

Los Angeles Football Club Media Conference

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Bob Bradley

Press Conference



Los Angeles FC - 4, Portland - 2

THE MODERATOR: We'll start off with a few words about the game and then we'll take questions.

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, first and foremost, I'm happy for the players. When you go through a little bit of a tough stretch or adversity you've got to find ways to play out of it. We started the game trying to control things but the tempo of our passing was too slow. Somewhere 20 minutes, 25 minutes into the first half you could just see the tempo of the passing pick up, balls moving quickly, the right number of touches. Diego's goal was a really good goal in terms of how it was, the ball moved and the timing. And that certainly gives confidence again and that reinforces with players that these are the things that we have tried to do and if you go through a period and things are not as sharp, then you've got to just focus on getting back to some of the basic things and doing them better and better, faster and faster.

Nice push in the first half and then totally F'd it up with a lapse at the end. But I liked the fact that at the end of halftime we regrouped quickly. And then in the second half we didn't give up a goal. That's important for us as we continue to try to just regain confidence. And then we finished it off with a good goal at the end.

A number of good performances tonight. I thought our midfield at the beginning of the game with Mark playing a little deeper and Pancho and Cifu played really well. And then of course, it's nice to get Eduard back on the field late. He helped us with some composure which led to the fourth goal. His way to give our team rhythm and just pick the right spots. That's still a big part what he brings. I still think that the guys up front regaining confidence. Good to see Brad get a goal again. Brian with a really good pass to Diego. So all these things help as we try to move ourselves forward.

THE MODERATOR: Great. Thank you. Take questions, please.

Q. Obviously it was a good performance all around,

but I'm curious what you think about Diego and perhaps having an MVP-type season here putting something like that together. Do you think he's making a good case to be MVP of the league? Obviously you saw last year with Carlos, he put together a stellar season, so I'm wondering what you think about Diego's season overall so far.

BOB BRADLEY: We're really not a team that talks about things like MVPs until the season's over. But what we love is the way Diego has taken more responsibility. He's become more of a leader. You could see it in Orlando and it continues. He's growing as a player. I've mentioned a few times how he works so hard on his finish and that part keeps getting better. So we have challenged a number of guys to try to see if they can take more responsibility. That's Eddie Segura, that's Mark-Anthony Kaye, that's Diego and Eduard Atuesta. And I think that Diego, and Eduard, before he was injured, those two have really shown that they can be leaders in our team. And then now we're just trying to build on that with Mark and Latif and Eddie and Tristan and others.

So but, no, I'm really proud to see the way Diego just keeps focused on the right things. He's a really good team guy and I think he's getting better and better.

Q. You mentioned Chiqui and Cifu. In the following months, you started the American qualifiers and there is the possibility of Diego and Jose Cifuentes being in the roster of the national team. How do you see this possibility?

BOB BRADLEY: Yes. So I can't speak to who gets selected, but what I can speak about is the work I see from these two every day. Chiqui becoming more consistent, showing that he can be more of a competitor from the beginning of the game until the end, pushing himself harder. I think that at times in the past Chiqui, because he has certain qualities, has been able to cut some corners and I've tried to hold him accountable that as a teammate, that he shows his, the other players every day that he's a guy you can trust. He's a guy in big games that's going to come through. So that part I'm really happy to see with him.

And then the development of Cifu has been incredible to see. When he arrived you could tell that he was still a little



nervous about things. His English at first, he was uncomfortable even trying to speak English. He had plenty of guys that could always speak Spanish to him. But what I've seen is him just try so hard to grow as a person. He now tries to speak English. He looks right at you when you talk to him. He's a really good guy. He's a really, with a strong character. And so I think in this last stretch he has really taken big steps forward. So we're always supportive of players with national teams and I'm happy with the way both players are moving forward.

Q. I know you just talked about Diego. I know you gave him, can you talk a little bit more about giving him the arm band? And my second question: We've seen the defense play a much better job in the second half. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

BOB BRADLEY: I mentioned a few minutes ago about leadership and the team. And Mark has worn the arm band. Diego now has worn it. I think probably there will be some times when Eduard wears it. It's all about trying to develop some more leaders. We're a young team and you've got to try to make sure that some of these guys who have been here and understand the way we play really take more responsibility every day with their teammates, on the field in games, and that's what I see from Diego. So we're going to continue to challenge all those guys in the way that they take responsibility and make our team stronger.

Defensively, it's easy to say, Oh, yeah, the second half was better. For the most part, even when you look through this rough stretch, we don't give away that many chances, but we have made mistakes. We have had some goal keeping errors. We have given up too many goals on restarts, defensive set pieces where, especially on the second part of the play we don't see the play through. So we have tried to see if we can work in different ways and I just think it's important that when you've given up a goal right before halftime, instead of just letting that affect you, that there's a real focus in the second half. And that type of mentality is going to, is something that we need more of.

Q. Atuesta made his debut. He hasn't been playing since Orlando and he got a solid, like, 15 minutes in the game tonight. What are your thoughts on his performance and how his recovery has been going?

BOB BRADLEY: The last week or so we saw progress. He started to get more comfortable with just the way he could strike balls. And at first he was a neutral player in training some days and then he got into a little bit of regular training. So I spoke to him yesterday after training and we talked about the possibility that he could give us 15 minutes based upon how the game was going. You can

see that when he steps on the field, even as he's coming back from injury, his intelligence on the field is really important for us. There are some players that just make everyone else on their team better. When they have the ball, they give the game rhythm, they make good decisions, and Eduard is certainly that player for us. And so really nice to see him back on the field and hopefully we can continue to move his minutes along.

Q. During the week, you spoke about the importance of guys like Eduard, Eddie, Diego, to step up as leaders. Can you give me like a rate of the performance inside the field and in the locker room? And also Pablo had a couple of good interceptions at the beginning of the second half. Does this give you a little bit more confidence in the goal keeping position where there has been some doubts?

BOB BRADLEY: It was nice to see Pablo be aggressive on some of those plays. I know that he wasn't happy with his positioning on the goal right before halftime, so the best response is to put it behind you and be ready for the next play. So that was awesome to see.

And I can't grade leadership. I challenge guys every day in different ways, and to try to get some of these players to take more responsibility, to help them understand what that means. When you take more responsibility on the field, it doesn't necessarily mean that you try more on the field. You still play to your strengths. You do things that make other players better. You set a tone in training every day. You have a good way that if a teammate looks, after training some days, like he's a little bit down, you have the way to find him and let him know that he's got to keep going. So there's so many aspects to being a leader and helping others -- being a good example and helping others, and so I'm just trying to help all those guys with that part because I think they're all very capable.

Q. I wanted to ask about a player such as Latif, who is very versatile and allows the team to be flexible when dealing with fitness and injury levels. What kind of importance such a player that gives everything on the field at times gives a team and lift?

BOB BRADLEY: Yes, Latif's a special guy in that regard. He's very versatile. I think I got asked the other day about his position and I said, for right now, it's right back. And I'm not -- I think if you ask Latif, he would still tell you that in some ways right back is not his favorite spot. But if you're going to have a good team, you have to have players that understand in some moments that it's not about what they want to do or what they like to do. It's about doing what's best for the team. You continuously try to find ways to challenge guys to do that. So tonight I think it was a really

good example where I mentioned in the first half when we needed the game to go faster, from right back, I thought Latif really made a big difference in finding good spots, going forward in the right moments. He still competed, came away with loose balls, still won some headers, even though he's obviously not a tall player. So he's versatile, and in the moment when you consider everything that's going on, I really, I'm really proud of the fact that even if it's not necessarily his favorite position, that you saw the way he went about it tonight, and then that kind of mentality only helps our team.

THE MODERATOR: All right great. Thank you.

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