

2022 MLS Cup: LAFC vs Philadelphia

Saturday, November 5, 2022

Los Angeles, California, USA

Banc of California Stadium

Los Angeles FC

John McCarthy

Postgame Press Conference

LAFC 3, Philadelphia Union 3

3-0 Penalties

Q. You faced penalties against America earlier this year in. What ways did that help here? And secondly, you're a Philly guy, Philadelphia Union product, you played for that team. To do what you did today against that club, how does that play into the whole scenario for you?

JOHN McCARTHY: Yeah, so the first one is with the PK shooting and Club America, there's no PK that's the same. There's no PK shootout that's the same. It's different game, different mindset, different everything.

To be a Philly kid and play against my hometown team, it's their first final, ever, in the MLS Cup, so it's something special.

I would root for them any day of the week besides today, and I genuinely mean that. There's a lot of good people in that organization, and they mean a lot to me.

From that aspect, they have a lot of meaning in my heart, but there's something that the group of people there actually taught me when you cross a white line, doesn't matter who you are playing against, you play to win.

That was the mentality for everyone from start to finish, and that was my mentality and it worked.

So that's just how I train, how I play. Doesn't matter if it's a game of spike ball. I don't care who I play against. I genuinely, I liked winning. I loved winning.

Q. Two-part question as well to piggyback off the Philly roots, to come into this game and be thrust into it in the 110th minute because of Max's injury, to warm



up very quickly, to have it go the way it goes with conceding a goal, and to you winning the MVP on the PKs, as Carlos said, it's a Hollywood script that maybe nobody would ever come up with. So I want you to tell me about that ending. And secondly I saw you guys FaceTiming with Max in the locker room. What did you say?

JOHN McCARTHY: I'll go to the second question first. I couldn't hear him. I saw his face, and we both could see each other's emotion. That's the player of the game for me. If he comes out and slides and misses, it's 3-2 and who knows how the game is going to end.

But he made a big-time decision by coming out and making that play. And I'm absolutely devastated for him because it seems like it's a pretty serious injury and he's going to miss the World Cup. I don't know the extent of it, but if you come out of a game in that situation, you're not coming out for a Band-Aid.

I'm genuinely, genuinely sorry. But the emotion in that phone call was just something special to have.

And what was your other question? I kind of forgot it.

Q. The Hollywood ending script for you.

JOHN McCARTHY: Yeah, like I said, I'm a Philly kid through and throughout. I grew up in Philly my whole life, grade school, high school, college. I know the people from that city. I know a lot of guys on that team, some of the fans. Some of the guys in Sons of Ben were texting me beforehand some funny jokes and talking s--- and whatnot.

But it was -- it was just a moment that you dream of as a kid, to play in a final, first off, and then to play against a team that pushed us all the way until the last game of the season, to be in the final.

I wish it was against somebody else, honestly, because I feel for the team and the city because if it was against -- if we weren't in the and Philly was in the final, I would for sure root for them.



But to be put in that moment and come on, I just was hoping we find a way to keep it clean and then save a PK and hopefully something good happens.

But it's a dream come true. And I had no idea when Ilie scored that it was done. I had no clue. I was walking towards the goal, and Ilie scared the s--- out of me.

Q. The two penalty kicks that you stopped, was that merely reaction on your part, or did you have an idea how each shooter was going to approach the penalty?

JOHN McCARTHY: Oka spoke about it right before the PKs, what are you going to do? I'm not going to tell you what we said; I think that's fair.

But we had a good conversation, and we said, stick to it, go with what you feel. Obviously as everybody knows in the League, there is moments and video on everyone. Everyone uses the same data. You can see everyone's PKs and stuff like that.

Obviously I watch film, literally, as I was sitting in the hot tub for pregame warming my body up, I watched a nine-minute clip of PKs. I'm not going to say I didn't have some type of idea.

But I just went with what I thought would be good for the shootout. I'm grateful it worked, I really am. It's a dream.

Q. Can you compare this situation you came into to other sports? Is this equivalent of starting quarterback going out in a Super Bowl in overtime and you have to come in? What was it like?

JOHN McCARTHY: So I'll tell you this much. I leaned over to Oka, and every two days, we would practice PKs with the team. So twice a week, I should say, we practiced PKs.

I asked him, I said, "Am I ever going to play in PKs?" I genuinely asked him. I said, "If I am, can you please just give me a heads up?"

So at the start of the second overtime, I leaned over and I said, "Am I going in?"

He said, "How much time you need to warm up?"

I said, "I don't know, five, seven minutes."

Said, "Okay, I'll let you know at the eighth minute."

Minutes later, devastation. Devastated for, like I said before, what happened to Max. Oka leaned over and said,

"There you go."

So like you said with the Super Bowl, yeah, this is a moment that is on par with that for me. It's a Cup; it's your final in the League in America. It's the biggest stage in America.

Someone got injured. Hopefully the next guy can step up in any situation, and I was able to -- like I said, I was hoping to save one, and saved another. Unfortunate miss for him, but it worked out great for us.

Q. When you were in Philly, you developed a bit of a reputation for penalties or as being a penalty saver. What makes you so comfortable in that kind of situation? And in the days leading up to a final, players envision scenarios of how a game might go. Did you do that, and what was the most extreme or wildest scenario that you allowed yourself to have before this, and did it fall short of what actually ended up happening?

JOHN McCARTHY: It's crazy because, like I said before, with all those talks going into the PK -- I kind forgot your first question.

It's crazy to talk to family and friends and the past three weeks, hey, if PKs come around, I might have an opportunity to play. Or if something tragic happened, which it did, I might have an opportunity to play.

So when it came down to the final, all week, and the three weeks leading into it, it was like, I want that ring. I'll do whatever it takes to get that ring. Doesn't matter how I did that. That was just a mindset of getting that ring.

And your first question -- Philly. My mindset on penalties is the shooter has the best chance to score, actually. The shooter has a higher chance to score than he does to miss or get saved.

If I get scored on, I have four more chances. If I can save one, hopefully that's enough to get a save and help the team.

But I believe in a PK shootout, I will save one. I believe that I will give my team the best opportunity. I don't have any doubt when I step on the field.

Yeah, mistakes are made, but I believe in myself and the team that good things will happen.

Q. Teo missed the first penalty, and you're standing in-goal, they score, they get ahead. Did that settle you down? Did that make a difference for you? And

second, all season long, it's been next man up for this club, the bench, but you can't really do that at goalkeeper. So how did you feel about role through this season and having a chance to contribute in this biggest moment?

JOHN McCARTHY: It's crazy because Teo, in three weeks of practicing, was burying the ball in PKs. He's one of the MOST clinical finishers I've seen in training sessions even. For him to miss, it was like, unlucky, like I just said to the previous reporter. It was unfortunate. Mistakes happen. Life goes on. You move on.

I think I said it in the pregame, it's the next move, next moment is what's the most important. I'm not worried about what just happened. I can't affect that. It's already gone. On to the next one and it is what it is.

And your first question?

Q. Next man up.

JOHN McCARTHY: Next man up, I gotcha. We were sitting in the locker room, actually, a couple of the guys with John and Jordan and Ryan and one of the trainers, and I think it's true that this team, yeah, we have a lot of stars: We do with Carlos; we do with Giorgio; and we do with Gareth, those are big-name players throughout the world, and I think everybody knows that they have done spectacular things and they were spectacular and throughout the season.

But like you said, the next man up is a mentality that I think we tried to instill with the club and a lot of guys when they did get their chance, you hope they made the most of it because we don't have any bad people on this team. We have a lot of hard-working people and good guys. I've been saying all season, hopefully the good guys make the most of their opportunity, and that's what our plan was and what got us where we were today is the next man up mentality.

Q. We've seen goalies in this league over the years go from backups or third strings, Matt Turner in New England; Brad Stuver getting a chance in Austin. Can you take us into the mindset of a goalie and waiting for your moment, because like I said, we've seen that many times with different players over this league's history.

JOHN McCARTHY: Yeah, I just would train to win, play to win. I have the mentality of just wanting to win. It doesn't matter, like you said, spike ball, small-sided, crossbar challenge, whatever I do, I want to win it. I want to give it everything I have and that's my mentality; it's always been.

If my chance comes tomorrow, great. If my chance comes in three years, great. If it comes next year; if it was two years before, great.

I just want to do whatever it takes to win. That's just how I am. If I get a chance, and like you said, Matt Turner, he made the most of his opportunities. He deserves what he gets.

I like Matt Turner and Brad Stuver a lot. Those guys put their time in. Hopefully something great comments around the corner for them, and hopefully something comes around the corner for me and a lot of other guys that put the time in to make the most of an opportunity.

Q. Who did you ask if you were going in?

JOHN McCARTHY: Oka, my goalkeeper coach. I've known him since my Philly days.

Q. If anyone had told you at, I don't know what time it is, 6 o'clock, five, six hours --

JOHN McCARTHY: It's 6 o'clock? (Laughter).

Q. Hey, we all have deadlines. If we had told you five or six hours ago that you would be sitting in this room and you would be out on that field and that you would have that trophy with you, what would you have said to us?

JOHN McCARTHY: I don't know. I just think it would be just like a dream come true. I haven't listed a trophy since I was 15 years old at Northeast Catholic. I was with a bunch of goofballs from Philly just playing soccer. I had a final at La Salle, I had a final in Philly in the Open Cup. For you to say that I would hold that thing, it still doesn't make sense. It doesn't add up. I believed that I would list a trophy one day. I don't know when or where but I believe that hard work pays off. If you would have told me that, yeah, I would have said it truly is a dream come true. I hope it does come to -- yeah, I hope my dreams come true.

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