

Toronto FC Media Conference

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Patrick Mullins

Media Conference



Toronto 2, León 1

Q. Big win for the side tonight. Can you take us through your thoughts on the match and what the emotions of the celebration we got a little glimpse of there? How are you feeling?

PATRICK MULLINS: Sure, yeah, we left León last week, and I think that's when this match started up. It was halftime, and we had an amazing week of preparation where we really focused on us and how we could be dangerous. I think we also wanted to be really tough to play against, and I think that's what we saw tonight.

We came out in the first half against a team that we knew was talented and created chances, and we wanted to really put them under pressure and do that in a synchronized way where we're all together and causing turnovers and trying to be dangerous once we do get the possession level.

I think you saw that throughout the first half and I think even into the second half it became even more difficult for them to deal with and dangerous, which you saw how it led up to our goals.

My goal, just -- things happened very quickly in that goal. Jacob is a player who I feel like we've trained similar movements like that all the time off of starting attacks, and then once the ball was in the net, a lot of things hit me. But then I heard Michael come over and say, "That's for the Mullins family." Then things really came down to earth to me. I had lost my grandmother this past week, so I had very much had a heavy heart in this game, and I think the team supported me so much through that loss of my family.

Once again, in that moment, in that goal, in a big game, that meant a lot to me, and then just to see how we continued on the last 20 to 25 minutes, even when it got close there at the end, I think once again, it just shows where our group is at now and kind of a little taste of what we can do when we put it all together and as we move forward now with the MLS season starting this weekend, and now of course we'll be into the next round here.

Q. A lot of the young players, the young talent really put their hand up tonight and also in León last week. Can you just tell us a little bit about what you saw from these youngsters the last two games?

PATRICK MULLINS: I saw a group of players that not only stepped up in this moment, they embraced it. They shined in that moment.

We've been seeing their qualities ever since they've been with us in training in this preseason, and I think we all had belief in what we could do as a group when they were all on the pitch, so we saw what Ralph does tonight and covering ground and turning balls over and being kind of the start of our attacks, and then Luke Singh anchoring us down in the back, making plays, blocking crosses. I already talked about Jacob Shaffelburg, some of the success he has, and Noble, when he's on the ball and he's getting touches, I think it excites our team.

So I think we saw in their performances from the guys who started and the guys who came in, too, that we have quality players, and I think we have hungry players that are just wanting to get started and keep showing what they can do on these types of stages.

Q. Sort of building off what you said there about Luke Singh, can you take us into the locker room before the match? Was there any sort of advice anyone was giving him, and how commendable was his story tonight making his first career start?

PATRICK MULLINS: Well, we were all just so happy for him because, as I said before, we had been seeing these types of levels that he's been hitting in training, and I think we all had a lot of belief in him to step up into the lineup tonight. I think he started the game well, and that continued on throughout the rest of the night.

Everything that I saw from him in the buildup to this game I think is a great credit to him to be ready for his moment and to take it, and he absolutely did. I think everyone was just so happy to congratulate him on his first start, and obviously he made the appearance last week in León. It must be an amazing feeling for him tonight.



Q. Of the five MLS teams in CCL this year, you guys on paper at least had the toughest draw, and then there were of course some circumstances around who's available, et cetera, being away from home as a club yourself, going to México in the first leg. How did you see the team respond to that, because whether you guys were paying attention to it or not, there were people who were like, hey is Toronto going to get through this, can they navigate it? But you guys found a way. How did you see the team answer that?

PATRICK MULLINS: Oh, I think the players and this club does what it always does is have belief in ourselves in all situations to go out and really go for the game and push for wins each night out, no matter the circumstances. We had prepared in the same way that we would for any other game, and just to come out with that type of mentality, I think it's something that this club has been about, and I think we're showing how we've reignited that mentality and continuing on to the start of this season in our Champions League campaign.

Q. Can you take me through the goal, yours? Because it seemed like when Michael sort of plays that ball out wide to Jacob, you instinctively go to the back post. Do I have that right? Did you sort of know that that's where Jake was going to play it to?

PATRICK MULLINS: Absolutely. We've seen Jacob do that many times where he creates just a half a yard, a little bit of an opening to where he can play the ball in dangerous areas in the box, and just the way the game was going, there were a lot of intense moments where defenders are stepping quickly to attacking players.

I just kept always thinking, when we get balls in those moments, whether it's Jacob or Marky or Richie or Auro getting forward, it's can I keep being alert in the box, can I keep finding spaces to be dangerous in the box. And like I said, I had seen it so many times in training that I trusted it was going to be there, and I just knew that I would be there to finish it off.

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