



# Toronto FC Media Conference

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## John Herdman

Media Conference

Columbus 4, Toronto FC 0

**Q. Another difficult night at the office. That second half, the bottom just fell out. What was your take on the evening?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Well, I think the second half, we were definitely in momentum for periods. They scored that early goal, which was a quick one after halftime, but I thought we started to gain momentum, Lorenzo, Fede on that left side, and I think we were sort of two inches away from Kobe maybe even turning the game.

It was that sort of moment where you know, seconds after that opportunity, they have gone down to the other end and scored which ends the game. In terms of trying to get back against one of the championship teams.

I thought when you looked at it, they had 11 shots, we had 8. They had six on target. We had two; they scored four. For me, you look at the championship quality on that team and what they are able to do and execute, yeah, I thought it was definitely a game when you come into their stadium, you are trying to contain. I thought we did that for periods. We scored often set piece. They scored off the set piece. You know, 1-0 at halftime. I said to the players, we're right in this.

Again, I think Lorenzo's injection was able to just bring that little bit more control, and then obviously they scored that goal which just made it a bit of an uphill battle. But we had chances. I thought we had some good chances. We had some good momentum in periods, and that's a gap. You can see gaps between players in various positions and structures. You just see it's a team that's really fit for purpose and can execute when required.

**Q. Can you talk about the reason bringing Lorenzo off the bench, as opposed to starting him?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, there's a couple of things. He took a bit of a knock on the ribs Wednesday night. It was his third game in three days and as I said to you, it's continuing building fitness. We knew against coal with us it would be more of a direct game with Prince and Derrick as a 1-1 split. We knew we were going to do a lot of chasing, so it's just managing. Managing a player that's been working across three games.

And yeah just making sure that one, we didn't push him too far tonight, and two, that we brought him in at the right time. We were sort of three minutes too late getting him on the pitch because I think at 1-0, when he came in, the impact was pretty profound for a period. Like I say, they score that third goal, which was against the run of play at the time, which sort of ends the contest.

All in all, a bit of management, and then trying to manage an away performance and a style of play where you need a lot of energy and runners and people who are willing to defend for 60 or 70 minutes. I thought if we kept it at 1-0, it would have looked a lot more cleaner coming in and him having an impact on the game.



**Q. You have a game coming up on Wednesday. Not time to dwell on this one. How important is it to bounce back into competition?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, it's an important competition for the fans, for the players, for the club. I think the biggest challenge is always going to be that two-day turnaround and the volume of games across the weeks. The squad is pretty thread bare. When you see what Columbus is bringing on to the field and we are bringing on center backs to sort of freshen up in positions based on people's loading, I think that will be the biggest challenge for us but at the same time, it's exciting. This is what we need. We need that little change of scenery. We may get some reinforcements back for that match. We'll see.

All in all, it's an exciting opportunity against a good team who have already put Montréal out of the competition. So you know that they have the quality to beat MLS teams.

**Q. Did you get an explanation why the Kevin Long goal as ruled out? We didn't get a good replay.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, the referee said it sort of went out and in on the swing. Again, I haven't seen the angles. I know Fede was definitely disappointed. The ball had gone out, he knew it was tight. At the end of the day these decisions are made and you just have to score on. We score a set piece and they go down the other end and do the same. That's pretty frustrating. That's championship football and a championship club in a tough environment. You know you are going to get certain calls and they are going to execute the level that they can with Cucho.

**Q. I understand you're missing players and you're up against an excellent team today. But when you wake up tomorrow and you look at some of those goals scored in the second half against your team, I mean, what goes through your mind? The last goal was keystone cops defending.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, I mean, it's something that we've got to close the gap on. I think with Shane Long coming back, he does make a difference -- sorry, Shane O'Neill. Shane O'Neill coming back, it's going to make a difference for our team for sure when he's, again, he's able to build that fitness. I mean, we had Raoul Petretta playing in the midfield tonight. Obviously he's preferred at wingback or the left side of defense.

You know, we're still waiting for Richie Laryea to join the team which again will make a big difference. With Shane's presence, you saw we were a bit more solid for periods and we're just not able to get that consistency in the back line as well.

You know, Longy is going quite a few minutes, two-day turnaround, and it's tough for center backs to come into the game. You have to be ready to freshen up the players and really to be honest that's all we have on the bench. There's many good TFC II players but putting them in against the champions of the MLS is never easy. Probably not the right place for them to get their baptism in MLS.

Our time will come. It will turn. I keep saying this to the players. Time will turn. You look at the reality of the squad depth, we're thin and pushing guys across many names. Got much opportunity for rotation and if we fall behind in a game like that tonight against a good team, it's going to be an uphill battle but I thought they did battle, and that's important. And we'll review. We always review. We've been working on the goals against the last game against Atlanta, there were some errors there.

Also at the other end, we had some good opportunities. I felt that we could have been more clinical but it's both ends and we'll keep working at both ends and we'll keep it in the fight and look forward to pushing this game against Forge in the Can Champs to hopefully freshen things up.

**Q. What was the rationale behind playing Raoul in central midfield and how do you think he did?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I think he did well. He's such a smart player and he was formed, his early stage of his career, as a six. We knew he had that capability. Again it was just lack of midfielders. When you look at what they bring, we wanted to have that extra midfielder in there and particularly the way they operate with two, sometimes three tens, a false nine that will sort of pop into the pockets in front. We really wanted to have someone in there with that smarts and defensive instincts. I think Kosi and Matty do a good job but with Davey out you lose that defensive midfielder that you can play in the two so we had



adapt our tactics to some degree based on that.

But I thought he did well. Sometimes it was early in and you could sense it in terms of when we were building, just the angles. All in all Raoul has done a good job for us. This is a lad who is getting three hours of sleep if he's lucky with the new baby and we've been pushing him, pushing him, pushing him. So fair play to him. He was class this week training and putting that commitment in to do the work in midfield.

**Q. We didn't see that 20-minute dip tonight, did we?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I thought the lads were solid. It was just quality. Real quality. Like I say to you, 11 shots to 8 in their place. So we contained them to 11 shots on target which is a good number for an away game and six shots on target, that's similar to games like Orlando, Cincinnati, Philadelphia. You'd say, okay, six shots on target. They are going to score, what, two? But they score four.

Again for us, we've just got to be more clinical. I thought we had a big moment to score on the back post, and we had other moments there. So as I say, the fight was there. It was just I think to what Neal said, there was just some moments you look at the goals we're conceding. I know the lads are disappointed.

They really are disappointed with either the recovery or just some of the instincts in and around the box. That can be worked on. That's all I can say. It can be worked on and as I've said to the players, we've got to make signings and we've got to be ready to improve the scoring. Everyone is running out of chances here. It's time to show up and if you're not really, really committed to bringing the passion, which I didn't think it was a passion issue tonight or it was about a lack of fight. It was that just against players like Cucho, Rossi, who I thought showed their class, Ramirez, very good.

But in other areas, I thought we were good. I thought we showed our quality. Just not enough to get on the board and as I say, I think big moments change game, the goal after halftime, and they were in ascendancy and they attacked once in five minutes, eight minutes and score and we get in the ascendancy again. Missed a great opportunity at the back post. Same missed opportunities we've seen at Cincinnati at the back post to win games and in two minutes they are at the other end scoring.

So, disappointing. I mean, there is the gap for me. It's just how clinical and ruthless, and quality players will find an opportunity to find the back of the net. We have to work on that collectively.

**Q. You mentioned the transfer window but that doesn't open for another little bit. Between now and then, what can sort of be done to sort of right the tide here? Is it just trusting the process? Is it doubling down on your core principles are there other things that can be done?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** If you watched the game tonight, what were your thoughts? Were we that far away? Were we that far away interest them? Like I say, 11 shots to 8, six on target, two. The quality is definitely there. We are defending in a five. We could load up with more defenders. But as I've said to the players, like you've got to trust the process. We've got to stay tight together. We've got to keep fighting which they are. As I say I don't see guys quitting or blaming, throwing arms up. They were good tonight. They were right there. And that was suffering; that third goal goes in, you suffer.

For me, we are working tactically. We are adjusting. We tried to adjust some things tonight to get to halftime in the game so we could bring Lo in at the right time where he could operate in a bit more of the stretch against Columbus and we were close with that. Again, the transfer window is already open for us. I know the front office have God players almost ready to go. You know, we are right there. When the window opens, we should be right there ready to kick in and as I say, add some depth to this team.

Again, Richey and Oso we want them to go to Copa America and we know they are just around the corner. Tournament will finish with them hopefully winning a trophy and coming back with a level of confidence that they can bring into Toronto FC and give us a chance to fight for those playoff spots, and as I say, with Shane fully fit, with Oso back, with Richey back, with summer signings, I think we just raised the quality. Because the fight, the commitment's there. At times you see the tactical blueprint can stifle teams and it can also create opportunities.

But when it comes down at times to quality versus quality, we get found out. Like I say, Cucho gets that opportunity, turns, spins between legs and puts it in the back of the net. We've got to push to get those moments for our players when get in that bottom, we can do exactly the same.

For example, shot goes in -- saves it -- we don't have two men following up. These are the tiny details that we have to work on. Every goal we've got to scrap for, fight for. It's not always going to be that perfect goal. Those are the little things I know and we can get those marginal gains in.

You know, as I said to the lads, it's not about blaming at tack, it's not about blaming the defense, it's about staying tied together, coming back to work. It's about looking in the mirror, making sure you connect to your passion. I've seen Kosi Thompson tonight, really connected to his passion, to his city, the club. That's a guy over the last two games, stock's been rising for our team. He's doubled down and taken his opportunities and he's getting in the fight.

I'm looking around, there's other players that could follow that lead and those players will be working to make sure that they are really giving everything for the club, body on the line, following in on shots, putting their head where it hurts. You know, what you've seen again from some of our boys tonight. We'll keep fighting. That's going to be the catch cry. We'll keep working and looking for tactical opportunities behind the scenes and be ready for when our boys come back and strengthen this team. But you have to look at the reality. Columbus turns up with a full squad tonight. Full squad, one player missing, Jacen Russell-Rowe. Orlando turns up with a full squad. We are a thread bear and we are hanging in but it will turn when our quality returns.

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