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Raphael Wicky

Press Conference



Q. The stretch of five games, do you have an idea of target of how many points you're going to need out of this stretch here?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, hi everyone. Thanks for being there.

No, look, we are taking game by game. I think that's the best way to go. We're focusing on every single game, and obviously we know that the start of the season was bad; that the results were not there; that the points are not where we want to be. That's just a fact. So right now we are focusing on game by game and the next game is Columbus, that's the most important one. We are going to have to get three points. That's with the mentality we always go into the games. We want to get a result there, and then we will look the next one with Cincinnati and the next one. I don't think it makes sense to look too much ahead.

Q. Gastón did not play for Paraguay last time out, wasn't even on the bench. Do you have any indication as to why that was? And a follow-up to that, is it frustrating for you when you let a player go on international duty and then they don't play?

RAPHAEL WICKY: So I texted with Gastón and I asked him if he was injured, and he said no, that the Coach wanted to give him a rest day because they have a lot of games coming up in a very short amount of time. That was what he told me.

So, we'll see. We'll see if after that 3-1 win he will play the next game, but that was the explanation the coach gave him.

And I mean, look, I'm not losing any thoughts about that. We are always happy and proud that the players are called to the international team because that's very important for the player. I've been in those shoes. I was very proud to play 75 times for Switzerland, so every player is proud to go play for his country and so are we as a club. And then

once they are there, there nothing I can control. If the coach want to put in, he puts in. If the coach doesn't put him, that's the coach's choice and so I'm not losing any thoughts about that. He plays, then I'm happy for him. If he doesn't play, that's part of the game.

Q. This weekend will be something of a special occasion; the Columbus Crew will have a had you been dread percent capacity and the final match at Cruz Stadium before they move into a new building. How much difficulty does that atmosphere add for the away team?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I don't think it adds any more difficulties than the game already is. We are playing against the champion in their stadium. We know it's going to be a tough game and we also know that we on a good day when we are very focused and concentrated, we can make results against any team. We have proven that in the past year that we were very close to win with be games away and we were very good against a lot of team. We played well against Columbus, also in the last season.

So we are focusing on that. I think that to have the full capacity, I think that's just also great for us. We have a year of playing football, or let's say, two or three games last year of playing football, or more than 20 games because the first two were with fans where we didn't have any fans. There was into atmosphere and now we are happy fans are back. Obviously things are opening up more so if the stadium is going to be full, that's going to be amazing. We are really, really looking forward to that, hopefully as many people as possible are there and we can have a nice football game for everyone. We are looking forward to that.

Q. Speaking of that taking it game by game approach that you mentioned earlier, this coming up is not just any game, as it will be the last game at one of most historic soccer stadiums in the country and they will have that stadium at full capacity so it will be packed to the brim. What have you been preaching to your players in terms of the mindset that you carry into the game? Is it a chance to play spoiler and sort of put a foul mood on match for those Columbus fans? Is it just another game? What is it for you guys?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I mean to be honest for us it's another



game. For us it's a game against a champion, against a very good team. We go there like I said the stadium will be full because we all love this sport playing in front of the fans and for us it's that game.

We are going with the mindset there to get a good result. That's what we are going there. We know it's the last game. We know they want to celebrate. But that's nothing which plays a big role in our preparation. We go there and we want to play our role. We want to play our game and we want to get a result. That's what we are focusing on and if the stadium is full, then that's better for everyone.

Q. How many players are available to play Saturday from international games and when are the other players coming back?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Well, we obviously know that Frankowski is at the Euro, so he won't be there. Gastón is as the Copa America, he is not there. Kenny Kronholm is not with us and Stanislav Ivanov is still not with us. He's still injured.

So yeah, we have Francisco back who was with Costa Rica and we have two players back who got their green cards over in Europe during this break. We have a few other guy who is were coming back from injuries who are back in training as well. So it's slowly starting to look better with having the players back but obviously Frankie and Gastón are there.

Q. Whether it was dealing with the pock-mark schedule last year or the injuries this year or going on rode, you haven't been able to grind out results despite adversity. Why is that? Is there something missing with the team right now? What do you think the explanation is for that?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I think for everyone, it's always in every country, it's more difficult to play at home. That's I think a proven thing. First of all, you like playing in your home stadium, you like playing in front of your fans. You want to have the support from the fans. Of course last year no one had that, away and home, but still normally that's proven that teams make more points when they play home than away.

Other than that, we had some really about games where we were up, we were up 2-0 in Minnesota and up in certain games and we didn't win them. Why, yes, you can analyze every game tactically, was there something to change or did we not have enough players to sub in or because players were not there because of COVID or injuries.

But that's tactical or the actually game analysis. We know

that we can beat teams, we can beat teams away even if we haven't since I am the coach here, but we know that we are good enough to do that because we were up in a lot of games. We just then need to finish these games, and I'm confident that we will soon do that.

Q. I don't mean just road games. I mean basically in general. Last year the results weren't great and obviously this year, home or away, they haven't been great. So why in general hasn't this team been able to overcome adversity?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, look, that is something we are obviously aware. As I said in the beginning, we are not happy with the start of the season. We are not where we want to be. We are not where we expected us to be in terms of the results and that's something we are working hard every day on.

We want to bring our team back into winning, our team back into where it belongs, where the club belongs and where it wants to be. We are working hard on that.

Why that is? Yeah, there is not one explanation. The injuries we had, the six very important players for us who were hurt, they hurt us hard, but I don't want to take these as excuses. That's just a fact. We missed some of them and some are back and some are on international duties and other teams had that as well.

There's multiple factors. In certain games, we didn't convert our chances and in certain games we made too many mistakes or we gave a goal up and then we couldn't come back.

I think we are trying to reflect what we can change, what we can do better, and the one thing is we are working hard on bringing this team back into winning games.

Q. You just touched on this, but defensively, you had preached last year that the team is making too many mistakes but over the last three games, the team has defended quite well, only giving up two goals in three games. Do you think you've made progress defensively? And on the flipside you are still creating chances, but not finishing them. How do you get this team to start finishing?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, look, you're right, I agree with you that first we didn't give up a lot of chances, big chances in the last three games I think. We created still some good chances.

Yeah, exactly why, I cannot tell you. That happened as well last year. What I can tell you is we are working hard.

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We are working hard with the strike with the offensive guys in front of the goal. We want to give them confidence and we want to finish these actions and we want to keep having a good defensive mindset and defending is not only the back four, the goalkeeper on the back line and and that means the whole team. I think we are in a lot of games defending well. We just need to defend well for 90 minutes which we have done better in the last three games.

But then yeah, we need to finish our chances and be very clinical. I think that's a strength which we need to develop that we don't need too many chances to win games because, of course, that's the reality, as well. If in any game you need four, five, six chances to score a goal, that is difficult to win games and it's too much. So we are working on that, and we believe that these players get the confidence back and hopefully can finish these chances.

Q. How much of an impact on your team's overall mentality does the announcement of knowing that Soldier Field will be at maximum capacity moving forward?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I mean, look, that's something I mentioned before. That's great to hear and that's what we need. I mean, we need the support from our fans, like I said in the beginning, teams usually make more points at home because the fans have a big impact and that's the same with us.

We obviously love playing in front of our fans. We want to bring a good energy into the stadium from the beginning of the game so that the fans see a good football game and we need their support and yeah, that's great to hear that it will open up and hopefully there is many, many people coming and supports us, because we need that support, of course.

Q. Do you have a prediction for your country's national team here in about 15 minutes?

RAPHAEL WICKY: It's a tough game against one of the best teams, but I think Switzerland has proven over the last two, three years that they can play against very good teams. They had a lot of games against the top six, seven, eight teams in the world and were actually having good results. So I think that very optimistically, we can have a 2-2 draw.

Q. You mentioned earlier you only take it one game at a time and everything like that, but knowing that you do have four straight home matches at Soldier Field coming up after this weekend with a lot of games in a short stretch as well, do you look at this upcoming four or five games as a very pivotal stretch for the

season in terms of the direction which way this year goes for you guys?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Of course we know and of course we are aware of that. We know the schedule and we know that even before we had a lot of home games but from now until that stretch when we start with six away games I think in a row, we have a lot of home games and we know that this is very important for us. We also know historically in this league, you win a lot of home games, you have big big chances to make the playoffs. So we know that.

But that's not the approach I'm going to go to the team. I'm not going to talk to the team about the game in a week or the game in ten days or in two weeks. But we all know the importance of the home games and of making points at home, that's for sure. We know that. But still in preparing the team. I prepare just every single game by game. That's my approach. I've always had that and that's how we do it now. But we were aware of the importance of those games.

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