



GAME NOTES: [USL CHAMPIONSHIP REGULAR-SEASON MATCH 1]


Las Vegas Lights FC at Memphis 901 FC

1 p.m. PT


National: ESPN+

Local: KVVU-FOX (Las Vegas)

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LAS VEGAS LIGHTS FC
Dennis Sanchez
Cashman Field, Las Vegas, Nevada
Team Website



TICKETS

RECORD	HOME	AWAY	STREAK	LAST 5
0-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	--	--

A NEW ERA

Las Vegas Lights FC will kick off the new campaign on Saturday, March 9 when it visits Memphis 901 FC before its home opener against FC Tulsa on Saturday, March 16 at Cashman Field.

On January 27, 2024 - new Lights ownership in Jose Bautista was announced. Since then, the Club has added Sporting Director Gianleonardo Neglia and Head Coach Dennis Sanchez, who have assembled a new-look Lights squad for the 2024 campaign.

The club has added a number of exciting new players to this year's squad, including the Ghanaian forward Solomon Asante (a 2-time USL Championship Player of the Year), veteran English midfielder Charlie Adams (196 career USL Championship appearances), and the promising 20-year-old Dominican midfielder Edison Azcona (on loan from Inter Miami CF of MLS).

This week, ahead of the 2024 campaign, the Club announced several roster additions as the team takes shape.



Las Vegas Lights FC completes transfer agreement to acquire midfielder Valentin Noel from Austin FC II

Las Vegas Lights FC on Friday (March 8) announced it has completed a transfer agreement with Austin FC II of MLS NEXT Pro to acquire midfielder Valentin Noel ahead of the 2024 USL Championship season. The 24-year-old midfielder recorded six goals in 25 appearances for Austin FC II en route to his former side winning MLS NEXT Pro Cup in 2023 - a championship match in which he tallied en route to being named 2023 MLS NEXT Pro Cup MVP. The transaction is pending league and federation approval.

The transaction reunites Noel with Lights Head Coach Dennis Sanchez, who previously served as an assistant coach with Austin FC II during its championship season with Noel and the first-year side in MLS NEXT Pro.

“Adding Valentin Noel to Las Vegas Lights FC is an important moment in the new era of our club as he is a promising, young, talented player ready to contribute now to our roster,” said Lights Sporting Director Gianleonardo Neglia. “We believe Valentin is positioned to not only be a key piece of our roster immediately but also for multiple years to come and is already a high-caliber player at an early stage of his career. The significant investment from ownership in acquiring Valentin made this possible, and allows us to continue to build a roster we expect to compete for the postseason.”

Las Vegas Lights FC adds five additional players ahead of 2024 season kick-off tomorrow

Las Vegas, NV (March 8, 2024) - Las Vegas Lights FC announced it has added five additional players to its 2024 roster: goalkeeper Raiko Arozarena; defenders Edward “Eddy” Berumen and Maliek Howell; and midfielders Giovanni Aguilar and Alexander Romero. All five transactions are pending league and federation approval.

As a USL Academy signing, Romero will be able to train and compete for the Lights in the USL Championship and Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup while maintaining his NCAA eligibility. Arozarena, Aguilar, Berumen, Howell and joined the Lights as free agent signings.

Arozarena, 26, joins the Lights goalkeeping corps after gaining experience with USL-Championship side Tampa Bay Rowdies from 2021-2023, including a 2022 loan to USL League One side Forward Madison SC where he made 16 appearances. The Cuban international spent 2018-2020 with Mexican club Venados. After gaining international experience with Cuba’s Under-20 roster, Arozarena made his Senior Roster debut for Cuba in 2022 and has appeared four additional times with the Lions of the Caribbean.

Berumen, 22, previously secured USL-Championship experience while on loan with Sacramento Republic FC. The defender most recently completed his collegiate career at the University of California-Irvine. There, he recorded 35 appearances (27 starts) and recorded one goal and three assists,



Howell, 25, completed his NCAA career at Missouri State after recording 34 matches over three previous seasons with the Memphis Tigers. In the 2023 season, Missouri State outscored opponents 23-5 in games Howell played in. The defender joins the Lights with international experience as well, having been a member of Jamaica's Under-20 and U-23 sides before making his Senior Roster debut for Jamaica in 2022, securing two caps.

Aguilar, who turns 26 today (March 8), spent the 2022 and 2023 campaigns with Vancouver Whitecaps FC 2, recording 48 regular-season appearances, six goals and five assists. The midfielder made his First Team debut for Whitecaps FC in 2023 as well. The Sacramento Republic Academy product made 72 appearances with Cal State Northridge before being selected 49th overall by Vancouver in the 2022 MLS SuperDraft.

Romero, 19, makes a return to Vegas after previously making 14 regular-season appearances for the Lights in 2023 while on loan as a member of Major League Soccer's LAFC's Academy team. The midfielder has recorded a trio of appearances in U.S. Open Cup action as well. He has also earned seven caps and recorded one goal representing El Salvador's Under-20 team.

Las Vegas Lights FC adds three technical staff members

Las Vegas, NV (March 8, 2024) - Las Vegas Lights FC announced it has added three staff members to Head Coach Dennis Sanchez's staff: assistant coaches Gerson Echeverry and Ivan Mirkovic as well as goalkeeper coach Armando Quezada.

Echeverry's managerial career began in 2004 at the collegiate level where he spent 14 seasons at his alma mater, Seton Hall, including time as an assistant coach (2004-2011) before serving as Head Coach of the Pirates (2012-2017). Previously, Echeverry spent 2018-2023 with former USL-Championship side Rio Grande Valley FC where he served as an assistant coach and head coach during his time with RGVFC. Echeverry's professional soccer career in both indoor and outdoor sides spanned 1995-1999, including a 40-goal campaign as a forward with indoor side Harrisburg Heat in 1999.

Mirkovic entered the coaching ranks following the conclusion of his playing career from 2011-2018. He transitioned into a coaching role in 2019 when he became a player/coach with Fresno FC and served as head of analysis. The former midfielder previously played for Ventura County Fusion, Sacramento Republic, Orange County Blues, Saint Louis FC and Tulsa Roughnecks, earning more than 115 appearances in USL-Championship action.

Quezada, the club's newest goalkeeper coach, played professionally from 2018-2022 as the former keeper spent time with Detroit City FC, Los Angeles Force, San Antonio FC and Greenville Triumph SC. During the 2023 collegiate season, he served as an Assistant Coach with Cal State San Bernardino.



Las Vegas Lights FC adds four players to 2024 roster on Tuesday

Las Vegas, NV (March 5, 2024) – Las Vegas Lights FC announced it has added four new players to its 2024 roster: defenders Gennaro Nigro and Hayden Sargis; midfielder JC Ngando; and forward Khorri Bennett. Bennett and Nigro join the Club as new signings while Ngando (Vancouver Whitecaps FC) and Sargis (D.C. United) join the Lights on loan for the 2024 USL-Championship season. All four transactions are pending league and federation approval.

Nigro, 23, previously played for Real Monarchs (MLS NEXT Pro) after beginning his professional career in Europe with Italian side Potenza Calcio (Potenza) back in 2020. Playing primarily at leftback, Nigro is a New Jersey born, New York Red Bull Academy product joins the Lights having made 14 appearances with Real Monarchs in 2023. Previously, Nigro appeared 20 times for Italian powerhouse AS Roma's Under-19 team.

Sargis, 21, has made 61 USL-Championship appearances since 2020, including gaining experience with League sides Sacramento FC (33 appearances) Loudoun United FC (21), and Phoenix Rising (7), playing the overwhelming majority of matches at centerback. Last season, Sargis recorded two Lamar Hunt US Open Cup appearances for D.C. United and made two MLS regular season appearances while earning three appearances for Loudoun United.

Ngando, 24, was originally selected by Whitecaps FC as a Generation Adidas player 13th overall in the 2023 MLS SuperDraft. During his rookie season, he made 14 appearances in all competitions with the first team, including the MLS regular season, Concacaf Champions League, Canadian Championship, and Leagues Cup.

Bennett, 26, previously laced-up for USL-1 side Charlotte Independence and notched six goals in 30 appearances in 2023 as well as recording a goal in two US Open Cup appearances for the same side last year. Over the last two seasons in Charlotte, Bennett has scored 17 goals and added three assists in regular-season action with the majority of his matches coming in starts at forward.



WHEN AND WHERE: Kickoff is at 1 p.m. PT at AutoZone Park in Memphis, Tenn.

WHERE TO WATCH: The match will be available to stream on ESPN+.

2023 RECORDS AND STANDINGS: Las Vegas: 3-21-10 (19 points, 12th West), Memphis: 14-10-10 (52 points, 4th East)

PREVIOUS MEETING: The Lights and Memphis 901 played to a 2-2 draw last April in Memphis. Lucas Stauffer and Emmanuel Ledesma scored for Las Vegas, while Jeremy Kelly and Luiz Fernando tallied for the hosts.

FRESH START: Las Vegas enters the 2024 campaign with a major overhaul from last season. Former Major League Baseball player José Bautista recently became the new owner, while Gianleonardo Neglia and Dennis Sanchez have taken over as Sporting Director and Head Coach, respectively.

HEADED WEST: After spending its first five USL Championship seasons in the Eastern Conference, Memphis joins the West with the arrivals of North Carolina FC and Rhode Island FC.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING:

Las Vegas Lights Head Coach Dennis Sanchez:

"With our identity and what we're trying to build right now, we want to be the protagonist, we want to be in control of the ball and in control of space. We want teams to have to adapt to us...If you were to come out and watch us play, the goal is for us to be in our attacking half as much as we can and have sustained attacks over a period of time where teams feel like they can't get out, there's a level of suffering, and through different ways of arriving we're creating a high amount of goalscoring opportunities."

Las Vegas Lights Sporting Director Gianleonardo Neglia:

"We expect to be competitive from Day One. We're not shying away from that. Obviously, we have had our challenges in terms of timing and when we started, but that in no way is an excuse. We feel that we have assembled a competitive team to take the field and we expect to be competing for a playoff spot."



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT - 20 DAYS OF MISC TEAM NOTES - ADDITIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

In addition to the acquisitions and announcements on the preceding pages, a rundown of the announcements and signings the Club made in under three weeks under new leadership which began with new ownership (January 27) and new Sporting Director (Feb 2) + Head Coach (Jan. 29).

Las Vegas Lights FC selected for national television spotlight

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/27/las-vegas-lights-fc-selected-for-national-television-spotlight/>

February 27, 2024

Las Vegas Lights and Global Apparel Brand hummel Sign Multi-Year Apparel Partnership

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/29/las-vegas-lights-and-global-apparel-brand-hummel-sign-multi-year-apparel-partnership/>

February 29, 2024

Las Vegas Lights FC signs College Cup champion Shawn Smart

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/26/las-vegas-lights-fc-signs-college-cup-champion-shawn-smart/>

February 26, 2024

USL Championship legend Solomon Asante leads trio of new Las Vegas Lights FC signings

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/23/usl-championship-legend-solomon-asante-leads-trio-of-new-las-vegas-lights-fc-signings/>

February 23, 2024

Las Vegas Lights FC acquires Nicholas Ammeter from Swiss club FC Wil

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/22/las-vegas-lights-fc-acquires-nicholas-ammeter-from-swiss-club-fc-wil/>

February 22, 2024

Las Vegas Lights FC acquires Dominican Republic international Edison Azcona from Inter Miami CF

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/19/las-vegas-lights-fc-acquires-dominican-republic-international-edison-azcona-from-inter-miami-cf/>

February 19, 2024

Las Vegas Lights FC welcomes three new signings for 2024 season

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/16/las-vegas-lights-fc-welcomes-three-new-signings-for-2024-season/>

February 16, 2024

Las Vegas Lights FC adds quartet of new players

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/13/las-vegas-lights-fc-adds-quartet-of-new-players/>

February 13, 2024

Las Vegas Lights FC acquire midfielder Charlie Adams via transfer from FC Tulsa

<https://www.lasvegaslightsfc.com/news/2024/02/07/las-vegas-lights-fc-acquire-midfielder-charlie-adams-via-transfer-from-fc-tulsa/>

February 7, 2024



2024 USL Championship Regular-Season Schedule	
Saturday, March 9 1:00 PM @ Memphis 901 FC AutoZone Park	Saturday, May 11 5:30 PM @ San Antonio FC Toyota Field
Saturday, March 16 5:00 PM Vs FC Tulsa Cashman Field	Saturday, May 18 7:30 PM Vs Las Vegas Lights FC Louisville City FC
Saturday, March 23 5:00 PM Vs El Paso Locomotive FC Cashman Field	Saturday, May 25 4:30 PM @ Tampa Bay Rowdies Al Lang Stadium
Saturday, March 30 7:00 PM @ Oakland Roots Pioneer Stadium	Saturday, June 1 7:30 PM vs Phoenix Rising FC Cashman Field
Saturday, April 6 7:30 PM Vs San Antonio FC Cashman Field	Saturday, June 8 7:30 PM Vs Miami Cashman Field
Saturday, April 13 7:00 PM @ Monterey Bay Cardinale Stadium	Friday, June 14 4:00 PM @ Loudoun United FC Segra Field
Saturday, April 20 5:00 PM Vs Rhode Island FC Cashman Field	Tuesday, June 18 7:30 PM Las Vegas Lights FC vs Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC Cashman Field
Saturday, April 27 1:00 PM @ Charleston Battery Patriots Point	Saturday, June 22 4:00 PM vs Memphis 901 FC Cashman Field
Saturday, May 4	Saturday, June 29 7:30 PM Vs Pittsburgh Riverhounds SC



<p>7:30 PM Vs New Mexico United Cashman Field</p> <p>Wednesday, July 3 7:30 PM @ Sacramento Republic FC Heart Health Park</p> <p>Friday, July 12 6:00 PM @ El Paso Locomotive FC Southwest University Park</p> <p>Friday, July 26 6:00 PM @ Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC Weidner Field</p> <p>Wednesday, July 31 6:00 PM @ New Mexico United Isotopes Park</p> <p>Saturday, August 10 7:30 PM Vs Detroit City FC Cashman Field</p> <p>Saturday, August 17 4:00 PM @ Hartford Athletic Trinity Health Stadium</p> <p>Saturday, August 24 7:30 PM Vs Indy Eleven Cashman Field</p> <p>Saturday, August 31 7:00 PM @ Orange County SC Championship Soccer Stadium</p>	<p>Cashman Field</p> <p>Wednesday, September 11 5:30 PM @ FC Tulsa ONEOK Field</p> <p>Saturday, September 14 7:30 PM Vs Monterey Bay Cashman Field</p> <p>Saturday, September 21 7:30 PM Vs Sacramento Republic FC Cashman Field</p> <p>Saturday, September 28 7:30 PM @ Phoenix Rising FC Phoenix Rising Stadium at 38th St/Washington</p> <p>Saturday, October 5 7:30 PM Vs Orange County SC Cashman Field</p> <p>Sunday, October 13 2:00 PM @ Birmingham Legion FC Protective Stadium</p> <p>Saturday, October 19 7:30 PM Vs Oakland Roots Cashman Field</p> <p>Saturday, October 26 4:00 PM @ North Carolina FC WakeMed Soccer Park</p>
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OWNERSHIP



José Bautista

Over a 15-year career in Major League Baseball, Bautista was one of the most feared sluggers of his era, with 344 career home runs. He played for eight clubs, most notably the Toronto Blue Jays, who recently awarded him the “Level of Excellence” to recognize his outstanding achievements over his ten seasons in Toronto. He was named an MLB All-Star six years in a row from 2010-15 and twice led the majors in home runs, in 2010 and 2011, the same years he won the Hank Aaron Award.

Born and raised in the Dominican Republic, Bautista represented his home country at the 2020 Summer Olympics (delayed until 2021 due to COVID-19) in Tokyo, Japan. His leadership helped the D.R. earn a bronze medal, punctuated by a walk-off hit and his signature bat flip that sealed the win over Israel to secure the team’s place in the semifinals.

Since his retirement from professional baseball, Bautista has established himself as an active and thoughtful investor, board member, philanthropist and entrepreneur. His on-field prowess and reputation as an ethical businessman has led to partnerships with significant brands, including Audi, Hublot, Coca-Cola, TD Bank, Fanatics, General Mills, The Players Tribune, Silver Jeans, Booster Juice (Canada), Pizza Pizza (Canada) and New Balance.



Bautista was an early equity partner, lead investor, and board member for Marucci Sports, a baseball equipment startup that was sold to Compass Diversified Holdings in 2020. Additional business interests include stakes in Canada Goose, which went public in 2017, and Endy Sleep, which was acquired by Sleep Country in 2018, and currently serves as a Partner and Senior Advisor to Aquilance, a leading household financial management firm that assists successful individuals, entrepreneurs and families to make better-informed financial decisions and save time on administrative tasks.

Bautista is passionate about supporting the community and has committed himself as a resource to athletes around the world. He founded the Bautista Family Education Fund in 2011, which provides support and assistance to student-athletes aspiring to attend university programs in the United States and Canada.



Joins Lights' front office having most recently worked as Assistant Sporting Director at Venezia FC

LAS VEGAS – Las Vegas Lights FC today announced the appointment of Gianleonardo Neglia as the club's new Sporting Director.

"I am delighted to have Gianleonardo join the Las Vegas Lights as our new Sporting Director," said Lights owner José Bautista. "His experience over the past several years in European soccer at one of Italy's most forward-thinking clubs and his knowledge of the North American sporting landscape will be a tremendous asset as he works alongside Head Coach Dennis Sanchez in building our club on the field."

Neglia joins the Lights' front office having most recently served as the Assistant Sporting Director at Venezia FC of Italy's Serie B. Venezia FC currently sits in third place in Serie B and is in contention for automatic promotion to Serie A at the end of the current campaign.

"I am beyond excited to be joining Las Vegas Lights FC, and humbled to be the club's new Sporting Director," said Sporting Director Gianleonardo Neglia. "I'd like to thank our owner, José Bautista, for this incredible opportunity. There is plenty of work to be done, but we can't wait to get started. There is no city in the world like Las Vegas and I am confident that we can deliver a team that this city and community can be proud of."



First-time Head Coach arrives from Austin FC, brings experience from Sacramento Republic FC, Charleston Battery

LAS VEGAS – Las Vegas Lights FC announced on Monday the appointment of Dennis Sanchez as the club's new Head Coach ahead of the 2024 USL Championship season. The appointment is the first addition to the club's staff since the acquisition of the club by new owner and six-time MLB All-Star José Bautista.

Sanchez joins the Lights having served as an assistant coach for Austin FC II in the 2023 season. Working alongside Head Coach Brett Uttley, Sanchez helped guide a squad that included current U.S. youth internationals Damian Las and Micah Burton to the MLS NEXT Pro title this past campaign.

"We are excited to bring Dennis Sanchez on board as the new Head Coach of the Lights," said Las Vegas owner José Bautista. "Throughout the interview process, we found Dennis to be someone who aligned with the values we want to establish for this club. His communication skills and ethos as a coach made him the best candidate to lead the club forward on the field as we create a new culture and identity for professional soccer in Las Vegas."

Sanchez brings prior experience working in the USL Championship to his new position from his time at Sacramento Republic FC and the Charleston Battery. Sanchez became Republic FC's Academy Director in January, 2020, taking the reins from current Sacramento Head Coach Mark Briggs. During his tenure, the club signed academy products Mario Penagos, Rafael Jauregui and Hayden Sargis to their first professional contracts, with Sargis earning nomination for the Championship's Young Player of the Year award in 2020.

In 2022 he joined the Charleston Battery as an assistant coach to Conor Casey and led the side in its final game of the campaign. During his tenure with the Battery, Sanchez



played a key role in the recruitment of young star Fidel Barajas to the club, who this past year went on to win the Championship's Young Player of the Year award before his transfer this month to Real Salt Lake for a club-record fee.

Prior to his appointment at Republic FC, Sanchez had spent four seasons as the Academy General Manager for the Columbus Crew of Major League Soccer. With the Crew, he oversaw all aspects of the Academy including creating a player first culture, scouting and recruitment, and the implementation of an integrated methodology.

"I want to thank José for the opportunity to join Las Vegas Lights FC," said Sanchez. "José's vision for the success of this club is clear and has resonated strongly with me. I have full belief that under his leadership, we will attract the best players, foster a winning culture and consistently compete for championships. I would be remiss to not thank those people closest to me as I wouldn't be here without them. I look forward to getting to work and making our community proud."



Las Vegas Lights FC Roster - Numeric By Position
As of March 8, 2024

2024 LVLFC

JERSEY #s

GOALKEEPERS:

Nicholas Ammeter	1
Austin Wormell	31
Raiko Arozarena	56

DEFENDERS:

Gennaro Nigro	33
Gaoussou Samaké	72
Fabien Garcia	4
Hayden Sargis	3
Emrah Klimenta	23
Maliek Howell	24
Joe Hafferty	22
Shawn Smart	20
Eddy Berumen	2

MIDFIELDERS:

Charlie Adams	6
Giovanni Aguilar	13
Edison Azcona	10
Solomon Asante	14
Valentin Noel	27
Zander Romero	77

FORWARDS:

Coleman Gannon	8
Christian Pinzon	11
Riki Alba	9
Khorl Bennett	90
Joe Gyau	7