



2022 MLS All-Star Game Presented by Target Press Conference Select Quotes

August 8, 2022

Q. What does it mean to be an MLS All-Star to you?

WALKER ZIMMERMAN: It's always an honor to represent the league, represent your club, team and your city. So it's a really fun event. It's great to receive that recognition but also to play with some of the best players from around the league. So it's a really special opportunity, and I think it's one that everyone here doesn't take for granted.

Q. As you know, the Mexican fan base is the largest soccer fan base that we have here in the United States, and yet there's still a lot of doubting by the fan base about the quality of MLS no matter how many times MLS has done better and better against teams in Liga MX. What is it going to take for Mexican fans here, and then via TV, via Mexico, what is it going to take for them to appreciate what this league can do and appreciate the quality and become fans of teams in this league and not just follow teams in Mexico?

JAVIER "CHICHARITO" HERNÁNDEZ: It's a very difficult question, which I don't think it's that easy just to mention one thing. I guess it's going to be time, patience. We were talking that, as well, in 2002, one of the most difficult days for Mexico national team happened, and the MLS wasn't even as big as it was now.

Just to put an example, growth is something that takes time to develop, and it takes time to accept sometimes in the mindset or in the minds of a lot of people. Yeah, that's evolution and that's part of life that a lot of things are evolving, and you need to adapt and you need to accept that competition is something that makes you better. You don't need to feel threatened by it. You need to feel it's something that's going to make you better and better and better.

We've always been neighbors. It's very surreal this situation, I'm a Mexican guy representing MLS, even as a captain against Liga MX. It's like they are gray areas that we need to mention. And I mentioned the 2002 because it's a very far date and it was a World Cup match and they went farther than we went and I wasn't even in the first division.

We need to be more of a gray area. We need to take the best out of each league. We need to take the best out of things and not stay in this narrative of heroes and guilty persons and white and black and etc. and etc. We need to be more positive and to have that narrative.

Of course, competing-wise on Wednesday and even the skills challenge I'm going to be involved tomorrow, I'm going to try to win. That's part of this competition, like Walker said, and I

mention it a lot. It's not that easy. People think we come over here to have a fun time. No, we come here, it's part of our jobs. We're very grateful, we're very honored to be here.

But yeah, I want to have the narrative that the Liga MX has so many things that we need to praise, the same as MLS, and then this type of events are going to help us both keep going.

Q. Adrian, have you ever coached in an All-Star Game before, and how much coaching can a coach do in a game like this?

ADRIAN HEATH: No, it's something new for me. Something I'm really excited about and something I'm really looking forward to. I think one of the highlights for a coach is when you get surrounded by top-draw talent, and that's what we have got. I'm really looking forward to getting to know them just a little bit more than just shaking hands after a game.

As I said, we think the game is going to be really competitive. I'm really looking forward to it. Yeah, I think it's going to be a great occasion. I think the big thing, as well, is you know the atmosphere is going to be terrific, and the game is sold out, so we are all looking forward to it.

Q. Javier, when you found out that you would be the captain, being a Mexican, what did you think? What did you feel about that?

JAVIER "CHICHARITO" HERNÁNDEZ: When I finished the training, we were speaking about that with my colleagues. I felt grateful, grateful, very grateful, very happy, and satisfied because this is the right perspective. There always needs to be a captain to represent the players, but we all can be leaders. We all can give a lot. Many of the players in this league are captains on their own teams. This is just part of the game, and I don't need or deserve a special treatment. I just have to take this responsibility to be humble and to be grateful.

Like I said before, it is kind of surreal to be a Mexican player playing in the MLS as captain. Just I'm grateful and very humble, but being a captain doesn't mean that I'm more important than the others.

Q. Walker, this is the third All-Star appearance in your career. I'm curious your perspective the similarities or differences in the progression of the league at each All-Star appearance, and maybe events – not just on the field, but off the field, events, and experiences and new teammates as well?

WALKER ZIMMERMAN: Each game is different and each game is a lot of fun, a lot of quality. The biggest difference is obviously shifting from we played Atlético de Madrid in Orlando in 2019, and it was competitive. You know, you're wanting to prove that you can play at a high level but the competitiveness on the field last year in L.A. against Liga MX was definitely a new step in terms of the competition.

Orlando was also, I believe, the first time that they had revamped the skills challenge and brought that to life. It's fun. You get to watch guys score crazy bikes and scissor kicks which I expect to see from Chicharito here tomorrow, maybe a little celebration or two, a little shimmy (laughs). I don't know what you'll do, but we'll see something from him tomorrow.

But it's a fun event. It makes it fun for the players when you can watch guys showcase their talent. I'm excited. Each year is an honor and I'm just happy to be here again.