



## Toronto FC Media Conference

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*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

### John Herdman

Media Conference

Cincinnati 4 Toronto FC 3

#### Q. Crazy game tonight.

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, loved. It just loved. It loved the passion, the spirit for both teams, two teams that, you know, wanted to win. Exciting game. I mean, as a coach, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed that football match. Just seeing the lads give everything, two good teams going after each other. A lot of quality players on the pitch showing their quality, and just a hell of a game, yeah, I enjoyed it.

But no points. Doesn't help us. Doesn't help us catch Cincinnati.

#### Q. What do you say to your team in the huddle after the game after an evening when they showed such grit and character?

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I asked them to be brave before the game. I said, like you know, the bravery piece is really important in these matches.

I came back to that. I thought they were brave tonight. Some of their packages of football were top level. Took a lot of courage to break their press at times, and players were living right on that razor's edge. I thought the players took themselves to a place where, yeah, mistakes, big mistakes are right on the other side but they were living on that edge.

So proud of that. Felt we showed a championship ability tonight against a team that is a championship team, and there was a gap still, and the gap was a loss.

You know, we've got to close that gap. I think 16 or whatever games we're in, that's two very good games against Cincinnati. We are close. We are closing.

#### Q. You've got two more games coming up next week but is this a result that stays with you?

**JOHN HERDMAN:** No, I think it's the performance. I said to the players, they have to feel something tonight. It's how they feel coming off the field because we don't control the results. We just don't control those outcomes. But I said, you have to feel. You have to feel something tonight. You have to make them feel that dread of coming back to this stadium, and you've got to come out here feeling like you're getting closer as a championship squad.

You know that, feeling was important, so we'll take that feeling into a tough two games on the road, knowing that they are not far off. We are close. We are closing the gap. We are closing the gap.



**Q. Inaudible.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I thought the lads were brilliant tonight. I thought it was a real top-level attacking performance against one of the best.

Beverage defensive teams in the League. Like I said, you have to be brave because if you're going to get after them, you're going to leave yourself open and you've got to take some risks, and they have got high quality. I thought for long periods, they managed Acosta, they really did, for long periods. And like Insigne, top players, they do find their ways. They do find their ways.

Proud of the effort but more proud of the performance. There was some passages of play there that were the best of the season.

**Q. How difficult is it to --**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Like I say, you have to be brave. The mindset has got to be right. And then there are certain third-man combinations that you have to work on. I thought tactically, we got some of the attacking right tonight. And then some of the defending pieces you're in the hands of the gods when you are genuinely dealing with top players that know how to win football matches.

So I don't want to even criticize the defense tonight. You can look back and say, he should have done this or he should have done that but it was the spirit in which the team attacked and defended. You know, it wasn't a game where I just felt like they peppered our goal, should have scored four goals.

I felt like any time they got a good opportunity, they took. It maybe that's the gap we have to close because we had some very good opportunities that we should have took. I thought Derrick Etienne in that last second of the game that, cross he put in, normally we have a wing back on the back post scoring that. That could have been a goal.

**Q. How important was that goal from Deiby?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, I mean, we knew the intensity they were going to bring. They have the third-highest aggressive line and approach in MLS. They are an aggressive team. You see the physicality of their No. 9, when he's charging down at you being I think the lads were, okay, this is a little bit different than training.

You know, once we did -- we had to adjust something with the tactics as well. That was an important shift to get more of a goalkeeper back four and get Raoul that inversion. They matched up well. So we had to shift him low. A couple of things we did, and I think we found our footing in the game.

And Davey, I asked him to be our Rye King tonight, and he got the Rye King goal.

I think it's experience now, experience of pushing that championship level. Like I say, against Cincinnati, it's easy to come in here and similar to what we did when we are away and talk about everything they are great at, and all the threats and sit tighter.

But I think that was an important step for us tonight to really get after a top team. I think it's consistent with our approach now for the game against Orlando or the game against New York, the game against Dallas, the game last week against Montréal, the consistency, and the mentality, the identity, and I think the fans are starting to see the evolution of the team. I think defensively, we're a tight unit but we are going to suffer at times against their quality, and I think that's the quality in MLS. You have Insigne as one end of the field and Acosta at the other and you can't match that in MLS.

**Q. You are also getting players back from injury, and you got key performances from all your players out there today.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, Lorenzo, that was a top performance from him tonight. He just got into the floor. And I want to say that all our lads played well tonight but he showed his next level. He showed that real Lorenzo Insigne sort of guile and MLS



is magician quality.

So I think it's important to see him feel the game tonight but also put the defensive shift in and not get caught up with the emotion of goal scoring, and he just got back to task and found his way to drag the team and bring his quality.

So you think about him with that sort of mindset, and his ability, Bernardeschi and where he's, and he's been an absolute steel; and Richey and Osorio back healthy, Kevin Long will be back this week.

Yeah, I mean, it is mouth-watering, but Copa America is just around the corner. It's going to be one of them, here and then they are gone. It's frustrating as hell if I'm being honest, as a club coach, you dream about this team and you've got all these ideas and then you get maybe one game a season with them on the pitch.

**Q. Inaudible.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** He had a gastro issue in the game. He was really struggling before kickoff, I thought. He did a great job to get through the first 45 minutes and had a big impact. The boy -- it shows respect because they matched him up with Tyrese and Tyrese at times had his way with him. This is an MLS rookie playing against an Argentinian DP.

Kudos to the work that went in on the front office and the technical stuff to find that type of player. You know, people have head, you might want to sell your first draft pick because X, Y and Z but Spice, he's been class.

**Q. Does it turning point you he's settling in so well?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** He's just got this -- he's a joy to coach because everything to him is -- there's almost like this beautiful naïvety about him. Like he doesn't carry this sort of professional footballer cynicism or he's not second-guessing decisions. Just everything about it is new to him and he's embraced it all and he's got massive confidence. It's like this unshakeable belief in himself, and it's funny because he's not arrogant or anything like that.

But you can see some of the guys get surprised just at the comments he makes because he's just genuine and he believes in his ability. You know, I'm proud of where he's got to but you look at his beginnings, he's come from real humble beginnings, and I think he's carry that had through with him.

**Q. Going back to Insigne, against that opponent in a game like this, is that where you hoped you're going to get that performance?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** You see he's going to rise to those occasions a hundred percent. Lorenzo has had a rough night. It not been easy. You have to understand, the lad came here with high expectations to do big things. He's a winner. He wants to win everything. But he's had injuries, and like I say, it's the first time, really, in his career; he's just one after another.

So tonight, to see him going 99 minutes -- what is it, a hundred minutes -- trying to work this out -- it was a big step I think for the team, for the fans. But even just his commitment in those minutes. Like I think if he made another ten, he could have scored another two goals. He was just loving it. That shot against the crossbar, maybe only Messi could do something like that in this league. That was magic.

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