

## The Power Of Soccer

An Interview with Brad Sims, Chief Executive Officer, New York City FC

**EDITORS' NOTE**

*Brad Sims assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer of New York City FC (newyorkcityfc.com) in January 2019 and is responsible for all aspects of the organization on a day-to-day basis, leading the front office staff. Sims joined the Club after six years with the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers where he served as Executive Vice President of Franchise Operations and Chief Revenue Officer. In this role, he was responsible for managing all primary areas of revenue for the Cavaliers including ticket sales, premium seating and hospitality, corporate partnerships and database marketing and analytics. Sims joined the Cavaliers in 2012, helping grow revenues by double-digits for two straight years prior to a run of four consecutive NBA Finals appearances in 2015-2018 where the Cavs ranked at or near the top of the NBA in every revenue category. A former New Yorker, Sims*



Brad Sims



*spent four years at the NBA League Office in New York City serving as Vice President of Team Business Development, Team Marketing and*

*Business Operations. In this role, Sims worked closely with NBA, WNBA and NBA G-League teams to provide strategic direction. Known within the industry for his creativity, Sims has 22 years of sports industry experience and is a 2015 Sports Business Journal 40 Under 40 honoree, as well as a Leaders Global Under 40 Award Winner.*



Renderings of Etihad Park, New York City FC's new stadium in Queens, New York scheduled to open in 2027

**What excited you about the opportunity to lead New York City FC and made you feel it was the right fit?**

First and foremost, it was New York. I love New York and had a great experience when I was here earlier in my career working for the NBA. To have the opportunity to come back to New York and lead a professional sports team was a dream opportunity for me. Another reason is that I am passionate about the sport of soccer. I played soccer from the time I was four years old, and the sport has an amazing upward trajectory. New York City FC was going into year five when I joined so it was still the early days and the ability to help build a team in a growing league for the sport I love was a compelling proposition. I would also say that a key factor in my decision was the stadium opportunity. I love to build things, whether that is building teams or building the next generation of leaders or building actual infrastructure.

The opportunity to be a part of envisioning and building the first ever soccer-specific stadium in New York City is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Finally, I would say that the people were a major factor in my decision to join New York City FC. The leadership of the organization are quality people who do things the right way, and they understand the need to invest in people and attract top talent to take New York City FC to the next level on the field and in the front office. The support of ownership and the board has been integral for us to achieve what we have to date and to continue to innovate and grow for the future.

**Will you highlight the vision for building the new stadium and how you have approached the fan experience?**

The stadium, Etihad Park, is a game-changer for the club, our fans, our corporate partners, and the community. We are not just building a stadium – we are building part of a project that will see our partners build a community that will include affordable housing, an elementary school, a hotel, and green space. There is a major community aspect to the project which is something we are all proud of.

We have amazing fans who have been following us from venue to venue, whether we have been playing at Yankee Stadium or Citi Field or elsewhere. It is special that they will now have a stadium to call their own. We believe that we will have the best purpose-built facility for soccer in the United States and have a few pillars at the forefront of the fan experience: we want to be authentic to New York City, such as using local chefs as part of our culinary offering; we are committed to sustainability, and this will be the first all-electric outdoor stadium in any sport in North America; we are on a tight parcel of land with



*Rendering of the field at Etihad Park*

12 acres to build a 25,000 seat stadium, which is going to bring the fans right to the action and create a loud atmosphere. The new stadium is going to be a major difference-maker for New York City FC.

**You mentioned community engagement for New York City FC. Will you elaborate on the organization's commitment to supporting its community?**

Community engagement is built into the core values of the club and our company, City Football Group. We are 13 clubs strong, and a community focus is core to the DNA of all

of those clubs. New York is a big market to tackle, and we are investing heavily in our community work with eight full-time employees focusing on our community efforts along with a large number of part-time employees, as well as volunteers. We are bringing free soccer programming to many of the boroughs, and our goal is to reach every community throughout the five boroughs whether that is through building mini-pitches in those neighborhoods, offering free camps, programs and clinics, activating night leagues in elementary school gyms on the weekends, or other innovative programs. We do this because we want to better lives through the game and make an impact on those that don't have the resources within the five boroughs.

**When you look at the impact and success of New York City FC under your leadership, are you able to enjoy the process and take moments to celebrate the wins?**

I tell our team to take those moments, whether it was a game we had against Miami earlier this season which had approximately 45,000 fans in attendance at Yankee Stadium; when we won the championship in 2021; and just recently when we officially broke ground for the new stadium, Etihad Park. It is important to acknowledge the hard work and efforts of our team, and for them to appreciate the impact they have made for the organization.

I am not great personally at celebrating the wins, mostly because there is so much potential and so much opportunity for the future. In most countries around the world, there is a long history of being soccer-first, but in the United States we are only on the first generation of being soccer-first, and there is much momentum and excitement for the sport in this country. The future is very bright for the sport of soccer. ●



*Rendering of the north stands of Etihad Park*