

# Los Angeles Football Club Media Conference

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## Bob Bradley

Press Conference



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BOB BRADLEY: Actually I'm still angry that we gave up a goal late. I think we had some good moments in the game.

Good start. A number of chances to get the second goal, including a very good chance that we created for Brian. Jordan's pass back to him should be on the ground and we can't finish.

And then in transition, they are able to score. I don't think that we do a good enough job dealing with things as they come forward, and we get sucked over toward the ball and Villafana is able to score at the back post.

Good for Tristan and for Carlos to play 90 minutes. That wasn't the plan. It was not a really high-tempo game, so physically, both of those guys were able to do okay. I thought Tristan had quite a good game.

Very happy for Diego to win the Golden Boot. We talked about his maturity this year, and so that's something that he has earned, and a rematch with Seattle and that's a real opportunity to think back to last year and the way the season ended with a chance to see what we can do to even things up.

**Q. Your team seems so different when Carlos is on the field, and I know that sounds sort of ridiculous because he's the best player in the League. What else does he change? You mentioned getting 90 minutes from him. Seems like you're taking a different team into the playoffs now with Carlos.**

BOB BRADLEY: Getting closer. I think we've had moments throughout this whole season where our play has been very good. I said a number of times that we've been more inconsistent, and that's what's cost us, whether it's inconsistent with finishing games like tonight; whether it's occasionally inconsistent with defending set pieces, concentration.

So we've hurt ourselves. When Carlos is there, when as many guys as possible are fit, sharp and good form, we still believe that we have a team that can win MLS cup and as

we get to this time of the year, we think we are getting closer.

If you look at the whole season, you know, the start to the season, the months off, obviously we supported Carlos completely with the decision not to be in Orlando with his wife's pregnancy and that part of it. And then first game back, just trying to get him going again, MCL, out for a long time.

When we finished in Orlando, when we're trying to finish the game out against Orlando City, there's a play in the box where Dejan is trying to clear a ball, and ends up kicking Edward and Edward is out for a bunch of games.

So you know, we've had odd moments that have cost us, and in those situations, it's opportunities for other players, but I'm hoping that the inconsistencies that drive us crazy still in some ways serve as lessons and that we can take advantage and be a really good team in a few weeks when we play in Seattle.

**Q. From the opening whistle, the way your team pressured Portland and the setup you guys had, you were very compact and rotating well and obviously that creates the first goal. It started to less on a little bit in the second half. Is that a function of fitness or is that because you weren't able to find that second goal and extend your lead?**

BOB BRADLEY: I would say both things, plus I think we lost some sharpness with passing, connecting plays. The package of everything, it certainly means that you keep them in the game. Fitness does become a factor at that point. But the ability to get the second goal and if for some reason on a given night -- you have to know how to finish the game in other ways. That's, once again, the lesson.

Late goals have hurt us. When we talk about inconsistent, we gave up a late goal against Portland in the third match of the group play in Orlando, and then that cost us winning the group there. We gave up a late goal against Orlando in the knockout game, then it went to penalties, and of course we get knocked out on penalties.

So the ability to finish games, you know, it's a few weeks back when Brian had a great chance against San Jose to go up 2-0, and we weren't able to finish, and literally they

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came right down the field and made it 1-1 and they lost a game 2-1, that actually in some ways resurrected San Jose's season, but that's never a game you should lose.

And oddly enough, ironically enough, Brian gets the big chance tonight to again go to 2-0. It's not an easy chance because the ball, as I said earlier, that Jordan cutback, it's got to be on the ground. It's got to be a chance that the ball comes on the ground and you finish.

But same situation, the ball comes loose off of the chance and off the transition, we had a number of opportunities to maybe stop the play, but we don't end up doing a good enough job and pay the price.

**Q. Two questions. The first one, you mention all the ups and downs that you guys went through, and still you're advancing to the playoffs, maybe not in those first spots but still making it. What does that say about the team? And second question, you were already talking about Carlos but you mentioned yesterday that you weren't sure if he was feeling all right with 90 minutes. What did you see from him fitness-wise? He did take a hit towards the end of the game, but the fact that he was able to stay.**

BOB BRADLEY: Yes, I said earlier in the press conference tonight, that we didn't expect him to play 90 minutes. He did tire out. But the game tonight was not a high-tempo game. It was a slower game, and that's what allowed him to keep going.

And so the minutes, and then the upcoming weeks of training will all help, and I think we'll see him even closer to his top form.

I'm sorry what was the first part of the question?

**Q. What does it say about the team advancing and being in the playoffs through all the ups and downs, even though you weren't in the top four, but still going to be there fighting.**

BOB BRADLEY: We have a good team. We have to prove it in the playoffs. We are not happy with the inconsistency. We are not happy with where we finished in the standings. I think we have a better team than that, and there's no reason to talk -- there are things that happened this year, but you know that I've not spent any time ever talking about them or using any of that as an excuse.

It's on us when we show up every day to push ourselves, see the things that need to get better and become a top team, or continue as a top team. And we've hurt ourselves this year.

But when all is said and done -- we saw it in Los Angeles with the Lakers and the Dodgers. With everything that's gone on in the country and in the world this year, some teams with leaders just still at the end have something special, something different. There's a mentality. There's a concentration. There's a determination. And I'm hoping we can find that.

I believe we are capable of winning MLS Cup, but again, you go a game at a time, and so we know that we start in Seattle. Always a tough game. From the start we've had really good games with them, but we know that last year, they came here and knocked us out of the playoffs in the conference finals. So we've got to see if we can settle that score and go there and be at our best.

**Q. Can you talk about your thoughts on Christian Torres in the starting lineup? And the second one, which things do you need to fix to face the first round of the playoffs when LAFC faces Seattle?**

BOB BRADLEY: Look, you guys know me by now, when you say things like, what things do you need to fix, the way the game is equalized is an example. If we are sharper with the chance, if we sharper with the advantage and we finish with the play, then we are not talking about one point. We are talking about three points.

So the game works in ways where everything fits together, the way you attack, your decisions with the ball, your sharpness, your ability to create chances, finish chances. That plays into what happens when you lose a ball, how you react, how you defend.

So for me, we have not been consistent enough, and it's in all parts of the game. If you take everything -- I will say that there's some percentage down in all areas versus last year when we were at our best, or even earlier in year when we started.

So we've been a little bit less consistent. We have been a little bit down, and I think you could say that that's most of our players as you go through the year have been a little bit down from their best.

And so these are the fine margins, and so it's not one thing to wave a magic wand and all of a sudden this is how we're going to start to win games. The game works where everything is together, and if you are good with the ball and you don't lose certain balls; if the right number of touches and now the other team can't win it, then that helps you defend. So attack, defense; they go together, and we have not been sharp enough in all these ways.

Christian Torres I thought did really well. His instincts, he's part of the action, the pressing that leads to the first goal. He's making progress, staying with Erik Duenas, staying with Tony Leone. We are also very happy with Mohamed Traore and Mo (ph). Some of our young guys are improving, and we are very happy with the way Christian played.

**Q. With the international break coming up, are you losing that quartet coming up this week, Rossi, Rodriguez, Cifuentes and Palacios?**

BOB BRADLEY: I believe we are.

**Q. And how is that going to affect training going forward? Will they be back for the first game?**

BOB BRADLEY: I don't believe they will -- I think they will be back, but I don't think that they will be out of quarantine. We don't know the date of our first game, so I guess there's still details where I can't give out 100 percent answer. But based upon the way it's all been laid out with quarantine after the international break, I think it's unlikely that the players that leave to play on their national teams will be able to play in the first game of the playoffs.

**Q. And they are probably leaving tomorrow?**

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, maybe even later today. Later today or tomorrow, I'm not sure.

**Q. That's a big -- that's a big loss for you there. How do you sort of -- you talked earlier about other guys stepping up, but with that --**

BOB BRADLEY: We are going to take the group that's here. We know we play Seattle. We are going to work like crazy for two weeks and go to Seattle and give our best effort to move on. I understand that this year has been difficult on the league in terms of schedule, and they tried to figure out a way that they could finish the season and have a champion.

And so things like being in a bubble in Orlando and the MLS, the way the schedule has been put together, things like teams have missed a lot of games and points per game per standing and all these things, they are all products of a crazy year.

But one big one is playing playoff games when you don't have players back from international break with quarantine. So what are you going to say? I'm not here to complain. But does it really -- is it frustrating? It is incredibly frustrating. But there's nothing that we can do. So you make sure that everybody that's going to be here is ready.

We've got a couple weeks to continue training. We've thought about this for a few weeks, and so it's just the situation that I guess is part of a crazy year. You know, scheduling international breaks, playing games when players are away, those are things that need to be improved. Because, you know, can you imagine if in Europe the Champions League final between Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain and both teams missing a bunch of guys on quarantine? I mean, everybody would go crazy.

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