

Toronto FC Media Conference

Wednesday, October 27, 2021

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Head Coach Javier Perez

Media Conference



Toronto FC 2, Philadelphia 2

Q. It seemed like we were going to be writing a story about a comeback win tonight, but the team kind of shot itself in the foot with another bad goal. What do you take away from that performance? Seems like a lot of good effort was wasted.

JAVIER PEREZ: As you know, Neil, I like to focus on the positives. I think a good game. First half we took control. Forget the first 30 seconds of the game, but we took control of the game. And the second half, we came back with a couple of goals. We have to remember that this is the second -- the second team in the East -- coming into this game was the second team of the East. So it's a pretty good team, well organized.

I think we get a bit more comfortable with the 1-2. You can tell that we are not used to having the lead in the games because we kind of put the foot off the pedal a little bit. And then obviously when Santos came into action, we took more risk because they play with Przybylko and Santos on top. And we have our two center backs, and it was more difficult for us. Right?

But I think -- I think I'm happy with the performance of the team tonight. And I think we showed today that we have to be that team that was in the playoffs. It's not in the odds, it's not in the cards for us this year for us. But the quality is there. And I think we deserved more tonight, we deserved more for the season.

Q. Obviously, you're somewhat vindicated by starting Jozy tonight -- sorry, starting him for the first time from his comeback. Aside from the goal, what else did you see from Jozy? How would you evaluate his performance tonight?

JAVIER PEREZ: Jozy comes -- you have to remember, he comes a long way. I think the last time he played 90 minutes it was in March 2020, more than a year and a half ago. So the fact he completed 90 minutes, he scored a goal. He kind of created as well the opportunity for the second because I think if the deflection don't happen, he's there to finish the play as well. That transforms the team. I

think we have Number 9, our reference out front, that not only can scores goal but as well be the reference when we press.

I think I highly value as well the effort, how he dictates the direction of the team, whether we have to press. So I think he brings a lot of positives into the team. So I think today, for him, it's a big milestone because he's 90 minutes. And we want to see more of him. It's two games in a row of scoring. So I just can only encourage him and keep putting him on the field so he can do what he does best.

Q. You said you want -- even though you guys are out of the playoffs, you said you want your team to finish the season strong with a good effort every night. Are you pretty satisfied that the team is doing that for you?

JAVIER PEREZ: I am. I think it's not easy when you don't have a clear objective like is in our case to come tonight and put the performance that we put together.

And I think the team fought. The team took the control of the game. I think we were a bit upside. We tied 2-2. Yes. It's true, we didn't win the game, but I think the effort is there and the mental concentration is during the 90 minutes, taking aside the first 30 seconds of the game.

I think it's there. And I think the team wants more this season. They know this season is not over. They know that we cannot just show for one games in the semifinals, that we have to keep going, we have to keep displaying good performances. And, again, I'm satisfied with what I saw tonight.

Q. You touched on this a little bit, but earlier this week, you were saying one of the difficulties the team has had is the lack of a real goal threat up top. And with the return of Jozy and getting draws in these two games, is having a certified threat at the top of the formation the sort of thing that turns losses into draws and draws into wins?

JAVIER PEREZ: Yes. I think you are right. I think I have to acknowledge that if we have control of the game we don't create as many threats as we should. I think

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

sometimes we have 20 players around the ball or too many players on other parts of the field and not enough players inside the box. And that's something we obviously have to work on and we have to modify.

That's obviously my responsibility. And I think we are trying to adjust to that. I think we need to find -- we have more players that they feel more comfortable with the ball. But at the same time, we need to find who is going to attack the space and who is going to get inside the box when the ball is wide. And that, I think, is going to help us to capitalize the opportunities.

But we have to remember that where we create more chances is when the ball is wide. When we made the crosses I think with Jahkeele, with Jacob on the left, we created a lot of chances. With Jahkeele on the right when he come on, we created some more. And then it's a question of who is going to be inside to materialize or capitalize these opportunities.

Q. Two questions, if I may. First, if Richie Laerya had been able to play tonight, would you have played Kemar at center back?

JAVIER PEREZ: I cannot answer that question because I didn't have Richie, obviously. So I can only answer questions with facts and situations that I have in front of me. And unfortunately -- Richie is one of the best players in the team, and unfortunately he was ineligible tonight. And we have to find a solution.

So would he be playing? Yes. So that's the short answer. Who would be playing in the center back position? I don't even question -- or I don't even ask myself that question because I didn't have the opportunity to have Richie tonight.

Q. Fair enough. And I understand you want to focus on the positives. But both Philadelphia goals tonight were scored by players who were left unmarked. How can a team succeed when that happens?

JAVIER PEREZ: You're absolutely right. I think you answered the question yourself. I think both plays, they are similar in a way. There is a third one that he hit the crossbar and it's very similar. So that's a mistake. And that's something we've been penalized for, and that's why we have today a draw and not a win.

Q. Javier, that was Michael Bradley's 250th appearance for this club tonight. That's a big milestone for any player. I know we've talked about Michael's contributions a lot over the years, but I wonder if you could speak about what that means and

what it means in world soccer when a player reaches a milestone with a club like this?

JAVIER PEREZ: I mean, I don't have objectives for Michael. I think I spoke long and enough about him, his commitment, his dedication, his leadership with the club. Even 250 games is not even enough for him because he's -- everything that he has contributed not only in this club but, I mean, in everywhere where he has been. I can only say positive things about him.

As you know, we worked together for the past ten years on and off, and I know him very well. And at this point, I think he's embracing his role as a captain. He's embracing the leadership. And I think it's an example for all of us. So I think I said there a lot of compliments for him, and they are all well deserved. So congratulations to Michael. Hopefully he can stay with us another 250 games.

DraftScripts by ASAP Sports