

Toronto FC Media Conference

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Chris Armas

Media Conference



Toronto FC 2, Columbus 0

Q. Congratulations on your first win in the League at the TFC home.

CHRIS ARMAS: Appreciate that.

Q. You had said in the lead-up to the game that you wanted to reward for your team's work and to minimize errors. It seemed you got that in a terrific team effort tonight.

CHRIS ARMAS: Yeah, it's it was so good to see. And I've seen what's going on around here on the inside in training, the commitment from guys, the real togetherness. The energy in training yesterday was incredible and you almost sensed it was coming in terms of a win. Even tonight when you talk about, yeah, for them getting the reward here, Alejandro Pozuelo and guys in the stands urging things along, and Zavaleta, some of these guys really pulling for each other because it's important that we get going here with some points and a victory and you see many guys come into the match. Tsubassa we thought was excellent and Jozy, Kemar gets some first minutes. This was really a complete testimony performance and yeah we're just going to try to put some good performances together and get the rewards.

Q. Can you just talk a little about just the way Michael Bradley has stepped up this season, and tonight in particular, and just how nice it was for you to see Jozy score?

CHRIS ARMAS: You know, Jozy, his energy around the team, the way he pushes guys, the way he pushes young players, it's a beautiful thing on the inside because I get to see it up close here.

But then, you know, he's a leader around here. You know, Michael's a certain voice and captain and Jozy's, you know, the other guy, let's say and there's others. But Jozy, the way he can -- the energy he brought in that locker room before the match tonight, the way he's been training, and again, for Jozy, he wants to score goals. To see him -- that's a desire goal there and you can see his ability to

make some plays and understand how to draw some fouls and operate in that final third. So it was great to see Jozy have a great influence on the game, and Michael, since the day I showed up around here, he's really helped push the messaging and his commitment to what we are doing, and it's nice to see him drive the team tonight. You know, he gets rewarded with a goal but I think for him and us, it's the performance; that it's -- he's connected in all ways and he's really, again, helping -- you know, coach the guys out there. You know, we talk in little ways before the game, but yeah, good performance from both guys and that's the leadership of this team.

Q. Just wanted to get your not on Soteldo. Obviously he played a couple days ago but this was his first start. He looked pretty lively. What did you see from him in the 60-odd minutes that he played?

CHRIS ARMAS: We were trying to create some width at different moments to open them up, on the right it was Richie and we tried to use Yeferson in some wide areas. He's a good 1B1 guy and you can see that in the final third, he can unbalance and he's dangerous. And in other moments he's a very intelligent player. It was almost tough to take him off. We're trying to manage minutes but he's a guy in certain moments when we needed to keep the ball he's one of the guys that could do that.

Listen, what I think he adds to the team is quality but also, you know, a real belief. You feel like your chances are better with guys like that.

So yeah, it was really good to see him mesh with the team. He has only been training for a new days but we think he added something really interesting to our team and we're just getting started with him.

Q. Chris it seemed like there was a better balance tonight between the periods of pressing it and the pauses in possession. Was that perhaps a better example of the game plan you're looking to get from everybody, and what was perhaps the difference for you tonight?

CHRIS ARMAS: Yeah, look, you're right, and it was

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deliberate. We have players that are really good in possession, and trying to put them in spots to work towards that strength while understanding moments to really attack and almost play where it could feel like transition from possession, where you have the ball but it's not just a pass-around. I thought we used the ball well tonight. I thought we attack asked got ourselves in some good spots and we attacked certain areas that we were hoping to. In the first half you could really see we created some over loads and this was a good thing and I think our guys understand that well.

So, yeah, look, I think that the good thing that I also saw defensively was when it feels like 90 degrees and humid, it's hard to press with long stretches, so it's, then what, maybe we are controlling certain spaces and trying to be organized in the mid block. I thought our guy the relatively stayed organized and then it's still hard. I know some guys started pressing on their own but it is hard to do that in the heat but I think tonight with the ball was a nice step forward and then defensively, it was important that we were organized for most of the night.

Q. Can you speak on the back line? The past few games, it's been a bit rough. Can you speak on how they were able to respond tonight and get the clean sheet for you guys?

CHRIS ARMAS: Well, I thought the partnership -- look, it's a back four, right, and then you can talk about the sixes and then it's the back four with Alex, Alex does a lot of talking back there and helps things along. I think you could see a real focus from Omar and Chris. I think they both were the foundation of what was going on, and then I think, you know, when you look around the field, you know, especially to the left and right with Richie and Ayo I think they were locked down on the night, not an easy matchup for sure. Kemar comes in late to help things on the left side, but yeah, look, I think it's pretty straight that we avoided, you know -- we were tidy on set pieces. That's a good team we just played there. It's a good team that can hurt you in a lot of ways and guys put out fires, they defended with real urgency, the details were covered, and it's still about us getting really good at things that win you games and avoiding some of the things that cost you results, which is sometimes mistakes and giveaways and things like that. It was a good team victory and nice for the back line. They owned the shutout with our goalkeeper for sure but that was a good team effort. Nice to see that back line get rewarded, too.

Q. Just wondering if you could comment on what's your evaluation of the partnership between Ralph and Michael in midfield because it seems like a burgeoning partnership and Michael has benefitted from playing

alongside. What's your take on it?

CHRIS ARMAS: Well, I think you're right. I think there's a ball-playing six and the ball-winning six, right. Michael is also a ball winner. If Ralph is the ball winner, Michael is also the ball winner and Ralph is also the ballplayer.

But you have some different skill sets there and Ralph adds a certain type of ability to cover ground and he can sniff out second balls. And you can see probably four or five occasions where not just winning a second ball, from being in good position, but his ability to win a duel and to physically impose himself. This is nice. When what we tell Ralph oftentimes is stay close to Mike, stay close to Markie and Mike or Marc with Ralph and those guys really being connected without the ball but for sure with the ball and Ralph was pretty tidy on the night even with the ball.

So, yeah, look I think Ralph gives us something different. So it's nice to see that he's one of the young guys, right, that he's getting some reps and I think he's taking his chances well.

Q. It's always hard to see on TV but it looked like Yeferson was on the left, on the right, tucked in behind the striker. Do you give him freedom to do that or are you instructing from the sideline?

CHRIS ARMAS: Yeah, there's freedom with our, call it interior wide midfielders that at times just because we oftentimes take up interior spaces that they could -- Marc you could see was tucking in a lot and helping out and you could see how that helped us create some over loads and he would get on the ball. There's some flexibility more so for Yeferson to operate in wide areas and in interior areas. They switched on their own -- in some moments and they just stayed there, right, until things -- one was off a set piece and they just stayed there until their actions finished. But yeah, I think you'll see that Yeferson, he can create on the right and where he's most comfortable on the left and even on the left underneath a few times he found a little pocket. So as we get to know him and as he gets to know our system a bit, yeah, he'll show up in different spots. Yeah, he understands space pretty well.

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