

St. Louis CITY SC Media Conference

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St. Louis, Missouri, USA

David Critchley

Postgame Press Conference



St. Louis City SC 2, Real Salt Lake 2

Q. A lot went on in tonight's game.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Unfortunately we couldn't get three points but that is probably a great finale, in a way, to end this year. It was exciting. It was entertaining.

We had adversity thrown right at us, and we saw the resilience and the character of the players. It's something we spoke about for a long time.

So to not give in, to not quit, even though you could say there's nothing to play for in some way, is a great test of the locker room's spirit and character as we finish off the year.

I think there was a couple of moments that we definitely need to improve on, the two goals conceded were probably a big example of that. But you know, it's a first of many for me. It the first of hitting the woodwork three times and not coming up with three points in game, but again that seems to be the way the season's gone for us.

Again, massive thank you to the he players for their efforts and determination tonight.

Q. Looked like in the second half you guys were focused on trying to get those goals back. It looked like attack, attack, was about the main thing on your mind that whole half.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Absolutely. Absolutely. We wanted to go out tonight and make it a memorable night. Make it an entertaining night for our fans. They showed up tonight, even with all the weather that St. Louis had today. They supported us, cheered us along. So we could give them nothing but a hundred percent of intensity and energy tonight.

I thought we were actually very good in a lot of moments with the ball. We created some very dangerous chances. I

don't know the XG or shots or anything, maybe you guys can fill me in as this goes on. But we missed a couple of moments where we could have won the game. You know, and again, hitting the woodwork three times, just couldn't quite finish the plays off.

Again, it was just an entertaining game. It was the way we wanted to finish the year with an electric, exciting, fast-paced game.

Q. And those two goals you gave up early, just communication problems there in the back?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: That's one of the situations when you press aggressively, you've got to be mindful of when the press is broken. Tried to reorganize the team pretty quickly.

So the first one I think we missed a couple of moments high in the corner of losing second balls and it bouncing around, and then Kyle just kind of got dragged into a massive space that we shouldn't ever be dragged into. Late on a couple of challenges there; that was the first one.

The second one, I think I was a little surprised it didn't get brought back for a foul on Mykhi. But again I'm not going to make it about the referees and the decisions tonight, if I disagree with a few of them tonight. He didn't bring the back, and then we just got caught in transition. Yeah, we can clean them moments up for sure next year. They are moments that are easily cleanable.

Yeah, it unfortunately got away from us. But again the, the fight, the spirit, to come back and keep playing until the last minute and almost winning the game late was massive credit to the guys.

Q. You mentioned XG earlier, but Olatunji has a brace in the first half. Second half looked like Kyle was marking up a little more closely, to the point where he wasn't able to create much before coming out of the game. Was that a specific adjustment at halftime or was it more of a reaction to what he had to say at half?

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DAVID CRITCHLEY: No, it was very specific. We done a great job in the first half utilizing Conrad and Totty in the attack. So the more you use your fullbacks in the attack, the more you might be vulnerable to transition moments or defending with a 2v2 or 2v1.

But something I told the guys at halftime is I don't want to go now into the second half and have Totty and Conrad just drop on the back line and be really reserved. We felt like we had a massive amount of success.

The messaging was to keep Totty and Conrad higher to create 2v1s in those wider lanes. And then put the responsibility on Chris Durkin, Fallou and Kyle to just make sure that in the second half, Olatunji, Luna, they had no time and space. And I think you saw a much more aggressive trio with them three in the second half, and that's why we limited them to chances.

Q. Just talk about the environment before the match, Roman Burki's extension announcement was played before the crowd. Was that something you were aware was going to happen before the match, and how long did you know about the contract talks?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I've known. But yeah, it's something we'd planned. Again, I was outside, thankful, for it. If I wasn't, I probably would have heard the fans screaming on it, anyway. It was a massive celebration.

It's a great statement next year for the club to re-sign your captain and a profile like Roman's. It shows his commitment to the city and this club, and it shows the direction the ownership want to take this team moving forward.

So it's very, very exciting, and I think re-signing Roman is a massive deal for the club.

Q. From day one that you were assigned as a head coach until today, where do you think the team has improved the most?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: With the team?

Q. Yeah, with the team.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think just overall, we've shown we're a very good attacking team. I've got a lot of data out there that I won't bore you with it, but we've got a lot of data to show that when you look at an expected threat, I think as of a week or two years ago, since I took over to today, we are like third or fourth in the country in how we create chances score goals. So we are very high up there.

I thought we've developed on the ball attacking extremely well. The first half of the season, that was not an identity of this team. They struggle to create chances and score goals. We've done that very well.

And I would also say, as of late, I've been very proud, and I know we conceded two goals today, but the defensive, I want to say mentality, overall, of the players has made me very happy and very proud. They brought in a lot to the defending side of the game now, and they are probably the two big moments I've enjoyed.

Q. I know the season just ended and there's a long way to go for next season in 2016, but if it was up to you, the decisions, where would you like the team to improve for next season, or what positions or what type of players would you bring for next season in 2026?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, I think, you know, when I look at it from an attacking standpoint, there's enough spots that you can score more goals in than the wide areas, as well. I think we have created goals with Klauss and Célio. And as of late they have combined or 18, 19 goals maybe, centrally.

We definitely want to be a team that can also create moments from wider areas and score goals, as well. Having personnel there that can create chances and score goals would be great for the team.

We also need to be very organized defensively. So maybe not a position for this but a profile for this is a really good defensive-against-the-ball-type player that prides himself in that phase of the game, moments. Could be a center back; could be a six; could be a fullback, but a really defensive-minded player on this team would really help us not concede as many goals.

Q. A push to work the ball down the left side of the field but seemed especially in the first half, it caused the self-defensive structure to get little imbalanced, and after the transition, Fall was getting pulled over to the left sideline a lot. Was there something in the second half you did to not reorganize things but make sure things didn't get as discombobulated as they were in the first?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I think the information at the halftime was to speak to Chris Durkin specifically. Because when you had Chris, Conrad and Totty all releasing, all go forward, that's when we were the most vulnerable. And I felt like one of them had to stay back and help in the transition moments.

The way the flow of the game was going, we were so successful in the wide areas attacking, whether that was starting the attack with Conrad off the dribble but finishing it with Totty. But I felt like down the middle of the field, we could have had Chris be in a little bit more stable position.

So we had Chris sit back a little more reserved or a little bit deeper for these moments so we could continue with the success out wide, and I think having a plus one in them moments in the second half really helped us with not conceding too much transition.

Q. Your thoughts in the moment on Mykhi getting the start and how he played?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I'm super happy for him. I think, you know, the moments in the first -- I don't know, maybe 15 minutes when he hits the post, just wish it would have dropped the other way for him. Obviously it would have really, really made him feel super confident probably as the game went on.

We were able to get him some really good minutes, some valuable minutes. I know his attacking flair is something he's spent time on and worked on. But I want to give him credit for his defensive efforts now, as well. I've had Mykhi since the academy days. I had to get back into him a lot harder to get back into defense than I do these days. He's definitely learned on the defensive responsibility of his position, but as the season next year goes on, he's just going to get more brave and more creative on 1v1s and be a really good attacking player for the team.

Q. Two moments in the game that stand out to me. Both times ball hit the post, bounces to a player that's flat-footed, not really ready to play it, and there's no capitalization on the chance. Can you speak on the importance of staying aware and staying on your toes in the box and be being able to kind of pounce on those chances?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, we'd win the game 4-2. Yeah, look, I know the one for McSorley where Klauss hits it off the post, and I think he's seven or eight yards out and he's not anticipating it. It's very easy for us to sit here on TV, on camera, to slow it down and to wind it back; these decisions are happening every tenth of a second.

But they are the differences. They are the differences from, I think we mentioned this week, we were seven points behind making a playoff spot. These are the small moments that individual behaviors and quality and sharpness in this organization does need to improve.

We know where we finished in the standings, and I think

we have had a great end of the year. Now we've performed and picked up results. But the expectation and the standards of this club are very much higher, and they are the plays you have to finish off, if you want to be a playoff-run team.

Q. With a game like tonight, do you feel the impact, like the momentum changes, do you feel the impact of that more in a match like tonight?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, as in regards to like the openness of the game? Yeah, I mean, you know, Real Salt Lake are coming in position where they don't quite know what they need because of the couple of teams that are competing for the playoffs. But they came out, and in all fairness, made it much more open and transitional than what we were anticipating. Probably a lot of that leads to the result that they need in the game.

But as the space opened up and as the game became more transitional, I think it favors us against a lot of teams in this country. We're very quick and fast off the attack. We have now really good mindset to get back in and defend well.

So definitely an exciting, entertaining game for the finale of 2025. It's probably a game that recaps the entire 34-game season in 90 minutes for this team as exciting, entertaining, lots of goals, too many conceded, and too many moments where we missed big chances.

But that's probably the cap on 2025. So now it's all about 2026 and how do we make sure we get into next season as a really strong contender for a playoff team moving forward.

Q. We had less fans tonight but sounded like they are louder than any game I've been to. What's your message to the fans?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: My message is just very simple: It's thank you so much. They have been very constant in showing up all season for this team. Every single player and staff member in that locker room knows the importance for this for the players and staff.

So for me, thank you so much to all the fans. They have been a plus all season, and we couldn't have done it without them.

Q. Was the plan for Marcel to take the penalty kick?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I wouldn't say yes or no. All I can say to you is we drew up a scenario yesterday in training, just to put a situation on the game that we played in, and it



was having a penalty against Roman. And I asked Célio and Edu who wants to take it ask, and stood up and took it in training.

I think it's one of those where Marcel, would he have gotten goals? Is that would have been his tenth goal? So a nice round number to finish the season for him. What that shows to me for Edu -- I would say he Edu is the first penalty changer on the team. What that shows to give Célio the ball to take it is an act of selflessness and a true test of everything I've talked to you guys about away from the field: Building character, building togetherness, building brotherhood.

So to give up that big moment to Célio, I thought was massive, and Edu gets rewarded with the second take.

Q. And Klauss's goal, was that a designed play there?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yes. We've definitely -- I'm so grateful we've scored from that moment, especially for Alex, who does our set pieces. But yeah, one of the ideas is to target in Fallou in the front zone, and from there just react to the ball quicker than the opponents.

We had a couple moments in the year we didn't quite capitalize on, but thankfully tonight we were in the right place at the right time for that second goal.

Q. How bad was the rain down there? Looked like it was coming down pretty hard.

DAVID CRITCHLEY: I'm pretty drenched through. I had a nice final game day attire that I was going to wear but I elected to go with the black puffer jacket from the club because it was pretty wet out there.

Brilliant British footballing weather, is what I would say.

Q. The year is over. You've been in this chair for more than half the season. How do you feel you did?

DAVID CRITCHLEY: Yeah, I feel like I've done a great job. The one thing I was always wanting to be clear on when I stepped in was for me, a lot more needed to be fixed than just the football on the field. There was a lot of stuff off the field that needed to be addressed and fixed and set new standards, expectations. I feel like we done that fantastic.

I think the football improved dramatically on the field, whether you are the coach of the team and you say that because you're biased or you're on a neutral and you just watch the game, it entertaining. It's exciting. There's definitely moments we have to clean up on, but that's what we're going to do over the off-season here as we prepare

for 2026.

And I always said, I just wanted to be analyzed off the situation I was given. You know, I had a situation where I stepped into a locker room that was probably a little bit more disconnected than what we want. We had a lot of injuries thrown at us throughout the first short period of me stepping in.

But overall, I'm happy with my performance. Yeah, I thought I done a good job.

Thank you, everybody, I'll miss your faces for a little bit.

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