

# Los Angeles Football Club Media Conference

Sunday, October 30, 2022

## Steve Cherundolo

Press Conference



LAFc 3, Austin FC 0

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: We're excited to be in the MLS Cup final. That was our objective. I think the guys did an emphatic job of making sure there was only one team playing here next Saturday. It's I think the best I've seen this year of them implementing our match plan from the first minute to the end, which gives us coaches and the fans and hopefully everybody watching a better feeling watching the game and not worrying until the final minute.

Very proud of the guys tonight and what I experience in the locker room is still hunger and want for more, and we'll keep the level of focus as high as possible for a week and hope to have a similar press conference next Saturday.

**Q. Your overall thoughts on why you guys were so dominant today?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: I can share a little bit of match plan, first two games against Austin, especially the game here in L.A., to put them under pressure, who likes to play and spread the field out and to involve six plus their goalkeeper's players, seven and build up, and if you can successfully put them under pressure, they can make mistakes, it's hard for them to find a rhythm, and I think we did that emphatically tonight.

**Q. Were you surprised that Austin was so passive? Your center backs had a lot of time.**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: I think passiveness has to do with the tempo of the game. We pushed the tempo very hard in the first half, and it's only natural if the tempo is higher than you are used to that you take a breather when you don't have the ball.

I think it has more to do with that than them, a conscious choice of being passive. I think if you look at their lineup, I don't think they wanted possible pass ive but that's a question for Josh.

Yeah, Giorgio experienced some issues with his calf but there's no injury but for precautionary reasons, we took him

out at the half.

**Q. Same with Segura. Do you expect him for the final?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: He's dealing with an injury. He's having a test done today and yesterday and hopefully have more information tomorrow.

**Q. You said this is the best time they have implemented -- working on the long posts, is that something you implemented, you were having a lot of success creating the passes?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Yeah, deep runs and connecting passes behind the opponent's back line is a big part of our DNA and a big part of our game model, and the more you can do it, the better we are, the faster the game is, and the higher the chances are of us scoring.

Yeah, it's absolutely something to work on. Not particularly only for this game. It part of our daily, maybe not daily but regular training regimen.

**Q. The first ball looked like it was a set play. Curious how long you guys have been working on that play, Chico four from the corner?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Yeah, we have invested more time in set pieces. I think it's only natural at this stage of the season where duration of training and intensity of training, has to be turned down. We focused more on the details of the game including some pieces, we have invested more time in them. That's Marc dos Santos' department and he's done a great job the past two games and we've scored more goals in set pieces.

**Q. Were you disappointed to go into the locker room at halftime only 1-0 up and in the second half defensively they were having a bit better of a game. How did you guys survive that to get the second goal?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: I think before that, we saw very clearly that there were more goals out there. This is the way Austin plays and played all year. It's either/or. There's nothing in between.

And we felt and our message at halfway was play the exact



same way, step up, do not sit back and wait for a counterattack, put them under pressure and we'll make mistakes and there's a second goal out there for us.

What happened at the corner could have come at any other moment. I was very proud of the guys to continue play in the same matter for most of the second half with the exception, you called it ten, 15, I'll call it six and a half minutes, I was very proud of the guys and their mentality tonight to continue the way we played.

**Q. Were you disappointed --**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: No, never. You'll never see me be upset when we're in the lead.

**Q. Starting off well has been a point of yours all season, you've been a second half team and you wanted them to come out of the gate quicker than they have. Did you have an inkling that was going to happen today or what do you think is the reason why you started the game the way you did?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Never told the guys to go start playing in the second half. This is just the way things develop in this league. It also has to do with the opponent, which is out of our control. We try to play the same way all the time which is a high-tempo game, aggressive at times, should be vertical but at the right times also finding the right windows and pockets and passes.

So maybe really to answer your question, it has to do with the opponent's behavior more than ours, so we really take the same approach at all moments of the game.

**Q. You talk about success in set pieces. Can you also talk about just how big a goal confidence-wise the third goal is, coming after a substitution and getting that goal, bringing to validation all of the successful play?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Yeah, absolutely, that's a good point. Set pieces are in playoff competitions or in finals of tournaments, World Cups, European championships, Champions League, are a higher percentage of goals than goals that are in the regular season going to play. We know this and games are tighter and there's more on the line, and set pieces are very, very important. I'm happy we took advantage of it in two games.

And Motorola has been very bright for us this season. Murillo (ph) has become more prolific than in relation to last season. He has grown as an attacker. His energy and verticality coming off the bench today was key, and his energy was key as well. It was only natural that after

putting in a good performance last week and this week, he comes up with the goal. So it's great for him and his confidence. It's great for us, too. It's another option off the bench.

**Q. Following up, the prolific play, on the score sheet today --**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Yeah, I've said it before, he's a complete package. He has the ability to dominate the game and to put the opponent on his heels, and he did, Illie and Kellyn in the first half, mostly due to our strong left side with Giorgio, Chico and Illie. We knew our message at the half was continue, continue, continue and things will fall. He has not stopped. He loves to play and he hates it when he stopped training too early. He wants to continue training. He's an animal in a very positive way, in every sense of that word, a positive way. He's a pleasure to coach and he loves being here, and I think maybe he's just waiting for next week to score again.

**Q. I thought among other things, one of the reasons for the outcome today was the game management, if you can talk about that and also the substitution?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Yeah, the tempo the first half was very fast, both teams suffered. In the second half, it dropped in tempo and you saw both back lines get stretched a little bit. There was more room to counter, and then it's only natural that your attackers get a little tired.

So we wanted to do hold onto our first 11 as long as possible, because we felt they were closer to the second goal, but as soon as the second goal was scored and that penalty was not called a penalty, we knew it was time to change and get some fresh legs on the field and to shore up the game.

Then in the end, there can always be a third or fourth goal that can fall, and yeah, our attackers did a great job on Chico and Carlos as long as they could and bringing in some fresh legs is an option we have that not many teams have with similar and sometimes different and better quality.

**Q. One of the great things about American sports is in a final, you get home-field advantage. The fans here, I would stack them up against anywhere around the world in terms of the atmosphere they create. This is a massive moment for them, but what's your message to the fans who have been waiting for this moment for a few years now to be able to experience it?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Yeah, amazing atmosphere here. It makes me feel right at home. It is my home but

away from home-home, my second home here. So it's an incredible atmosphere, and you know, this is for them and it's also for everybody at the organization who has worked so hard in the past seven years to put this club and organization on the map, to build it the right way, and for the right reasons: To win for the city and the fans. I think you experienced it and many experienced it tonight.

The next game is for L.A. and for our fans.

**Q. Elliot conceded less than half an expected goal in both of these playoff games. What do you think is going right defensively not only in this game but in the LAFC playoff games?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: I think the intensity of our defending and our pressing, and the overall tempo of the game is tough to hang with. It's just been our goal all season is to push games as fast as we can because we can go fast and we want to go fast. We train that way. It's only natural that we put the game on our terms or 80 or 90 minutes it should favor us.

Yeah, it's something that I pay close attention, to quality chances from opponents, passes behind our back line and they have been few and far between the last few games. The effort especially from our attackers has been really good and our midfield has been awesome.

**Q. What's the situation --**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: They are ready to go if need be.

**Q. Was planned?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Subs are never planned. We always react to what the game gives us. There was today, the subs we need were necessary, and I think the right choice. It just goes to show what an amazing team we have. If we need, we can change -- inaudible -- with Cristian and with Gareth. But today, it wasn't necessary.

**Q. Can you talk about Cristian's performance, for a player of his age, can you just talk about that?**

STEVE CHERUNDOLO: Yeah, he's getting old, isn't he (Laughter). Yeah, another dominant performance again on the left side is fantastic, Chico and Illie have their way with Austin's right side, and he got forward more than he usually gets forward, which as an ex-outside back, the more you can occupy your attacker that you're guarding in the defensive end, the less you have to do defensively. It was a great game.

Chico, again, fantastic effort. I think he ran into a wall in

the end physically because he didn't anticipate going forward so much today. Yeah, he's a warrior, he's a smart and clever player. He is also for his position, he is the full package: He can defend, he can attack and he has a heart and desire. So he's perfect for LAFC.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...