



Toronto FC Media Conference

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John Herdman

Media Conference

Orlando City 2, Toronto FC 1

Q. You got the start you wanted but another unfortunate goal. What was your take on the evening?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think we started brightly. Looked like we were going to get control of the game pretty early. I'm proud of the lads that took their opportunities tonight. He's been waiting awhile for that shot. Thompson, as well. They put on a shift and just fought, fought for the club, fought for the jersey and the lads that came into the game, I think the Jahkeeles, Kobe Franklins, Shane O'Neills, they had a big impact. But we had a 20-minute period where we were not at that desire or intensity. It's the story of TFC this season. These 20-minute periods for whatever reason whether we are playing home or away, it's just not that desire or intensity. It's like the game gets too easy, we score a goal and same with Nashville. Just a period where we take the foot off the gas. It's a mental trap we keep falling into and once it's one guy or two guys, then three follow, four follow, and you're not getting the rhythm of the pressing or the attacking.

This has to be a turning point for the club tonight. I said that to the players after the game. It has to be the turning point. There's going to be some hard conversations in the next two days starting with all of us looking at ourselves in the mirror for that 20-minute period where we were not at that desire or intensity, what happened there and why does it happen? Why do we fall into that trap game after game after game? So I'll start with me and my staff. We'll have some hard conversations, and then internally I think each individual player will need to do that themselves because if this isn't a turning point, then the season can slide away very quickly.

Q. 13 shots -- how do you account for that?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I mean, you look at the quality on the pitch, and I think the combination play at times was good. The play into the flank was decent. But again, I think we've got to be able to combine centrally to open those slots up. And there's moments there where you just think, pull the trigger. Pull the trigger. Shoot through legs or shoot around a body and see what comes of it.

Kosi Thompson showed that tonight. I thought he had that sort of fire and desire to go win and the game. I feel like at times, we're waiting for something to happen. We're waiting for a big player to have a big moment. There are numbers, where they are around the box, but at times, just need to be a bit more patient to find a better opening.

Q. It might be just me but Lorenzo seemed like you moved him around to try and get him more of the ball but what do you need to do to get him going?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think I've said this. He's building fitness. He's building match intensity, match fitness, and teams all know he's a key player. So there's a physical element. You're starting to see seems are bringing a level of intensity and physicality, and I think at times, it's numbers. We need extra numbers around him on his side.



But at the same time, collectively it's not about one player tonight. That 20-minute period, for me it was all 11 and the coaching staff on the sideline. We have to be able to adapt in that moment. There's got to be a circuit breaker in that mindset or that reality where at home you're allowing the opposition to impose themselves.

You know, there's a clear sign there. We're walking at home -- that was the message loud and clear, players that can't commit that level of consistency with the energy and the intensity, you know, the other players that are willing to bring just a splash in for 90 minutes will get those opportunities. That's a hard conversation I think I've got to have with the group but more importantly they have to have it with themselves. We have a fan base that are just endlessly supporting the team and it's like in that 20-minute period, it's not like the fans stopped. We stopped.

So we have to get to the bottom of that. That's since Chicago, it's been a consistency we've seen. I thought Atlanta, I thought we turned the corner there. I thought that intensity was brilliant. The game, whistle to whistle, we kept going but Chicago, Nashville, Red Bulls, we had that 20-minute period in the first half. It's got to change.

Q. How is Derrick?

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, you know, may be a hamstring. We are hoping it's just a cramp. We'll be assessing him. Obviously a quick turnaround to Columbus but he's been, again, one of the bright spots on our team, wonderful attitude he always has on the pitch. He's always energetic and plays with a smile. I think the fans have probably enjoyed what he's contributed to our team.

Q. You talk about the players looking at themselves in the mirror and having hard conversations, does that extend to you and the staff?

JOHN HERDMAN: I said that at the start, we'll always start with us. That's the one thing. We are a staff -- the one thing I know is we work hard. There's been no corners cut. We all are working hard. The effort is going in but we've got to make sure that that effort is in the right direction because there's a pattern emerging and that pattern is costing us. I think after the first goal, we showed you could have got straight into the momentum and really put that team away in that first half. And we really needed to. When you look at what they had on the bench, Santos, Muriel, Lodeiro coming into the game, you know, we knew that that first half was going to be critical.

So good that we didn't step on the throat.

Q. Is the transfer window going to offer some answer?

JOHN HERDMAN: Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think that's part of the message, I mean, for all of us. We've carried the team over, 80 percent of the players have carried over. Some of that has been a reality of our cap status. But I think there's a moment where again, players, if they really want to give this club the best opportunity to be a competitor, winner, we have to be ready to raise a level and if we can't raise levels we have to change levels. That's certainly a front office conversation. I know Jason and his team are all working hard.

Q. Can you comment on TFC having the second highest number cards in the week, is that an issue and what steps are taken to address it?

JOHN HERDMAN: We're working hard to address it. Doing our best.

Q. I think it's three goals inside 15 minutes that you guys have scored. I wonder if you see that as an area of improvement, playing from a lead earlier on might give you guys more of an edge in games?

JOHN HERDMAN: Well, I think it's working against us. It's almost, you have that edge in the game but there's -- it's almost like we fall into a comfort zone, and we're letting the game -- we go out there and we take the game to the opponent, like I say, in Nashville, we could have been two, three up, but as soon as we scored that goal, it's like, it's got this feel. The guys have that rhythm again, and we just took the foot off the gas. You see it. When the ball is on one side of the field, we should have nine players on half a pitch. We've got players standing and walking, and that can't happen, not at this level. Not at this level.



So we had some principles that have been driving our success when we have been at our best. We have kept the team tight and they have shift as one, work as one collectively, up the field, across the field, and we lose that, whether it's fatigue, whether it's players that just don't have the ability to play how they want them to play, I don't know. That's what I've got to figure out, and very quick.

Q. TFC have lost five consecutive games, three at home. What would you consider a successful season for TFC?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think, again, a successful season is about connecting with the fans and building trust, and we're losing that. We're losing trust. I mean, the fans, to be fair, were class tonight. I think they saluted the effort they seen in the last 30 minutes but we felt like we took that big step to reconnect with them and it showed, particularly at home, showed how much we care and showed in moments how we are willing to fight for the club.

But the last, as I say, five, six games, I mean, Atlanta, I've got to tip my hat to the lads, they were good in Atlanta. In Nashville, we were good for 55, 60 minutes. So it's just we can't put a 90-minute performance in. That's what we're struggling with.

So what's a successful season? What about the fans? What do the fans want? They want a team that's in the playoffs. They want a team that's competing for a trophy, a championship. 12 games left. Canada Championship is around the corner. We have got the Leagues Cup. Still a lot to play for. Richey coming back and Oso coming back at some point. A couple of injuries that will be returned soon and some summer signings, which we are going to have to make.

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