

AUTOMOTIVE

Audi doubles down in soccer realm with multi-year sponsorship renewal

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Audi Americas remains the League's official automotive partner after extending a sponsorship originating in 2015. Image credit: Audi

By AMIRAH KEATON



German automaker Audi is entering a new phase of a standing sponsorship involving top professional soccer league, Major League Soccer (MLS).

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The car manufacturer's Americas division has announced plans to keep its position as the League's official automotive partner, extending a sponsorship which started in 2015. The new multi-year agreement sees Audi becoming the first presenting sponsor of both the 2023 MLS Cup.

"We're thrilled to extend our relationship with Major League Soccer as we do our part to keep raising the profile of the game and support youth players stateside," said Tara Rush, chief marketing officer at Audi of America, in a statement.

"We value this sponsorship as it drives participation for the sport, strengthens the soccer community across the U.S., and reaches new fans."

Audi x MLS

The renewal signals a successful sports association, as MLS transitions into its 28th season this month, and as the world anticipates the arrival of the 2026 World Cup this round will be hosted by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

MLS Cup aside, Audi will remain title sponsor of the Audi MLS Cup Playoffs and presenting sponsor of the MLS Golden Boot Award, an offering that honors the League's leading scorer each season.

The update builds on a foundation of philanthropic progress between the pair.

In the last 8 years, the partnership has provided educational resources to more than 1,600 youth players, and counts increased housing options for more than 130 youth players and \$4 million in support to MLS academies among its achievements.

Audi also lends a hand locally, supporting five club partnerships including D.C. United, Orlando City SC, San Jose Earthquakes, Sporting Kansas City and New York Red Bulls while maintaining official naming rights for Audi Field in Washington, D.C.

The debut of an entirely new program, the Audi Goals Drive Progress Impact Award presented by MLS WORKS, is also set for this year.

The initiative aims to recognize the individual community work projects of players, tapping a selection committee for candidate review of those who, through their social impact projects, are creating sustainable communities, fostering equity and inclusion and enriching the lives of populations in need across the U.S. and Canada.

Both partners will present the winning player with a \$100,000 contribution to a charity of their choice during this year's MLS Cup.

Founded 30 years ago, the men's professional soccer league sanctioned by the United States Soccer Federation represents the sport's highest-available level for U.S. players.

As of the 2023 season, the league includes 29 teams, a bulk of which are based stateside, with America holding 26 and Canada contributing 3.

"Audi has been a champion of Major League Soccer throughout a tremendous time of growth in our league, and they have been a dedicated partner every step of the way," said Don Garber, commissioner at MLS, in a statement.



The new multi-year agreement sees Audi becoming the first presenting sponsor of both the 2023 MLS Cup. Image credit: Audi

"The Audi Goals Drive Progress initiative has funded \$4 million to support MLS academies making an immeasurable impact on the lives and playing careers of young soccer players," he said. "It says everything about Audi's commitment that as part of their renewed partnership with us, they are now collaborating with MLS WORKS on the Audi Goals Drive Progress Impact Award to honor the work of our amazing players in the communities where they live and play.

"MLS is proud to continue our work with Audi during this momentous time for soccer in North America."

Many a luxury label has ventured out into ftbol affairs in recent months (see story).