

# Toronto FC Media Conference

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## Bob Bradley

Media Conference



Atlanta United 1, Toronto FC 1

**Q. Thoughts on the game, as far as maintaining structure and formation. What can you take away from this match?**

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, the good part is on a night where the football is not real good and where we struggled to connect passes and play in their end, that has a team, the mentality was strong to stick together, defend as a unit and take a point.

So you know, there's steps with teams, and for this team tonight to take a point that way is still positive. And then, look, it's earlier in the year, there's all sorts of football things we can talk about. They pressed us hard. We didn't find the right -- we didn't find the right space. We didn't play quickly enough. We missed too many pass, all that, allowed their pressure to just come and come and come.

I thought we made a little bit of an adjustment add halftime but in the first half, Brandon and Oso were going too wide. We needed them more central when we had the ball so that there would be a little room at time for Richie Laryea and Raoul to move forward and also wanted to keep Fede higher so he wasn't trying to be the outlet all the time. That helped in some moments.

But the big thing for us tonight is just it's a team point that the group can feel good about, and then keep working on the rest.

**Q. You used three separate forwards. Are you looking for solution without Insigne?**

BOB BRADLEY: No, his hamstring tightened up and then Ayo's hamstring tightened up. It's not ideal to use two subs in two slots like that but that's the way it worked.

Yeah, then if you consider that obviously Lorenzo wasn't quite ready this week from a pure attacking standpoint, we didn't have some of the things that I think we're capable of.

You know, we tweaked the way we played a little bit to try to keep Fede up higher inside a little bit more and to have

some more numbers in the center of the field.

**Q. Is Lorenzo still good to play next week?**

BOB BRADLEY: I'm hopeful for next week. He was back on the field doing a little bit before this game.

**Q. Obviously a great performance by Sean. If you can evaluate what you saw from him tonight.**

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, Sean came up big tonight. He made a couple really big saves. Was sharp. Always communicates well behind the line, and you know, when we needed him tonight, he was always there.

**Q. Can you talk about how much work and how much focus it takes from the side to stay lock in like that for 90 minutes tonight?**

BOB BRADLEY: You mean for the group?

**Q. Yeah, more the group.**

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, on a night where it's not sharp and where it's easy to get frustrated, the challenge, it's an important challenge for us to make sure that everybody keeps going on those nights and sticks together. We have to defend a little bit more. Defend deeper a little bit more, and that's what you end up doing.

Obviously if you defend that deep, finding passes to play out, sometimes is difficult. Didn't do that well enough. We did have some good moments, encounters, including the play that led to the goal.

But I thought overall, I keep saying that the mentality to deal with the game as it came at us was good.

**Q. The late goal in the second half, considering what you were saying about the football not being too good for your team --**

BOB BRADLEY: I don't understand the question.

**Q. The goal, do you feel that was a little bit of a lift for**

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**your club considering what you were talking about tonight, how your team struggled in some areas?**

BOB BRADLEY: Yeah, look, they were putting balls in the balls. They were they were crossing balls. They were chipping balls. They had a lot of runners in the box. Could one of those plays have turned into a chance? I mean, look, even their goal came where it was a double ricochet. I don't think Mark did a good enough job of closing the first shooter down. And then, you know, if it hit Mark, Matt got caught in a funny way.

So the part of -- if you talk about our defending tonight, the defending in terms of not giving away obvious chances was probably pretty good. But if you're that deep and now balls are coming in, and they are a team that crosses a lot of balls.

You know, they push people high and wide. So Brooks plays, on a night like tonight, basically out wide as a wide ringer, always have width on the left -- whether it's Wiley or even at times Gutman. So look, they pushed us deep. They had five, six guys running into the box, and so I thought we dealt with most of it really well, other than you'll -- had one, you don't clear it, it comes loose, there's a shot, there's a rebound.

So that was the stuff that kept adding up on the night. You look at the numbers, the numbers are high because of stuff like that and because of our inability to move up the field and play more football and push them deeper and turn it into more of a two-way game.

**Q. As you mentioned, maybe Mark could have done a bit better in terms of closing down the shooter on the goal but aside from that, what did you think of his overall performance tonight?**

BOB BRADLEY: I thought Mark put in a big effort just like everybody. When a team -- in a game like that, you need everybody pushing hard, and look, when I say he could have done better, look, it's not meant as big criticism. The ability to step out a little faster and not turn or whatever, you know, in the midst of all the players that happened in the game, Mark came through with a lot of really good plays.

I still feel that he can be sharper with the ball. I know Mark. I know that, you know, as I worked with him in 2018 and 2019 and 2020. The little details of how he recedes and the number of touches and looking around a little bit more can be better. There's still some times right now where he'll -- I think Brandon slipped him a little ball late in the game and he took a little touch behind his leg right inside, but he didn't realize that there were others waiting for him.

So you know, the ability in tight spaces when Mark's doing those things really well, then his level jumps up and I think it's getting better and better and better, but I still keep telling him that we can -- there's more there.

**Q. Just on the goal from Fede, it was a really tidy finish from him but the ball from Michael and the run from Richie were just as important parts of that, yeah?**

BOB BRADLEY: Yes, good analysis. Fede did really well but Richie's run was important. The timing of Michael's pass, Fede's patience, but hard run. But at the very end, Richie's run on the outside becomes a really important part of that, absolutely.

**Q. How dependent is Toronto on -- from a creator, is that something that's missing right now?**

BOB BRADLEY: Look, we're still trying to develop a team where all these things come together. It was frustrating last year that when both Fede and Lorenzo arrived, arriving midseason, it took Lorenzo a number of games before he was ready to play, and then he missed a couple late, one for family reasons and then one because he had an injury.

So any possibility of having continuity last year got thrown off. Oso was out. Mark was out. So I think, yes, we need all that to come together.

But I do believe that when you have Lorenzo going in a good way, when you have Fede going in a good way, when we can still get in nine between them, that offers something, I think our midfield is still, again, there haven't been enough games where Mark, Michael and Oso played together. Now we have Victor. When you talk about creativity, Victor adds something.

You know, we have a team with some good footballers and now we have to have a little bit more time. I mentioned earlier, that games early in the year in this league are hard. You know, sometimes conditions aren't always great. Weather's not always great. When you play away from home, there's usually a real energy for the home team.

So early season games are hard. It's not always that the football early in the year is the greatest, right, and for us, we have to work through that. We have to get better and in it we have to develop a mentality to know how to fight through games. So at least a little bit of that part happened.

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