



Toronto FC Media Conference

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John Herdman

Media Conference

Vancouver 4, Toronto FC 0

Q. Obviously not the result you were looking for today. What was it that was so difficult to break down?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I think this Whitecaps team is very cohesive. Certainly the length through that center spine with Cubas and the two centre-backs in the center and the right and Brian White goal, that's fine. It's a lot more difficult to break down when you actually face. It when you look at the tactical footage you can see the opportunities but when you get out there live, you see the ground that Cubas can cover. I thought he was a real problem for us tonight.

And then for us, I think just cohesively, you know, we're still developing as a group. Players are coming back and trying to get that cohesion, consistency. We were just loose in that first half. I thought the first half, you know, we started the game quite well. A little bit of a mistake that led a goal. I thought we were right there and then we had a spell where our pressing, we just need it to get tighter and we fixed that I think for the first 15, 20 of the second half, and then the transition goal just killed us. I mean, that goal from Gauld is the moment that's going to put you in a position where it's going to be difficult to come back from. I think fair play to the Whitecaps. They are a very good team. They have been together for a good two and a half years, and there's real chemistry there.

Q. You talked about the consistency and that it was a little bit lacking tonight. Do the injuries that you have faced early this season contribute to that at all?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I mean, of course, you go through a preseason with a squad that are consistently playing and they go into the first few matches playing consistently, and you know, you lose some players. But that's normal in football. I think you've got to accept that you are going to lose players through injury. We've had a bit of bad luck at the beginning of the year but at the same time, you've got to close the gap on that as a team. We lost I think six players when we got a result against Atlanta, that's for us, the next man up.

Tonight it was a balance of everything, some of the tactical elements we have to get better at. You know, making sure that coming into a place like this, we are more disciplined with our set defensively, and I think we just got too loose, and that's on the coaching staff. That's on the players at the same time but we'll get back. It stings, the loss. But we'll get back, we view, and get back at it. I think that's the mentality we've instilled in this group that this season is going to be a tough season, no doubt but it's a tough season for every team. They are going to have their moments with injuries, and for us, I think we are only going to get better.

Q. Can you talk about what you've learned from your group, not just tonight but over the last couple games here?

JOHN HERDMAN: Well, they will keep fighting. That's really important to see. There's no quit in the team. The goals the Whitecaps scored, the two set piece goals, the transition goal from Brian, from Davey, an error, the transition from Ryan



Gauld I said this to my group where we are self-destructing in big moments and happened in the previous game. Tonight we've done something similar. So if we don't learn from that, we weren't going to keep progressing in that Eastern conference. I think that's the big step we've got to take. We've got to look at those moments and how we set ourselves up to be harder to beat as a starting point. We were probably the best defensive record in the League coming into the last two games and then conceding seven goals in two matches, it starts, and that's where we'll be starting our tactical review and looking to strengthen coming into a tough match against Charlotte.

Q. Were you happy with the effort tonight?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think it was an effort from players that I want to see the effort from for sure. When you look at a DP Federico Bernardeschi putting a big shift in, Kevin Long putting a big shift in, players in that central spine are putting a big shift in. That was something that was said in the huddle afterwards. One of the senior players was pushing that effort piece and I think that's an important thing to raise. I think effort is easy to target, we finished top of the rankings and our work rate in MLS across the last two matches, only second to the Whitecaps, so this week we'll review those data points and see if the effort was there. Sometimes it's about intensity. Sometimes it's about -- you don't have the juice to get set to attack with that same verve and power and explosiveness. I think to question the players as a starting point to review but for me I didn't feel it was an effort attitude element tonight. I think it was more the clarity on when to get set defensively and to hold that line and to be tight, and then those -- with it being a derby game, we were just too open which left a lot of lost cause chasing after the first 20 minutes. I think effort was there but they started to lose the energy levels they are required to maintain a tempo.

Q. I was just going to ask you about the message in the huddle, and the third from goal, is that something that comes from taking risks or does getting beat on a counter off a corner like that is something that would get your attention?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, it's got to get our attention. I feel like last week, big moments from Casey were very similar, set piece free kick and they get a 1v1 against our keeper. Tonight it's the same. Again, it's tension and focus from tactical and the technical staff who have that responsibility to make sure those lines are always set and organized against a team like the Whitecaps who are just brilliant in transition. For me, it was disappointing. The goals we conceded were very disappointing tonight from a recycle and a set piece, that's a disappointing goal -- five foot whatever, was able to get between two defenders and score a header that. Should never happen. So these are the things we will look at. We'll look at collectively. I know the players are disappointed with those pieces, and again, our focus in our training has got to come back to the clean sheets and that mentality. That is when Toronto FC is at its best when we are able to manage those distances and keep the team tight, as well as man accurate those defensive transition moments.

Q. You knew the task you were taking on when you took this job. Are you about where you thought you would be or pretty much where you expected to be at this point?

JOHN HERDMAN: Well, as of last week, we were well above where the expectations were and the goals the team had set we were right on track. I think this week has been a bit of a body brow that we're going to have to take, it stings, not only against the Whitecaps, it's the Canadian derby, or one of them. It's a little bit of, okay, this is the real test now for this group. Can we regroup this week and focus on the growth and learnings we take from this game and go into the charlotte game with a different intensity and mindset, that has to be the starting point. I think, again, just tonight when you look at coming off-track and we have come away from home and I felt we were just a little bit too gung ho trying to press the Whitecaps when we could have let the game come to us, I think conceding the first goal early might have sort of triggered -- I feel like we've got to get after this game but I think we could have been way more patient and committed to a set structure.

Q. Something totally different, we haven't spoken for a couple of months, how proud are you of G at the moment -- he's had a couple of call ups, he's on the cusp of the first team, a World Cup coming back from that injury, how proud are you?

JOHN HERDMAN: I'm always a proud dad. Yeah, his journey keeps us sane in this mad world. Really proud, to come back from the injury and to get off the bench for the Caps, that was a big step for him. Just showed his resilience and fight. They still have a long way to go. On nights like this, tough nights like that, you're able to turn to your family and obviously see -- get something from -- whether it's my daughter who jumps horses or my son who scores goals. So yeah, thanks for the question because it's lovely being back with the family.



Q. Why did you decide to go back to Johnson rather than stick with Luka?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, good question. You know, with Sean, he's the one none at the club. I think Luka has done a terrific job for Sean. He has a presence on and off the field. You know, for him, he's one of the key leaders in this group, and it's a young team, a very young team as you know with how we have unfolded that roster, and a new team, as well, a lot of different faces from Gomez to Long to Longstaff, Flores, so players like that, the TFC DNA players who have experienced and seen a lot in football, are important to this team, and the preparation and the conversations that I had prior to games, that can bring experience in big moments like derby matches. That was the rationale behind it, just to bring, again, a first team keeper back to the first team and bring his experience to these moments.

I can't really knock on his door tonight. I think leaving a 1v1 with Ryan Gauld, and again 1v1 with Brian White off that first goal, and then the set pieces where we are not defending on the back post Sean, what he was asked to do he did very well tonight, and we've got to ask questions in front of Sean Johnson tonight and that will be on the coaching staff as well.

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