compete (or have ever previously have competed) in any NCAA or NAIA university or college soccer program, and c) player has never been signed or registered as a professional soccer player as recognized by FIFA. The Academy Player must play for a club which conducts its activities (home games and/or training) within the team's franchise territory or play for a club which has a documented affiliation with the team. In the latter scenario, the affiliated club outside the territory of the team must not be in the territory of another Championship team, and the team must register all documented affiliate clubs with the League Office prior to the season or upon completion of the affiliation agreement. Additionally, teams with MLS affiliations can use the Academy Players of their MLS affiliate.

No Academy Player may register or participate as an Academy Player with more than one Championship club during a season. Academy players may not be loaned.

Academy Players that are classified as international count against a team's maximum of seven international players. Academy Players must be registered as an amateur with the USL Championship team or its formally-recognized MLS affiliate. Teams may make Academy Players active or inactive on the Master Roster. Inactive Academy Players do not count towards the roster maximum or the international player maximum. There cannot be more than five (5) Academy Players listed on the Game Day Lineup.

CHAMPIONSHIP RULES

Master Roster

A. Master Roster Guidelines

The Master Roster consists of up to 30 Active Players and is the official player roster of the team, as set by the USL Championship. Inactive Players do not count towards a team's Master Roster.

A maximum of seven (7) players on the Master Roster may be International Players, pending the trade or sale of International Roster Spots.

A professional team must carry 12 or more professional players on its Master Roster. Each club is allowed two Permanent Loan Assignment spots that count toward this minimum. These slots can be filled by players from any league, and these players cannot be recalled for any reason to meet the standard. Any violation of this standard will result in a fine being assessed at the League's discretion. Players loaned from leagues other than MLS with no right to recall also count toward this minimum.

Active Players consist of properly registered players on USL Championship contracts, players in on loan, and active Academy Players. Players who are signed to a USL Championship Standard Professional Player Contract and are not in on loan can only be active on the roster.

The only players that can be made inactive are players out on loan, in on-loan, or Academy Players. Inactive Players do not count against a team's International Player limit. In the interest of clarity, players on USL Championship Professional contracts cannot be made inactive.

B. Master Roster Changes

Whenever a team makes a change to its Master Roster, notification must be sent to USL Registration. Changes are not approved until the USL Championship confirms via e-mail.

C. Master Roster Freeze

No incoming transaction or player movement is allowed after the Roster Freeze date, including but not limited to: signing a player, receiving a player on loan, changing a player's active/inactive status, and/or replacing players. All trades, transfers and/or loans between teams must be finalized and approved by the USL Championship prior to this time. The USL Championship will not allow "deals in progress" or "extensions" to go beyond the deadline for any reason.

For purposes of visas and other pending documentation for incoming players, ALL documents must be approved by the USL Championship, and if warranted, by Major League Soccer and the U.S. Soccer Federation, prior to the Roster Freeze deadline. All players must be completely active on the Master Roster to compete in the USL Championship for the remainder of the season.

The date of the Roster Freeze is September 24th, 2021 at 5 p.m. Eastern Time.

Any MLS player legitimately on the final Master Roster of a USL Championship team at the time of the Roster Freeze date will be permitted to compete for the Championship for the rest of the season, regardless of whether or not that player is subsequently traded or transferred to another MLS team. In this instance, a newly executed loan agreement is required by the USL Championship. However, if a player is sold or released from his contract with MLS, this will terminate the player's loan with the USL Championship team.

Any field player on loan from any other team (including intra-League loans) must play a minimum of five (5) games during the regular season to be eligible to play in the playoffs. One of these games must occur prior to the roster freeze date. This standard does not apply to goalkeepers.

Any Championship player who is sold to an MLS team after the Roster Freeze deadline may rejoin the Championship team on loan for the remainder of the season, as long as he assumes the spot on the roster he vacated when he was sold by the club. As long as the player played in a minimum of five (5) games during the season, either prior or after being sold, he is eligible to play in the playoffs.

SPECIAL EXEMPTION (GOALKEEPERS): In the unlikely event that a team is reduced to a single "available and healthy" goalkeeper due to National Team call-up or medically-verifiable injury, the team may petition the USL Championship in writing to be permitted to add a backup goalkeeper to its Master Roster. This may only be done in the event that at least two eligible and healthy goalkeepers are active with the club, participating in regular team activities, not on loan with another team, and listed on the final Master Roster submitted at the time of the Roster Freeze date. This backup goalkeeper will be permitted to remain on the team's roster until such time that one or more of the originally rostered goalkeepers becomes available and is able to compete. The USL Championship will have the power to reject the addition of a goalkeeper in this situation, if it feels its primary intent is to create a competitive advantage.

Player Loans

Loans may not extend beyond the length of the guaranteed contract or option term, provided the option has been exercised. Loan cancellation terms are outlined in the Loan Agreement. Academy Players may not be loaned.

Loan Guidelines

Championship > Championship: Each team is permitted to receive or loan a maximum of two players under contract from/to each Championship team in any given season. An individual player may not be intra-league loaned more than one time per season.

Championship > MLS: There is no restriction on the number of Championship players a team may send to compete in MLS. All loaned players shall remain on the Championship team's Master Roster. Additionally, for players to move freely between the two clubs throughout the season, the Championship and MLS clubs must have a documented affiliation with one another.

MLS > Championship: There is no restriction on the number of players on loan a Championship team may have from an MLS team at any given time. The team must have space on its Master Roster to add any player on loan. There is restriction on the total number of MLS players which compete on a given Championship team during the season. Additionally, for players to move freely between the two clubs throughout the season, the Championship and MLS clubs must have a

documented affiliation with one another.

Championship > League One: There is no restriction on the number of Championship players a team may send to compete in League One. All loaned players shall remain on the Championship Team's Master Roster. Additionally, for players to move freely between the two clubs throughout the season, the Championship and League One clubs have a documented affiliation with one another.

League One > Championship: There is no restriction on the number of players on loan a Championship team may have from a League One team at any given time. The team must have space on its Master Roster to add any player on loan. There is no restriction on the total number of League One players which compete on a given Championship team during the season. Additionally, for players to move freely between the two clubs throughout the season, the Championship and League One clubs must have a documented affiliation with one another.

Loan Players in the Playoffs

A loan player must compete (play in a match, not just be rostered) in at least five regular season matches for a specific Championship team to be eligible for the playoffs with that team. One of those games must occur prior to the Roster Freeze.

23-Man Game Day Player Pool

All players must be rostered (i.e. registered with the League and Federation) and active prior to their inclusion in a Team's 23-Man Game Day Player Pool. Suspended players cannot be included in the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool. Should a player be successfully rostered (provided all registration paperwork and ITC cleared before the applicable match registration deadline) and fall within the 48-24-hour window, they may be added to the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool; however, the change will be subject to the opposing team's approval in accordance with Master Roster Guidelines.

Teams are required to submit their 23-Man Game Day Player Pool of players that are available and active for a match 48-hours prior to each match. Between 48 and 24-hours prior to the match, any change to that Game Day Player Pool must be approved by the opposing team and the League. There will be no changes allowed to the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool less than 24 hours prior to a match. Failure to submit the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool 48 hours prior to the match will result in a minimum fine of \$500. Failure to submit the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool in alphabetical order will result in a minimum fine of \$50. All appropriate parties must be included on the correspondence for the standard to be met. All times are subject to change in accordance with the best interests of the game and in the spirit of the intent of this rule in the League's absolute discretion. The League reserves the right to override approvals or denials of the opposing team.

No player may be simultaneously active on the Master Roster of two separate teams in two different leagues. The only exception to this rule occurs if a player has been listed as active on a USL Championship team's 23-Man Game Day Player Pool, which is submitted to the League no later than 48 hours prior to the match. In such an instance, a player may remain active in both systems. Any player that does not meet this exception must be listed as inactive in the USL Championship registration system to participate on a separate team in a different league. No player may be listed on the active roster for two separate teams in two different leagues on the same day. Failure to meet this standard will result in a minimum fine of \$500.

If a player not included on the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool participates in the match in any capacity, including being available on the bench for selection, it will result in a minimum fine of \$1,000. On the day of the game, during the roster exchange, game day lineups must be cross-referenced with the 23-Man Game Day Player Pools from each club to ensure all players included on the lineup have also been included on the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool. In the event that any of the parties involved with the exchange identify that a player included on the lineup was not previously listed on the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool, the designated League contact listed on the match preview must be notified and the player will not be able to compete in the match. If this occurs, the team is permitted to replace the lineup spot with a player who has been included on the 23-Man Game Day Player Pool provided the opposing team has the same opportunity based on the number of available players at the match (i.e. the opposing team has 19 or more players available for selection). The home team and visiting team must also submit a copy of their Official Game Day Lineup to the League 60 minutes prior to the start of the match via the Teamworks platform to meet the standard.