



Toronto FC Media Conference

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John Herdman

Media Conference

Atlanta 2, Toronto 1

Q. Man, I don't think I've ever seen an ending to a game like that before. Thoughts on first the team's performance over the course of the 90 minutes and just the way that winning goal came about?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I thought the performance over 90 minutes was a collective. I think the team took a big step from Red Bulls. There was a disconnect between lines, distances, but I thought tonight the players were all in.

And you got that sense that they were grinding out a result, but also had chances to win it.

So I thought it was a good performance, John. Like I say, I was proud of them taking that step forward from where they were at in the Red Bull game.

I thought they were carrying the whole (indiscernible) from the Red Bulls, but I thought they shook it off and it was a more TFC road performance.

And then what can you say about the last goal? I mean it's going to happen once in a goalkeeper's lifetime. Probably going to happen once in my lifetime as well.

Hope it never happens again. But you make errors like that and just got to learn from them. I told Luka we love him, man. He's been brilliant for us, and standing in for Sean, he's a young keeper and made some big saves in that game.

Yeah, so I think it's tough. I mean, I don't have too many words. It's just gut wrenching. But at the same time, there has to be a response coming into the mid-week game at home against Orlando.

If we can maintain that cohesiveness, and as I say Lorenzo was getting more minutes under his belt, having more of an impact in games, Federico is still right there. Etienne was strong tonight.

So we get them firing at home it's just next task. Got to keep moving forward. Tough to take with ten seconds left. I asked the official how long is left, he said ten, I turned my back to walk to the bench and it was in the back of the net.

First of my career and hopefully the last.

Q. Between the game winner and that one time you guys lost track of Almada at the end of the first half there is that a lesson in just how attentive a team needs to be defensively?

JOHN HERDMAN: I thought we were. We were very attentive. Atlanta at home is a difficult place just with the crowd and



they get good momentum here.

But I thought they dealt with Almada pretty well most of the night. I think of the amount of opportunities that Fede and him being able to impact the game. I thought Almada had some good moments but wasn't massively impactful. Then he gets that moment where we don't turn with the man, we switch off, but that's the difference in quality.

I mean, that's where you need collective defending for long periods. I thought we had that tonight. So I would say coming into the second half, they had about ten minutes of good momentum, bit of momentum at the end of the game.

Outside of that, limited them to quite a small amount of risk I thought. Wasn't save after save after save from Luka. I didn't think it was waves of momentum. I thought we had some good chances. Almada gave it away, when Derrick is down one-on-one with the keeper, that was a big moment for us, big moments on the back post.

Yeah, and we've had goals disallowed by really tough decisions. All in all, happy with the steps we took forward. Disappointed we didn't get a result. Thought we earned a result tonight.

Q. John, I didn't see the numbers, but I suspect just from the I test, Fede and Lorenzo absolutely ran themselves ragged. Speak to their performance on both sides of the ball tonight.

JOHN HERDMAN: I said Lorenzo was picking up much fitness. He had a disrupted pre-season and entry into the season; when he returned back, he had his sort of paternity leave back in Italy.

I feel like he's just building more and more match rhythm. Tonight, it's always a tricky place for Lorenzo to be playing long stretches, so we had to preserve him tonight.

You know, we push approximated him maybe five, ten minutes beyond what we think is important for those sort of turf feels. It was a pretty tough turf feel being compacted quite a bit.

Yeah, I thought he was excellent tonight in terms of his (indiscernible). Federico, I mean, he's been a beast all season. There no doubt in my mind he's been a really talisman for the team.

When you get Lo and Fede both pushing their I limits, everyone goes with them. That's the influence they have on our team. And I keep saying there is more to come. There is more to come from Lorenzo. More to come from this team.

Q. John, how many times have we seen Fede score that goal?

JOHN HERDMAN: And that's it. I mean, we train that, we work that. Teams try and work against it. How many times did we get in that situation, and through the game, it was -- this is how we play. Find your way to get your top players, to the DPs on the ball. I thought Atlanta tried to find their way with Almada and we found our way. He's been a real, as I said talisman, for Toronto FC this season.

We just need a bit more from others to chip in. I thought when we are in a strong streak we got players chipping in for goals and thought we had some good chances tonight. Then I thought the goal decision was tight. It was very tight. That was a great goal. Rarely you see Lorenzo score a headed goal. He was so happy. To have it chopped off was tough.

Yeah, I mean, I've been in football for a while. We had a lot of reviews tonight, penalty decisions, but I just wonder if there was a review on that goal. I don't know what the final rules are for players walking off the pitch and hiding behind goalkeepers having a drink of water off the field. I don't know what the rules are there.

A lot of things were reviewed tonight. I'm surprised that wasn't reviewed at the end of the game. But that's football.

Q. John, earlier this week you talked about maybe the scars are starting to open up from previous seasons. Wonder, a loss like that, the manner in which it happened with that absolutely schoolyard sort of trickery play, are you worried about the scores deepening losing a game like this? If so, how do you combat that?

JOHN HERDMAN: No. I think we had a good week last week, John. The work that was done with the leadership group, with the team, they spent some time themselves just working through to get the clarity of why we're here, what we're trying to achieve.

And then just dispelling the myth and the reality. Still in the playoff hunt, still right there. Yes, we had a tough spell but there are 13 games left in MLS. We've got a summer window we can strengthen n. We have Rickey Laryea, Sean Johnson, Jonathan Osorio coming back hopefully soon. Congratulations to them and kind of tonight making a big step.

And then we've got players like Shane O'Neil and Tyrese Spicer, Alonso Coello. They're a little bit further off. Brandon. These players are close to coming back for Toronto FC to strengthen us. Tonight was a big step, John. I thought tonight we had a rough game at Red Bulls. Felt like we were fragile against Red Bulls.

Tonight the lads, from the lads at the start of the game to those that finishes the game, I thought those players definitely showed a maturity and an ability to step forward to say, look, we're going to fight and help bring the energy that might have been lacking in those Red Bulls matches, et cetera.

So I thought it was a step forward tonight based on where we were from Red Bulls. And we should have had a result tonight. No doubt about it. Football gods didn't give us it for whatever reason. Going to suffer again for a couple days.

I feel like they felt they took a step forward in terms of their connection tonight, so that's will stand us in good stead going with good confidence and trust into the Orlando match.

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