

Toronto FC Media Conference

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Javier Perez

Media Conference



D.C. United 3, Toronto FC 1

Q. Seemed like a lot of the games this season, early goal conceded, slack defending, inability to score, coming on late when it's a little late. What was your take on the season finale?

JAVIER PEREZ: Yeah, my take is -- it's a game of two halves, the first half, where we are never in the game or think, and the second half, where we do more of what we are used to do or what we have been more effective this year. We took this game more like a test for the final, and we have a few things to try. Obviously in the first half, didn't go well and then in the second half, we went back into what we have been doing when we feel more comfortable and we feel like we were more in control of the game at the end. I think we have almost 20 percent of the possession but it comes down to, it's like you said, you made the point that it's three set pieces, two corners, penalty -- and you have no chances to get points.

Q. With Justin's final match, you did him a nice favor subbing him out late so he could get an ovation. What did you say to him as he came off the field and you hugged him before he went to the bench?

JAVIER PEREZ: Yeah, I told him that it was an honor for me as a coach to have a player like him and being able to coach him during the season. Wished him the best of luck.

I think he's an example for a lot of players but as well the way he conducts himself for a lot of people like including myself. So it was just to communicate to him that it's been a pleasure and it's an honor to be his coach. So that was my message to him.

Q. Were you told anything before the game if Montréal didn't win and were eliminated from the playoffs whether your match against them for the final, when would that be?

JAVIER PEREZ: No, absolutely not. As you know, I always approach the next game. So in my mind, it was only D.C. today. It was as I mentioned before, it was a testing to into the final, especially because D.C. play the

same formation as Montréal, the 5-2-3. We tried to change a little bit to do some things that didn't work out quite well in the first half and then in the second half we came back to what we usually do and we were good.

The only thing that it was at least in my mind, and the only message that I pass across to the team, it was the game against D.C. tonight.

Q. At the end of a difficult season, how important are those little moments with the fans?

JAVIER PEREZ: That's a very good question. I think everybody knows that we play for our fans, our fans are the ones that they give us the energy, and today I think it was a difficult game. Especially when we saw fans in the stadium, and some of them, they were even here to welcome us to the stadium before the game.

And I think they were the ones giving us the energy in the second half. It was easy to give up in the game because it was -- we were losing 1-3 already. But I think the fans, they kept us in the game and I think everybody wanted to play for them.

It's very important for us that we have the support, we feel the support of them, and the players as well. The players they want to have the support of the fans and I think many times the fans don't realize how much of an impact they have on the players and the staff and the team as a group.

So it's been a pleasure to have the fans today in the stadium and hopefully we keep having everybody in the stadium pushing and pushing the team forward.

Q. The television broadcast said Chris Mavinga left the game at halftime because of a concussion-related problem. Can you clarify that? And also, the other two moves you made at halftime, was that just because you didn't think the attack was working?

JAVIER PEREZ: I think, first of all, Chris, he was being examined by the doctor and they decided that it was a risk of concussion so there was no -- it wasn't necessary to risk his health, so at that point we made a decision that it was



better to keep him out for safety.

Jozy was feeling, as well, his groin, so there's no point to lose Jozy for the final when we have him in this game, and then we made another sub just to give a little more clarity to the team and take a little bit more, like I said, a little bit more the shape that we felt more comfortable in the past few games.

So in the end, it was a couple of kind of forced substitutions, but in the end, we wanted to give more stability to the team and see if we could create more chances. I think we did. Definitely we were in control the second half, in the numbers, they proved that. 68 percent of possession, didn't capitalize on all the scoring opportunities, but we have our chances, as well to score a few goals.

Q. Can you tell us what's next? You don't know the date and the location of the Montréal game, but will you continue on training as normal? Will all the players remain in Toronto or will they be allowed to sort of leave and then come back? What is the plan?

JAVIER PEREZ: No, everybody is staying here. I think at this point we will try to balance the rest and the training. But everybody is staying in Toronto. Everybody has to be ready for the final. And all that we have to do is regroup and regain our strength, our confidence, and be ready to fight for the Cup. I think tonight, it's not easy for us, but I think it's not easy for Montréal, either. They lost 2-0 at home, and I think it's a big hit in the confidence as well that they have been out of the playoffs.

I think we will be both teams hungry, and at least on our side, we will be ready and preparing for that final.

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