

St. Louis CITY SC Media Conference

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David Critchley

Postgame Press Conference



St. Louis SC 3, Nashville 1.

Q. You've got to like a game where you guys go up 1-0 and make 2-0 and make it 3-0. I haven't seen games like that.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Not since I've been here. Something we worked on in training all week, and even last week, was what's the mentality like when we score a goal. Too often I've sat in this chair and we've started a game well, we've scored a goal and we've had a little bit of a passive behavior, and today wasn't the case. So that shows massive growth in the team.

Just to go in and get a goal and build on that momentum, build on the aggressiveness, what favored us to get goals. So to go up three, I thought was fantastic. And then the penalty comes, Roman makes the save. I think it's one of the loudest the stadium has cheered for, which is great and that's absolutely the right moment to do so.

But it gets brought back. But I felt like for this theme this year there's been moments that have gone against us. But today the difference is we put ourselves in a position of such a controlled moment with 3-0 that even when it doesn't go our way, we can still come away with three points.

Q. The importance of Jaziel's goal, and not an easy one, and not a guy that you expect to score a goal in that way in that situation.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: No. But we spent a lot of time in all the areas, set pieces. We're very organized. Alex does a great job with set pieces, first phase, second phase, making sure guys are in the right positions. And even for a fullback to go and put the ball in the far corner like he did, I was super happy for him.

He's come into this group and been brave. He's come from the second team. He's been brave. He's adapted right away. The team has welcomed him with open arms and I

was really happy for him tonight.

Q. Nashville had chances to get a shutout against a team like that and to keep Surridge and music hard basically shut down?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, I think they had, I want to say, Surridge and Mukhtar have 29 goals, maybe, together so far this season. We knew their threats. We knew how we had to counteract their threats and combat it. And, again, we were so close. Yet there's a penalty at the end that gives them the opportunity.

But I was very happy tonight. We scored three goals but I thought the defensive performance was also phenomenal from these guys, and that's been an area we've been spending time, so that was happy to see.

Q. Following up on that defensive performance, Fall has a great first game in MLS and in Energizer Park. What do you think about his performance and the big tackles he made early on?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Against the ball, he was brilliant. On the ball, we've asked him to be brave and try to play out. I think he had maybe one or two stray passes but that's okay. That's going to happen, especially as you adjust and adapt to the League and the style that I'm asking for.

But defensively, I had a moment where he slide tackled, and I think three times consecutively on the ground. His aerial threat was fantastic. His leadership is getting better. I'm hearing in moments on the field as well. So good, fair performance for him here, so I was very, very happy for him.

Q. Seems like he's been adjusting quickly to what the team is expecting out of him.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think so. He's come in and felt comfortable right away. I give the locker room massive credit for that especially when guys come from overseas. If their teammates open them with welcome arms, it making the transition so much smoother. It's been good for

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him.

Q. On the young players in general on this team, Sang-bin gets his first goal. What does it mean to have this performance with those players playing well, as well?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: For me, when these guys came in, I thought -- I'm going to go away from the question a little bit, I thought Devin was also fantastic today. He deserves a shoutout.

But Devin, Sang-bin, Fallou, bringing in new energy into this team and new faces has massively helped this group. So for Sang-bin to get on the score sheet was good. Was he the one that had the chance in the first minute of the game, maybe, really super early that just went wide? Nice for him to get on the score sheet and feel comfortable now. All attacking players once they get a goal, their confidence should rise and rise.

Q. There's a lot of uncertainty heading into next year with the amount of prayers on club options and a lot of contracts expiring. How do you as a leader in the locker room and as the coach of this team try to keep your players centered and with the goal of just going out there day-in and day-out and focusing on the game at hand?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, you know, the present moments that I talk about with these guys is the only thing that we can really try and control.

So for these guys that are on options just training hard, playing well, and training but then also coming out on the weekend and putting in performances like that will only help their case.

So as easy as it might be to get distracted in these moments they are doing a decent job to stay focused on what they can control which is their daily performances. So that's what I try to help them with and guide them in. So hopefully that's coming across and they try to remain focused.

Q. I want to say, Jaziel scored a goal, that's massive, but knowing he's not a natural fullback that goes offensively like the modern fullbacks go today like Devin, are you expecting that from him? The way that I see it, I don't know, you may correct me on this one, is we are going to see him playing more as a fullback than as a center back; is that right?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Possibly. For Jaziel, when he came into this group he was very versatile so he's a comfortable

defender naturally to play in four positions. Now with the addition of Fallou, and with Henry getting back, Kess, I know we didn't see him back tonight, but he's back to almost full fitness; that center back position is pretty loaded and I'm pretty comfortable with. We'll probably see him more in the wide areas as a fullback. I know he's not an attacking fullback but he is a very good footballer that can read moments. Probably more as a fullback, yes, and for him, I was just happy he got on the score sheet.

Q. In the corners and the throws, usually in the corners, what I saw today, you guys were usually playing short first, but then on the throws, you were going straight to the ball. Can you walk me through with your coaching staff, how do you decide that?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Again, I can just only give credit to Alex, the goalkeeper coach that spends a ton of time with these guys on set pieces. We knew defending-wise they had a really good first contact on corners. So the option was to play it short and try to unbalance them, move them around on the field before the ball came into the box.

However on throws in when you have a player like Devin that has that, let's call it special weapon, it's almost like a corner kick, right, so we can utilize that moment a little bit more. Yeah, it was all designed by Alex today, so I give him full credit.

Q. I noticed the communication between players was probably key to the success today. What was that? It flowed, the communication, and so things were efficient. Was there any specific practice to have that be efficient and effective?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I wouldn't say we spent any extra time on it. It's just been something I focus on all the time with these guys. They probably hear me use the word communication ten times a week. Just in how they communicate to each other, how they receive communication.

Like most things, you know, after the couple of weeks when a new coach comes in with maybe a new philosophy, it just takes a little bit of time to get settled. But for me, how they treat each other and how they communicate is so important. I think this took us -- this team took a step in the right direction in a lot of areas, communication being one of them.

Q. Seems like you were able to push them out to the flanks a lot of this game. How important was the ability to drop Ostrák into that flat three midfield? I know it's a different look than you showed a lot of teams, and looked like it was useful in helping slow

down Nashville.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, we knew a lot of their opportunities come from the central areas. So we wanted to remain really compact, and one of the messages to the team was make their fullbacks their quarterbacks or their ballplayers today.

They had a little span in about the 35 to 45 moment where they found some good success, more than I wanted. So at halftime we adjusted the shape again and had more of a flat five to eliminate Devin being in them 2v1s quite a lot, which helped as well. Just eliminating the central areas on Nashville was the key to our game this week, and I thought the guys done a pretty good job of that.

Q. Padelford seems to be making big contributions. He's been a big addition to this team.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, when we looked at his profile and we looked at bringing him in, we knew a physicality in his engine was something that was a massive strength of his. He took a week or two to get adjusted to the heat but he's getting quickly adjusted to it coming from Minnesota. So hopefully he just gets fitter and sharper every game, but he can cover a lot of ground, as I think we all seen tonight. So he's going to be a good weapon for us moving forward.

Q. Did it seem to you like Mukhtar stopped on the penalty kick, his forward progress?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Something I've talked for these guys a lot and Roman with his training and his performance is -- Roman deserves a clean sheet so, so much, and we were so close tonight. Then he makes the save, and I think he makes a double save, if I remember, cleared and makes a double save, only for it to get brought back.

But that is what I was talking about. Sometimes the luck has not gone our way as the team this year, but the difference tonight than other days is that did not define the end result for us. What we have to try to control is be so dominant in games if even a little bit of a moment doesn't go our way, it shouldn't impact the end result. Roman's clean sheet is coming pretty soon here. I can give you guys my word on that.

Q. In the moments with Orozco's goal and Klauss's goal those are moments that this year have not gone your way and both catch the post on the way in. Was it one of those things, bound to happen sooner or later where you get the breaks?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think so. I use the word "momentum" a lot, and this is a momentum hopefully shift

in our direction.

Yeah, every game, when we look at performances, when we look at how we just control the game and take away almost the final result, we've had a lot of really good performances and like our XG tonight was 2.6, 2.7. We've had higher this year and lost games. It just shows that it's starting to shift in our favor, let's just say that, so I'm happy with that.

Q. Petey signed his contract this week and this is his first game. First performance. What do you think about his showing tonight?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think he's our good luck charm and he's done fantastic. It was nice to see Roman walk him out on the field and get him accustomed to Roman and the team, and we started off sharp with him 1-0 by our side.

Hopefully we can go 2-0 next week with Petey. I'm a big dog lover. I have two dogs myself back at home. I'm excited to see Petey around a lot.

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