

Toronto FC Media Conference

Saturday, May 21, 2022

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Bob Bradley

Media Conference



D.C. United 2, Toronto FC 2

Q. That, I would imagine, is a point that's valued on a difficult day with players missing, but your team answered in the late going. What did you think of the performance?

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, this team has faced a lot of adversity in this last period and there's been other moments where they have shown resilience and stuck together, but we let it get away from us. And so today, I think means a lot. It means a lot to the group that they are fighting through this and they get a little something today. They needed that. You know, football, when you're around a long time, you can go through a stretch where it seems like no matter what you do, you can't get things turned around your way.

The ability to keep guys going and engaged and pushes and working hard is a challenge. It's probably the biggest challenge that you ever face as a coach. But these guys are doing a really good job of that, and again, today, two times coming back, I think we adjusted a little bit in different moments of the game. We got some reserve on the field that made a difference. So those are all positives.

Q. Obviously I assume you didn't start Jonathan because he messed the last two games and his fitness level was on your mind. When you brought him in, did you have any particular instructions for him with the last ten or so minutes to go?

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, look, Oso is a good player. When he's not on the field, some of the things that we do well on the midfield are more difficult. He understood the way the game was going. You know, when he came on, we tweaked a little bit the way we played again. He's versatile. He's smart. He and Michael have a very good understanding.

Every team that we play tries to have a guy follow Michael because they know that the way we build oftentimes starts from the defenders going through him. And Michael knows that when he's playing with Oso that if he moves a little bit and draws his marker, Oso will see the space that's been

left, find himself in a spot, get the ball and in those moments, our ability to be a little bit more fluid is there. So that's important.

You know, he and I talked about how many minutes he thought he could do, so that was part of the discussions that we've had. But there's no mistaking how important he is for our team.

Q. In the past, you've talked about not wanting to rush Ayo because he has to get the confidence back. How much will a performance like this, not just the goal but the overall performance help in terms of getting his confidence back?

BOB BRADLEY: It's very important. It's a really well taken goal. Jesús slips a really good pass and you know, Ayo does really well with it.

He's still a presence with speed and power that gives our attack a little bit of a different dimension. And you know, he was smart about the way he played today. With the weather, we had to try to find a balance. We couldn't press too much. So we tried to figure out when we could step up a little bit but how in other moments we could be in more of a mid block. At some point in the first half, we switched from 4-3-3 where Ayo was tilted a little bit right to a little bit more of, whatever you want to call it, 4-4-2 or 4-4-1-1 which got Ayo higher and playing a little bit on their last man and gave Jesús a little bit more freedom to come underneath. When we did that, our wide attackers, Jayden and Deandre did a good job of coming into some of those half spaces.

I thought that helped us in the first half and again if you can get Ayo into these kind of positions, if we can keep pushing him along, he brings a lot of really important qualities that I think are going to help our attack.

Q. Can we get you on the two D.C. goals? Seems like a bit of miscommunication.

BOB BRADLEY: On what?

Q. On the two D.C. goals.



BOB BRADLEY: You know, the first ball -- the first play starts with a long ball down our left side. You know, they do a good job, Fontis is always available in the half space and then they have got runners.

And then on the ball that got cut across, we still had Lucas and Cosi to be able to deal with the cross and to deal with floor he is, right? And so we just didn't do a good job dealing with the long ball and then it's a play that we should be able to make in front of the goal.

The second one, you know, Carlos clips a ball up to Jesús. It turns over. I need to see it again but Lucas might have been able to get to his right quicker. Cosi tried to recover. Made a little bit of pressure. And then there's a moment where you know, I still liked to see Alex, we talked about it a little bit on some of the moments where now a guy is coming toward the goal and takes a such, just making himself a little bit bigger, being a little bit more aggressive. It's similar to the goal at the end of the Vancouver game. I think there's just little things there where we can still be better. The kind of ball that gets played up to Jesús, I mean, Carlos chips one, I think we can do better finding the right passes out of back through the midfield and then it turns over, we weren't in the best of positions, so those are the two goals.

Q. Carlos picked up a yellow card in ten minutes into the match which obviously made the task at hand for him a little bit tougher but how would you evaluate his performance this game, and I guess overall so far this season?

BOB BRADLEY: Look, I'm not going to go deep into -- you guys watch the games and part of the job is -- you know, I speak pretty openly but I don't go deep into ups and downs of every player after every game. I think when you watch games, that's part of what you guys should be doing.

I think Carlos has a big personality. We are still trying to get the best out of him. I want him to be a little more consistent. I want him to be a guy who organizes the people in back a little bit better. He's been in big games and he's played on big teams, so we know the qualities he has and we are still trying to get to know him better.

I take the responsibility that when players come in, it's the coach's responsibility to figure out how the players think and how to get the best out of them. So it's still early. I don't think we're there yet.

Q. Jesús was playing in a deeper role today. Was that to accommodate Ayo in the starting 11 or was that a tactical change-up on your end?

BOB BRADLEY: Can I ask a question? Please don't take this wrong, but did you just come on the call or did you just not hear what you just said?

Q. I didn't hear what you just said.

BOB BRADLEY: No problem. I just -- because I don't mean giving answers a second time but I just wanted to be -- to make sure that -- that it wasn't missed.

We started playing in a 4-3-3 today. And when we play in a 4-3-3, Jesús, even as a 9, we encourage him to come underneath to help us make an extra man in the midfield, and when that happens, then we also encourage our wide attacker to be more narrow and be threats.

I didn't think that early in the game, Ayo was getting involved enough. So we changed at the water break in the first half, and we played more of, I described it a few minutes ago, as a 4-4-2 or a 4-4-1-1 where Ayo played more as the 9 and then Jesús had the freedom to come underneath him. So at times, it had a look where Ayo would be higher by himself and then when we did that, Deandre which Jayden, defensively, were a little bit deeper. But when we had the ball, they did a very good job of moving into those spaces on -- just on the outside of their sixes. So at that point, it's Djefal and Durkin.

So we had now an ability to play through their first, you know, where they have a sort of a front three. So they play 3-4-2-1 or something like that.

So when we played past that front three, I thought we had a good finish to the first half finding some of those spaces, and yes, that got Jesús into some really good areas. If I remember the goal right, I think maybe Michael stepped up on a loose ball or tackle or interception and played it to Jesús and Jesús was able to slip a really good ball to Ayo.

So yes, we were hoping he would come underneath right from the start but then we made a change at the water break at the 30-minute mark where he was now playing underneath Ayo more.

Q. Can you tell us what was like in that heat? What were the conditions like?

BOB BRADLEY: Hot and humid. It helped to move the game from 4:00 to 6:30. Would have been better to move it from 4:00 to 8:00. It's a hot, humid day, and when you haven't played in these kind of conditions yet, it's even harder. But I thought the players handled it very well.

Q. Your post-game demeanor doesn't seem to change

a lot after a the last-minute goal for a win, draw or loss, but were you feeling somewhat relieved or happy were you feeling when Oso scored that goal with about a minute left in the game?

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, I felt great for the guys. I felt like we were still pushing. I mentioned at the beginning, this group has faced some challenges and there's never been any part of the situation other than trying to say, this is how you become a good team. This is the work.

It's hard work, I promise you. After a game -- after every day, there's a lot to do right now, and so even in games as a coaching staff, I think we find ourselves probably needing to adjust tactically different times during the game, which once we get the team exactly where we want, that's not going to be as necessary. That's for sure. So when you see these guys fight and continue on this in these kind of conditions, get that goal, what was I thinking? I was actually thinking, maybe there's time to get one more. But it's still a well-earned point.

Q. It's a very short turnaround because you have to fly out to Halifax, you play on Tuesday, and then you've got another game against Chicago at home on the weekend. Wondering with games in quick success, what kind of pressure does that put under you in terms of squad rotation, selection, especially with all the injuries you're dealing with?

BOB BRADLEY: We'll see. We're not loaded with all sorts of options at the moment. We've got to recover quickly. We'll assess where we are with each guy. The Canadian Championships are an important part of the history of the club.

So we take it seriously. We already talked briefly after this game about how important the Canadian Championship is, and what it means even as far as if you can win it, getting into the Champion's League. So the players know that. I don't have to tell them. They have done it before. So quick turnaround. We'll assess and figure out how to have a really good team on the field and get to Halifax and be ready.

Q. I would imagine Paul Stalteri is already handy to have around, but with CPL opposition, is he providing the scouting report, so to speak?

BOB BRADLEY: He will provide the information in the scouting report for sure. We've already talked a little about it. Paul is an important part of staff every week but when we play against the CPL teams, he's even more important.

Q. Around the world, these Cup games are special

occasions. What makes these occasions special?

BOB BRADLEY: That everybody, all different clubs, get a chance, and there's a history, always, that's important.

You know, we've had good experiences in the U.S. Open Cup. I had two amazing experiences in Norway where the early round, you play in some different places, small clubs. Played one match up in the Arctic Circle near Senja. And you see people come out in a small stadium and it's their chance to see a team from the top division.

So, look, that part of football is special. Again, I was thinking a little bit about the Norway experience because I've never been to Nova Scotia, and I know Halifax with their still stadium and the people there, it's going to be a big day. Jacob has been talking about it for a while.

Yeah, this is all part of Open Cup football. Important.

Q. Obviously going to be a very special game for Jacob Shaffelburg. I know he wasn't available to you tonight. Is there a chance he's available on Tuesday or is it too early to say?

BOB BRADLEY: Too early to say. We'll see.

Q. Have you followed the Canadian Premiere League or since you took the Toronto FC job, you followed it more?

BOB BRADLEY: I followed it a fair amount last year, and obviously when I took the job, there were different players that I was immediately asking Paul about, asking some of the other people at the club about. You know, I have an idea some of the teams, some of the styles. I've spoken to a couple of the coaches at different times.

So yeah, I love to see a league come up where players get opportunities and now you've got in a country where the game plan has grown so quickly, you've got clubs that now start the process of finding players, scouting, building teams, developing identities. You can see that for sure in some of the teams.

Q. Have you ever crossed paths with Steven harp before?

BOB BRADLEY: Sure, I have. Steven was the national team coach for Canada in 2007, right, with the Gold Cup? I believe so. I know that he did a very good job with that team. I know he's well respected. Was in Trinidad for a while and he can which check the couple of times I've talked to him, I always appreciated just his down-to-earth way and his understanding of the game, and I know in

Canadian football, he's really well respected.

Q. You touched on it briefly earlier, but how challenging is Tuesday going to be given the travel, the short turnaround and the number of injuries that you're dealing with?

BOB BRADLEY: I think that you have a fast turnaround, you've got to get guys ready, and there's an understanding that when you play these kind of games, it's a big deal for the opponents. And when they get a home game in the early rounds of the Cup, you have to have a team that's ready for a hard game. It's a challenge for sure.

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