

#SACPROSOCCER

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SACRAMENTO TO JOIN USL PRO IN 2014

Sacramento Professional Soccer, LLC awarded franchise rights with support from Think BIG Sacramento.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (December 3, 2012) – United Soccer Leagues announced today it has awarded an expansion USL PRO franchise to Sacramento, California with the team commencing participation in the 2014 season. Warren Smith, founder of Sacramento Professional Soccer, LLC, will lead the franchise with support from Mayor Kevin Johnson, Think BIG Sacramento and the Sacramento Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Warren Smith, former SVP of Business Development for Clean World Partners and co-founder of the Sacramento Rivercats (MILB), is a steering committee member of Think BIG Sacramento and has been working with the organization to bring professional outdoor soccer to Sacramento.

Smith has entered into an Exclusive Right to Negotiate (ERN) with Sacramento City College relating to holding professional soccer matches at Hughes Stadium. The two organizations are actively working through the details with the intent to enter into an agreement in the early first quarter, 2013.

Smith led the grassroots effort starting in 1997 to build a professional baseball stadium and attract a professional baseball team to the Sacramento area. He successfully negotiated all real estate agreements necessary for the land, acquisition and stadium development, which included the largest naming rights partnership in minor league baseball and a joint venture agreement with Savage Baseball Group that led to Raley Field's development and the Sacramento River Cats moving to West Sacramento, California.

Sacramento's USL PRO franchise will plan a series of exhibition matches during 2013 involving domestic and international professional soccer teams. In addition, supporter events, soccer clinics and player appearances will be scheduled leading up to the 2014 inaugural season. In early 2013, the franchise will begin the process of building a professional franchise infrastructure, including personnel and naming the team with input and engagement from soccer fans. For updates follow the team on Twitter at [@SacProSoccer](https://twitter.com/SacProSoccer), "Like" them on Facebook at [Facebook.com/SacProSoccer](https://www.facebook.com/SacProSoccer) or visit SacProSoccer.com.

The Sacramento area contains one of the strongest regional soccer scenes in the United States, with some of the highest youth soccer participation rates in the country, as well as successful high school and collegiate programs. Numerous athletes from Sacramento currently play in Major League Soccer (MLS) and USL PRO. During the 2010 World Cup, Univision had higher viewership in Sacramento than ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX stations combined for the match between Mexico vs. Costa Rica. Sacramento was also consistently in the top 10 for ESPN/ABC Nielsen ratings during the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

USL PRO is the strongest, best operated and most experienced North American men's professional soccer league below MLS, both on and off the field. Focused on franchise stability and longevity, USL PRO will feature 13 teams in 2013, with over half boasting a decade or more of operational experience. Expansion teams in Phoenix, Arizona and Tampa, Florida will begin participation in the 2013 season.

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The league is focused on aggressive, but deliberate, growth by adding teams fully capable of meeting USL and US Soccer Federation standards, which are located in markets that further promote regional league play. In addition to league play, USL PRO teams will continue to compete in the national Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup and various domestic and international exhibitions. USL PRO is the longest standing pro league affiliate member within the US Soccer Federation.

Quotes:

Tim Holt, USL President

"USL PRO is thrilled to expand into Sacramento in the 2014 season," USL President Tim Holt said. "With the Phoenix FC Wolves joining the league in 2013 and the Los Angeles Blues having already developed a successful presence in Southern California, Sacramento represents yet another significant step towards our objective of achieving a regionalized competition approach in the West. This remains a fundamental aspect of a USL PRO business model that is resonating with prospective team owners as the most sustainable for professional soccer at levels which support MLS. Warren Smith is a widely-respected and highly-accomplished figure in the Sacramento sports community and has presented a very impressive vision for professional soccer in Sacramento. By partnering with him we know USL PRO will be successful in Sacramento for many years to come."

Mayor Kevin Johnson, City of Sacramento

"Today is an exciting day - not only for soccer fans around our region, but also for those who believe fervently in Sacramento's potential as a vibrant and emerging market," said Mayor Johnson. "I welcome the USL PRO to town and am thrilled to see more jobs and civic amenities heading our way."

Warren Smith, Sacramento Professional Soccer, LLC Founder

"Sacramento is one of the strongest soccer regions in the country," said Warren Smith, founder of Sacramento Professional Soccer, LLC. "We already have numerous professional soccer players that are from Sacramento, or make their home here. It is time for the people of Sacramento to have the opportunity to watch them play on the national stage and to show the rest of the world that the Sacramento area is a great soccer region. I am grateful to Mayor Kevin Johnson, Think Big Sacramento, USL, the soccer community and the many regional leaders that have scored this goal for our city."

Kunal Merchant, Think BIG Sacramento Executive Director

"This is great news for our community," said Kunal Merchant, Executive Director of Think BIG Sacramento. "A USL PRO team will provide more jobs, more family-friendly activities and more visibility for Sacramento on a national scale. Congratulations to Warren and his team for once again proving that this is a terrific sports market."

Steve Hammond, Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau President & CEO

"Sacramento is a community that's demonstrated an unwavering commitment to amateur and professional sports time and time again," said Steve Hammond, President & CEO of the Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau (and most recently, the Sacramento Sports Commission). "We are excited at the opportunity that professional soccer presents to this region and look forward to helping to make it a successful and long-term endeavor for this community."

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