

Toronto FC Media Conference

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Ayo Akinola

Media Conference



D.C. United 2, Toronto FC 2

Q. It's been a long time since you were able to make a start for the club. How did that goal feel?

AYO AKINOLA: Felt really good. I was very happy with the fact that we were able to tie the game up near halftime. Gives us a bit of a breather to regroup. But for me personally, I'm very happy.

Q. Does it complete the return of surgery, you're starting, you're scoring, you're back?

AYO AKINOLA: Just consistent part of being on the team sheet, you know, when it comes to who Bob wants to put on his 11 -- for me, it's just the consistency part of it now.

Q. How hot was it out there?

AYO AKINOLA: It was hot. That's why I didn't really celebrate like that. It was too hot. After I scored and I got back up, I didn't really try to do much. Yeah, it was pretty hot.

Q. What does a result like that do after struggling?

AYO AKINOLA: I think it can make us go forwards. But it just shows you the resiliency that we have as a team, the mental toughness; that when we are down, we can come back, tie the game or even win it. The mentality from last year to this year definitely has shifted. You know, when situations like this happen, you know, how we come back when we're down, how do we find the residency and hard work, how do we prevail to go back. For us personally, I think it can help us with momentum.

Q. Can you take us through that goal, how it played out for you?

AYO AKINOLA: When Michael -- I think we were on a break or I think it was -- I think Jayden on the left and Jesús carry up the ball on me on the right. Even though Jesus played a wonderful pass, Jesus could have shot it as well but the unselfishness on his part in trusting me, to play me -- for me, I see Hamid come out, I could either slid it

through or chipped it but for me I just wanted to like just bury it, just smack it. You know, just to -- just for us to be tied up, you know, I think that was really important for us confidence-wise knowing that we're back in the game.

Q. Deandre seems to have taken to that central role. What have you even from him these recent weeks? What's working for him?

AYO AKINOLA: His ability to dribble, to beat 1v1. When he has space, just the ability to beat guys, really, really fee as a midfielder, being that guy that can break pressure. In that central role, Deandre, has done a really, really great job of that.

Q. TFC's first trip ever to Halifax. What has Jacob been telling you about his home province?

AYO AKINOLA: I know he's really, really excited to go back home and play in front of his fans and his people, see where he came from. His mom, dad, his whole family is going to be there. For him personally, it's a special game for him. But obviously we are over there to get three points and try to win it for him, but for us as well, so we can move on to the Canadian championship.

Q. Wondering, how closely have you followed the Canadian Premiere League since its launch in 2019?

AYO AKINOLA: I follow a little bit because I know some of my former teammates that I played with are now in the Premiere League, so I followed it quite a bit. Some guys are in Edmonton, Pacific, I follow those teams quite a bit. So for me personally, a little bit, yeah, quite a bit.

Q. Wondering what your thoughts are on the standard of play, what have you made of the league?

AYO AKINOLA: It's pretty good. As you can see, now that guys from a Premiere League are going to -- you can see from Lucas and Caden just the trust factor that most coaches have in CPL players, those guys are two prime examples, taking the leap and that next step. You've seen the growth and development from CPL, knowing that anybody could play up, even to MLS or anywhere else.

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For me it's been really, really good.

Q. Tuesday will be first time Toronto FC plays as a Canadian Premiere League stadium. Are you excited to experience that atmosphere compared to any other MLS team?

AYO AKINOLA: Yeah, I'll definitely be excited. I've never been to Halifax. I'm going to ask Jacob, what's there to do and what's it all about there, how fans, the people over there, how they react. So for me personally, I think it will be a great game, great atmosphere.

Yeah, I'm personally excited for me. I know it's going to be a quick turnaround because we play Tuesday. So try to get back home, recover and fly out and play the game.

Q. You touched on it a little bit but what's the challenge of going on the road to a town with a raucous fan base? What do you want to go in there with on Tuesday?

AYO AKINOLA: The mentality of three points, as every trip. It's not going to be an easy game. You know, Halifax is going to come ready to play, as we expect the same standard from us in the locker room. We expect a battle. We expect a hard-fought match. But our mentality coming out of this game is three points.

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