



The United Soccer League is the largest professional soccer league in the United States and Canada, and the world with 29 teams in 19 U.S. states and three Canadian provinces. The USL has more than doubled in size since 2014 and built a stable, highly competitive professional soccer league on a national footprint with strong local ownership groups in major markets positioned for long-term success. The 2016 season marks the introduction of six teams – Bethlehem Steel FC, FC Cincinnati, Orlando City B, Rio Grande Valley FC, San Antonio FC and Swope Park Rangers KC. The USL’s teams are divided into two conferences – Eastern and Western – with each team playing 30 regular season games. In addition to league play, USL teams compete in the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup as well as various domestic and international exhibitions. The USL is the longest-standing professional affiliate member of U.S. Soccer.

History – The USL (formerly USL PRO) was formed when two existing professional leagues were combined into a single league property prior to the 2011 season. The league was designed to help ensure the long-term stability of professional soccer in North America, and featured 12 teams in a pair of six-team divisions during its initial campaign. Among the league’s founding members were six longtime USL clubs with more than 100 years of operation between them – the Charleston Battery, the Charlotte Eagles, the Harrisburg City Islanders, the Pittsburgh Riverhounds, the Richmond Kickers and the Rochester Rhinos.

Teams/Schedule – The USL’s 2016 regular season schedule features a 435-game slate kicking off on March 25. The league’s footprint is national but its schedule is highlighted by a regional approach designed to build rivalries. The 2016 USL Regular Season will be staged over 27 weeks, with the final day of the season set for September 25. The USL’s 29 teams are divided into two conferences -- Eastern and Western – with each team playing 30 games:

- **Eastern Conference:** Bethlehem Steel FC, Charleston Battery, Charlotte Independence, FC Cincinnati, FC Montreal, Harrisburg City Islanders, Louisville City FC, New York Red Bulls II, Orlando City B, Pittsburgh Riverhounds, Richmond Kickers, Rochester Rhinos, Toronto FC II, Wilmington Hammerheads FC.
- **Western Conference:** Arizona United SC, Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC, LA Galaxy II, OKC Energy FC, Orange County Blues FC, Portland Timbers 2, Real Monarchs SLC, Rio Grande Valley FC, Sacramento Republic FC, Saint Louis FC, San Antonio FC, Seattle Sounders FC 2, Swope Park Rangers KC, Tulsa Roughnecks FC, Vancouver Whitecaps FC 2.

Playoffs – The top eight teams from the Eastern Conference and Western Conference will advance to the 2016 USL Playoffs, with four weeks of postseason action set to crown the league’s next champion. The fixed-seed format concludes with the USL Championship, which is held at the venue of the conference champion with the best regular season record.

Major Milestone – Since the start of the 2015 season, the USL has nearly doubled in size going from 14 teams to 24 in 2015 and 29 in 2016 giving the league a combined MSA reach of 75 million people, 25% of America’s television households.

Logo – Introduced in 2015, the USL mark serves as the central pillar in a new design philosophy for the league. Inspired by the geometry of the field, its design cues are more akin to a 21st century startup than those of a monolithic sports league. Starting with the logo, the USL overhauled its identity to step forward as a league brand that is fit for its partners, clubs and fans as the dawn of a new era advances for the USL.

The simple shapes of the USL lettering appear as a stencil and hint at its flexible use. The new logo is

not a corporate logo: it is a tribal mark, something to be taken to the heart of each club's community, personalized, and worn with pride by allowing club versions.

USL 20/20 – The USL has implemented initiatives to improve the quality of the league both on and off the pitch with the vision, by 2020, of establishing one of the most internationally respected and sustainable professional soccer leagues that is both attractive and rewarding for players, investors, partners and fans.

In 2015, the USL announced a groundbreaking multi-year partnership designating global design, architecture, engineering and planning firm HOK as the Official Stadium Design Partner of the league. HOK will lead a stadium development, design and standards initiative supporting the league's strategic initiative to house all USL clubs in soccer-specific stadiums across North America by the end of the decade.

As the league's official stadium design partner, HOK will apply its venue design expertise to guide soccer-specific stadium development for expansion clubs and the renovation of current USL stadiums to increase capacities and amenities. HOK will also consult to the league and its clubs on maximizing venue revenue, developing ancillary programming and creating operational efficiencies.

Media Reach – Twenty five of the USL's 26 American teams are situated within the Nielsen Top 90 TV Market Universe with four teams in the Top 10, 12 teams in the Top 25 and 19 teams in the Top 50 markets across the country. The USL's three Canadian teams are situated in that country's Top 3 television markets.

All USL matches are broadcast live and in HD exclusively on Match Center at USLSoccer.com. The accessibility of live video showcases the league and its players, coaches, and fans, while connecting its clubs and partners to a global audience, and present them with opportunities to reach additional fans from throughout North America and the world.

Fan Base – The USL fan skews young (64% between ages of 18-44) and male (79%), comparable with MLS fans and the general population; a high proportion of them are college educated (91%), employed (87%) and with a high annual income (42% have household income of at least \$100K). USL fans are passionate about the game of soccer with a high number being current and former players with a strong interest in various soccer leagues. USL fans are highly engaged with the league with more than three-quarters attending at least two games in 2015, while 45% are season ticket holders. The USL fan is tech savvy with more than one-third consuming USL-related news via digital and social platforms on a regular basis.

Key Executives – Rob Hoskins, Chairman; Alec Papadakis, CEO/Managing Partner; Jake Edwards, President; Justin Papadakis, Chief Operating Officer; Tom Veit, Chief Marketing Officer; David Wagner, Vice President, Competition & Operations; Steven Short, Vice President, Business Development.

U.S. Open Cup – The Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, recognized as U.S. Soccer's National Club Championship, is an annual competition open to all amateur and professional soccer teams affiliated with U.S. Soccer. The tournament has crowned a champion for 102 consecutive years dating from 1914. In 1999, the competition was renamed to honor American soccer pioneer Lamar Hunt.

A total of 17 USL teams are set to play in the tournament in 2016: Arizona United SC, Charleston Battery, Charlotte Independence, FC Cincinnati, Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC, Harrisburg City Islanders, Louisville City FC, OKC Energy FC, Orange County Blues FC, Pittsburgh Riverhounds, Richmond Kickers, Rochester Rhinos, Sacramento Republic FC, Saint Louis FC, San Antonio FC, Tulsa Roughnecks FC and Wilmington Hammerheads FC.

With a record number of 92 teams participating overall, the USL begins Open Cup play in the Second Round (May 18). This year's winning team will receive \$250,000, a berth in the 2017-18 CONCACAF Champions' League and have its name engraved on the historic Dewar Challenge Trophy, one of the oldest nationally contested trophies in American team sports.

The USL's Rochester Rhinos are the last non-MLS team to win the U.S. Open Cup (1999) and the USL's Charleston Battery were the last non-MLS team to advance to the Final (2008).

MLS Partnership -- Major League Soccer and the USL announced a groundbreaking, multi-year partnership in early 2013 designed to enhance the development of professional players in North America.

Three years later, the partnership between the two leagues cannot be viewed as anything other than a resounding success. With the 2015 season seeing full integration between the two leagues - with MLS clubs either partnering with current USL clubs or entering their own side in the USL - both leagues have seen positives on and off the field.

2014 saw the addition of the LA Galaxy II to the USL, the first team in league history to be owned and operated by an MLS club.

The Galaxy II's success prompted seven additional MLS clubs to enter their own sides for 2015. For 2016, the Philadelphia Union have announced a club in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, and the Houston Dynamo are partnering with newly-announced Rio Grande Valley FC, which is constructing its own 10,000-seat soccer-specific stadium. Sporting Kansas City and Orlando City SC will also enter teams in the 2016 season, as the Swope Park Rangers and Orlando City B take to the field for the first time.

Overall, there will be 11 USL teams owned and operated by MLS clubs and nine USL-MLS affiliations among the 29 USL clubs.

PDL - Owned and operated by the USL, the PDL is the proven developmental leader in North American soccer's evolving tiered structure. The PDL features 67 teams within four conferences throughout the United States and Canada in 2016, including 12 teams affiliated with USL or Major League Soccer clubs. The PDL has proven to be an important stepping-stone for top professionals now playing throughout the world, with 70 percent of all MLS draftees having PDL experience. The PDL season consists of 14 regular season matches for each team, seven home and seven away, and provides elite collegiate players the opportunity to taste a higher level of competition while maintaining their eligibility. In addition to league play, PDL teams compete in the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup as well as various exhibitions.