

# Toronto FC Media Conference

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## Bob Bradley

Media Conference



Philadelphia Union 4, Toronto FC 0

**Q. Given the players you were missing today, I'm not sure what can be taken out of this result, same with some of the last few games. But it's clear more work needs to be done on this roster. Just how much more work needs to be done?**

BOB BRADLEY: Yes, just so many different kind of challenges. And any type of consistency, as we entered the latter part of the season, we had hoped that we could get ourselves on a run and then during that period we just never really were able to play the same lineup, keep things going. We continued to hurt ourselves with different kinds of mistakes.

So all of that adds up to the situation where there's a lot in a needs to be done. You take all the information from start to finish of the season, and look at -- look hard at it and tried to figure out how we can make important steps to improve ourselves.

**Q. The decision to start with three center backs, was that due just to the player absences or was that more of a tactical decision?**

BOB BRADLEY: A little bit of both. I thought that the way Philadelphia plays with their diamond, with the way Gazdag stays up high, with Uhre and Carranza; that it might allow us a little bit better shape in terms of how we could engage them.

In order to do that, we needed to make sure that our wing backs step at it aggressively and we didn't start the game that way and I thought after we gave up that early goal, we started to be a little more aggressive and had some better stretches.

You know, their main treat overall was still that they get -- they play a lot behind the defense, and the timing of the ball and the runs, Uhre's fast, and so our ability to understand when to drop, our ability to step up, move up the field faster so that we weren't sort of caught half and half, those are a lot of the details that if you don't get right, that's what makes Philadelphia dangerous.

**Q. 2-0 there's a non-call at one end and hand ball call on the other side a few minutes later. I'm not so much son concerned with the decisions themselves but more your thoughts on the fine margins and how those little things can turn into big swings and how that was a factor for the team this year.**

BOB BRADLEY: Yes, that's spot on that we didn't find enough ways to take advantage of key moments. We seem to be a little slower sometimes to react to a given play and the other team faster thinking and faster to get to something and so if that's the case, then the ball can tilt a little bit in some of those sort of random key moments, not something that's coming in a big way based on how the game is playing out or tactically what's going on.

But just a quick situation that is still -- that's part of football. The ability to help your team improve so that the different type of situations that present themselves in a game, that can be anything, it can be a reaction to close down, it can be as one goes in on a tackle the second guy is ready, it can be the speed at which we play the ball on and on and on. The best teams still -- the package of those things, they are usually doing better in moments and if that drops a little bit, then that team loses its edge.

An example would be in the moment, a team might -- it's still a great d but some of those small little details when they are at their best are at such a high level are not now quite at the same level and the margin in every game gets tighter and tighter and tighter.

You know, when you look at our season, overall, our margin in games, our ability when we do something good to make a big chance at it, to take advantage of an opportunity, score the right goal, make the right pass, and if you compare that with our ability to end in certain moment, then we've got to deal with a quick situation, make a play in the back, react faster or make a safe, those things were not aligned in a way that you could be a very good team so that is part of improving the roster and that is part of the work collectively to improve.

**Q. Given when you said about your team's margin for**

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**errors in a game this season, obviously not going into detail by breaking down positions, but can you say how close this team can be from being a winning team?**

BOB BRADLEY: I think we need to look hard at everything. I still think that our ability to make certain moves this year were hampered by preexisting contracts, preexisting moves, things that didn't law us to do certain things that we would have liked to do.

So I think we've got to know step back, look at everything, figure out what's possible in terms of how we continue to add more of the right kind of guys. Guys that -- I said it at the beginning of the year, guys that know football, guys that are excited about what we are trying to do in Toronto, the way we want to play, guys who love to compete, guys that come never day excited, new teammates.

I think the bar, we tried to raise the bar this year but I look hard at everything and say that we have a long ways to go.

**Q. Michael finishes the season having played all but ten minutes in MLS this year. How impressed have you been with his longevity over the course of the season?**

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, he takes care of himself. He's a pro. He hasn't missed one training session. Yes, he's getting older. The plan at the beginning of the year was that he wouldn't play a minute over ten but when you throw in injuries -- you look at examples sometimes and the mentality every day, the love of the game and the intelligence of how we can as a team do things better, on that end, any metrics you want to look at for a midfielder, things that we would consider important, passing, aggressive passing, ability, whatever you want to call it, defensive gains, recoveries, interceptions, yeah, you can find certain categories where a guy has like a pure better defensive package than he has.

But if you put together all of the qualities of what you still look for in a midfielder, and look closely at him compared to any midfield in the League, it's been an impressive season.

**Q. Going back to my original question, your audio cut out a bit in your answer, but given the changes, the good and the bad, do you see the glass half-full or do you need a stiff drink or maybe both?**

BOB BRADLEY: That's an interesting way to answer it. Yeah, do I need a stiff drink right now. But in the end, there's a lot of work to be done and I've repeated that three or four times. We tried to raise the bar in every way.

And now you need a little time and you need to talk to guys to find out in moments how they felt. When you raise the bar and try to approach some players out of their comfort zone, some are up for it and others aren't. Sometimes it might be that they have a -- they are ready to really push harder.

But that part of seeing more guys go on the job, get better, become more dependable, more consistent, that's an important -- that probably is the most important thing for a team. You see so many guys in a season raising their level, and we talk about the inconsistent, some of which is injury related.

But the inconsistency of getting the same lineup on the field and still from game-to-game, how guys play in the beginning of the year versus middle of the year.

**Q. Hugo came on in the second half to earn his first senior team start. I won't ask you to evaluate his performance because it was only 2 minutes but how important was it just to get the kid on the field and get him minutes and playing time and some experience?**

BOB BRADLEY: It's important, two players that trained different times with the first team this year and did well for the second team and players that we know we can push forward.

**Q. I know we'll talk to you next week, but if you had any closing thoughts on the season is, we'd love to hear them.**

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, I mean, it fits with what I had said at the beginning. From start to finish, this was a very, very challenging year. Challenging when we are looking at existing situations. Challenging to figure out ways to improve the roster. Challenging with the weight of guys coming in midseason. Challenging with the different injuries where just maybe you thought you had a little chance to get a little bit more consistency, you were never able to do that. The biggest example would be -- have been seeing more games, for example, where Michael and Mark-Anthony and Oso could have played. Hardly any minutes.

So there's other examples like that. So in all ways, just a huge challenge. Probably in that regard, I would say that one of the most challenging years that I've had as a coach to keep guys going and to try to keep a focus on things that we needed to think about every day. It's a test for everybody. I appreciate all the efforts but at the same time some do better than others when things, when it gets cranked up to a higher level, so we have to really assess

all that, and understand that we've got to take away really important information -- to build on.

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