

St. Louis CITY SC Media Conference

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Bradley Carnell

Postgame Press Conference



St. Louis City 2, New York City 0

BRADLEY CARNELL: We came out today to send a message to show that we were a little bit angry with ourselves in the past performance, and to set things straight. And I've seen the intentions in trainings. I've seen the intentions in the messaging within the locker rooms.

And I thought over the 90 minutes we dominated a very, very good team here at CITY PARK, and yeah it was a good feeling to get back to winning ways.

But yeah just really excited for the boys. Proud of them but it doesn't stop here. We can't celebrate too much, and yeah, if we carry on in this trend or this form, then we'll be just where we right need to be. So that's it.

Q. You didn't have a whole lot of practice time since the game. So they made the changes that they needed to do. Was a lot of it internal?

BRADLEY CARNELL: A yeah a lot of it was internal. You know, we committed a lot of time to off the field sort of training in terms of video scouting. Reflecting about, you know, some past performances, and yeah, just trying to set things straight, and you know, make a case for who we are and who we are not.

You know, credit to the guys, though. Being totally accountable, responsible, and know that, yeah, there's something about this team that's special. And I see the amount of work these guys put in, when you don't quite get to see everything. I see the enjoyment as a group. I see the commitment and togetherness as a group. It was good to see the ship on the display tonight, similar to some performances of last season.

Q. Sam, his let foot -- on a role with that foot.

BRADLEY CARNELL: Yeah, I think that's the end product, right. I think Sam does a whole lot more than just that. I

think everyone we brought in today, I think everyone who started today, I don't think across the board that there's anyone who should feel disappointed about their performance. I think it was a total complete performance today.

And that's the only way we can operate. We can only operate in this way and then when we do, yeah, more often than not, especially here at CITY PARK, things fall in our favor.

But yeah, I always say that the harder you work, the luckier you get, and you know, today we dominated and were in total control in all phases.

Q. Last week you talked about how the team doesn't work without the intensity, and tonight everybody was jumping in the passing lanes, and defensively strong. Was that the impact --

BRADLEY CARNELL: Yeah, part of that, it's on me, right, because we set up a game plan, and sometimes it doesn't go according to the game plan, right. So then I look at myself, and then it's always good to remind myself who I am as a coach and who I'm not.

So again it's part of my pathway as well. Sometimes you get it right and sometimes you have to learn. You know, I feel I never want to start learning and always put the team in a good space to succeed. Yeah, it's how I set the tone, how I set the message with the group, and you know, how we all get on board and feel belief and confidence that that's the right way.

So I think tonight was a very good display of exactly that.

Q. The starting lineup was a big change from the last couple of games. Can you take us through the process to get to this lineup?

BRADLEY CARNELL: We just looked for the 11 most healthy players. It's been a challenge over the last couple of games. To roll out the back line that we have been accustomed to over the last couple of games, you know,



yeah, obviously in Houston, we had to rotate some lineups with the congestion and the fixture scheduling and what-have-you. Some of it by choice; some of it by need, and just proud of the guys that they all came through this okay.

It's all very worth it and beneficial to our group when we sustain the 90 minutes in the way that we played tonight, and everyone walks off smiling. And I think that's important because we have put in a shift tonight. We put in a ton of work, and to see that the guys came through it okay was amazing.

Q. Seemed like the press was pretty high again, much like it was against Houston. Was that connected to having that back line that you just mentioned, the consistency in the back line again?

BRADLEY CARNELL: No, again, I spoke with the messaging, and it started from the front. The press for us never starts at the back. The strikers initiate it. The strikers read the passes. The strikers are supported by the ten, the sixes, and then the back line. If that's all synchronized and the orientation for us is always the ball, and then if we connect and force overloads and create the chaos that we like to control in certain moments, then it looks that way, exactly what you saw tonight.

Q. When it comes to forcing those overloads, does it change things when AZ is up with Sam as one of the two strikers, as opposed to him triggering the press from the second midfield spot where he was later on in the game?

BRADLEY CARNELL: Yeah, I think AZ, even Klauss to a certain extent, they have a knack of jumping at the right moment, right.

You know, I think Sam is working his way to that category as well and he's picking up more passes and he's forcing more mistakes. Credit to these guys for all reading the right moment because if a team gets their rhythm, it can break you a little bit to not just, you know, your physical state, but also your mental state. And tonight, you can see the urge to fight against that and always to come out on top, and if you didn't get the trigger, then the next guy was there, and that's what we count on, right.

So tonight was extremely fun to watch.

Q. It felt like there were a lot of opportunities from distance, too, and did you like the feel that maybe there was a little more aggression in trying to put it in the back of the net outside the area?

BRADLEY CARNELL: Yeah, I think against Houston at home we hit the post twice, if I'm not mistaken. Tonight we hit the post twice, and we always encourage our guys to finish off with final plays. What does that mean: Is it the next pass; is it the shot from distance; is it the next runner; who overlapping, right. We give the guys freedom and flexibility to that but we supply them with principles in the transition moments, whether they should stay on the ball, take the shot and knowing that we have some set piece weapons. If it gets deflected, then we can really put another layer of pressure on their back line.

Q. Nilsson appeared to be really active considering his hectic preseason into this first four-game window. Were you impressed with his play tonight?

BRADLEY CARNELL: Yeah, he's a warrior, right. So he battles through. He commits to the team every single day. He's got a great attitude. He's a leader, not just by actions, but also in and around the locker room with the younger players, and you know, those are the things you don't get to see.

But then to see him coming out on top like this tonight, is an indication and a reflection of exactly why we signed him, right. So he's had a stuttered time with us, but finally get to see him a string of games, getting him strong, getting him healthy. I feel that the curve is trending in the right way for Joakim. I think the medical guys have done an amazing job to keep turning him around.

Obviously there was a slight setback last game, but then he knows his body. He's an experienced guy. He knows when he should play through something. He knows when he should pull the plug on that one and take himself out.

So again, he has the experience under his belt and he chooses wisely for the team.

Q. There were a couple of unfortunate moments the last couple games on defense, and today looked very sharp, very clean, and I wonder, you know, what are your thoughts on the defensive performance and how happy are you with the clean sheet today?

BRADLEY CARNELL: Yeah, good. I haven't seen it as critical as you maybe over the last couple games. I think as a collective, we have given up a lot less chances, you know, which is a good thing.

Today was clinical. Today was really tight. And it was really good that we were so connected but again, I said it starts from the front, and I think the guys put in a hell of a shift up front just to force those turnovers and to be relentless in the press and to come back in the game and

to defend with ten players.

Credit to everyone. It was a complete performance.

Q. And you kind of touched on it at the beginning, but the disappointment of getting knocked out against Houston, do you think that was really helpful and inspiring for the team and will help carry you guys forward the next couple game?

BRADLEY CARNELL: One of the things is being honest about how we operate as a group, and it was good to see that the players themselves felt that there was something off about Tuesday. Didn't need me to tell them. They didn't me to show a video. They didn't need me to lay the heavy hand. These guys, they know we give a better picture than that.

We are bitterly disappointed for sure, and even in that game, we had a couple chances. The pendulum could have swung another way, but that's done and dusted, and we're not looking backwards. We're only looking forwards, and what we could control is today's performance, and I think we did that.

So now we can't just rest here and think that's going to happen every single weekend. We have to be, again, modest, humble and remind us who we are and there's only one way for us, and that's tonight, how we played.

Q. You mentioned earlier when selecting your starting 11 that you were really looking at the 11 healthiest options. I was curious, we didn't see any of Blom tonight. Checking to see if that was just for some rest or if there was anything deeper?

BRADLEY CARNELL: We are just evaluating Jabs at the moment. He did take a knock on his knee. So again, we are just waiting for some evaluation over the weekend. We'll know Monday morning. He's got a couple of things at the medical center, so that explains Jabs' absence.

Q. Obviously Célio had a special game, a goal and assist. What is it about his game that's starting to open up and take him to the next level as a player?

BRADLEY CARNELL: I think Célio, with certain opponents, he comes to life. You can see the attitude he plays with, the fire in his belly, and if you let New York City take control of the game like that, then it's going to be a tough evening for us.

So we need the characters on the team that bring a lot of fire, not just the technical ability, not just the pressing but we needed somebody, especially on that frontline, who has

a bit of fire in their belly, and you can hear when he wins a goal, he's so emotional about it, and he really intimidates the opponent sometimes. It was good to see, and then he gets rewarded and he gets to reward his teammates as well.

Listen, we are always pushing Célio. It's a project, and Célio knows where he started and he knows where he is currently and he knows where he wants it get to. It's up to us as coaches to encourage him, and nurture him and to get him going in the right direction.

But yeah, he's fun to watch.

Q. Was there any uncertainty for you on the centre-backs going into tonight for Joakim and Tim, definite in your mind?

BRADLEY CARNELL: I think after Thursday's training, we knew these guys could turn around. Felt in a much better place on Thursday after some evaluations and Friday's training. Both guys got to good speed, 90 percent of their max speeds and just to make sure they are ready to go.

Yeah, we managed them really well. So in all good, sometimes you have to give up something and unfortunately Joakim couldn't play the full game the other night and we had to lose him for half the game pretty much, but then we gained a lot tonight as a group.

Yeah, I think it was a week in hindsight well-managed, and yeah, it's unfortunate that we don't go through in the Champions Cup but now we know where we have to put our full focus on.

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