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John Herdman

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Sporting KC 3, Toronto FC 1

JOHN HERDMAN: I mean, Luka made some big saves. I think -- missed some chances in the first half, as well. I think they were certainly in defensive transition in their attack in transition, they were pretty clinical. When you look at KC and their style of play, they like to dominate the ball dominate the ball but again we forced them into direct play. Thought we lived in their half quite a lot which meant we were very open which left us to, I thought, two ends of the spectrum. We either were playing some sublime moments of intricate football that got us too key areas or there was a lack of quality in moments and they were very open which gave them some big chances.

So that's big learnings for us. At home we always want to win at ten. We want to dominate the ball. I think we dominated it the ball. I think at times we had big moments and some exciting moments playing a good style of football but with that comes the risk and that risky I thought was exploited in big moments.

I think if we had scored the first goal when we had our chances, that game changes. Game changes very quickly. But coming out of that second half, we weren't good enough. That was the bottom line. I think we were brave enough in that second half coming out of the dressing room and then we just let them get a little bit of a foothold in the game and let them push us into an area we didn't want to be on that left-hand side, and we needed to be braver in that moment. Just too many turnovers which then led to that little bit of momentum and then that great goal that they scored.

Q. The kind of game where if you put a goal in early, it might have changed things. Does this game illustrate, you still need a No. 9?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think it's been a discussion across the club since last season, is this constant conversation about that center forward role. I kind of thought Prince's work rate tonight, you look the effort he put in, he put in one of the biggest shifts on that TEAM. The pressing, he nearly forced the keeper in THEIR goal twice. So his effort is a hundred percent; Deandre Kerr, they come on and put a shift in.

But you know, they are getting chances and getting options, opportunities to play and at some point, someone's really got to step up and take that number nine jersey. I think as a club we are always looking. The window is still open but these guys are putting a hell of a shift in and at the moment, you know, the effort, we are expecting something is going to come from that effort and we are expecting item come in time. But again, how many opportunities are people going to have in these moments.

So we'll look at this collectively because you can target the nine but there's moments we should have crossed the ball and we didn't. There's moments we got into great areas to cross and the quality wasn't quite there. There's moments we should cross and we are turning inside and shooting, and I think there's an element of, collectively, we all look at this whether it's tactically or the decision-making. So some of this, you could say, is just No. 9 quality or whether it's decision-making in that



final third to give them the best chance.

Q. Were the goals preventable?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think of preventable in that we had just given them a foothold. I just felt like coming out of the second half, the first half we picked their crests apart. Maddy, Alo, we were finding the midfielders and it was risky but we were bouncing it and being brave and confident. And for whatever reason, we decided just to keep dropping it into that left side and you have Siggy on his wrong foot getting trapped. I thought that led into just them being able to live in our attacking quarter for too long and when you give a team like that an experienced team like that that timing quality in your part in the field, they are going to find opportunities.

I mean, it was a hell of a goal they scored, a really good goal, but at the end of the day we give them too much time in that part of the field. I don't want to say Luka could have done better or defenders should have closed down. It was just you could feel something coming. Too many giveaways and not getting our center midfielders on the ball early enough.

Q. Do you want to see more of a response -- to get that carbon copy score, losing some confidence?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I was in the middle -- to be fair, I didn't see the last two goals. We were in the middle of making changes. We knew we needed to get a shift in, and just some confidence and energy into that midfield with Deiby Flores. So that was the plan to get him in quickly, and by the time he was about to step on the field, they had scored the carbon copy goal.

Again, I think the response came too late. That's what I'd say. I mean, I was proud of the response from the players. They kept pushing but it was just a little bit too late. I needed to get that midfield closer to the game and them combining like they did in the first half.

So you know, not pointing fingers at the midfield but when the confidence is ebbing, that sub needed to come in, and it was just a second too late.

Q. When you talk about the importance of the next man up performances tonight, were there next man up performances

JOHN HERDMAN: I think Luka obviously has made a real name for himself over these last few games. I mean, you know, you watch Columbus. You watch Cincinnati. Their keepers are making three big saves a game. That's how they win championships.

And Luka and Sean are going to have to do that for us to keep pushing. But Tyrese, I thought just to see his consistency was good. I thought, again, he's building match fitness and I thought he was able to consistently show he's a threat in this level. He didn't have that young player dip in his second game. I thought Jahkeele showed confidence again.

But yeah, I mean, it wasn't too many changes from that starting 11 from last week. So I'd say those young lads that put a shift in, I think showed that new level of quality did again tonight, that consistency, I really enjoyed seeing that.

Q. What's your evaluation of Sigurd? He was a starter last year and wasn't necessarily a first choice this year but has come in and done well. What's your feeling?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I think Siggy has put a good shift in for the team. His tactical excellence and the line height he's willing to hold for the team, he wins a lot off the front. People had said when I first took over, his aggression might not be there but he's been very aggressive off the front and I'd seen him playing for Bromby in a back three in some of the Euro matches that he played and he'd done a really good job there. I think that three does suit him. I think being on the left side is always a challenge for a right-footed player, particularly in a three-man center back system. But he's actually, today, I thought, his distribution was good.

They were just smart in the second half when our midfielders stopped showing, and when Siggy was getting it right on the touch line and Luka was clipping balls into him, his only hand and he was getting stuck. That's not the fault of his. He's trying



to get himself back inside and find the pass he can, but at the same time, that's two games now Sigs has put a role good account of himself.

Q. Back in your lineup today -- what is your takeaway from his performance and with Lorenzo being out for a few weeks?

JOHN HERDMAN: When we were able to get him into that game, the box in the midfield played tight together. He brings the whole thing alive. As soon as it starts to stretch, and we don't find the bottom of that box, the two center midfielders, it's difficult, then also into the game -- then he's into rolling out wide in areas where it's hard to really bring his quality.

You know, scoring in that last minute of the game just showed his captain quality. I think he has to do that for this club. He has to show if there's one man still fighting in the 90th minute, it has to be him and he was there, putting it in the back of the net and giving those fans something to cheer about. That was important tonight.

Q. Between the huddle in the field, what are the conversations you're hearing?

JOHN HERDMAN: Well, it was my message in the huddle and it just wasn't good enough, and that can't happen here in Toronto ever again.

I was proud of the identity. They played to win. They played to win. They were on the front foot. They were in Kansas's half most of the game. Kansas's first half, I was proud of what they put out there. As I said to them, it just lacked that quality. It went from sublime to just a level that was going to cause us problems, almost give them a goal and we can't live at that end ever the spectrum. There's got to be an in-between there and when the quality diminishes, we have to find the tactical acumen or the togetherness to bring the team closer. So I said to them it just can't happen here but I'm proud that you show the fans how much you care. You're not going to quit on this team ever, and that's, you know, you'll win the right way but you've got to learn to lose the right way and I thought they lost the right way. They put a shift in. Thompson, Deiby, etc., they all put a good shift in and tried to help the team get a result. So that's what I said to them, keeping it quite simple. It can't happen again. It wasn't good enough. But you didn't quit and you played to win and that's important for me.

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