



Toronto FC Media Conference

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John Herdman

Media Conference

Toronto FC 2, Philadelphia 1

Q. Well that was much needed, your substitutes did the job tonight.

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, you know, brilliant from DK. We had a mission in the game, which was to finish strong. We've been loading up with a lot of players who are fatigued and going back-to-back games, and we've been strong in games, but you know, we wanted to keep some of the weapons on the bench today just to make sure that last 30 minutes, we've been getting punished in that last 30 minutes.

We wanted to ensure some weapons were coming in, like Davey, Lorenzo and DK, with a level of freshness, and yeah, ability to change the game.

So that was good. It was a good start tonight. We said this was a chance to start again, and we said that we wanted to make sure that we were set up for success for Richard and Oso coming back. It was a different mentality. We can go into that match now against Miami probably with one of my best starting 11s for the first time since the beginning of the season. Hopefully the players, never too high, never too low. We just keep our feet on the ground. Stay focused. It one win, well deserved for the fans and I thank the fans. They have been brilliant with us tonight. They just kept us going. But it's just the start; it's start of a playoff push.

Q. Was there a difference compared to other games, the last few games?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think the mentality in the second half, you could see, the goal rocked them but it didn't crush them. That was a real testament to some of the work that's been going on behind the scenes for myself, Robin, the leadership group we've been working hard on resiliency and how to respond in those moments.

I just thought after halftime, we had a real clarity with Lorenzo's addition to the box. We were able to be find some of those third-man combos behind the oppressing structure with his quality. I thought we were lacking that little bit of quality in the first half to be able to break their medium press but obviously Lorenzo gives that you little bit of X-factor when he comes into the game, and then obviously Flores brings an energy and different sort of grit. Covers the ground well, and you could see him intercepting on that pass. Really happy with what Deiby did today.

Yeah, I think the difference being, we kept enough in the tank to finish strong. We used our depth in the first half.

Q. Given what your team has gone through and the difficulties, was this a must-win?

JOHN HERDMAN: Oh, yeah. We said this for the players. When you come up against Columbus away, and it's not apples and apples. Going away to Atlanta, I felt like, again, there's always going to be some sort of gap, that way we had the close.



Tonight there was no gap. We were at home and playing a team -- the only thing they had was freshness, a full week of freshness coming in but we had our home advantage and we had the advantage of knowing that Lorenzo, Insigne, Deiby, can play like that against a team that I thought was going to be thin in the second half.

Q. A big number --

JOHN HERDMAN: He's been struggling with a foot injury. For example, Wednesday night we couldn't start him because of the turf. Atlanta, he could not come on to the field because of the turf.

He's got something that's been bugging him just all season and he's been really mentally strong to stay in the fight because I think a couple of players might have decided to pull the pin and try and take three, four, five weeks off. But he knows we're in the grind and he stayed in. It.

Really proud of him tonight. He has been battling. We had a good chat on Wednesday because he was desperate to play in that Can Champs game. He was in good form in the Can Champs and been waiting for his opportunity and his foot has been holding him back.

To see him get out there tonight, show what he can really do, we need that at this time. This is what we need at the moment, a guy that's going to get two shots and score two goals.

Q. Is Insigne a hundred percent? How would you describe him physically?

JOHN HERDMAN: He played 90 minutes on Wednesday on turf. I mean, this is a reality where we're just doing everything we can to try and put Lorenzo and all our players in the best conditions possible.

Like as I said to you on Thursday, we were players that were redlining big time. They are redlining me and they accumulated too many minutes. Our schedule is crazy. We need to look at that, especially and even this next match in the Can Champs we are going to go to Houston and play on the Sunday and we get a two-day turnaround with travel. We asked to play on the Wednesday and there's no grace for it.

You just look at it and go, okay, let's grin and bear it and keep grinding. We know as a club we have to build depth. We have to build depth and some of that starts this summer.

Q. The second goal --

JOHN HERDMAN: Absolutely. He's had strict instructions to play closely to the goal and to play in the air, other players that move to open those slots. I thought he was tactically disciplined tonight in that attacking role that he played in. Really happy with his performance. Long may that last coming in to this critical period.

Q. Tough week this week, two road games.

JOHN HERDMAN: We're grinding it out. This last two months has been wild. When you think of the injuries that we have, the long-term injuries, you really -- I've seen guys like Kosi Thompson rise to the challenge. It's wild. He scored four in 90 minutes. Who does that? But he's running on the passion of the club. And I told him tonight, he's got to be the enforcer for the team.

We have a lot of guys on yellow cards who can't enforce themselves on the game. I think we have four players managing yellow cards tonight that would have been suspended from Miami. So you know, he put a hell of a shift in on fumes. So that's it, and then even like big Aimé Mabika comes in, 12 minutes, every guy has got -- it's going to be like that right till the end of the season, I think. We'll be in by fingernails with this squad.

Q. After a long couple months, how nice to hear --

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, to hear the drum, I created a picture that have drum last week, the week before. That's the feeling we all created. It's what we play for, to do and have that moment. To hear a band tonight, we won our match and we are



banging the drum.

Normally you do that after you won a cup final or a league or something. But I think everyone knows that seeing one of the fans, literally jump the thing and bring the drum to the players, I think they know how much we needed it.

Again, never too high, never too low. As I say to the players, let's get back on task now, that's a good feeling. We needed that feeling. We'll get Richey Osio back and we'll be ready to fight. Fight again.

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