



# Toronto FC Media Conference

*Saturday, October 5, 2024*

*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

## John Herdman

Media Conference

Inter Miami 1, Toronto FC 0

**Q. Your team led the dance for much of the evening, but the lack of cutting edge, the problem you've had for a while.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, I think the start, just to thank the fans who have been right behind us this season, this is a group that show up week-in, week-out. They brought the energy. We needed that energy. We just weren't able to deliver. I thought we defended really well today. That was a pretty impressive performance against, or what is, a talented team, regardless of who they start with. That's a tough Miami team to play against.

But you can't hide it. We are not as ruthless or as clinical as other teams. We see Miami get that one big opportunity, and it's taken, and so I think for us, you know, we knew it was going to be a mountain to climb this season, and we've climbed. We've had some performances that weren't at the standard. And that's for us to reflect on. But we've had some performances that week be really proud of. There's been some moments in the season, you know, the derby wins or nations -- sorry, the Leagues Cup progressions, beating Pachuca, being in the top four for the first parts of the season, all of those things were great steps.

But it just hasn't been good enough in this last four months, and you know, we'll have to look hard at ourselves. We were in a playoff fight but I don't think we had enough punch in that fight.

**Q. What was your take on the whole atmosphere? I know Messi is obviously a star but it's kind of a strange thing to witness your crowd chanting.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** It's tough, eh. You're in a game like that and you're expecting the the last 30 minutes to feel like it's a pressure cooker for everyone, and it felt like a discuss. You know, it was -- when you bring the best player that's ever walked the earth, I mean, what do you expect? I mean, it's just a gift, I think, for the fans, the people of Toronto, to be able to see that man in the flesh. You know, so I understand it. I understand it coming from the northeast of England, I can't comprehend it but I understand it.

It was a wild night. We could have come away maybe with a point, which that would have helped us in the run. We had to go for it. I thought we did all right against Messi. I thought the lads managed Busquets, Suarez, Messi, and it wasn't until we started committing them, looking for a goal that we looked vulnerable.

**Q. How could you tell -- especially now that it's out of your hands.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I think we've got to be honest. We've got to reflect. We've got to be honest and reflect. This is my first season with the club. I told them what the fans were telling us and the fans were saying, we've got your back. Their performance wasn't as strong in different parts of the season but they can see there's a fight in there. There's something



different. But at the same time, that it wasn't good enough, from me, from others that have come into the club and tried to turn this around, this is the first project we have not turned around in our first season. That's going to require, again, high-level honesty from all staff, people who have been here for ten, 15 years, people who have been here for four years, people who have been here for only a year, there's just got to be high-level honesty around all aspects of what we can do to learn to grow, to improve.

And I know the fans don't want to hear that. They just don't want to hear it, and they don't want to hear those words of we lose and learn and all the clichés. They want to see action. I think they have seen some elements of action this year. But not enough. Not enough to fully get a picture of what this club could be in the future.

For me, it's a case of evaluating, re-evaluating everything that we have done this year, and then just keeping our hands tightly together and praying that the gods give us something.

**Q. Inaudible.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** No. We had to win. We had to win tonight.

**Q. Your regular season is over. The league has another match day coming. Maybe you'll want to reflect on this a little bit but what has it been like for you? You've had the intensity of games every week, twice a week, compared to the national team. You've had to endure ups and downs going home without your family and things like that. What has it been like for you?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I mean, I made a commitment to give it my all this year. I said that I would be willing to leave my family and just immerse myself fully into the job, and that's all I've done. I've give it my absolute best. I think the group that came in with us, we've worked long hours to try and close the gap that we've had not being club coaches, seasoned club coaches, and there's no game I've never took a step back from. I've always been in that fight.

I think from my side, I know I've given it my best. The practices were there. But it wasn't good enough. I think that's -- you know, I'll reflect on that. It has been an up and down season. The emotions have been so high at times but then just so low. Like you know, that game against Sporting KC, or Chicago here, you just can't get your head around it, how you can go from beating Atlanta one week to that type of result, and then you go from beating Austin and pushing, pushing, like being a team, and the Canadian Championship where you look like bloody Barcelona at BC Place and you look fantastic, and then you roll up and you know, we concede four goals. You just can't fathom it. Again, I have to look inwards. That's the first step.

Hell of a ride. A lot I've enjoyed. A lot I've hated. But just resilient. That's probably the word now for the next few weeks, just to stay resilient.

**Q. Here for the long haul --**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I'm committed, fully committed to the journey with Jonathan Osorio. He's a great man. I've watched him lead and turn into a stronger leader over these last four months. I think the harder it got, the better he got as a leader. I've enjoyed that challenge.

We've got some good men here that I would like to see turn around. I think there's a really solid group of staff behind the scenes that are destined for success. And I'd like to think when I would have walked in these doors and spoke with Jason and Bill Manning, they told me, this is a three-year project. Year one will be difficult. We're not going to be able to create the roster that you dream of.

But you know, with my mentality, it's, look, we'll win the league without it; we'll do our best to get to the top four, top five. I think the critical piece is, it is going to take some time. I've learned that, and I've learned that MLS is a beast. This is a beast. And you need a deep squad of very committed human beings that can win football matches consistently.

I know the club are committed to building that.

**Q. Inaudible.**



**JOHN HERDMAN:** You could see, he didn't have much in him. I think he managed to get Messi's shirt. But yeah.

**Q. Can I ask what your thoughts were when you saw the Miami team sheet tonight?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I knew. I knew that was the team sheet. I just thought, oh, sh-t, because you knew that's a hungry team. That group of guys are coming in there to fight. And you knew Tata was saying, Okay, you guys get us through 60, give it everything. The other fellas will come on and finish the game.

I was hoping the other lads were going to start. I thought they would have give us a few more opportunities. We'd have to have been resilient but I thought that was again smart. He's got a hungry squad, championship squad. They can rotate a roster, similar to Columbus; and they can rotate a roster, and if they can keep you to 0-0, they have the winners coming into the match. I thought our lads did everything but score. That was the critical piece; we had to score. We had a couple of good looks there, and if we score, we're in that fight and Messi is coming on in a different scenario. Just, yeah, same old story.

**Q. What does Monday look like for you guys?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Well, the lads will be back in on Tuesday. I think we'll have a prayer room, and then do everything we can to convince the gods to give us a bit of slack. I don't think we've had much luck this season with injuries and other bits and pieces. But yeah, we'll get back at it. But I do think this next -- as soon as we know it's done, yeah you have to get into an evaluation with the players. It starts there first. You know, we've got to understand, you know, where we fell short this year, and that's part of the improvement cycle.

I don't know if they have been engaged in that before as a group but we'll have a solid process. We've got to hear everything.

**Q. Same --**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, I mean, it's a bit of a mystery to me. The MRI is not showing anything. There's something going on in the tendon. Yeah, it's a tough one.

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