

Strategic Public Relations Plan: FIFA World Cup 2026

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Executive Summary

Research – Program Diagnosis and Analysis

The Soccer is for U.S. campaign aims to increase engagement among Americans leading up to the FIFA World Cup on June 11, 2026 by focusing on the U.S. men's national team (USMNT) and fostering a sense of national soccer pride. By leveraging Americans' natural tendency to support their country, the campaign can foster pride and emotional attachment to the USMNT, creating a patriotic and culturally resonant connection ([Aisha, 2025](#)). This campaign seeks to tap into the deep-rooted tendency of Americans to root for their country, particularly during international sporting events, by positioning soccer as America's new favorite pastime when national pride and collective identity are heightened ([Aisha, 2025](#)).

This campaign targets new, diverse, and socially driven American sports fans who are united by a shared sense of community, participation, and national pride. Soccer fandom in the U.S. remains relatively new, with 17% of current fans having begun following soccer within the past five years ([For Soccer, 2025](#)). This presents a major opportunity to turn curiosity into lasting fandom. Soccer clearly lacks generational continuity in the U.S. and is not yet embedded as a traditional American sport; there exists no multi-generational fan base like those in other countries. At the same time, the opportunity is significant: there is a large pool of casual and latent fans- (65.5% of respondents in our primary research conducted through the University of Texas at Austin identify as aware or latent fans), who can be engaged and converted into active supporters.

Target Demographic:

The primary target demographic includes Gen Z and Millennial event seekers and general sports fans (ages 16–35) who are discovering soccer through social media, events, gaming, and broader sports enthusiasm. This group is 37% more likely to be female and 25% more likely to be Black than all soccer fans, with 53% of new fans identifying as women and 29% identifying as Black ([For Soccer, 2025](#)). They are highly digital, socially conscious, and motivated by interactive, shareable experiences. Women in the U.S. demonstrate strong preference for socially conscious brands, with 77% factoring kindness into purchasing decisions and 43% favoring brands that donate with every purchase ([Commisso, 2023](#)), ([Integer Group, 2011](#)).

The secondary audience consists of patriotic Gen X and Millennial sports fans (ages 30–55) who already associate sports with American pride, tradition, and communal rituals like tailgating and bar viewing. 39% of new soccer fans ("New Arrivals") are age 43 or older, reflecting a growing openness among traditional sports enthusiasts to embrace soccer as an American pastime. This group values togetherness and national pride- 14% of soccer fans watch games in bars or restaurants, and among them, 48% watch at least half of their matches there while 23% watch a majority, underscoring the role of social experience in fandom ([For Soccer, 2024](#)).

Audience Insights & Key Findings:

Sports provide a platform for expressing national pride, solidarity, and identity ([Aisha, 2025](#)). Tying soccer to familiar American rituals is central to this effort. Tailgating, a deeply ingrained American sports tradition, exemplifies this phenomenon: 79% of U.S.-based soccer fans watch at least one match per year at a bar or restaurant with others, and tailgating is driven by involvement, social interaction, sentimentality, and identity ([Sportsilab, 2023](#)). Fans emphasize "togetherness" as the core of the experience, highlighting the social component of sharing moments with friends, family, and fellow supporters ([Kertstetter, 2010](#)). Incorporating these social rituals with watch parties, pop-up events, and immersive tailgate experiences, can position soccer as a participatory and emotionally resonant pastime that aligns with U.S. traditions.

Engagement with digital platforms further strengthens this connection. Just over half of U.S. adults (54%) say they've listened to a podcast in the past 12 months, a slight increase since we first asked this in 2022 (49%). Younger people are far more likely to listen to podcasts, with 67% of those ages 18 to 29 saying they listened to a podcast in the past 12 months, about twice the share of those ages 65 and older (33%) ([Pew Research Center, 2025](#)). Millennials and Gen Z audiences are highly active on short-form video platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, with 91% of millennials and 60% of Black internet users aged 18–28 spending free time on these channels ([Takemasa, 2025](#)) ([Rominivi, 2025](#)).

These same audiences rely on social media to learn about products, sweepstakes, and experiences, demonstrating that campaigns leveraging short-form content and interactive challenges will effectively reach and convert casual fans. Studies show that U.S. sports fans are motivated to follow teams on social media to learn more about players and coaches (31%), engage with live games (29%), and gain exclusive content (27%) ([Sanchez, 2025](#)). Studies indicate that predicting, gamified content, and interactive fan challenges heighten involvement and enjoyment, with 78–80% of sports fans reporting increased interest in watching when predicting or participating ([Sanchez, 2025](#)).

Promoting positive perceptions of U.S. Soccer relies on emphasizing inclusivity, social responsibility, and community impact. Soccer is a popular sport among children- 7.6% of kids ages 6-12 play, making it the third most played sport in the U.S., but the

churn rate is high, with 44% of youth quitting by ages 6–17 ([Project Play](#)). This indicates a disconnect between early exposure and long-term fandom. This campaign works to reframe American soccer as something more than just a childhood hobby.

Finally, addressing barriers to fandom, such as unfamiliarity with players, perceived complexity of the sport, or lack of cultural relevance, is essential. Around 17% of people avoid sports because the rules are confusing, and 19% of women do not follow sports because they are unfamiliar with the teams or players ([Sanchez, 2025](#)).

Goal: Increase and sustain long-term American engagement in soccer leading up to and beyond the FIFA World Cup.

Objective: Increase awareness of the USMNT and the FIFA World Cup among target demographics by the end of the World Cup on July 19, 2026.

Strategy: Position soccer as America's new favorite pastime by tying the sport to familiar social rituals, fostering a sense of patriotism, pride and identity with the team.

Tactics:

- **Television ad flight introducing Soccer is for U.S. campaign, highlighting U.S. pride and American tradition in soccer**
 - A television ad flight will introduce the Soccer is for U.S. campaign, celebrating American pride and tradition in soccer. The ad will run across streaming services where the World Cup will eventually be broadcasted, such as Peacock and YouTube TV.
 - A flight of patriotic, high-energy ads that open with clips of international matches and the word “football” echoing through various announcers’ voices, before cutting to electrifying USMNT highlights and passionate American fans. The spot closes with a powerful double-meaning tagline that reclaims *soccer* as uniquely American; both as our word and our culture across the country, encouraging unity, pride, and the revival of the sport in the U.S., especially during a time of division, by stating its for *all* of *us*.
 - This ad emphasizes the core message of the campaign: rewriting the story of soccer in the U.S. While America may not yet dominate international “football,” the campaign positions U.S. *Soccer* as disruptive and fan-centered, creating a uniquely engaging experience that distinguishes the team and its supporters from any other in the world.
- **Launch USMNT watch party & activation tour**
 - The Watch Like U.S. activation tour will launch nationwide, featuring USMNT watch parties and pop-up events designed to generate excitement leading up to the World Cup. The initiative will debut with a high-energy USMNT x Miami Takeover Party, setting the tone for additional events hosted at sports bars, college campuses, and high-traffic venues in major cities and host cities across the country.
 - To build momentum, the campaign will spotlight USMNT Friendly matches to engage sports fans early and convert event seekers and casual viewers into dedicated supporters. Branded merchandise featuring QR codes will direct fans to the Watch Like U.S. hub and official USMNT social channels, allowing them to RSVP digitally and stay updated on future activations.
 - Official partners of U.S. Soccer, Truly, Jim Beam & Coke, and Michelob Ultra, will be integrated into the experience through event branding and sampling opportunities at watch parties.
 - The first campaign flight will launch in March 2026 alongside USMNT Friendlies and conclude June 11, 2026, as the FIFA World Cup begins.
- **Social media ad flight reframing soccer as beyond just a childhood hobby**
 - A series of social media advertisements that challenge the idea of soccer being for children, all of which ending with the line “**Not Just For Kids. Soccer is for all of U.S.**”

- Emotional spots will feature real adult soccer leagues, older fans, and everyday adults who love and participate in the sport, emphasizing its multigenerational reach.
- Humorous ironic spot shows kids taking over every element of the soccer experience- hosting watch parties, tailgating, announcing games, and playing “pro” moments- without a single adult present. Spot ends with the ironic line, highlighting the contrast between the stereotype of soccer as a kids’ sport and the reality that adults not only still have a place in the game, but are essential to its culture, passion, and growth
- Positions U.S. Soccer as inclusive, community-oriented, and welcoming to both lifelong fans and newcomers.
- Reinforces that soccer can be discovered or rediscovered at any stage of life, strengthening emotional connection and driving long-term fandom.

Objective 2: Enhance positive perceptions of U.S. Soccer by boosting new/latent fan favorability scores and emotional connection by 30% by the end of the World Cup on July 19, 2026.

Strategy: Humanize USMNT players and showcase their personalities to build emotional connections through relatable, personality-driven stories and philanthropic initiatives.

Tactics:

- **Launch Play With Purpose philanthropy tour as an addition to the pre-existing Soccer Forward program to position the team as community-minded, fostering goodwill.**
 - Launch the Play With Purpose philanthropy tour as an extension of Soccer Forward, positioning the USMNT as community-minded and dedicated to fostering goodwill.
 - The team will make surprise visits to special needs and underprivileged youth soccer organizations in host cities across the U.S., partnering with programs such as Just Ball League, Build Soccer, and Special Olympics.
 - The tour will be announced via USMNT social media channels, the U.S. Soccer website, and a press release.
 - The Play With Purpose Tour will highlight U.S. Soccer’s commitment to inclusivity, accessibility, and community development, inspiring the next generation of players to stay engaged with the sport.
 - Content from each visit will be captured and shared across social media platforms, amplifying visibility for the partnered charities while strengthening awareness and positive sentiment toward the USMNT.
- **Launch the Pass it Forward donation program as an addition to the Play With Purpose impact initiative**
 - The Pass It Forward initiative will donate a portion of ticket proceeds to the visited organizations
 - The program will be launched alongside the Play With Purpose tour through a hero video on social media
 - Donation messaging will be integrated into ticketing pages and promoted across USMNT-owned social media channels, email newsletters, and partner channels.
- **Pitch to national and niche publications about both philanthropy programs**
 - The Play With Purpose philanthropy tour and Pass It Forward donation initiative will be pitched to national and niche publications, including *The Cut*, *The New York Times*, and *People*, to generate earned media coverage.
 - Stories will feature behind-the-scenes content, youth testimonials, and milestones from both programs.
 - Earned media outreach will target a wide demographic with a focus on women, amplifying awareness of the team’s community-oriented values and positioning U.S. Soccer as accessible, inclusive, and impactful beyond the field.
- **Launch Talk with U.S. series on the US Soccer podcast**
 - Launch the Talk with U.S. series on the official U.S. Soccer podcast, giving fans an opportunity to stay connected to the team.

- Each episode will explore players' personal stories, highlighting experiences on and off the field, and provide insight into the philanthropic initiatives they support.
- Fans will be able to submit questions and messages, creating an interactive and immersive experience.
- The series will foster direct engagement with the team while promoting awareness of community programs and encouraging deeper connections with U.S. Soccer.
- **Introduce players and their personalities through a Meet the Players/USMNT: Off the Field social media campaign**
 - Launch the Meet the Players campaign to introduce fans to the personalities behind the USMNT jerseys, showcasing players' lives off the field.
 - Release reality TV-style, *The Bachelor* introduction-inspired, candid video montages leading up to the World Cup, with interviews focused on personal interests and experiences rather than professional performance.
 - The USMNT: Off the Field component will post lifestyle and behind-the-scenes content on social media to foster emotional connections between players and audiences.
 - Players will be mic'd during practices or scrimmages and participate in pop culture trends to increase relatability, engagement, and social media algorithm performance.
 - The campaign aims to humanize players, build familiarity among new fans, and address barriers to fandom related to unfamiliarity with teams and athletes.

Objective 3: Drive participation among event seekers & new soccer fans within FIFA sponsored events and activities by 20% by the end of the World Cup on July 19, 2026.

Strategy: Leverage digital engagement and immersive activations to transform casual new fans into active participants.

Tactics:

- **Incorporate new additions and enhancements to the USMNT app to excite and engage new/latent fans**
 - The USMNT app will be enhanced with game-time bingo boards, live polls, and prediction challenges formatted like Kahoot, allowing fans to compete with friends in real time during matches.
 - The Bet on U.S. feature will allow fans to make predictions on match outcomes, player stats, or fun in-game moments, earning points, sweepstakes entries, and exclusive rewards for correct picks, encouraging repeated engagement throughout the tournament.
 - Unique game codes will enable users to join friends, track scores, and compete together throughout each game.
 - The Off the Field videos will be uploaded under each player's roster photo in the app to allow users to remember and connect with their favorite players as they're playing games, making predictions and sending messages.
 - Fans will have the opportunity to send messages of support to players through the app for a chance to have their cheers featured on the big screen during halftime.
 - This integrated approach combines live match interaction, gamified predictions, and personalized fan-player engagement to strengthen emotional connection, increase app usage, and enhance overall excitement around the tournament.
- **Launch the Watch Like U.S. Phase 2, featuring tailgates & fan experiences at live games**
 - Phase 2 encourages fans to attend live USMNT games and engage with immersive tailgate and fan experiences, fostering connection within the growing soccer community.
 - Large-scale tailgates will be hosted outside each stadium, featuring VR activations, food and beverage trucks, soccer mini-games, and prize giveaways.
 - The Watch Like U.S. Them Worldwide Soccer Passport Expo will be set up inside stadiums, inviting fans to "travel the world" by visiting stations that showcase international soccer traditions and culture.
 - Fans who complete the full passport by participating in activities at each station will receive FIFA-branded swag or a promotional item from official sponsor, Nike.

- Truly, Jim Beam, Coke, and Ultra products will be incorporated as official sponsors throughout the tailgates and activations, highlighting brand partnerships while enhancing the fan experience.
- **#CheerlikeUS TikTok Sweepstakes**
 - Launch the #CheerLikeUS TikTok sweepstakes to encourage fans to actively engage with the USMNT and demonstrate their support for the team.
 - Fans will create short-form videos showing how they “Cheer like U.S.” and tag their content with #CheerLikeUS and #FIFAWorldCup to participate.
 - Videos can include creative cheers, dance routines, game-day reactions, or fan rituals, tapping into the popularity of short-form video platforms among Millennials and Gen Z audiences
 - Fans who submit videos will be entered to win exclusive prizes, including USMNT match tickets, branded merchandise, or VIP fan experiences, incentivizing participation and repeat engagement.
 - Content from top submissions will be highlighted on the USMNT social channels, motivating additional participation.

Conclusion

The Soccer is for U.S. campaign redefines and reclaims the sport as a uniquely American pastime, aiming to disrupt the landscape of traditional U.S. sports like football and baseball by emphasizing cultural experiences over mere performance. While other countries live and breathe “football” with deeply rooted traditions, the U.S. has an opportunity to create its own space for the sport- one that fuses soccer with the rituals Americans already love: tailgates, watch parties, chants, songs, and shared social moments that foster connection to players, teams, and fellow fans. Through immersive tactics like the Watch Like U.S. activation tour, gamified USMNT app experiences, #CheerLikeUS TikTok sweepstakes, and behind-the-scenes content showcasing player personalities, the campaign builds emotional attachment and engagement for a sport that has historically lacked generational loyalty in the U.S. Complementing these efforts, the Play With Purpose philanthropy tour highlights U.S. Soccer’s commitment to community, inclusivity, and youth development, while encouraging young fans to stay dedicated to the game and challenging the notion of soccer being just a childhood hobby. By combining digital, experiential, and social initiatives, Soccer is for U.S. not only introduces Americans to their own national team, but also establishes soccer as a cultural experience rooted in pride, connection, and identity- reminding fans that while other countries call it “football,” here, it’s soccer- and it’s for all of U.S.

Reporting and Evaluation

To understand the impact of the Soccer is for U.S. campaign, we will track awareness, engagement, and emotional connection across multiple touchpoints. Awareness will be measured by monitoring website traffic to U.S. Soccer landing pages and FIFA World Cup content, alongside social media reach and impressions on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, X, and Facebook. Google Analytics will capture trends in keyword searches related to the U.S. Men’s National Team. Pre- and post-campaign surveys will not only measure overall awareness but will also allow us to compare differences in opinion, knowledge, and perceptions of U.S. Soccer initiatives before and after the campaign.

Engagement will be assessed through both digital and in-person interactions. App usage metrics- such as dwell time, repeat visits, and participation in polls, bingo boards, predictions, and challenges- will provide insight into how fans interact with gamified content. Attendance and involvement at local watch parties and tailgate events will be captured through digital RSVPs, QR code scans, and wristband activations, while ticket sales and fan-generated content, including social posts using #CheerLikeUS, will demonstrate active participation and community building. Emotional impact will be measured through sentiment analysis of campaign hashtags and mentions, tracking positive, neutral, and negative reactions across social platforms. Engagement with philanthropic and player-focused content; likes, shares, comments, and story views will indicate connection and resonance. In addition, pre- and post-campaign surveys and EEG brain wave analysis during interaction with key owned media, such as humorous commercials or charity content, will provide a deeper understanding of fans’ pride, identity, and emotional bond with the USMNT.

Together, these measures tell the story of how the campaign not only introduced new fans to soccer in America but also fostered lasting emotional, cultural, and community connections, providing a clear picture of change from pre- to post-campaign.

Appendices- Appendix I: Research

Secondary Research

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Appendix II: Sample Tactics/Supplemental Materials

“Soccer is for U.S.” commercial draft:

VISUAL	AUDIO
Quick montage of UK stadiums: English fans waving flags, players running, national flags waving. Showing cultural foods and traditions central to England	Sound byte of English football announcers from past live games (Peter Drury, etc.): “What a goal for England!”, “This is for the pride of the nation...”, “England’s best football players... football!”
Switch to lush green stadiums: Irish fans cheering with scarves, clovers on banners and apparel; clips of the Irish team from past games. Low-energy visuals, focused on fans and team identity.	Irish announcer sound byte ending with “football.” (Ex: “...And that’s why I believe Ireland has never seen football like this...”) Fade into next clip.
Flash to the Spanish national team and fans waving flags, showing national colors. Still low-energy fan-focused footage.	Spanish announcer: “¡España entera está detrás de su equipo- este es el fútbol de nuestra patria!” Fade into next clip.
Flash to the French team and fans. Flags waving, fans cheering, team walking out of the tunnel.	French announcer: “Tout un pays derrière eux... c’est le football qui porte la fierté de la France !”
Rapid montage of teams and highlights from multiple countries stitched together: fans cheering, goal nets snapping, flags waving. Chaos and speed increase with jump-cuts and motion blur.	Multiple announcers layering over each other, repeating “football,” speeding up until “FOOTBALL” is all you hear.
Black screen.	Abrupt stop. Silence.
Slow zoom into an empty U.S. stadium. Lights begin turning on, one row at a time.	Echoing stadium lights flicking on. Sound of distant footsteps entering.
Empty field with sunlight streaming in. Close-ups of USMNT jersey walking onto the field. American flags gently waving in slow motion.	Heartbeat starts. Slow, distant “U-S-A... U-S-A...” chanting from real fan recordings.
USMNT striker takes a shot. Ball moves in slow motion through the air. Fans stand up in slow motion, then suddenly cheer at full speed when the ball hits the net.	Heartbeat grows louder... then- <i>BOOM</i> . The ball hits the goal. A hard, intense beat remix of a patriotic song begins (God Bless the U.S.A., Born in the U.S.A.).
High-energy montage of USA fans cheering, jumping, faces painted, tailgating, BBQs, bar watch-parties, people singing, flags waving, highlighting culturally American celebrations.	Patriotic beat continues, layered with real USA fan audio (cheering, chanting, drum hits, stadium noise).

Highlights of USMNT moments: goals, celebrations, team huddles, hugs, fans storming bars after a win.

Compilation of iconic USA soccer announcer sound bytes: “Another goal for the United States Soccer Team!”, “This is the best soccer we’ve seen in years!”, “America takes the lead in this soccer match!”

Screen fades to red/white/blue. USMNT logo fades in. Tagline appears in bold: **“They can have football. Soccer is for U.S.”**

Music swells. Final iconic lyric hits: “God Bless the U.S.A.” or “...and the home of the brave.”

Potential graphic:

Soccer is for U.S.

USMNT ‘Bet on U.S.’ app enhancement screenshot:

