

Soccer Sensation Messi, Saudi Sports Investments, and College Athletes' Rights: A Thrilling Sports & Entertainment Roundup

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Welcome back to the Spotlight! It has been quite a week for soccer (not football) in the United States. Lionel Messi's first two appearances in Inter Miami's flamingo pink jerseys (Barbie would be thrilled) have already proven his move stateside to Major League Soccer less messy and more messianic. First, he netted the game winner in his debut. Then in the next game he scored 2 outstanding goals in the first twenty minutes. A remarkable feat from someone who knows how to use his feet. If this sounded like a beginning too good to be true, and persuaded you to reach for your tin foil hat, watch the highlights. No smoke, no mirrors - just unparalleled talent.

Clearly, the MLS has to feel good about the new audience and excitement that Messi is bringing into the fold - creating a perfect runway for the US-hosted FIFA Men's World Cup in several years. On the Women's side, where the World Cup is in full swing, the United States Women's National Team is back to their winning ways (outperforming their male counterparts as per usual). On the other side of the globe, Saudi Arabia has proven itself keen to invest in sports, not only through its backing of LIV Golf, but through offering absurd sums of money (by the barrel?) to decorated soccer players including Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappe - the latter of whom rebuffed an offer to play in Saudi Arabia for one year for the record setting, bargain basement price of \$700 million. Though Mbappe is likely to continue playing in Europe, there is much reason to view soccer as ascendant throughout the world - but perhaps most significantly now in the US. Time will tell whether it is sustainable, but certainly the MLS should be able to use Messi as an anchor to attract more stars for years to come.

- Two dueling bipartisan proposals addressing college athletes' rights were unveiled in Congress this week, including a proposal by Senator Joe Manchin and Senator Tommy Tuberville to help "restore integrity" to college sports. What's notable about that bill is not as much that it is introduced by a former college football coach (Tuberville), but rather Congress' charge to *restore* integrity.

- Formula One racing is threatening to erect barriers blocking the view of the Las Vegas Grand Prix from properties located on the Vegas Strip. Sounds like the all-you-can-eat buffets are back to being the best deal in town.
- Dwayne Johnson makes a seven figure donation to the SAG-AFTRA Strike Relief Fund, proving himself to be The Rock for his fellow actors. What can he say except, "you're welcome"?
- Actors such as Bryan Cranston and James Van Der Beek are delivering impassioned messages about the threat of artificial intelligence to actors' livelihoods - a key motivating factor for the strike. Van Der Beek's message boils down (Cranston fans know to keep their distance when something is boiling down) to "I don't want to wait for our rights to be over."

Endorsement Deals, Sponsorships & Investments

Saudi Arabia is spending billions to become a global gaming hub. Some fans don't want to play

July 26, 2023 via ABC News

PepsiCo doubles down on HBCU sponsorship

July 25, 2023 via Advertising Age

Joe Burrow, Bodyarmor sign multiyear sponsorship deal

July 25, 2023 via Cincinnati Business Courier (Cincinnati, Ohio)

LVMH sponsorship brings financial stability to Paris Games

July 25, 2023 via Sports Business Journal

Tuberville, Manchin Add Another NIL Option for Congress

July 25, 2023 via Sportico

How Much Do Top Celebrities Earn per Sponsored Instagram Post? [Infographic]

July 24, 2023 via Social Media Today

Celebrities are flooding the market with liquor brands - and some are faring better than others

July 21, 2023 via NBC Philadelphia

Washington Commanders Sale Closes, Harris Is New Team Owner

July 21, 2023 via Sportico

Sports

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July 26, 2023 via *Bleacher Report*

[F1 tells Strip properties to pay up for Las Vegas Grand Prix views](#)

July 25, 2023 via *Las Vegas Review Journal*

[MSG v. NYC? How the Garden's Future Is Tied to Penn Station Redo](#)

July 22, 2023 via *Sportico*

Music Biz

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July 25, 2023 via *Reuters*

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Film & TV

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July 25, 2023 via *Forbes*

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