CALIFORNIA LEGION HEAD TO CHICAGO FOR MLR CHAMPIONSHIP SHOWDOWN AGAINST UNDEFEATED HOUNDS

California Legion head to Chicago for the MLR Championship, facing the undefeated Hounds on Father's Day in a winner-take-all showdown on ESPN2 and ESPN+.



LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, June 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The journey continues for the California Legion. Fresh off a hard-fought semifinal victory against the Seawolves in Seattle, the Legion will travel to Chicago this week for the 2026 Major League Rugby Championship, where they will face the undefeated Chicago Hounds in a winner-take-all battle for the MLR Shield on Father's Day, Sunday, June 21. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m local time (8 p.m. EDT / 5 p.m. PDT) at SeatGeek Stadium and will be broadcast nationally on ESPN2 and ESPN+, with the official pregame starting 30 minutes earlier.

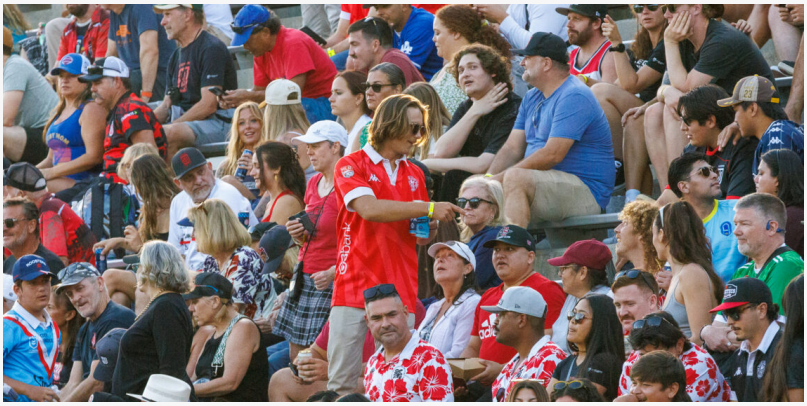
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>
> *Steven Hoiles*

For California Legion CEO Adam Freier, the championship appearance represents a remarkable achievement for a club competing in its inaugural Major League Rugby season under the California Legion banner.

"It's an incredible accomplishment for this group," said Freier. "To come into the competition in our first year as California Legion and earn the opportunity to play for a championship speaks volumes about the commitment of our players, coaches, staff, and supporters. There has been a tremendous amount of hard work behind the scenes to build something the entire state can be proud of."

Freier also emphasized the significance of representing California on the league's biggest stage.

“California has such a rich rugby history and one of the strongest rugby communities anywhere in North America. To have the chance to represent the entire state in the MLR Championship is something that means a great deal to everyone involved with our club. We know how many players, families, supporters, and rugby people across California are behind us, and we’re proud to carry that responsibility into Chicago this weekend.”





The championship matchup presents the ultimate challenge for Head Coach Steve Hoiles and his squad. The Hounds enter the final as the league’s only unbeaten team and the lone opponent the Legion have been unable to conquer this season.

“A sign of a good team is when you can beat everyone in the course of a season,” said Hoiles. “That’s the true testament of a team, to be able to call yourself a champion.”

For Hoiles, the formula for success begins long before the attack.

“It won’t be about how good we attack,” he said. “That’ll be a byproduct of how well we defend and how our discipline is. It’s going to come down to defense and discipline as much as anything.”

While Chicago’s perfect record has earned them the top seed and home-state advantage, Hoiles believes the Legion’s battle-tested campaign could prove invaluable in the pressure moments that define championship rugby.

“If we get the game to an arm wrestle and there’s 10, 15, 20, 25 minutes to go and it’s not going as well as they would have liked, they simply haven’t had as much time under the pressure that we’ve had this year,” Hoiles said.

Players to Watch
The Legion’s run to the championship has been built on contributions throughout the roster, with several standout performers emerging as key figures heading into Sunday’s final.

Fly-half and goal-kicker Coby Miln has provided a steady hand throughout the postseason, converting opportunities at an elite rate while controlling territory and tempo.

“He kicks at 85 percent and he kicks them long range,” Hoiles said. “That gave the guys a lot of confidence, and I thought he played with really good composure.”

In the backfield, Rory Van Vugt continues to set the standard for consistency and reliability.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen him give less than a six or seven out of ten,” Hoiles said. “He’s the most consistent player we’ve got in our team.”

The Legion’s veteran leadership group has also played a critical role throughout the season. Leaders including Jason Damm, Joe Taufete’e, Lance Williams, Gonzalo Bertranou, Billy Meakes have helped guide the squad through adversity and into a championship appearance.

“It’s not me, it’s not Jace, it’s not Deno, it’s not Dave Clancy,” Hoiles said. “It’s kind of like a combination of them. So there’s no egos.”

Championship Weekend in Chicago
The MLR Championship is more than a final—it’s a celebration of rugby across North America. Championship Weekend will bring together players, coaches, supporters, and rugby communities from across the continent through a series of events including the Chicago Rugby Summit, MLR Welcome Party, Fan Festival activities at Navy Pier, youth rugby programming, supporter gatherings, and fan activations leading into Sunday’s championship match.

Hosted at SeatGeek Stadium, Championship Weekend is expected to draw rugby fans from across the league as Major League Rugby crowns its 2026 champion. Supporters from every MLR club will gather in Chicago to celebrate the growth of professional rugby in North America and witness the culmination of the league’s season.

After months of competition and a grueling playoff journey, only two teams remain.
One arrives undefeated.
The other arrives battle-tested.

On Father’s Day, the California Legion will look to complete their road journey and bring the MLR Shield home to California.

Match Information:
2026 Major League Rugby Championship
California Legion vs. Chicago Hounds
Sunday, June 21
Kickoff: 8 p.m. EDT / 7 p.m CDT / 5 p.m. PDT

SeatGeek Stadium | Bridgeview, Illinois
Live on ESPN2 and ESPN+ from 7:30 p.m. EDT / 6:30 p.m CDT / 4:30 p.m. PDT

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