

New York Red Bulls Media Conference

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Troy Lesesne

Press Conference



New York Red Bulls 3, Toronto FC 0

Q. Congratulations on the win, two goals two goals by Luquinhas, the performance you wanted and you got it. How proud do you feel of this entire group to put you in this position right now to extend the streak from 13 years to 14 years into playoffs?

TROY LESESNE: Yeah, I would say first for Luquinhas to get two very important goals on the night, and Tom Barlow, also, to get a very important goal himself.

We know what the narrative has been all season long for us. We've needed to score goals and we've been in position to score goals and maybe we haven't capitalized enough, I think we can all be honest with that.

But tonight that's not the case, and Luquinhas deserves all the credit for being able to put two big goals in the net as well as Tom Barlow. Tom Barlow, he deserves that and more, I tell you what, the way that guy works, and Elias did a fantastic job to create that moment and I'm happy to see that.

As it relates to the team, a week ago, we sat here after losing to Chicago and I think we felt it's going to be very, very difficult. Now here we are a week later and we're in the conversation. But that's not just a week-to-week thing. I think we felt that since May whenever I took over, we were in a really hard spot. One win in 11 matches, and I said that many times, and I'm going to say it again, we were the bottom of the table and now we're going into the last week of the season and we have a chance to make the playoffs. I think if you would have told everyone that at that point in time, I don't think many people would have given us much of a shot. Not to mention within that time frame, you see Lewis Morgan not being available for this entire stretch. You see Dante not being able to be consistently in the lineup. You see Cristian Cáceras being sold. These are really, really difficult chances.

To come back to the point of your question, our guys never

made any excuses. We continued to fight. It wasn't always perfect but here we are and we have a chance.

Q. With your team up 3-0 were you aware of the fact that with the current score line, you were tied with D.C. Untied for the goal differential because they were winning 2-0 against NYC FC, were you telling the guys to push for the other goal or were you focused on the game at hand?

TROY LESESNE: Yeah, I was aware that the goal differential is an important component of this and obviously we wanted to push for another goal. I think you see Frankie doing that, coming very close and hitting one over the bar slightly; Cory, last couple minutes, we are still pushing for another goal. I think that you saw that that was the case on the field.

I expected for us to score three goals to have a question like, hey, why didn't you score the fourth tonight. That's about on par for 2023, so thank you for that, Michael.

Q. We've seen these games in the past --

TROY LESESNE: Come on, guys, you've got to have fun with it a little bit, right.

Q. We've seen in the past when the game goes into halftime after a really good stretch and doesn't have a goal and this time they got it right before the halftime. What was the mood in the locker room like compared to previous times when you didn't get that, and did you think that that really made them less tense to get more goals in the second half?

TROY LESESNE: Yeah, I definitely think you could see some sense of relief that we scored the first goal right before half. We didn't want to come in 0-0 but also we weren't very satisfied with that first half. Speak to you guys honestly, when we don't get results and when we do get results that. Wasn't a great 45 minutes for us. We weren't exactly on top of the game in the way we should be.

In the second half we made a few adjustments and the guys ultimately went and executed. But I do think that the



goal helps create that momentum going into the second half.

Q. You mentioned Tom Barlow. Talk about how hard he works, the runs he makes and maybe some of the work people don't see, and just how proud you are of him and how happy you are for him, like you said, the goal is the least that he deserves, and also the connection he's forming with Elias, game by game and how their games mesh so well?

TROY LESESNE: Yeah, I think you described that very well. Tom is a guy that is a very, very selfless individual and he works very, very hard for the group. I was asked the question a couple weeks ago, and it doesn't always materialize into goals and assists. And that's his primary job. I think we can all say that.

But at the same time, there's other components, to the game as well, especially our game, and Tom has been part of this club now for five seasons and he gives every single ounce that he has. And when he's able to score goals like that tonight in important moments, it's very satisfying, not only for our group but for Tom and his family, and I'm happy to see that.

Q. When you took over, you had an unbeaten streak starting in the Open Cup win against D.C. United, and you had a winning streak during the Leagues Cup, but how satisfied do you feel now that you've had yourself a two-match winning streak in league competition?

TROY LESESNE: Yeah, I'm very happy with that. What I would say is the thing that I'm happiest about is in this stretch where we played Miami, New England and then I can't remember the third match but it was three matches that we lost, and we dug ourselves a hole.

For us to be able to dig ourselves out of that hole at this time of the year, again, speaks to that the group has a lot of fight left in them. Now to put together a few different matches of getting a couple wins, a couple draws, putting points on the board, that's what you want to see this time of year. What he did, again, going to Nashville, we are more than likely going to need three points to seed ourselves into the playoffs.

Q. Could you talk about the sub at halftime for bringing on Dylan Nealis, and can you talk about how happy you were to see the effort from Elias to force the issue, force the turnover and then set up Barlow for that opening goal?

TROY LESESNE: Yeah, so Hassan had a really good 45 minutes and he was feeling a little muscle injury potentially

at halftime. Hopefully it's not going to be anything long-term but he was feeling it, so it was important to make a change and not put him at risk individually and for our team.

I would say Elias has shown, since he's been fit and really in good form, he's doing tremendous work against the ball but he's also doing tremendous work in terms of creativity and being able to get goals and assists lately and putting himself into final third moments where he's dangerous.

Again I'm just going to keep reiterating that. That's what we need going into Nashville is to have Tom in a good way, Elias in a good way, Cory coming on in a good way, Luquinhas scoring goals. That's what we need.

Q. You had great games, D.C., Cincinnati. What's it going to take to play Nashville in the last game of the season? And also talk about the clean sheet and no set piece goals given, how proud are you of the defensive line?

TROY LESESNE: I'll actually start there with Nashville because that's going to be something we have to look at ourselves and say we need to have a very good defensive output in this match away from home in third place from the standpoint that we want to try to limit them in transition, set pieces, they are credibly dangerous. They have great service, great target, so we are going to have to shore that up.

And then I love the way that we have made opponents uncomfortable lately. We are not allowing them so get settled in the game. That's the thing I was kind of disappointed with in the first half is Toronto was settling into the game a little too much. More times than not lately, we've been on front foot and that's been very positive.

The last thing I would like to say, and I think that answers your question pretty well.

I would really like to thank our supporters. Tonight is a night in which is our last regular season home match, and we also want to recognize them and all the support that they have given us this year through, again, maybe the most difficult season in Red Bulls history in the last -- certainly, in the last ten to 12 years.

But I also want to say that hopefully we're going to provide another home match for them, and that could look like us potentially hosting that play-in match. It could look like us if we progress in the first round, it's a home and away fixture. So that's our goal is that we are not done yet and we want to provide another home match.

And lastly for you guys, many of you guys in the media have all been here week-in, week-out, on the calls late at night whenever we are away from home.

So you know I'm not trying to shower everyone with praises and rainbows and butterflies, but I would like to say thank you. And I appreciate your fairness and I appreciate all your questions, and that goes for everyone in the room. Thank you very much.

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