

Florida Cup: Chelsea FC vs. Club América

Sunday, July 17, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Allegiant Stadium

Chelsea FC

Thomas Tuchel

Media Conference

Q. I suppose the obvious first question is your thoughts on the first run-out for your side in preseason, two different teams in each half.

THOMAS TUCHEL: It was a very difficult match. Very difficult opponent for the first match. Normally we start a bit with lower league opponents, but this was very tough.

Also, the environment, like playing in front of a full stadium, full stadium, full crowd, big crowd against an opponent like America, who are already in the competition was tough.

First half was tough for us to create clear chances, but we had. Couldn't score and kept a clean sheet.

The second half we found better solutions. Looked more dangerous. It was a very good second half. It was a good first half. Very good second half.

We just have to win, and I'm happy that we took the win.

Q. And the word on Ben Chilwell being back playing football again?

THOMAS TUCHEL: Yeah, we're super happy that he is back, and you can see that it's a difference from training to game, and he will take his time, but he will get his time because he deserves.

And we will support him on his way back, but it was good for him. And happy that I think nobody is injured after a very physical game and very physical two weeks. Yeah, same for Chilly. Happy that he is back.

Q. I'm going to try third time lucky. Kalidou Koulibaly is now a Chelsea player. Can you tell what is you think of him and what he has added to the group?

THOMAS TUCHEL: Well, he brings experience, quality, top defending quality, height, and everything what we are



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looking for to play back-three or back-four.

It's a brilliant signing. It's another brilliant signing for us, and we hope that he can show his quality as soon as possible. He is now training outside. He arrived yesterday. We were very happy.

He knows already some of the players. Plays with Edouard on national team; played with Jorginho in Napoli. I think from this side it will be very quick that he feels welcome in the group. It's, anyway, a nice group, and everybody is happy that he is with us now.

Q. Can I just ask for a quick view on a couple of players? Conor Gallagher, who started tonight, a lot of Chelsea fans have been very interested to see him and how he did.

Then also Timo scoring. I just wondered if you could talk about how you see his situation because there's been a lot of talk about whether he could go this summer.

THOMAS TUCHEL: We need to see, but everybody is responsible for their own situation, and so is Timo. Timo played 45 like everybody else, and Timo scored, and that's what counts, and from there we go.

There's always stuff to improve, but it's the first match. Kai had a big chance. Mitchy had a big chance. Timo took the chance, and Mason.

I mean, anyway, I can't unaffected that they become more experienced. They become with more experience maybe more calm and adept more and more. They're still young players, and this is what we want from them that they stay confident, stay focused, and do what they need to do as strikers.

With Conor the same as midfield player, but Conor trains on a very high level. We can clearly see that it was the right decision to let him go on loan. He made a huge step in his development in this year in Crystal Palace and became player for England, and we can see this clearly in training. It was very, very good start from him. It was a good match from him.

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Now for him it's important that he gets used to our principles of the game, to understand when to move, when not to move. His work rate is outstanding, and he has such a big heart, so he can be a big asset for us.

Q. What did you think about the environment today at Allegiant Stadium, and what did you think about the stadium? It's less than two years old, and you guys were out here for practice yesterday and today for the match.

THOMAS TUCHEL: Huge stadium and brilliant stadium and fantastic atmosphere.

Like I said, for us for a first match after two weeks of intense training almost too much because it's like a cold shower when you come from training pitch and the next level is this kind of stadium against this kind of opponent, but it's a very nice stadium and very spectacular stadium, and it was nice to play there.

Pitch was very good to play on, and that's why everybody felt excited yesterday in training. Temperature was perfect to play, so fantastic venue.

Q. What do you think about these tournaments, like the FC Series, you guys representing a club like Chelsea to try to help grow the sport here in America?

THOMAS TUCHEL: Yeah, of course. If we can, we are always happy to come. Facilities are good. Players like to be here and training camps and enjoy their free time, and there's a bit of free time. So this is, of course, a huge week, and we can feel the excitement around the teams. We can feel the excitement for sports in general in America.

As a coach you maybe -- purely as a coach and from the pure view as a coach you would like to maybe not spend too much time in the heat and different time zones, but this is nowadays life as a big club, so we are used to it. We make the most of it. The players are very happy, very committed to this kind of effort, and that's why so far it's very well-done and very well-organized.

Q. You mentioned the physicality earlier on. Were you surprised by it? There seemed to be quite a few tackles in there that you wouldn't expect from a preseason game.

THOMAS TUCHEL: Yeah. It was a really tough match, like I said. Normally you start against maybe a bit of lower teams where you can find your rhythm, and it's very, very different to train. Even if training is on a very intense level

and very competitive in our squad, but it is different.

Yeah, you could see that they already are in the middle of the season, and they showed this kind of physical game which you have to adapt to. I'm happy nobody got injured. Sometimes it was on the edge for a friendly game and let's say for preseason match and especially for us in the first match, but it was okay.

We adapted to it and accepted it and did not get frustrated, so fair enough.

Q. One of the other youngsters that you played in the second half was Ethan Ampadu. Has he got a chance of making it with you?

THOMAS TUCHEL: Everybody has a chance. Everybody has a chance. It was a bit sad today because some youngsters had to be outside due to injury or simply to the fact that we were too many players for two teams, for 20 team players that we used, because some other players deserved to play.

Like, for example, Harvey Vale had a fantastic tournament with English Under 19, and he did very well in training.

Yeah, and Ethan did very well. I think the position is a good position for him in the middle of a back-three. He played very, very -- a lot of vertical passes. Did not play from left to right only, but penetrated through the lines of the opponent with his passes and sometimes with his dribbling, so he was very active. It was a good match for him, and he is training very well, and that's what it is.

Q. Just a quick one on Kalidou as well. As a club you have given Kalidou a four-year contract with an option for another 12 months. He is 31 years old. It's unheard of for Chelsea to give someone of that age such a long contract. Presumably you think that he can be playing at his peak for a number of years still to come.

THOMAS TUCHEL: That's what we believe. That's what we believe, and that's what he is here for. I mean, there were always rumors about him leaving Napoli. It was always super difficult and in the end impossible to get him because he was a key player. It's nice that he takes the challenge right now.

And we have Thiago Silva, who is even older and super experienced and still on the peak of his game, so we hope that Kalidou can do the same and play many years for us.

He is totally fit and ready for the challenge, and he needs to be because we need him in top shape.

Q. I believe this is the first time you guys have toured in the U.S. since Christian joined the team. What kind of reception have you seen him get from the U.S. fans here in Vegas and even going back to your time in Los Angeles?

THOMAS TUCHEL: I guess so. It's for sure the first time in U.S. since I'm at Chelsea. We can see that everybody is excited about Christian, of course. He is American player, American national player, captain for America, and an important player for us.

I think that he enjoys it to be in L.A., in Las Vegas, and now we go to Orlando with him. He enjoys it to be in his home country and to play for Chelsea and to present himself within the squad. Of course, we can clearly see the excitement around him.

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