

# New York Red Bulls Media Conference

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New York, New York, USA

## Troy Lesesne

Press Conference



New York Red Bulls 1, D.C. United 0

**Q. Can you talk, give us an update possibly on Dante's status, and sitting on the sideline, can you talk about how you guys have been --**

TROY LESESNE: Yeah, first, for Dante, think that it's one that we'll have to evaluate over the coming days. I don't think it's very severe based on what I'm hearing, but at the same time, we have to see exactly what it looks like. Hopefully we caught it early enough to where it wasn't a serious strain.

But in terms of the way that we have been playing, I would say this game, you may have something in the Philly game, the New York City game, those were very combative games from us and we had less of the ball. In this game, I actually felt like we had to deal with a lot of long balls from D.C. United, and we dealt with them extremely well.

I don't know if you know who their frontrunner was, but that guy has been doing it for a long time, Christian Benteke, at a high, high level, and Andrés and Sean did very well in the first ball moment. The second ball moment, we actually cleaned a lot of those up.

From that point on, though, I thought we settled the game down and we had the ball in a really positive fashion. Where I think we can maybe tighten it up a little bit is maybe the final action, the final third. There's a lot of good runs that are made, and maybe we don't always play that pass.

But winning, though, is clearly the most important thing right now, and we want to make sure that we have a good process towards those results and those wins. But I said this maybe in one press conference when someone opened up by using negative words to describe a win, and "ugly" needs to stay out of this press conference. So no one will say ugly today (laughter) thank you

**Q. Tonight we saw Cameron Harper play a little bit more forward with the midfielders, can you talk about that? And can you talk about how was it to see John Tolkin, it seemed like especially the first half he was not playing as much forward as we are used to seeing him. A lot of times, he was back and then five seconds later, he's in front of the the net. Can you talk about that and eventually seeing him score a goal?**

TROY LESESNE: I'd say that our two centre-backs as I said before, had tremendous games, Sean and Andrés. Carlos, as well. I think Carlos was solid again on the night. I know there's not a ton of action but whenever he's called, he's big on crosses and making saves. It may look routine but they are important.

Ad then speaking to Cam, I was really happy with Cam for the night, and you know, he plays as a right fullback that's really in a high, attacking position for us, and we like that because he's dynamic one-on-one. And credit for him to being able to go to a right ten role late in the game because Kyle can come on and add a different dimension, which he did, as well, which I thought Kyle made a big impact again tonight.

Lastly, JMi, where he was positioned in the first half had to do with D.C. playing so many long balls, with the ball, whenever we are trying to build out, he was in a little bit lower position and was able to start to advance himself in the second half which I was happy with.

Finally him scoring the goal, I just said to him on the field, what I'm really pleased about is for him to be able to be rewarded with taking ownership in that moment and just, again, displaying leadership in his own way. That's a big moment. That's a big moment for our club right now, and where we are trying to get to in terms of making a playoff run here. And JMi is at the heart of that, and again, he was at the heart of that and he deserves that goal.

**Q. Can you comment on the use of the bench and the impact that you're expecting these guys to have whenever you do call upon them, and how do you continue to keep the group focused?**

TROY LESESNE: The focus, I'll start with that. The focus right now is certainly on our objectives and our process towards getting results, and so we have three clear objectives that we put forward to the group for this final stretch. And if we keep checking those boxes, every single day, and clearly on match day, then I think we are going to have a chance to make a run at the playoffs. That's very, very important to us.

And this is something that I feel like the group is really committed to, and with that, it actually goes hand-in-hand with the guys that come on.

So these guys that come on, Tom in a difficult moment comes on for Dante with Dante going out of the game that early, that's not easy to do and Tom was able to secure a lot of balls for us tonight and help us bring a lot more continuity to our attack which is really, really important.

I think Kyle again made tremendous impact on the night. We also have Wike coming on, in an important, ten, 15 minute stress and we have seen Peter Stroud's quality all year long and when he gets called on, he's always ready to do the job.

I'm happy with those guys, and the guys that did not get put in the match tonight, they are knocking on the door, and a few of them will feature tomorrow night in a 17 game.

**Q. You talked about matches like this, very tight -- how impressed are you with the entire crew that they were able to stay composed, despite the fact, you had chances, missed, okay, but kept fighting and kept going?**

TROY LESESNE: I would say a couple things about that.

One, the character and the resilience of this group, I talked about this a few weeks ago but I'll reiterate it. There's a lot to be said about the character and resilience of the group. The circumstances for this team have not been easy and again we are responsible for the results. But there's a few things that go into it.

You know, Lewis, to mention him right now, and him not being in the roster, and probably in the very near future, he's going to be out for a little bit of time, he's our top goal scorer last year and make the a serious impact on our team, not only for goals but his presence on the team. If most teams lose their top scorer, that's devastating.

Cristian Cásseres, major impact player for us. By the way, now he got his second start in France's top division, really happy for him but that's a major player that we lost, and again, credit to Daniel Edelman, Frankie Amaya, Drew

Yearwood, Peter Stroud, all these guys showing resilience and saying, we are ready to do the job.

These are just a couple individuals that are out of the team that, again, would really derail a lot of teams in our league.

And so you come again tonight, and Dante goes down. And that's a big player for us. And Dante is really coming into form for us, and hopefully he'll be back very soon.

But we continue to fight through it, the next guy steps up, and we have to have that attitude throughout the rest of the season to believe that we can get the job done with any player on the field.

**Q. Are you preparing for the Inter Miami game technically and the pressure?**

TROY LESESNE: The first Inter Miami question.

Look, I think we all need to enjoy tonight. That's No. 1. I think that these guys worked credit before I had against a rivalry for us in D.C. United and certainly someone that's close on the table. They need to enjoy it tomorrow, as well, and then we'll really start to unpack what next week looks like.

But I have heard a number of clubs when they have gone against the best player of all time, and not only him but his teammates in Busquets and Alba, Josef Martinez, Cremaschi. They have a good team beyond just the greatest player.

But I have heard a lot of teams say, oh, we're not going to fear them or we're not going to back down. This is a tough team. So we're going to try to be as best prepared as possible with the most respect possible and try to challenge them in every way we can.

But today we enjoy this three points. Tomorrow we enjoy it and Miami we get ready on Tuesday to start to talk about how we are going to do that.

**Q. Were you surprised about D.C. United's approach to this team, and can you talk us through your emotions seeing John Tolkin score that goal?**

TROY LESESNE: A little surprised from D.C. United, I thought that they obviously were much more direct than I think we have seen them play throughout the majority of the season this year. I think that they are very good with the ball and they can open you up in different ways.

But I think they made that decision coming here and respecting our press, and they made it difficult for us, that's

for sure. John Tolkin scoring, JMi scoring the goal, to reiterate what I said earlier, I'm just so proud of him, continuing to evolve as a leader for this team. Leaders step up in big moments. He wanted that moment, and he was able to execute.

**Q. Tonight I think was a demonstration of what's going on in your overall team so far with creativity. What have you done off the field to help boost that more into the game? Because now we see Tom Barlow stretching the ball wide, being able to play it in, or whether it's Duncan coming on and playing into the box, or whether it's kicking out to the middle, finding those different positives we probably have not seen prior. What primarily have you done to make that difference?**

TROY LESESNE: There's obviously a lot of work that's on the field and in training, in the video room, we spend a lot of time with these guys looking at the game.

But culturally what you're talking about, referring to the belief that's in this group now individually and collectively, we work just as hard on trying to create the right environment for them, and that can look like, you know, a number of different things and a number of different ways that we can have them speak to one another in a direct fashion about things that they see in their teammates that really inspire them. This is an exercise that we have, done, coupled with challenging their teammates, saying, hey, this is where I think you can really make a bigger impact.

And so when those honest conversations are had and the the right environment is created, there's more transparency for players. So then I think they are able to have a lot clearer understanding of their role on the field.

I also think, one thing I didn't mention tonight about our resilience and resolve was crowd was fantastic tonight. Everyone is so excited about next weekend, for the right reasons, there's no doubt about that.

But tonight, though, our fans showed up. There's no doubt about that. They pushed us in that last ten minutes and we are very, very appreciative of that because that's something we have to reciprocate is the energy that they put into every single match for us.

**Q. I wanted to ask about Drew Yearwood, he slid into central midfield. Since you took over, he's predominately played an attacking role. Curious how you would evaluate his performance in that role, and if there's been a conversation with him about what his role is expected.**

TROY LESESNE: Yeah, Drew stepped up tonight. Frankie has been critical with -- that's another one I didn't mention. Frankie has been critical how he's played for us in that role as we have really built a lot of momentum lately. And Frankie will be back, I hope the beginning of the week. He's just out sick, but I think he's through it now. He should join us back for training on Tuesday.

But Drew, though, what I love about Drew is his versatility, and he can play in a higher role in kind of a ten role because he's got really creative ideas and he's been a classic six throughout his entire career, a box-to-box midfielder, and so tonight, that's what was required, playing a little bit deeper, being able to pick up the ball and drive, and also secure second balls, and so I thought tonight was a really good performance from him. And again, when Frankie gets back, there's more competition in the midfield and that's a good thing for us going into next weekend.

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