



Toronto FC Media Conference

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John Herdman

Media Conference

Toronto FC 2, Austin 1

Q. How big a win was that in the scheme of things?

JOHN HERDMAN: It's a big win. Big for the fans and for the players. We were hurting. I think you don't see that fight tonight was important. We knew that they were going to bring an intensity and energy. They had a very attacking team. I thought we had go control. Got the two goals, and with the 2-0 score line, you're in that sort of land, how much you go for it, how much you protect. All that matters at the end is three points. Crowd of the lads.

Great to have the skipper back. I think Jonathan makes a massive difference in this team and you can see his desire and fight, and I think all the lads tonight, they dug in. They really dug in and showed that fight, what it's going to take to make it through to the playoffs. You're going to have to fight. People keep telling us, you have to grind the results out all the way through.

Q. Any word on Wingo?

JOHN HERDMAN: We'll assess it. He felt it on a sprint. I assume when you feel it on a sprint, it's not usually good news. And Gomis had to come out as well with some tightness in the hamstring. We'll see. I spoke too soon, I think on Friday about having a full squad back almost. But I think the good news is longy is recovering a bit quicker than we anticipated. So he might be back but I'll let you know more in the next couple of days with those lads.

Q. When you spoke to us yesterday, you talked about the danger -- how do you think you did --

JOHN HERDMAN: Yeah, I thought the lads did well. We matched up Richey Laryea with Bukari and just made sure that we had experience. Richey loves those challenges, he really does. I thought first half, again, they were quiet.

And I think Lorenzo, Richey, Raoul, they did a really good job on that side. Because they tried to overload with a midfield run and I just thought the hand eye on, the timing of that was really good. Got in behind that once which was a bit scary.

But second half, certainly, I thought this was a bit more threat from Bukari, way more dangerous towards the end. But you know what these games are like. That last 10, 15 minutes, it's time to hunker in and get the result that you need. We were able to bring some players off and get freshness against Columbus, as well, which I think is important at this stage, given the amount of games we're going to have.

Q. Inaudible.

JOHN HERDMAN: He really came up big. I see this in every team, and in this period of time, they have to come up big for



you. Big moments. It was disappointing, it was like they were only going to hurt us in that transitional moments where we were attacking their box. It looked like defensively we had a lot of control in their buildup, but as soon as we turned the ball over, you could sense that, yeah, we were going to get punished. Sean did really well. He pulled a cup of his teammates out of it tonight and those errors, we have to tidy them up. We talked about that at halftime, just cleaner, cleaner, cleaner. Make sure we complete a final action across or a shot, the extra pass or the extra dribble leads to those moments.

Q. Croatia was a welcome return. What did you think?

JOHN HERDMAN: I was really happy with Alonso. He's been hungry and I enjoyed that. I told you this week, it was about watching lads fighting and pushing, and he just showed a real hunger and desire, and of course Kosi Thompson, Larry, they have all been fighting, Servania for those spots. Davey was away on international duty. They really have competed.

It's been really fruitful because I thought him and Longstaff both were like physical. They were in the fight. Big tackles, and yeah, you see obviously Quajo's (ph) quality with his passing. He's a very good progressor for us.

Q. When you gave Deandre the start, what did you think --

JOHN HERDMAN: Hungry. I mean, that's what we want. He's back from his injury, that awful foot injury that just kept playing. He never felt comfortable training. We give him the time he needed and he's come back hungry, really hungry and fighting for his club. That's what we've needed from him. He's a quiet lad. He's quite an introverted fellow around the group but you see tonight, he showed for a young man, if he keeps pushing, he could be the difference.

Q. Did Brandon suffer a setback --

JOHN HERDMAN: Squad rotation, can only put 20 on the roster. So the lads know that we have depth at center, mid. We did have a lot of depth at center back but we'll see what that looks like. You know, Sigurd and bran den were on the rotation tonight, and yeah, they are the tough conversations I've had to have over the week. And I've got more to come, I hope, given these injuries and I'm hoping that we come through that well.

Q. It's a tough game, Columbus, short term. What's sort of the key navigating this tough stretch?

JOHN HERDMAN: We have to harden up. We've got to do the recovery. We've got to embrace the challenge. It's an exciting opportunity to have Columbus at home because again, I think not many people give you much chance against that team, just the quality they have. But we were able to rest, as I say, Lorenzo tonight, you could see that first 45, he was hungry, he was sharp, and he had that little bit of bite about him. So we managed to take some gas out of his tank ready to play a big match against Columbus, and I'm sure he'll be up for it.

Q. Looked like Oso --

JOHN HERDMAN: I mean, he's so passionate about the journey, the club. I think he's really grown into a captain as his own man. He pushes people's levels. He pushes the coaches levels. He pushes the players levels, and I've seen him grow. He's growing into more of that Roy Keane-type leader where he's willing to speak his mind to get the standards that are required, and at the same time, you know, you have to walk the talk, and he does.

You know, he puts a shift in for his team. I thought he was -- I thought he was excellent tonight. He covered every blade of grass. He brought his quality when he needed to, as well. He's starting to grow into that real steely eyed leader and I'm excited for him because we need that. This club has needed that type of leader to come through and emerge and be ready to drag the team when it needs. He's that guy. He's got good mates on this team, like Richey, etc., who will respond to him, and he's got young players who look up to him.

Q. That was the 65th goal for the club, and you obviously have known of his quality for a long time but not many midfielders saw that number of goals. Do you think he gets the due that he deserves?

JOHN HERDMAN: No, I don't think he does, because for him, he's got an eye for timing into the box. I've seen him playing lower on the field but when you get him higher up the pitch and in those inside channels, he's got a knack of timing his runs



off players and when you have the quality of sort of Insigne's who can find those little set passes, etc., he thrives on that stuff.

I mean certainly for Canada, watching him with Johnny David at times, quality raises quality, and I think that's what Oso is. I always sort of scratch my head how he never played at the highest level in Europe or went into that environment. We always used to have those conversations but one thing is, he loves this club, and he's going to carry this club as far as he can.

Q. What does tonight's victory mean in terms of trying to kick start the playoff run?

JOHN HERDMAN: I think it's been kick started because we've been in the playoffs since day one of the season. I mean, that's the beauty. We're in a fight to stay in. We're not the sort of team that's sort of sitting outside of the spot that's trying to look in. We're in. Just making sure that we can see Charlotte now.

I mean, Orlando took a big step tonight but Charlotte has just appeared on the landscape for us. As I said, we're looking forward at the teams above us, and just one game at a time. Columbus is coming. That's the next kick start if you want to call it that. It's just the next step. Can we do something at home versus Columbus? I'm excited for that one.

Q. What would you highlight after this victory?

JOHN HERDMAN: Just spirit. The spirit, the fight, which is going to be critical in the playoff run. When you see the quality at times, we've played some lovely football. We were able to open Austin up, and not many teams open them up in that way. We were able to bring our identity central again and we recognize a lot of our work had gone down the size and we wanted to open the center of that pitch to come back to some of the things we worked on in the first half of the season. I thought that was a big statement because it takes bravery to play in those spaces and it takes a commitment, a tactical commitment to do that. You know, the fight and I think that tactical bravery were important.

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