



Toronto FC Media Conference

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John Herdman

Media Conference

Toronto FC 2, Orlando City 1

Q. Pretty stirring comeback tonight with Fede leading the way. Your thoughts about the performance and your Italian's performance?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I think we started the game strong. I thought we showed a good mindset to set the tone before we came into this venue, and sort of established a physical element to the game.

But I'm really proud of that second half. I mean, this is a tough place to come. There's always heat, humidity. We've just come off the back of a game this week, and to see the shift they put in, it was exceptional. And it was a complete performance when you see five lads come off bench and contributing to the goals, as well.

You've got to give a special mention to Federico. He went in for wing back when Shaqiri went off for a period of time. Not many DPs will do that, but to come in, Fede have a big impact and shift back into his forward position; he's a special human being. I've gotten to know if he had a over a time now, and he really cares. He cares about the State of the club, the team and winning.

So hard to single him out because I thought there was some real Goliath performances tonight from people like Kevin Long and Prince Owusu, etc., etc.

Q. The introduction of Derrick Etienne in the 58th minute seemed to give you guys more of an attacking rhythm and pace. What's your evaluation of his performance over the last half hour or so?

JOHN HERDMAN: It tells you, I think our front office did a good job of the signing of Etienne. I've seen him internationally, and I told him in my first meeting, get excited when the other guy got picked ahead of you because whenever he came on he was a real handful for us and then you put the pace of Spicer around him and the quality on goal on that side, these are guys that want to attack.

But I think what Derrick did is just bring an attacking poise. He has that ability just to slow it down when he needs to, and you know, when you see that little -- Raoul Petretta, these are the X-factor elements I'm going to keep encouraging them to bring to our team.

Q. Between the two goals, Fede's cross to Kobe and Kobe's cross to Tyrese, seems like the emphasis since the Vancouver game has paid off. What did you see on those two goals?

JOHN HERDMAN: It's exactly that. Those two goals were from the training ground. There's been a lot of scrutiny on our front players, our wing backs off that Vancouver game. It was hard conversations but at the same time, the commitment to



getting it right.

It's easy to say we need to improve, but then you have to do the work. We've got our wingback specialist, Alex, who is working on the crossing from Jahkeele and Tyrese, and everyone is crossing the others, attacking the back post and the timing of that and the quality of it. I thought Tyrese's goal was a wonderful goal, the quality of that, and able to stand that one up -- Prince is on a hot streak, as well. It's definitely paying off. The work's gone in and I think the players all through this period of time whenever we have pushed them, they have responded well.

Q. This result moves you up to fourth place in the East. Is this where you said the target for the team?

JOHN HERDMAN: Well, Sean said it in the huddle at the end, we felt like a nearly man with that goal we had against Simcoe. And I challenged the group after the Simcoe game, you know, the nearly man is not where we want to be. At the end of the huddle, he let the lads know. We hit our target after the first ten games; we are right in touch with that top four.

I'm proud of them. They committed tonight. The pregame conversations, they made some commitments as a collective and individually and you know, watching them live that, a proud moment as a coach. We're ten games into the season. We have not won the FA Cup or Champions League but we are going to celebrate and enjoy this moment because it's one of the first times I think this team has came back for a long time and won.

It's a tough place to come. Oscar and his team are a very good team, as everyone knows, and were in good form. The lads will enjoy this moment, have an extra day off this week and get ready to bring that intensity and that passion home to our fans.

Q. I just wanted to get your opinion on what your message was across to your players during halftime after conceding the one goal in the first half.

JOHN HERDMAN: Well, it was a tactical message. I think Oscar got his tactics right. They had recognized the timing on our pressing triggers, and we're just going to keep fighting -- McGuire behind and I thought they did that well. I thought we, at times, we adapted well. Raoul, Nicksoen, etc., Siggy, I thought most of the time they got it right but the one time we let Torres run, that was it. We were done. I thought tactically we had to address that, which is on those passes back, you knew the next goal was behind, so it was getting the timing on the drop.

And then halftime just reminding them, you know, you started well. You were in that game for 25 minutes. It was a tight game. You were the aggressor and it's only 1-0. We are right there. We are right there. We just did some things tactically to try to get Nicksoen released on that left side more frequently. Loosened Oso so he could go find the ball more and the spaces behind. I think that helped. But I think it was more just the mentality, hey, just be patient, you're right in this, and if you get the next goal -- we actually said, if we get the next goal, we think we'll go on and win this.

Q. You mentioned mentality there. Just wonder if you can speak more to that about the mentality that your team showed tonight, and coming from behind after conceding one goal on the road, which to be honest I can't remember the last time the team came back from a game like this after conceding the first goal.

JOHN HERDMAN: It's a work-in-progress. I think that's all I can say. It's a process that we are working on, this collective group behind the scenes from Robyn Gayle to the assistant coaches to the general manager. You know, everyone is in about having the right people here with the right mentality. That's being a collective feel. When things were tough for us, we didn't split. We maintained our principles of where we are heading and challenged the players.

Like I say, even coming out at Simcoe again, that was a tough conversation the next die, to get so close to breaking a record and not having the mentality to see it through. It was disappointing. So I couldn't celebrate that with them.

You know, if we are going to get this club back to where it belongs, it's going to change, and it's going to be consistent. You know, for me, I've got to keep having tough conversations with the leadership group, and they are going to have to keep having them with us to make sure we keep raising the standards.

So it's just an ongoing process, but what I have learned in the last ten games, it's a club-wide process. You know, people are



collectively driving the environment here, the standards and what we want from TFC II to the first team and the people around the club.

Q. We saw a little bit of the end of phase three celebrations on the pitch there, and you mentioned an extra day off. Why is it important to mark achieving those little goals along the way?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think you have to. We were so deliberate around these ten games, the points, the targets. You build trust when you commit to what you say you're going to do. For me, tonight was so important because that -- for the fans, as an individual, you have to be able to trust yourself. You have to be able to set targets and deliver. You know, they did it, and they have to celebrate that.

As I say, we are ten games in and there will be a group of people saying, Oh, my God, these people need to settle down and all the rest of it. But for me, phase three was ten matches, and these ten games, we landed where they said they wanted to be. You know, I'm proud of them. The good news is, we've got to go again. We've got another phase coming. This phase is -- the chaos of the double weeks. Our squad is going to get tested. I'm hoping we can get Roe back and Shane and Richie at the back end of this phase to help us out.

But the fun has only just started. The adversity is really going to come in this next phase now. I think the win tonight gave us a good foundation to build on.

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