



# Toronto FC Media Conference

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*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

## John Herdman

Media Conference

Toronto 0, Philadelphia 0

**Q. You said you spoke to the team about tightening up the defense, and you got that tonight. It looked like from this vantage point a pretty poised performance on the road.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I think exactly that, Neal. We threw the gauntlet down to the players coming to a place like this, their style of play. They have a very clear identity, and we wanted to put defending as our priority, but at the same time, bring our attacking identity and continue to be brave.

I thought tonight we just got the balance right. Thought we had some real big moments. Controlled the game in long periods. So thought it was as good of a performance on the road that I've seen.

I think when you come up against a Philly team, when they're in their house, you know you have to bring a level of tactical discipline defensively and bring the fight as well. They're a very physical team.

I thought all the players committed to that. That was something we talked about prior to the game. Again, I'm proud of the lads tonight. There was questions asked about how our defensive performances and rightly so, but that's our sixth clean sheet of the season and a good point on the road.

Disappointed not to take (indiscernible.).

**Q. Thank you. You gave Derrick Etienne a start tonight up front and I thought he looked quite lively. What was your evaluation of him on the night?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, he's growing with the club. Spoke to him just yesterday and he's really enjoying his football here. He's got a very clear role and we want him to live his identity, which is that magician, mercurial quality that he has. We've been trying to bring that out.

Again tonight had a tough environment he showed it. He found a real rhythm in the game and we were able to find ways it unlock the Diamond, which Jim Curtin is a top coach and it's not easy to do that.

I thought the quality of the lads tonight, Matty, Alo, Oso, and Etienne, they just kept picking the pockets and finding the opposite side.

For Derrick I think there is more to come, John. I really do think if we can keep him in this positive mindset and keep believing in his ability there is definitely more to come from him.



**Q. John, I thought your two best chances came in the first half from some really nice deliberate buildups, the one for Etienne and Fede there. Did you feel like there was a goal out there for you guys if you were a little sharper?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, I think the attacking performance, the ability to get into areas but just not have that quality on the night. We've gone from scoring ten to not scoring but not conceding.

But there was moments there tonight we got into some really, really good areas, and I think on a different night the way TFC have been firing, those goals go in.

We've just got to take that medicine. It's part of a season. Some nights you will end up in this space. That's where the defense has to come through. I think every man to a man committed to their defending responsibilities tonight.

Really proud of them.

**Q. John, as you know, the TFC family grew by one today. I wonder obviously the team celebrated that. Was it expected that the baby might be coming now or was it a last-minute thing?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** No, we planned it. I think the organization wanted to give the Insigne Family every opportunity to, one, get the right experience they needed for what's just a special moment.

And we been planning this one, so I think with Lorenzo it was important that he went back to Italy with his family and was able to really enjoy that moment and welcome young Mattias into the world.

It's another Insigne hopefully that wants to play for Toronto in the near future. Fingers crossed we'll see Lorenzo pretty son.

**Q. Quick follow up. Is there a possibility he could be back Saturday or likely not?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, there is a possibility. There is a possibility. We'll look to the logistics and see what we can do.

But at the same time, if it's going to put him in a position and the family in a position, we'll make that decision with everything in mind.

I think sometimes family has to come before football, and that is what we're aware of when we look at all the logistics now to see if we can get him in for the next game.

**Q. You mentioned Alonso quickly in an earlier question. Interested to hear your take on his performance tonight. I thought he, especially with Fede, had that really nice understanding with him.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, it was nice. We worked on just this rhythm of how to go and pick a Diamond, John, and I played the Diamond for about five years with the Canadian women's team and we knew what teams used to do with us. You need a player like Alo who can play in that rhythm and tempo to know when to run a player out, which he did quite a lot.

His off-the-ball movement was very clever tonight and then he knew when to arrive on the blindside of players. I thought he was really clean tonight. I thought coming into the game the other night, you know, against Cincinnati, he was clever, he was clean; tonight he showed that quality again as to why he's a strong young player in this league.

**Q. John, I could probably ask you this question after every game he plays, but how nice is it to have the calming influence of Sean Johnson making those saves every time he's called upon?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, he had to make one big save tonight. There was one that I felt, oh, man -- it's a Philadelphia textbook goal, back porch cross, Bedoya arriving between players, header in the six-yard box. So it was something we talked about but we knew they can do it better than you.

They found it. Only the once. I think the big man did it. He's done it on a number of occasions this season where at the beginning of the season he had a lot to do, more recently he's had less to do.



We think of the number of shots teams, particularly when we have been on the road, Nashville had three shots on target. We went into Orlando, they only had five shots on target that game.

So you look and go up, when the big man is called on, he brings it. He's been called up for the USA and this man he's starting to become a bit of an MLS legend. He's on 400 games now in the MLS, and probably doesn't get the recognition he deserves. Ten clean sheets for TFC I think, maybe more.

I don't know. Waiting for my stats person to come in on that. I can't say enough about the big man. He's done a hell of a job for us this season.

**Q. John, just how important was it that you have Kevin Long back in the lineup today in terms of solid structure and play?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, to get in there like that you need Long. They're a hard team to play against. You know the Philadelphia ID and Jim has them just like a machine. You know the channel run, the timing, you know it's coming.

But I thought Longy just red to tonight. We done some work with Longy on. He was working late last night with the unit coaches to see what that timing would look like.

I thought he marshalled Sigurd and Nickseon well tonight and got in the channel twice, maybe three times. Not many teams are able to kill those channel runs the way he did tonight.

So kudos to those lads. They stood strong. But what I really thought stood out with Longy is his ability to find the opposite side quickly. You got to do that against the Diamond and he was really clever.

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