

Los Angeles Football Club Media Conference

Sunday, October 30, 2022

Ilie Sanchez Kellyn Acosta

Press Conference



LAFC 3, Austin FC 0

Q. We talked how this is your third conference championship, does it feel like you expected it to?

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: You know, we were so focused on performing and just playing the game that we wanted to play that I personally kind of forgot that this was a final during the 90 minutes. We were very aware of the team that came here today, and we just wanted to be better on the field.

So Steve and the coaching staff put the plan together and we focused on executing it, and that's it. Now we are thinking about recovering and preparing for our next opponent; that it's going to be again a final, MLS Cup, but I think that our approach will be exactly the same than these previous two rounds.

Q. You have the shirt on.

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: I'm very happy. We are very pleased with the game we played and the trophy but this is not the one we want to have, or not the only one that we want to have, and we look forward for the bigger one.

Q. Earlier in the week we asked you what you expected about Austin, and today they were setback more defensively. What can you say about the Austin that came out today?

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: I believe they came out with the best 11, we showed that we had a great team and I think precisely that, being a team, is what gave us a result today.

Q. One question for both or either of you what worked
--

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: For me both Kellyn and Cifu have been tremendous today, the work that they have put in managing being in between their sixes and the outside backs covering also our wingers was everything to me and

to the team.

So yeah, I think that we have won the battle in the midfield but pretty much in every area of the field. So we have talked about the possibility of Austin playing with two sixes and one No. 10 or one No. 6 and two eights, and we were ready for -- to adjust during the game to that. I think that we planned correctly and that's the result that we got at the end.

Q. Kellyn, can you talk about what makes him special
--

KELLYN ACOSTA: Yeah, he's a cog in the midfield. He was talking about me and Cifu today but for him he's the one that gives us the confidence to move forward. He's been tremendous all year for us, and in it game for us in the midfield, that was an opportunity for us to win the game. Midfield wins the game. And especially with Austin, and their catalyst being Driussi, I think for us in our game plan was to limit their time and space and force Driussi in wide positions to make play predictable, and I think we just did a trust job all over the field.

We were aggressive, intense, and we were capable of making opportunities and capitalizing on some. It was a testament that we were ready for this game. In Austin, the pass game we faced asked a lot of questions of us and we were able to get tight on them and create a lot of pressure and they were able to pick us apart and today we fine tuned that. We studied them well, trained well and we were ready for them today.

Q. Your first season in LAFC, how do you qualify this first season?

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: Overall I'm very thankful to John Thorington, the coaching staff and my teammates for trusting me and contributing to the team. I have followed what everyone has coached us to do in order for us to be here.

Q. In your opinion, do you think you deserve to win the MVP award?

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: Yeah, I feel Chico deserves to win it, more importantly, winning the Cup but definitely deserves to win it. He's a complete player and we're glad to have



him on the team and hopefully we win, but what's most important is we make it all the way through the Cup.

Q. You've now exchanged jerseys and shirts two weekends in a row. What would it mean to win the next one?

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: Yeah, that would be very important for us to get the third jersey as well.

Q. For both you guys, you got off to such a fantastic start today and clearly you've been a second half team and that's been your reputation over the course of the season. Did you have a sense coming to the match, did you start off on the right foot and get off to a hot start? Could you tell these things in the locker room before the match?

KELLYN ACOSTA: Yeah, just reiterate from training, I think going into this game we are confident and I think everyone looks at us as a second half team but for us to be where we want to be and take it to the next level, we have to have a complete game and so that starts from the first minute.

I think we did a great job since the warm up, getting the nerves out, being clean and then in the first minute on, I think we were ready, aggressive, we were intense, we were clinical and at the first opportunity we were able to score a goal and we were constantly creating opportunities and we were on the front foot.

Like I said, we were ready for today. For us to live up the Cup, got to be aggressive from the first minute on because in this game, there's no are forgiveness and, you know, you don't start off strong, it's hard to come back in these games.

Q. Whens you're young and you're playing in your neighborhood or kicking the ball up against the wall in the backyard, some of us have those dreams but not all of us make it as a professional footballer and you guys are probably in that moment that you dreamed of to be on this stage and play in such a big game. What does it mean to each of you have this moment?

KELLYN ACOSTA: Yeah, I mean, since as a little kid, you always dream of being a professional. For us, we play a game that we love to play. It's a childhood game that we play for a living. For us as competitors, we always like the opportunity to play for something.

Obviously the regular season is great, but we are this close to playing in a game for the city for us for the fans to lift the trophy, and it makes everything so much sweeter. I think

just having a reflection on the year, we worked so hard to get to this point, and for some of us, it's a dream come true. It's a huge game but I think it's a testament to all our hard work and all the people in our support system that got us this far. It exciting times. It's a childhood dream to obviously play professionally but another dream is to lift up trophies.

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: On top of that, I think that we have fun playing soccer, and we keep having fun, and that's why we are here today; that we enjoy what we do, and we have to change something. So yeah, very happy to share these moments with a group of people that have the same goals and we can deliver what is expected from us from the whole club that expect that from the team.

So it's more than a dream now; it's a goal, and that's as Kellyn said, what we work for every day.

Q. Steve doesn't like to talk about himself so much. He likes to give credit to the coaching staff and to you, but what can you say about a first-year coach setting a record?

KELLYN ACOSTA: I think from my standpoint first and foremost, Steve deserves a lot of credit. I was rather disappointed for him not winning Coach of the Year from what he's done in his first year. From the records that he's broken and overall after a good season, I thought he deserved more respect.

I think for Steve, his standpoint is doesn't care about individual awards. He looks at the bigger picture which is MLS Cup. I mean, I can't thank Steve enough for all he's done for all of us. I think he's gotten the best out of all of us. He's implemented his systems and his tactics and I think collectively as a group we bought into it and he's gotten the best out of evident single player. I think Steve also, he comes from a laid back approach but there's some times Illie can agree with me and he's really gotten into us.

So he has that switch. But I think Steve, he's been tremendous. He's been really great and you know, we all want to win but especially we love playing for him and we hope to make him proud and lift up that trophy on Saturday.

ILIE SÁNCHEZ: This is his team. This team has his identity. And everything that we do and that we can achieve, it's going to be because of him in the first place. So nothing to add to what Kellyn said. Very happy and proud of having him lead this team.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...