

Hey there, it's Mark, back with a version of the podcast which is not really going to be in the finances. But we've had a major global event here in the States the last month and a half with the World Cup, which has been... I enjoy soccer, and I... we got used to in our household having a game on every day. There was like, we would look forward to see what games are being played and, and check it out. And, um, well I have one daughter that enjoys it.

So, uh, turns out that we have another soccer fan at PlanVision too. Matt Boyle. Matt's uh joined me here, he's going to talk in a few minutes as well about his World Cup experience. Um, but just wanted to share that with our clients that took an interest in this, or many of our global clients who are from countries that either played in the World Cup or, or they just followed along with it. Uh, hey Matt, thanks for joining me.

Matt: Hey Mark, thanks for having me. Excited to be here.

Mark: Yeah, so here's—I want to get into your background real quickly, but I... I played soccer growing up a long time ago, uh, and I... I took it up again kind of uh as an adult, uh, playing uh in Minn- in Minnesota. I played in a lot of men's leagues and coed leagues, really enjoyed the game. And then, and I had been following soccer. I remember watching the Premier League in the '90s—I can't remember the channel I would watch it on—and I've been following the World Cup as well. So I've, and I've been coaching my daughters as well. So I've always had an interest in soccer. When I heard it was coming here again—I remember '94 when it was here, watched some of the games—but this seemed to be a bigger event. There were more games, um, and uh it was easier to watch them now. So that's been my interest in soccer over the years, and it's been nice to see my uh oldest daughter, she plays quite a bit, and then she has an interest, well we'll get into that in a moment. But what's been your experience, Matt, as uh a soccer fan or soccer player?

Matt: Yeah, so I started like everyone else when I was little, like I was four years old, then continued playing through high school, some club level in college. Um, then out of college, I started playing some adult leagues similar to yourself and made a lot of friends and connections that way and always stuck with it. I'm still playing now. Um, over time I've served on a couple boards for different clubs, um, a little bit of coaching here and there. And my current feat is trying to get my three-year-old involved, and she's not taking to it yet, but we're working on that. [laughs]

Mark: [laughs] So you're coaching your children or just other children?

Matt: Um, right now we're bringing our three-year-old to her first foray into soccer. Um, so I'm not coaching, letting someone else try it, but still no success quite yet.

Mark: Yeah. All right. I'm curious, have you ever been to a a pro soccer game here in the St- in the States?

Matt: Yeah, actually. Um, it's kind of on my bucket list to get a scarf from every home team I've been to for the MLS, and so far I have about eight or nine of them. Um, and then I went to a couple World Cup games when they were going on here too.

Mark: Cool. So eight or nine games. Um, I don't even know how many MLS teams we have. Is it like, is it like 24 or 32?

Matt: Yeah, I think it's about 32-ish. Still growing, though.

Mark: Okay. Yeah. I have been to one. I I remember, I mean this was way back in the '70s, right, when they had the North American Soccer League, and I think Pelé come came here. Th- they did pay some money for some of the bigger names to come. I think it had some success, but could never quite get fully off the ground, and it folded at one point. But we did go to a game. I took my my family went to a game. We had a good time. It was in in Minneapolis, and I can't remember the name—the Minneapolis United. But it was a fun game. So, uh, anyway, so it was great to see the World Cup come here.

So I saw one game, uh, and you saw two. What what games did you see?

Matt: I did. So I saw in Philadelphia, Curaçao versus Ivory Coast. And then my big one was going to LA to see USA in their home opener against Paraguay, and that was uh pretty life-changing. It was a pretty cool, super super awesome experience, so.

Mark: "Life-changing!" [laughs] So, you—how long ago did you decide that you're going to commit to going to LA and and seeing uh somewhat of a marquee game for sure, the US's first home game?

Matt: Yeah, maybe around January/February we committed to it. Me and two of my friends. I have a friend who lives in the LA area, so we stayed with him. And then we put a a chunk of money down on some tickets, committed to it, and went for it.

Mark: How did you buy your tickets? I used a service, StubHub, to buy the tickets. How did you end up buying them? Through a broker?

Matt: Yeah, similar. Through um StubHub or Ticketmaster or something like that.

Mark: Okay. And was that pretty smooth as far as you know?

Matt: Um, other than the hole in my wallet, yes. [laughs]

Mark: [laughs] Well, the reason I ask is because mine ended up going okay. I've never used a broker. I don't even go to that many sporting events, hardly any. And I'm just used to buying tickets, right? You buy a ticket from the venue, you go to the game. But I had never used a third-party broker, and I didn't quite understand how the whole thing was going to go down. I wasn't going to get my tickets till the day of the game, which scared the heck out of me. But uh, and then I bought I bought tickets for—we'll get into my situation—I bought tickets for one game and we changed that and so on.

So, uh, you went out there, and you saw the game. Uh, logistically, did everything go okay?

Matt: I'd call it an organized chaos. Um, so we started the day pretty early for a, I think it was a 4:00 kickoff. Um, we took an Uber there. It took about an hour when it should have taken, you know, 20 minutes. Got there, you have to walk around a lot. There's a bunch of lines for different things, you got to figure out where to go. So like I said, just kind of an organized chaos of thousands. I think it was like 70, 80,000 people at at that stadium, and I think they said they sold out, so pretty crazy of a day.

Mark: But you got into the game, and I think the US scored like five minutes into the game, all right?

Matt: Yeah. Yeah, that was kind of a relief, kind of a weight off of everyone. Uh, there was kind of a, like a tension almost, and then that early goal kind of helped, and then they got a second one pretty shortly after. Um, and then it was pretty much smooth sailing, party atmosphere, kind of stuff. So super cool.

Mark: So I've watched soccer over the years as I mentioned, and the first half of the US's performance, I don't know what was going on, but and Paraguay ended up being a pesky team for sure. But they looked outstanding. I I had never seen the US play that well before. I've watched them over the years, and it looked like this is, they can contend at at a fairly high level here. Now, it turns out it ended up being more disappointing, but was that your reaction as well?

Matt: Yeah, I've heard a lot of people say something similar, that first half alone was probably the best performance by a US team in, you know, recent memory. Um, and to your point, Paraguay was a a decent opponent, but it wasn't a top ten world-beater or anything like that, but it was a decent barometer of, you know, being hopeful and optimistic about our chances there.

Mark: So you went there and you said it was life-changing. [laughs] Just the whole thing, or was there something specific about it that you would characterize as life-changing?

Matt: Yeah, um, I don't know, it's always kind of a bucket list item. You always talk about going to stuff like this, but it never really works out for one reason or another. But yeah, I mean it's once every four years, it's the USA, it's a home opener. I mean, there's there's only so many

chances you get for something like this. Um, but to be there and see it, and feel it, and live it, it's just way different than seeing it on TV or anything else like that. So, just everything about the day was special.

Mark: Well, that's cool. And you got a—I mean, it was uh it was just an awesome game from the US perspective. I had some friends I was texting with who are not really soccer fans, but they kind of got into it, you know, they were enjoying it. But anyways, it was, uh, my one buddy lives in Seattle and he was talking about going to the game against Belgium, right? And he was saying, "Should I get tickets? Should I go?" And we were kind of saying, "Hey, we got to go, man. It's, you know, it's not going to happen again." [laughs] And it was, he was going to pay a lot of money to go. And as it turned out, I think they were down immediately. Like the whole thing seemed like a just a drag for anybody that went to that event. Uh, you know, it's one thing to lose at the end, but it just kind of never was there. So that's great that you had a great outcome. You know, our situation I think was similar. We um, we uh I wanted to get something, well we ended up going to the Congo versus Uzbekistan, which we I'd been kind of laughing with my daughter and her friend about this, "We're going to see the Congo and Uzbekistan," like, you know, who—not a marquee matchup at all. Uh, anyways, so we bought tickets. We actually were going to go see um Morocco versus Haiti first, but due to a bit of a conflict with my daughter and her friend, we we decided to move, and we were flexible about the whole thing. But Morocco was a an elite team and and so we thought, oh, we're going to kind of see an elite team. We're going to drive to Atlanta, and we got the tickets.

A couple things struck me about the event, though, when we went in, and again I wasn't expecting much. In fact, I thought I told my daughter, "Hey, when the game starts, we'll be able to move seats, like we'll be able to [laughs] go to cheaper seats like..." [laughs] There was no way that was going to happen! The place was basically packed. Uh, so that was a a mistake on my end. Anyways, but our seats were fine. You can pretty much watch a soccer game from anywhere. Uh, but the one thing that struck me, uh, one of the things that struck me is going in there was there was kind of this electricity in the air, and I don't know if you had that at both your games too or not, but I've heard of um that when you go see a real heavyweight boxing match, that it's there's something, maybe you said that tension, uh there's an intensity in the air as opposed to just some sort of a regular season sporting event that you don't see in anything else. And uh, this event had that. And you know, soccer, from what I've observed over the years, a lot of these supporters, they just stand the whole game and there's... there's an energy there the whole time.

Matt: Yeah, I might be a little bit biased, being a soccer fan in general, but I think all games are cool, but these games especially felt different, like you're saying. That electricity, that party atmosphere, that that fun. And then at the end of the day, everyone kind of gets together and is still all friends and still all, you know, it's a global event, it brings everyone together, and all those good things. So I definitely felt it at both games I had. Like the last uh marquee matchup of Ivory Coast/Curaçao, even though it wasn't a a, you know, super highlight-filled game, it was still very cool, still super full stadium, the day was super fun. There was a bunch of stuff going on, a bunch of people around, so cool all around. Great experience.

Mark: And in that game, was there something on the line for Ivory Coast?

Matt: Uh, I think Ivory Coast could clinch first in their group. I think it was the third game. And Curaçao could technically still advance if results went in their favor, I think. But it ended up not working out for them.

Mark: I see. Well, at our game, we were we had no no rooting interest, right? But we decided that we're going to root for the Congo because if they won, they would advance. So we thought, oh, maybe it'd be cool to see them advance. And I was quite impressed with their level of play. The thing about that game was um that I thought the quality of play was more than I expected,

particularly with the Congo side, especially in the second half. They were relentless, and it was exciting. It really was quite something to see them. In fact, I looked at a ranking of the of the best games—I can't remember if there were 70 games or whatever in the tournament—but that game was uh I think the 20th best ranked, just for the just for the quality of play. So it was uh it was a cool event.

The other thing that that that impacted me as well was going to the game. Like you said, you had an Uber thing, well, logistically everything kind of worked out for us pretty well, and we got an Airbnb in Atlanta relatively close to Mercedes-Benz Stadium, which is a really cool venue for sure. It was awesome. But what, so I decided that we would uh we would just, I got valet parking at the hotel really close to the stadium, and uh [laughs] so everything was like falling into place. Then I had, then then we drove there, right? And you know, we all trust our phones telling us how to get to wherever it is that we're going. Like you just plug it in. You're going to go, you don't have to look up directions anymore. Well, the... so I plugged in the valet parking for the hotel, and it did not take me to the front of the hotel, it took me to like the back, to the delivery entrance at the hotel! [laughs] And here's—and everything is one-way, and the other problem is there's a mass of people, you know, just walking all over the roads. I I felt like we were uh in a movie where we're just overcome with like... 'cause we had to try to get through these one-way streets. I'm getting I'm losing all my patience. I'm trying to, my daughter's trying to help that help me out with the info. We finally got there, got the valet parking, but I was at one point I just wanted to start crying for my mommy. It was just getting so [laughs] But we left so early, probably like you did, that we... And the other thing that was really cool about it, at least at our game, was all the different um supporters that had just jerseys from so many different countries. Um, you know, just uh it wasn't it wasn't limited to Congo and Uzbekistan. Their turnout was was quite great, but just other random uh uniforms, so it was a it was a a nice event that way. So.

Matt: Yeah, we we'd similar experience. We saw a lot of like USA jerseys obviously, but even at the Philly game I went to, there were a lot of, you know, Argentina, England, you know, you name it, you saw like kind of jerseys. And and to your point, the supporters for the countries themselves that were playing was pretty great. I was surprised how many Curaçao fans we bumped into. We almost bumped into the the walk to the match, um their supporter group got together and we were almost part of that, uh but they took a little bit too long so we we did our own thing. But that was pretty cool to watch too.

Mark: Well, at one point um there was a group of Congolese, I guess, or and they were doing—and this was in uh you know, all the I don't know what you call it, the area around the stadium where you can walk and there's all the the the um eating places—that were involved in some sort of a seeming chant or dance type thing. And I said, "Hey, um, why don't you get my picture? I'm going to I'm going to go join in this thing." She said, "No way, Dad! You can't do that!" [laughs] So, a lot of that, a lot of energy that was really exciting.

Matt: Yeah, I'm sure you could have, they're pretty welcoming, so. [laughs] You would have fitted in.

Mark: [laughs] You know, and I think too, I don't think this was the case—this is my take on it—I don't think it was the case once you got down to the round of eight or the semifinals or finals, where in the I think the post-game atmosphere at our game was pretty cool. My sense is there was a lot more angst after those games among some of the supporters, you know, that they had gone so far, and man, they get so serious about the outcome, so anyways.

Well, thanks for joining me, Matt, um, you know. We'll see where uh... Now, the next time it's here in the States might not work for me, but it may work for you, so you can look forward to the next time it's here. All right?

Matt: Will do. Thanks, Mark.

[Post-Recording]

Mark: All right, that's perfect! That's all I wanted, just a little bit of back and forth about the World Cup. So, I'll send that to Christian, he'll render it, and then we'll get it posted.

Matt: How many hits are we going to get? Is this going viral or what? [laughs]

Mark: [laughs] I don't think you'll need a a a an agent after this.

Matt: [laughs] Well, I mean, to your point, like I think a topic like this is pretty universal, especially with a lot of expats and stuff. Like it's a nice, like people get involved, people are aware of it around it, even if you don't follow it. Like you get on the bandwagon, you see it in the news, so it's a pretty universal topic.

Mark: Yeah, hear, hear. Yeah. Certainly was newsworthy here in the States, and in other countries, yeah, the world kind of comes to a stop in in some places, so.

Matt: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Cool, well have a great day, Mark.

Mark: Thanks. Bye-bye.

Matt: See ya. Bye.