



# ***Professional Soccer Referees Association***

February 22, 2024

Don Garber  
Commissioner  
Major League Soccer  
420 Fifth Avenue, 7th floor  
New York, NY, 10018

Commissioner Garber:

I write in response to comments you made publicly concerning the lockout of MLS referees imposed by Major League Soccer's referee employer, the Professional Referee Organization (PRO).

Given your absence, and that of any other MLS executive leader at the negotiating table, PSRA finds it necessary to bring you up to speed. From the comments you made, we can only surmise that PRO has not been entirely transparent with MLS leadership regarding negotiations at the table.

## **WHY A 95.8% TENTATIVE AGREEMENT REJECTION**

The PSRA Negotiating Committee communicated repeatedly during bargaining sessions that the terms being offered by PRO would fall significantly short of membership expectations. In fact, PSRA pled with PRO negotiators to recognize this membership sentiment.

Unfortunately, the negotiators present were unwilling to heed these warnings, stating on a few occasions, "There is no more money." As such, we were compelled to bring that proposal to our members for a vote. The Negotiating Committee, in good conscious, could never support an agreement that was woefully short of membership demands.

We should also note that on the eve of the voting process commencing, in a letter to our membership, Mr. Geiger threatened a work stoppage if members did not vote to ratify the tentative agreement. Our members, like most professionals, do not react well to such bullying tactics. PRO's threat further aggravated our membership and forced PSRA to file an Unfair Labor Practice charge, which is now pending with Region II of the National Labor Relations Board.

As we expected and repeatedly warned at the bargaining table, the tentative agreement was rejected -- by 95.8% of membership.

After the tentative agreement was soundly rejected, PRO/MLS offered an eleventh-hour no-strike/no-lockout deal for the entire 2024 season that would have: (1) frozen referees' wages at levels negotiated in 2019; (2) rolled back job security provisions; and (3) provided no additional

consideration from MLS or PRO for increased workload and travel. For obvious reasons, this request was rejected.

### **OUR EXPECTATION**

We have made clear the expectations of PSRA members, and PRO chose to ignore these facts.

When you express your personal frustration in not knowing what PSRA members want, we recommend you look no further than the PRO negotiating committee. It is disappointing that our clear demands have seemingly not been communicated with you, and it's worth stating again that your professed lack of familiarity with PSRA's bargaining positions may not have occurred had you or any other MLS executive bothered to attend bargaining.

### **MEETING REQUEST**

We invite you again to join the bargaining table, where PSRA sits ready to have direct conversations with you to provide clarity. I can tell you our additional expectations amount to less than approximately \$100,000 per team in 2024.

PSRA takes seriously its legal obligation to bargain in good faith, and therefore we formally requested dates from PRO to reconvene bargaining on February 23 and February 26. These dates were rejected. We requested additional dates and, as of the mailing of this letter, have yet to receive a response from PRO's negotiators. To make our invitation easier to accept, we also offer to meet at your office.

We are ready to meet with you to reach an agreement that can be ratified by our membership. It should be the collective goal of MLS, PRO and PSRA to return our members, the professional Officials, to working MLS matches.

I await your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Peter Manikowski  
President  
Professional Soccer Referees Association