

St. Louis CITY SC Media Conference

Saturday, March 15, 2025

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Olof Mellberg

Postgame Press Conference



St. Louis 1, Seattle 0

THE MODERATOR: That win was St. Louis's first win over the Seattle Sounders.

Q. Talk about the Burke injury.

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, it happened yesterday in training. I was actually standing just a few yards away, and I saw it happen in the moment. It was like we were playing small-sider games. It was a wobbling shot. Took him by surprise, and just threw out his hand in like a reflex. Wasn't really prepared for it.

Yeah, I just saw it straightaway and asked him if it was the finger or if it was the joint, and he said the joint. But he continued training. We didn't think it was too bad.

But unfortunately, there is a small, small fracture there.

Q. Talk about the defense tonight and how the team banded around Ben, and another solid effort from top to bottom?

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, for sure. I thought we defended extremely well today, conceded very few chances. Scored enough; created enough to get a goal.

Q. Seemed like in the second half, especially until maybe the 75th minute that Seattle was building momentum. You talked a little bit last week about winning the second balls and wanting to see that more in the battle today. What was your thought process in the interim, and how did you like how the squad finished the game?

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, really well. I thought we needed -- we made a triple change, and I thought the guys that came on did really well. I thought we needed a little bit of energy at that point. I thought we struggled a little bit with the energy and the quality on the ball.

So yeah, I thought, again, the guys who came on did really well. I mean, throughout the game we defended really well, and we had our good moments going forward, especially in the second half. We probably should have scored the second.

But obviously pleased with the three points.

Q. And then Eddie's goal, you're standing directly behind it. Can you talk about what you saw in the run-up to the shot?

OLOF MELLBERG: The free kick from Edu? Yeah, his free kicks are amazing. Some of the best I've seen live. Even in training, there's always a huge possibility he will score.

Q. What specific strategy are you playing in the defense that's working? What is the strategy?

OLOF MELLBERG: The strategy is not to concede chances and goals, you know, and we're trying to have the best setup and formation and personnel possible to do that.

Obviously we're trying to be better on ball and have more quality, and now we are playing again a team that is very good on the ball. San Diego, Galaxy are, as well.

So we would like to have more possession, and you know, a little bit more quality when we win the ball, especially. We are still wasting possession a little bit too fast and too easily. Against good sides like this on the ball, you end up defending for long periods of times.

But yeah, we have to do that. We have to deal with that, you know, like we did in the end, and conceded very few chances.

So, extremely pleased with the organization in defense.

Q. Yesterday you talked in the pregame presser about trying to get possession under control and trying to better your possession. You had 28 percent in San



Diego before that, first game of the season, you had 56 against Colorado. Are you satisfied with 34 percent?

OLOF MELLBERG: I mean, I'm happy with improvements, and this is a small improvement from 28 to 34, I think you said.

But yeah, definitely we want to be better on the ball. I thought our defending, high defending is good, as well. We won the ball in dangerous areas. It's all about getting more quality and more confidence on the ball.

And I think we are playing it backwards too much. You know, we have control the session, and we end up with our keeper or our center backs; I think we can find better combination for higher up the pitch.

Also, I have to say, these teams we played, we get quite a lot of space to go be direct. You know, to go on the break.

So it is difficult for the players sometimes to not always try to take advantage of that. But I thought especially in the first half, we could have gone more to possession rather than trying for that direct ball in behind.

Q. Your squad joins only two other teams in MLS history to start the season with four straight clean sheets; that being the 2007 Vancouver Whitecaps and 2012 New York Red Bulls. What do you think that you have done, and your staff and the players have done differently from this season and their defensive woes from last season, how do you think that transition worked when you came over in the off-season?

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, really well. It was working really well in preseason, as well. I think we have a lot of players who are individually good at defending.

I thought we find the formation early on that suited the squad in defending, and we've been able to build on that.

So yeah, I mean, again, I've said it before, it's not a deliberate choice to have so low ball possession and having to defend for so long periods of times. It's not really by choice.

But also, on the other hand, we're not desperate to have more ball than the opponent. We want to win games.

Q. You made a change in the midfield going with Watts, Durkin and Löwen. How much about that was ball retention and pressing a little bit higher, and holding down guys like Albert Rusnák?

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, we changed formation a little

bit. It worked really well the last, 20, 25 against the Galaxy. We thought they looked really comfortable, and we were dangerous going forward, as well.

We decided to continue to build on that, and we thought it would suit, you know, our game plan against Seattle.

And also, we got Akil, he didn't start the last game but he's a player that's done really, really well both in preseason and the beginning of the season here. I thought, again, he did extremely well. Worked hard.

And getting another midfielder in, you know, hopefully gets us a little bit more possibilities in possession, as well.

Q. We haven't really seen Cedric Teuchert in that solo striker, especially playing such a high pressing line. What have you seen maybe in training that made you go with that switch, instead of Simon or Klauss, who have more experience up top in that pressing, single-high role?

OLOF MELLBERG: He's played there before as a striker. And we felt we had other profiles around him, you know, with Conrad and Tots a little bit further up the pitch, and also Célio and Akil joining in just behind, with the flexibility for Cedric to be dropped in sometimes as a bit more of a number ten. But also he's got good timing in his runs in behind.

So you know, there was a lot of defending for him, as for the whole team, but I thought he did really well in that.

Q. Can you talk about Chris Durkin tonight, led the team in touches and passes into the final third, and just his performance overall?

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, first of all, nice to see him back. He's still building on his fitness. But yeah, I thought he did really well today. You can see he's improving all the time.

Yeah, I think we can get even more out of him, in the first half, especially. But definitely just he keeps building and did really well today.

Q. We've talked in the past about trying to get more control in games. In the match tonight, there were long spells where Seattle was in control of play. How do you get more control in these matches and get that to translate into maybe more chances and more goals?

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, I thought control of the game today was really good. I've said it before and I'll say it again, more possession, and spend more time in the opponent's final third.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

You know, because we've got qualities there, and we have good rest defense, as well. I would definitely like for us to spend more time there.

Yeah, Seattle is a good team.

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Q. What did you think of Ben in the nets? He didn't have to be spectacular. He did what he had to do. What do you think going forward? Are you comfortable with him back there?

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, yeah, for sure. I thought he did really well. He was solid. They didn't have many shots on goal, and he didn't have to make that many saves.

But he did well, and he's a good goalkeeper. He's shown that in preseason, as well. Good shot stopper. It's different for us, obviously, because, I mean, Roman is a top, top goalkeeper in the world, I would say, in all aspects, shot stopper, on the ball, in the air.

So you know, with that in mind, I thought he stepped up, Ben, and did extremely well, and a good performance to build on.

Q. With this being first career shutout, how do you think Lundt did having to step up for the first time this season?

OLOF MELLBERG: Yeah, I thought I mentioned it. We found out today, early today about Roman's injury. And he didn't even know yesterday. With that in mind, he did extremely well.

Also, the other guys helped out a lot. We looked really strong on the crosses and set pieces.

Credit to the whole team for helping him, as well, in a difficult situation having to step in with such short notice.

Q. And City had yet to earn a point against Seattle in four previous games. You got that win tonight. What adjustments do you make tactically knowing their previous matches, knowing how they went, to secure the first victory against the Sounders?

OLOF MELLBERG: I was not looking too much at previous seasons. I was looking at their previous games now. I thought we had a really good game plan to get the three points.

But it's a good side. They have a good team. So I understand the problems they have had in the past. They have a deep squad, as well, a lot of experienced players they have been able to deep for a long period of time. You can see that. They know each other well.

