

St. Louis CITY SC Media Conference

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St. Louis, Missouri, USA

David Critchley

Postgame Press Conference



LAFC 3, St. Louis City SC 0

Q. LAFC looked really good. When you look at that game, as dominant as they were, did you feel you were in it at any point?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: No, not today. I think for us, our performance on who we are was not good enough, was not up to our expectations and our standards. Taking nothing away from L.A., I think that they have a very, very solid roster. The talent in their locker is very high level, and you see that today.

We give two goals away in the first half that are too sloppy, too easy, on teams that quality with the roster they have will punish you and that's why they are where they are in the standings.

For us, yes, taking nothing away from LAFC, their hot run continues, fantastic team, very well-coached, a lot of talent all over the field as we know but you can still find ways, we can still find ways to win football games, maybe it's not based on talent for at that time, quality for quality but the work ethic, the mentality, is where that has to shine, and you can't give away goals that we gave away today. That's what kind of got us down early, and then from there we were just always chasing.

Q. What's the impact of that first goal? Because you don't want to give a team like them easy chances, and seems like the longer you can keep them off the board, the better it is.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think so. We had one early chance with Klaussy, Sang and McSorley (ph) coming off the left side. Hugo comes out big, obviously makes a 1v1 stop on him. Those are the plays that you have to convert. Get a 1-0 lead and build off momentum. Because they are the earlier moments in the game where, you know, teams are going back and forth and trying to adjust and figure out the tactics.

But once we let them get settled at our home stadium on the ball and control the game as much as they controlled it that testifies did I have performance wasn't good and you tack that on with, again, the mistakes that we made tonight, yeah, made it a long night for us.

Q. Were emotions high out there? Looked like there was a lot of pushing and shoving and sniping as that game went on.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I mean, I think so. You know, we feel the energy that these guys give a lot even when we are in situations where we are down. I felt like there was moments, small moments where we were competitive, which allowed us to be feisty or snipy in that moment, but there was also moments where we got played around way too easy as well.

So I think some of the built-up anger in them moments for the individuals that make these types of tackles, you're chasing shadows for 89 minutes, you finally get close to them, sometimes you want to take a shot. I think we just need to be better at not being reckless in moments and being more disciplined and defending better as a group.

Q. Looking at the second half, momentum did shift a little bit after the subs that you made; did you like what you saw from those moments of that adjustment of bringing some of the intensity back?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I did. I felt like that was one of the highlights is our guys went into the game tried to impact. It all the names really impacted. All five did really good stepping in, controlling the game when he can control the game. Célio looked dangerous at times when he got on the ball especially with some space to take, and then Totland and Mykhi done good late in the game trying to push their last line and get opportunities.

I felt the groups came in, the individuals that came in helped the group tonight, but again, you know, game state, they are up 3-0. They are just managing that game, absorbing our pressure, and even when you're up 3-0, you're looking for moments to counter through Son or



Bouanga, and they had a couple moments, as well.

Q. Because he -- inaudible.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: You said all five, right? He does a good job. He's aggressive defensively. I think he had a couple slide tackles today and a couple big moments where he helped the group out and he does a good job on the ball as well.

So he's a complete midfielder, uses some experiences in games like that as well. He came on, trying to slow the game down when we needed to and speed it up when we needed to as well. But when you try to speed the game up against a team like that, sometimes it actually hurts you more than helps you.

Q. Sang-bin, I noticed that he played on the left side today. Primarily I feel like he's been playing on the right ever since he arrived. What was your intention putting him on the left and also if you could talk about how he's settled since he arrived from Minnesota.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, I think it was a decision we made on a couple of factors. One is trying to isolate him off the left side well with his speed. Secondly, a couple -- Brandon McSorley is coming off two goals, and it was one of those that you balance those two decisions and I think it's a good formula for Sang-bin and McSorley and Célio and all of our wingers, I expect that they should play on both sides effectively of the field at this level.

I thought they had good moments, especially early in the game. They did a good job isolating him but finding his biggest strength, his speed and taking away from him didn't help in them moments. Second part of the question, he settled in well. He comes out, trains well, has a good mentality. Looks to improve himself every day whether improving with the team or staying behind and doing individual work. I liked his mentality what I saw with the group so far.

Q. Since he's gotten back from the Korean national team, his first return in four years, do you feel that's given him a big boost in confidence?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think so. You look at any time you get that call up it does increase your confidence. He's come into our group from Minnesota and got significantly more play time as well which naturally increases a player's confidence also. He's a confident young man tonight.

I'm sure he'll tell you didn't have his best game and wanted to rise to the occasion of what it was tonight. Yeah he keeps getting better every single week.

Q. I know you talked about the goals already but goals number two and three, the defense sits back and let's the run come to them. Son gets a lot of time in the top of the box. The defenders don't step out and take away Deni in that play. What are your thoughts on the goals, not the plays where the team gets beat but the one-on-one moments not stepping up?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah yeah, we have to get better on the field with our decision-making. Something we talked about this weekend in our training environment was when we felt like they break our pressure and we see Son and Bouanga running at us, we do need to eliminate space behind. But at some point you have to step in and not let him dribble inside eight, nine, ten yards and took one in the corner.

In them moments, we have to read them better as individuals. We definitely need to try to take away their strength which is runs behind but you have to step at some point as you mentioned and put a block in there. There's goal No. 2.

Goal No. 3, it's something that's conceded on us special teams especially early in the season which we put enough players in front of the ball to block it but somewhere keeps trickling through.

We've just got to defend individually better in them moments. There's no escape around it. There's nothing I can say other than we've just got to be better defending inside our own box in them big moments.

Q. It seemed like Sang-bin was crashing inside as the care striker. I know you guys have done that a lot but considering his move from that striker position to the right wing this year for McSorley what was the decision-making process to have sung be the one crashing more as the striker?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think just like they are, in my opinion the best team in the League at counterattacks and transition, that was something we felt like they might hurt their back three in as well. We have to know the opponent we play. We knew we were not going get on the ball and dictate the game with 65, 70 percent possession.

So finding transitional moments, trying to find moments where we can be a little bit direct and get them behind. I believe you saw one action very early which we were successful back but (inaudible) makes a good recognition of that moment and comes off the line.

But we just have to know the type of opponent we are

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

playing and find where their weaknesses are. You are not going to pin them back a lot and over-possess them a lot in games but you can get after them in a direct fashion. And that was one of our objectives to try and do and Sangy was one of those personnels that we felt like might have been able to get him behind and find a 1v1.

Q. Going down 2-1 the at half, what was your message to the guys?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: You can't give the ball away the way we gave the ball away in situations like that. We did do a couple of adjustments tactically. We tried to set up a different -- more pressure ton their three center backs.

But quite frankly, if you don't give those two moments away as a team, yes, they had some of the ball and some opportunities, but you might go into the half at nil-nil and you never know from there.

So have to be much better when we defend for longer periods of times and then you finally win it, you can't just give the ball away every single time. The top teams in this league will punish you, and we showed that twice tonight.

Q. In the attack, did you think our attackers did enough to get behind, or what would you like to see?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I mean, I haven't see any of the data or any of the stats. I can only kind of what I feel is we just as a group wasn't good enough on the ball tonight.

I'm not going to isolate any single player because if we can't get in behind the last line, maybe it's the defenders on the ball and can't play out of it. Maybe it's the midfielder's fault and we can't connect enough passes.

It's a collective on the ball tonight for us. We have to have players that are more brave praying in these types of events and situations and getting on the ball and playing out of it. We didn't have that tonight.

Q. This makes it official that you're eliminated from playoff contention, but it's been obvious this is coming for some time. But does it hit you in any way when it becomes official that you're out of it?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: No. Because mathematically we knew the situation we were in several weeks ago. It was inevitable it was going to happen.

Now it's just about coming back and seeing how we as a club and the players respond this week in training. For us, it's one game that I felt we were dominated in in a lot of moments of the game, but, when I look now at how we

prepare for Austin at this point next week; it's a team that we can go out and beat.

So for us now, nothing changes. The objective is to pick up six points in the last two games and try to push ourselves into a position of finishing the season strong and trying to build momentum as we go into 2026.

Q. Is Fallou okay?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I haven't heard anything. It was a situation where he makes the tackle, I think with Bouanga may have slipped on him or stood off him. Tried to shake it off or five or ten minutes but inevitably we made the decision to get him off the field.

Q. Did it look like Sang-bin was pumped up for tonight's game? For a guy that runs a lot, looked like he was running a lot.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think so. He knew the occasion. He knew there would be a lot of his home country watching the game. He's coming up against obviously a player that everyone admires.

So I don't think he had to have any more extra motivation to play tonight, let's put it that way. Started the game off very well. If he gets to that ball early and puts it in the corner first couple minutes of the game, we are probably looking at a completely different football game but it wasn't meant to be for us tonight.

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