



Toronto FC Media Conference

Saturday, April 20, 2024

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

John Herdman

Media Conference

Toronto FC 1, New England 0

Q. How important was it to get the three points tonight?

JOHN HERDMAN: Back to basics to get a clean sheet -- against Charlotte we didn't manage the game well enough when we got a head, and at home we knew the crowd would be behind us and the energy would always be there.

You have to tip your hat to Jahkeele, he's had a big impact coming off the bench, and again, he's having a good season. He's making big chances for players and Prince doing what he's been doing, on a bit of a hot streak. Proud of the effort and proud of the way they managed the game and just make sure that we were hard to beat. That was a big starting point, but yeah, happy to get three points.

Q. (On Sean Johnson's performance.)

JOHN HERDMAN: He did well tonight, good stops, and that's the quality that Sean has. He's got that ability when he's right at the top of his game, he can make the big saves in the big moments. You know you're going to rely on your keeper in this league, when you're playing against DP front lines, you know that the keeper is going to have to deliver for you, and I thought he did well tonight.

Q. You mentioned the clean sheet, was that like job No. 1?

JOHN HERDMAN: It was that mentality of being back at home and creating that fortress. It was three points or bust. We had to come out with three points. It was critical to just turn that wheel towards a positive trajectory in the League and get closer to that top four.

I think that's what we've said, over those next three games at home, we have to take the full points out. It's critical. One point won't be enough if we want to stay right in the fight. When we're able to bring the likes of Lorenzo and Richie back into the lineup, Shane O'Neill, obviously Coello as well, those guys, and you strengthen the squad, we want to be as close to that top four as we can.

Q. Prince, two weeks in a row now -- is the job his now?

JOHN HERDMAN: Oh, for sure. He's shown a level of leadership across the last three, four weeks. He's had to deal with the disappointment of not starting, and he's had to loss manage a group that's been struggling. During week, he's shown a real -- from what I've seen, a real level of experience, professionalism, given his time in Europe. I think he's been one of the stand out people in the locker room.



Q. What specifically stood out in his performance tonight?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think he just brings that attacking edge. There's two elements. One, first half, we struggled with the way we were pressing New England with the wing backs and our attacking midfielders but we changed that at halftime. We got some clarity with the group which allowed Jahkeele to be more aggressive on the arrival on their fullback. They were very much able to find that opposite, opposite side rhythm. But I think with Jahkeele's aggressivity, it really stifled them and he was able to bring a new level of energy and pressure but with his unique fitness space, he can go both ways.

And I think that's the exciting thing with Jahkeele, he can bring an intensity defensively and then when the game shifts, he can go the other way and still put the fullback on his heels. I just thought there was a real energy from Jahkeele tonight and a desire to want to make a difference for the club.

Q. Another fantastic performance --

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I think it's just knowing that it will turn. It's going to turn. It's just the way the world is. If you keep putting that effort in, you keep putting the work in, it will turn for you.

So you know, he's done everything again tonight, everything we asked. He had been carrying a little injury as you're well aware this week. He had been out of training. So he was managing himself to some degree, and we always know his quality in the counterattack or that ability to draw three, four players helps our team.

But it's time. If we give him time, you know a player of that quality, he's going to find the back of net. We're gutted for him. We're all gutted for him. I didn't celebrate as much as I wanted to tonight because I'm absolutely gutted. We've never seen Fede score. Everyone wants to see him score because he's been that honest with his performances. It's been brilliant.

Q. After a couple losses in a row, it's always tough -- are you seeing relief from the guys?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I think relief that we can keep a clean sheet and relief that we can stay together. As I say, this is a team that has not been able to consistently put the same starting 11 out. There's always something that seems to change it. Tonight, seeing Nixon, Raoul, Sigurd for the first time since the present game in the back three, I was really proud of what they were able to put in.

I think you see that solidarity, and relief will come through without a doubt, but there's an element of frustration, as well. We want to play better than that. I don't think we can hide from that fact that it wasn't the first half, certainly wasn't a performance to be remembered from TFC.

Look, they came in here with a week's preparation. Their coach was clear that this was the turning point. Their players had all agreed that this was their game. They were going to come up and beat Toronto, and they gave it a real good crack. I thought this was a really motivated New England revolution team with some very good players.

Q. It's a short turnaround. What do the next two to three days look like, and how different is the starting 11?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think with anything, you can't take your eye off this type of opponent. I mean, this opponent, we know the occasion is going to raise their motivation up maybe ten levels. The players at TFC, it may be one or two levels, and you have to always try to bridge that gap. Some of that is selection and freshness, and then some of that is the mentality and the discipline and the next two days' preparation.

We'll be going into, this, I'll be back in the office, I don't know, 10, 11 o'clock tomorrow morning to turn around the tactical blueprint and the players will be back in Monday to start the walk-throughs. They will sense that this is a very important game for our club, and one that we won't be taking lightly.

But there are some players that are aware that this will be their moment as well. Some players we haven't seen yet.

Q. Have you wrapped your head around the fact you're going against a team Wednesday whose ownership includes Atiba and Doneil?



JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, as long as they don't play. I was wondering if Atiba and Doneil and Janine Beckie, etc., I think Julian is in there as well. Can you imagine that? Wow.

No, I mean, I'm proud of what those players have done. I mean, they are real -- these people have been trying to leave a legacy or this country. A lot of what they are doing behind the scenes, no one will ever know because that will never be spoken about publically but they were always pushing to do the right things and leave a legacy. I just wish it wasn't us that we were playing. I would like to see them play someone else and push on but yeah, proud of what they have committed to Canadian football.

Q. What's the thinking of the substitution down 0-0?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, Raoul had only a certain amount of minutes in him to there was a reality for making sure we didn't put him in that danger zone, that was one, and the second was to get Jahkeele into the game. I had had a conversation with Jahkeele prior to the game that it's going to be a busy schedule coming up and the impact off the bench is going to be really important for him. He's going to take a moment and he can take a moment to really light the game up. We knew that day, they had a left back that had not played much minutes.

We knew that when you're playing in those last 30 minutes, when you have not played that many minutes for a team, you're vulnerable. To bring Jahkeele in at that moment was key. Some of it was game management and others was player management.

Q. Just back on topic of Fede, injuries and rotation, by my count now, I think with Kevin Long's suspension, if he had a is the only player who has been able to start all nine games. While you were talking about next-man-up mentality and the guys coming in have done well you must be pretty desperate for some legal of consistency that you have not been able to have so far.

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I mean, every coach wants consistency. They want that cohesion, and it just has not been for us. So it can't be on excuse. At the end of the day, I think we know we'll get our luck. I don't know the time and the season when other teams may not get that luck.

So we just accept, absorb. We took a bit of a beating for a couple of weeks, and the players responded. As Neal said, there was a response there tonight. We actually seen that response whether we like to change players and down to Federico, he's just been a warrior. That's every minute of every game he's played, and you see his desire to want to press, his desire to try and score. You know, he's just been an absolute rock for this team, and I can't speak enough about his character.

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