

The World Cup Comes to Miami: Behind the Scenes

An inside look at the legal, operational and regional coordination behind one of the world's largest sporting events.

June 08, 2026 at 08:26 AM | By: **David Seifer**

When fans think about the FIFA World Cup, they picture the matches, the players, the national pride, the fan festivals, and the extraordinary global energy surrounding the tournament. What they rarely see, however, is the immense legal, commercial, governmental and operational coordination required to successfully deliver that experience at the local level.

The FIFA World Cup is not a single championship game or a weekend event. It is a multi-year undertaking that unfolds across weeks of sustained activity. In Miami, that means seven matches at Hard Rock Stadium, to be known during the tournament as Miami Stadium, including four group-stage matches, a round of 32 match, a quarterfinal, and the third-place match. Across South Florida, that also means a fan festival, viewing parties, soccer clinics, fan activities, sponsor activations, concerts, legacy projects, and transportation and public safety coordination.

Hosting the FIFA World Cup is comparable to hosting multiple major international events in succession, with the added complexity of national teams, international delegations, global media, multilingual fan bases, commercial rights protections, and a tournament framework designed to deliver a consistent world-class experience across host cities.

As outside counsel to the Miami Host Committee, Bilzin Sumberg has been deeply involved in building the legal framework needed to bring those seven matches to Miami, support related events across South Florida, and advance the commercial activities and community legacy projects tied to the tournament.

The Host Committee Represents the Community

The Miami Host Committee represents the community and connects the many public and private stakeholders responsible for delivering the experience of the local tournament and related events. Its role is to coordinate regional promotion, funding, fan experience, community engagement, and local execution, all while aligning Miami's identity with FIFA's global tournament standards.

The stakeholder involvement is wide. FIFA brings tournament production, operational protocols, brand standards, and rights to be commercialized. Miami-Dade County provides public infrastructure, and transportation and mobility plans. Public safety agencies offer security and emergency response. Hospitality and tourism organizations, including the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, bring destination marketing and visitor support. Commercial affiliates and host city supporters contribute funding, activations and community-facing programming. Vendors provide event production, logistics, and operational capabilities.

My firm's work has been to help the Miami Host Committee translate those many moving parts into a coordinated legal structure across event production, commercial sponsorships and

activations, donor arrangements, intellectual property licenses, government and agency agreements, vendor contracts and community legacy initiatives.

Working Within FIFA's Global Framework

One of the defining features of the FIFA World Cup is the robustness of FIFA's global operating framework. That framework is what allows a tournament of this unprecedented scale to be delivered consistently across multiple countries, cities and venues.

Agreements must be carefully aligned with FIFA's tournament standards, operational requirements, commercial protections, and brand guidelines. Local counsel must be disciplined in how downstream agreements are drafted so that supporters, vendors, governmental partners, event producers, and community programs can move forward while maintaining consistency with the broader FIFA overlay.

The coordination of commercial rights is especially critical. FIFA's global sponsor categories, commercial guidelines, and intellectual property protections are designed to preserve commercial affiliates and host city supporters' rights to promote and commercialize their respective brands and the FIFA and host cities' logos.

Beyond commercial rights, the legal work also extends to drafting and negotiating agreements to implement event production, vendor engagement, hospitality and tourism partnerships, venue-related agreements, infrastructure, fan activities, sponsor activations, host city supporter and donor arrangements, and community and legacy initiatives. Each agreement must function not only on its own terms, but also as part of an integrated system designed to deliver a seamless tournament experience.

The Final Stretch

As the kick-off approaches, the operational tempo is accelerating dramatically. This final phase is the ultimate test of the legal and operational framework built over the preceding years.

FIFA is already transforming Hard Rock Stadium into Miami Stadium, including the installation of a FIFA-standard natural grass pitch and tournament-specific infrastructure, branding, broadcast, hospitality, and operational overlays.

The FIFA Fan Festival at Bayfront Park, which runs from June 13 through July 5, 2026, will become a major gathering point for fans, featuring live match broadcasts, world-class entertainment, cultural performances, curated food and beverage experiences, interactive activations and family-friendly programming.

Community programming is also vital part of the tournament's local legacy. The Miami Host Committee has been, and continues to be, implementing youth soccer initiatives, public art installations, civic engagement campaigns, and regional activations designed to ensure that the FIFA World Cup is not only an elite global sporting event, but also a platform for broader community connection and lasting legacy throughout Miami.

The regional footprint will extend beyond Miami itself. FIFA has established team base camps for Portugal in Palm Beach Gardens, Cabo Verde in Tampa, and Curaçao in Boca Raton, further expanding the tournament's presence across Florida.

Miami's match schedule will draw passionate global fan bases to the region, including matchups such as Saudi Arabia versus Uruguay, Scotland versus Brazil, and Colombia versus Portugal. Notably, the Colombia versus Portugal game in Miami has had, by far, the greatest demand for tickets of any game in the entire FIFA World Cup 2026, other than the final game.

A Long-Term Investment in Miami

The FIFA World Cup's impact will extend well beyond the matches themselves. The global broadcast exposure will place Miami before international fans, travelers, businesses, and investors who may never have previously engaged with South Florida.

The tournament will leave behind far more than memories. It will strengthen operational playbooks for regional coordination, deepen public-private partnerships, showcase Miami's ability to host events of global significance, and support community legacy projects designed to endure long after the final whistle.

For Miami, hosting the FIFA World Cup is about more than seven matches. It demonstrates the region's ability to operate on a global stage, deliver a world-class fan experience, and convert a once-in-a-generation sporting event into lasting civic, economic and international momentum.

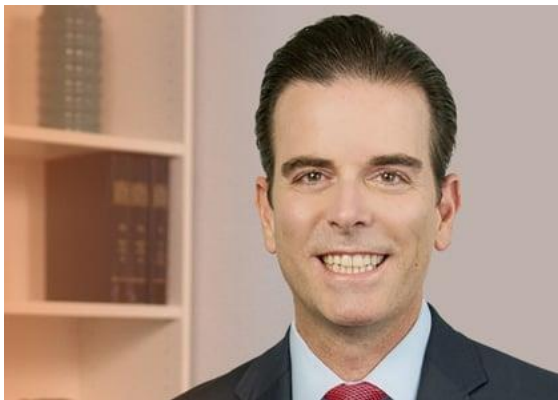
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