The ASL America's Soccer League

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CONTACT:
Christa Morones
(213) 460-4336

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COMMISSIONER MARIO MACHADO

ANNOUNCES HIS DEPARTURE FROM

THE AMERICAN SOCCER LEAGUE

SEPTEMBER 21, 1981 - LOS ANGELES. In the following statement by his attorney, Peter Eichler of Cooper, Epstein & Hurewitz, Beverly Hills, California, Machado announced his departure from the league:

"Mario Machado was appointed the Commissioner of the American Soccer League in order to bring professionalism generally, and in the area of soccer specifically, to a league which until that point in time did not have the cohesiveness, organization and leadership of a 'major league.'

However, due in part to the fact that many of the league's owners are novices in this area, the lack of organization and of a unified 'game plan' to make the league viable continuously hampered Mr. Machado's efforts to accomplish what he was brought in to do. Notwithstanding the failure of some of the owners and of the league generally to cooperate with Mr. Machado, he still was able to obtain commitments from several substantial new franchisees as well as from major corporate sponsors (e.g., Anhesuer-Busch as a sponsor of the league's recent Championship Game).

We have now been informed unofficially that Mr. Machado's contract with the league, which still has

several months to run has been terminated. No explanation was given for this action. Further developments will be reported."

Machado was appointed Commissioner of the ASL on December 15, 1980. Machado said, "We started to negotiate to get the league going. The ASL was on its death bed, as many of the sports reporters know, and we were able because of the Americanization concept to give it at least a stab at survival which has been the key which has allowed this league to get a second breath."

When asked how he became aware of the termination, Machado responded that some of the clubs came to him individually and asked if he wanted to be a consultant or work in some other capacity for their club. Dennis Gilstad, an employee of the Chairman, Sonny Van Arnem, confirmed it by saying that Van Arnem couldn't talk to Machado but that a letter would be in writing to him shortly. Machado said there was a meeting in Charlotte regarding his continuing as Commissioner in a different light--they were decentralizing the league. Machado said, "They started to take things away from the New York office, who by the way did a super job this year--probably more effectively and efficiently than the last 3 or 4 and I will stand on that--not that they were taking power away from me they were taking the ability to do an effective job from an overall league standpoint. All the functions of the league are being disbursed. In fact, the New York office today is packing up and closing down. Administration is going to Rochester--legal is in Oklahoma--financial in Cleveland--and I don't think that makes for a professional league in that you take all the functions of the league and break it down and put it in the hands of a particular club and that's what they're doing. I don't think that's the way to run a league."

The question was posed as to what condition he was leaving the league in and Machado stated, "The league ended on a very high note. I made the decision to move the Championship Game to Carolina and to give up the hometeam advantage to New York because I did not believe that they could end the season with

distinction to the ASL and I knew that Carolina, which is an exceptional franchise, had the moxie and understanding in the short time to put it together. The ASL I think today has a better reputation. The demise of the New England Sharks did not hurt the league at all. The Americanization concept does work. There is an interest from corporate sponsors that I have led to the trough who are waiting for next year and several franchises who have come to me waiting to see what my position is with the league next year to see whether or not they want to throw their lot with the league. Well, obviously, I will not be with the league and they have to make their own decisions. The ASL today as an umbrella is stronger than it has been in a long while. Internally, you have to look at the clubs. The addition of Carolina has improved the whole complexion of the league. Individually, you take Cleveland--who has not made one iota of progress in the last five years and I think that's stagnation and they should be looking at what things they are doing wrong. Allentown has the same problems. My suggestion was for the Stoners to move to Philadelphia which has a larger audience base and for the loyalists, as part of their season ticket plan, to provide a bus for them to the games and we would have 4,000 loyal fans and many more to choose from in the Philadelphia area. But they don't think like that because they're not marketing types."

Eichler commented that "A lot of these people are new to this business--both soccer and owning clubs, the management techniques and marketing techniques--and therefore this is not their strength and they perhaps did not bring in consultants who were experts."

While Machado stated that he made suggestions to the owners, all decisions were made after studies were done, the consequences were evaluated and votes by the executive board and/or owners were taken. No decisions were made unilaterally--rulings were made in the best interest of the league.

As for the future of the league, Machado stated, "We had a goal that we set--that was shooting for our 50th year and, hopefully, they have learned from the experience as we all have and they will go forward and get their house in order."

Machado was asked if he thought anyone would be willing to take on the Commissioner's job after this and his reply was that he didn't know who the owners' prospects were or who might be interested. His advice for the incoming Commissioner was that "He had better understand what they (the owners) really want as opposed to what they say they want--because I don't think they want a strong commissioner in the league. The owners still want to totally monopolize and make all the decisions at the club level rather than just concentrating and building a better league. My philosophy has always been that the league is only as strong as its weakest link and that the teams can only get stronger is we develop the umbrella organization that the league is and make that stronger--not make the Commissioner stronger--I think the league should be stronger. The NFL stands, the NBA stands, the NASL is shaky perhaps--but the ASL should be a strong umbrella. When people look at the mark and look at the name they should say that stands for something and that's important. I think integrity is the bottom line."

As for unfinished business which remains to be done, Machado stated, "I will do what I have to do as a professional to finish my job--I have no vendetta--but again no one has talked to me. The Chairman of the Board--our third this year--has elected to write me a letter from what I gather and will not reveal what that letter entails."