

Toronto FC Media Conference

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Michael Bradley

Media Conference



Toronto FC 2, Columbus 0

Q. How big of a result was this for Toronto just in light of the fact of the slow start to the continue and coming off of what was a pretty disappointing result in New York on the weekend?

MICHAEL BRADLEY: Yeah, it was a big win, there's no two ways about it. It's been a crazy start to the year. You know, there's so much that's gone on, so much that's gone on behind the scenes, and obviously you know, you guys all know me. I'm never one to make excuses ever but it's been our reality for this last stretch. You know, I think we've -- the fee feel on the inside of the group has remained really good. I think we all feel like we're moving ourselves in a good direction but obviously when you have the says and the standards that we do, you have to win games. You have to take points. You have to walk off the field at the end of 90 minutes feeling like you got the upper hand and obviously we haven't done that on enough days so far this year. And so in that respect to, you know, to play a good team tonight and to come away with, you know, a really, really strong win and three points, that part's really important.

Q. You're getting perhaps the best look at Ralph of anybody. What can you say about the young man and his performance beside you?

MICHAEL BRADLEY: I love playing with him. I think we've developed a really good relationship. You would -- he plays with a mature -- a maturity, he has an aggression, a physical strength to him. You know, he sees things quickly and you know, gets the ball quickly to the next guy. He's a guy that, you know, I don't know, for me he's been so good and so important for us that obviously it's a guy who given the way he plays, you have to understand -- you have to really understand football to understand what he brings to the game and what he brings to our team in terms of balance, in terms of, you know, sniffing plays out, coming away with -- coming away with tackles and loose balls, and so look, he's one of a bunch of our young players who is continuing to move himself along in a good way, so he's, again -- I -- I love playing with him in the center of the field. I think we've developed a good

relationship, and so, yeah, we've got to keep -- keep pushing him along.

Q. I don't think we've talked to you since your team signed Yeferson Soteldo. Why you can you just tell me how you feel? You've talked about this before, but just how you feel about the commitment your club has made again to bringing players like Soteldo and then you guys sign Lawrence and now Dwyer, can you talk about that a little bit?

MICHAEL BRADLEY: Yeah, look, I think it's clear from the top all the way down, from -- from Mr. Tannenbaum and the board to bill and ali and Chris and right on down to the players. We want to win. The expectation is to compete in every competition we're in, always, and so obviously when you have -- when you have a DP spot open and you're looking, you're going to go out and get a player, the expectation is that you're going -- you're big and you're going to get a guy who is going to come and really push the envelope for the team and the league. And so I think, you know, Yeferson is still getting to know our group and still finding his feet a little bit but you can see the ability he has as a dribbler. He has a way of mixing things up coming inside, staying a bit wider. And as we get him more time with our group on the training field and in games, we are going to see the best of him. You look then at guys like Kemar and Dwyer, you know, I think from the outside looking in, they see what we've built here and they want to come and be a part of it. And I tell you what, those are -- those are two guys who they are not just coming to make up numbers. These guys are fearless and they have an attitude and a mentality that they are coming here to help us -- help us compete and help us win. They are not scared of anything. Those are the types of guys you want.

Q. You scored your first tonight since September 7, 2019 for Toronto FC. How sweet of a moment was that to find the back of the net there in the first half?

MICHAEL BRADLEY: Yeah, look, I don't -- I don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about when the last one was. You know, I've talked a little bit before about the idea that I'm a midfielder who can play in different ways, can do different things, and obviously for a long stretch of our time



with Greg as coach, it was my job to give balance in the midfield and to really, you know, protect the area in front of the center backs to give us rhythm. You know, to make sure that we controlled that part of the field.

With Chris, that will be the job on some days. On others, it will be that I have -- you know, he wants me to be more mobile, more dynamic, to move around the field, to get up and connect things in the attacking part of the field, as well. And so obviously with that comes a responsibility to also, you know, score goals and help set up goals, and so that part -- that part is going to be important but again, the most important thing tonight was just the response, the mentality and coming away with three points.

Q. Between the calls we had with Chris and Kemar yesterday and the performance tonight, it sort of seems like there was a fresh wind in the group. Is something different and is this perhaps a sign of things to come?

MICHAEL BRADLEY: No, I mean, look, like I said, it's been a crazy start to the -- a crazy start to the year. You know, from starting preseason in Toronto, in the bubble, you know, subfreezing temperatures at BMO Field, obviously we dealt with a COVID outbreak. We got down here and we had a week or so to get ready for Champion's League. We all know what Champion's League entails in terms of the travel, playing at altitude. In there, you have two games against Montréal and Vancouver, that kick off at one and two o'clock in the Florida heat and humidity. You know, again, not -- no excuses. We had a bunch of guys get sick in México in the second leg against Cruz Azul, a stomach -- a stomach bug that went through us a little bit, and so, look, it's -- we don't want anybody's sympathy. They are not excuses, but it's what we have had to deal with and so we are -- nobody's panicking. We feel good about the group that we have. We feel good about the work that's being done every day. But again, we have high standards and high expectations and when you're not taking the points that you want, when you're not winning games, the -- that eats at you, and for sure now in the last few days, there's been good discussions amongst the full group and amongst small groups of guys that just said, come on, we've -- we're working in good ways but now we've got to really start to reward ourselves, and so look, tonight's one game. We weren't ready to -- we weren't ready to -- we weren't ready to hit the panic button after the Red Bull game and we're not ready to -- we're not ready to -- to say we've -- we've won anything yet tonight, either. You know, it's a long season. We'll continue to work. We'll continue to move ourselves along. And -- and that's that.

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