

Toronto FC Media Conference

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Javier Perez

Media Conference



FC Cincinnati 2, Toronto FC 0

Q. What did you see or not see from your team tonight?

JAVIER PEREZ: Yeah, I see almost two halves, right. I see one-half where the team came on a 4-4-2 trying to get runs inside the box. Trying to create the opportunities. And instead, we conceded a little bit of space in the middle. I think it was a little bit difficult between Medunjanin and Kubo; they were taking over that space.

Then the second half when we changed a little bit the shape, and we regain a little bit more control with the substitutions, but it was a little bit too little, too late. I think we just have three substitutions at that time and they scored the second goal and we didn't have the opportunity to get back in the game.

But I think at the end, the players, they gave everything they have. And we have another game on Tuesday. We will be tomorrow in the training facility, preparation on Monday, and it's a quick turnaround for our game against Miami on Tuesday.

Q. I guess you mentioned it there, but were you happy with sort of the compete level and the effort from the boys, because it seemed like at times the team lacked urgency a little bit and just sort of a little bit of resiliency, or am I misreading it?

JAVIER PEREZ: Yeah, I think you have to look a little bit behind the scenes what happened, right. We've been preparing for two weeks for this game. We have Alejandro planning to start, and Alejandro, the news comes Thursday night that he has something -- he cannot play and he cannot participate in this game and we have to change the plan. Obviously everybody has to be ready but it affects mentally the team, especially in the situation where we are right now. So between that, players coming from international break, I think it's a little bit difficult to get all the parts ready for the game.

But I think everybody tries to do the job. And we were there for 40, we stayed there for 40 minutes, and then we

conceded that goal that put us in a more vulnerable position.

Q. Regarding your lineup selection, were the guys on international duty not ready to go or were you working with the other group moreover this two-week period?

JAVIER PEREZ: It's a couple of things. One is we knew that some of the guys, they were coming with -- and this is new in the international break, right, three games in a row, 90 minutes pretty much in all three games. Some of the players, some others like Yeferson traveling almost for 24 hours, to get here he got here last night.

So we need to give a rest to these guys, and then you've been working with a group for the past week and a half, two weeks, and these players, they have been working and they deserve a chance to prove that they can play and they can compete.

But once again, as I said, all the time we were preparing, we thought Alejandro in the starting lineup, and this comes as -- I think that this mentioned this in the last press conference, when you think things cannot go worse, things can go worse. This is one of the situations that we have the MVP of last season, that he was ready to play this game, and the last day right before traveling, he got this injury that takes him out of the game. So that affects mentally to the team and the whole dynamic.

Q. What is the way out of this mess for this team? Do you have any idea? And why is it, because you've got a very veteran group. Why is it that a team with so many veterans has -- gives up a goal or has subpoenaing bad happen, and the body language changes. It gets really bad. It almost looks like the team checks out for at least a portion of the game after that. What answers do you have for what's going on?

JAVIER PEREZ: The answer is we have to find them in the game against Miami. That's the place we are looking for. And I think you are right in a sense, when we concede a goal, the body language, and the body language reflects the frustration of the players.



I think it was the way the season has been -- has been developing, and I think we try mentally to overcome these obstacles. I tried to tell them today that we have to put aside the position on the table and kind of reboot and restart again.

As I said, probably this is not -- this is probably not the best game to do that because we have special circumstances, but definitely the game against Miami, it has to be -- it has to be a game that we need to be -- that the team in a different mentality.

Q. You guys just lost to a team that unfortunately was winless in their last 12 games. Looking at the table, you guys are five points out from them in the Eastern Conference; they are second-last. Is this team now with 11 games remaining in the season, can you say that this team is a last-place team now?

JAVIER PEREZ: Well, I think the table reflects that. I think the table reflects the position where we are. It reflects that we are definitely the last team of the league, and I think at times, it's not a secret. You can watch the game tonight, and even at the beginning, it was an even game. You could tell that it was a game of two teams at the lowest part of the table. So yes, I think if that's the question, that's the answer, yes.

Q. In your experience as a coach -- I guess my first question would be: Are you hopeful that positive we will low would be able to play Tuesday? And in your experience as a coach, do you remember going through a season where you had so many injuries to key players, and how frustrating has that been for you?

JAVIER PEREZ: Yeah, first question, Alejandro, we have to go on a day-to-day basis. The first news that we have was that he would be a little bit longer out, but I know that he wants to be part of the team. He wants to help the team. He wants to come back. So I'm not sure if Miami is going to be the game he's going to be back but maybe for the weekend.

And the second -- the second question is: It's definitely the most challenging season of my personal career, and I think probably most players in the locker room and the staff can say the same thing. I never encounter so many difficulties and as I said before, when it looks like things cannot go worse, they can go worse.

But the only thing -- the only thing you can do is just to stay positive, stay calm. And I'm positive in the group. You see today, I think even if just different things, that we were not sharp or at times it looks like we lack of urgency, I would

say I know the group in and out because we work together. I think the group is somehow a little bit nervous, as well, because of the situation where we are. But I see in the faces they want to turn this around.

So it's not just something that the players do voluntarily; that they don't want to contribute. They don't want to win. I think it's just we are in a really, really bad dynamic, but I'm positive that we can turn this around. I think we can turn this around, and it's only ourselves we can get out of the hole. So we have to overcome all the difficulties and start to put points now that we go back home.

Q. Following up on that, what gives you hope that you can turn this around? Because I mean, bluntly, we have seen scant evidence of any positive from the team the last seven games. So what have you seen that suggests you can turn this around?

JAVIER PEREZ: Yeah, I think personnel similar to tonight is going to give us more ability to hold the ball. As I mentioned in the past press conference, we were working on being a little bit more direct, a little bit more transition team. But I don't think that's who we are, and I think we are more a team that we need to secure a little bit more the ball in order to feel the confidence. So that's the direction we are going to go.

I think at one point after the New England game, we looked okay at home. We were securing the ball and we had more possession, and that's more the identity of the team and that's more my idea for the next game.

Q. We only saw a little cameo of him tonight, Marshall-Rutty, I wanted to get your thoughts on him, and in the past, speaking about Priso and Noble, you talked about a young player being able to earn the trust and those minutes. What does it take for a player to earn trust and to earn minutes?

JAVIER PEREZ: It takes what Jahkeele did tonight, what Noble did tonight and what rally much did in the past. I think he didn't have too much time. He came in in a difficult situation in the game but we see -- we saw a glimpse of his quality. He has been training really, really well. At one point when we knew that Alejandro was going out, just because of the characteristics of the player, the characteristics of Jahkeele, we thought maybe we could start him because he has been training very well and he has something special.

But it was probably not the right moment to start him because of the circumstances where we are with the team playing away from home as well in a brand new stadium. A lot of conditions to pressure on a young player, but I'm

happy that he came on. He added some experience, and that's experience for him to keep developing.

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