

Toronto FC Media Conference

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Javier Perez

Media Conference



Atlanta United 1, Toronto FC 1

Q. This seems to be another one of those ties that seems like a win. Given the lineup you fielded with the youth, I'm guessing there were quite a few positives for you tonight.

JAVIER PEREZ: Yes, everybody is very happy. As you mentioned, it's a tie that has a taste of the win for several reasons.

I think first and foremost, we had a lot of younger players in the starting lineup come in as well to play with Jordan, as well, Julian, Jayden, Jahkeele, Noble.

And then we have a lot of experience as well on the field. It's a very good mix. It's a good plan. It's experience for them and it's as well very important because we play against a team that is playing -- such a spot in the playoffs, so this is not an easy game. This is one of the most difficult stadiums to come and get a result, and in front of 40,000-plus people in the stadium.

Overall I think it's a great experience for the younger players, and it's a good performance base on the team.

Q. How happy are you for Jordan Perruzza there, and did you say anything to him before you put him out on the field for the second half?

JAVIER PEREZ: Yes, he knew the whole time that he was coming into the game to play 45 minutes, and he knew this was a big chance, same situation for probably Jayden and Julian.

Noble and Jahkeele, they have been playing more often but these three, they knew that it was a special game for them and they knew the time that they were going to play.

So Jordan is a very resilient player. He's a very resilient person, and he's very determined. So I think he came on with a clear vision that this was a big opportunity for him, and like most, if not all the players on the team, he played well tonight and I'm very, very happy for him.

Q. The decision to withdraw Jozy and Pozuelo at halftime, was that always the plan for them to play 45 minutes or was their exits injury-related?

JAVIER PEREZ: The plan was to give 45 minutes to Jozy, Alejandro and Omar, and then give the rest that needs to go into the game on Wednesday. We have that game obviously that is extremely important for us, and -- but at the same time, these three, they didn't play as much lately because of the injuries.

So it was a good exercise to get some minutes tonight and get them ready -- get them ready for the game on Wednesday. But the idea was from the beginning to give them just 25 minutes.

Q. I wanted to get your thoughts on Julian Dunn. You talked about him there earlier, but three years between his last start and today, that's quite a long time to be waiting for your next opportunity to show what you can do. What did you think of his performance and how he acquitted himself in a pretty difficult environment?

JAVIER PEREZ: I think it was excellent. I mean, everybody saw tonight how difficult it was. We knew that, and on the right side, it was going to be Barco; it was going to be Bello. They were trying over and over again to take advantage, and he was a warrior.

So I agree with you, I think it's a long time. I think tonight he proved that he belongs to this level.

And there was obviously some question marks because for every younger player, it's a difficult situation to come in this kind of game, and now I think we can feel far more comfortable to give him the next opportunity.

Great performance for him. I already congratulate him. I think he did a terrific job against top-class players that he had in front, and that's a big milestone for him.

Q. Sort of bigger picture for a lot of these young guys that are getting minutes, what do you want them to be taking away from these games specifically, and what



do they get from these experiences?

JAVIER PEREZ: I think first and foremost to get the confidence because if they didn't have the quality, they wouldn't be here, right. They work extremely hard in the training sessions, and in order to earn a spot on the field, you have to take off somebody else.

And I think it's no secret for all of us that we are maybe at the end of a cycle and it's good to see all these young players to see that the future of the club, it doesn't need to rely necessary on bringing a lot of players. I think we have enough quality and we have the youth ready to step up and I think we have a good balance between very experienced players and younger players.

So it's just a night like tonight, this is a night to enjoy and see them playing together.

Q. While there's lots to be happy about tonight, there was another early, cheap goal given away, which has kind of been symbolic of this season. How frustrating is it to watch a team that's better than this keep digging itself a hole?

JAVIER PEREZ: I think you just describe exactly what it is, right. I think if we didn't make these mistakes, these completely avoidable mistakes, like many, many of them that we did this season, maybe tonight we would be talking about a win and not a tie, right.

But we are where we are. I think the important part is to learn the lessons, and I just hope not to concede any of these goals from now to the end of the season. For me, it's almost like arrogance. Sometimes we have to be more humble and we have to simplify things for ourselves. So I think it's a lesson for all of us and hopefully we don't see that again for the remainder of the season.

Q. Could we get an update on Alex Bono? You mentioned he picked up something in training the other day. Is it just for tonight or is it something longer term?

JAVIER PEREZ: I don't know. All I know is that the day we were traveling here to Atlanta, he tried to train. We know that he wants always to be with the team. The medical services, they were more optimistic about it, but he really wanted to give a try, and he tried and he couldn't go.

So how he is right now, I don't know. I know that some of the players, they were this morning training back home and I just made a phone call before coming here, everything went well. But I don't know Alex, the extent of the injury, and how severe it is. So we'll have to wait until tomorrow

to see if he can be with us or he needs some time to recover.

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