



## LA Galaxy Media Conference

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### Greg Vanney

Press Conference

LA Galaxy 2, Houston 1

**GREG VANNEY:** I thought it was a huge three points. Again, a lot, I feel like we've been on the road a lot. You come back home and you are starting four out of five, I think, at home. You want to take the first one. No matter how you do it, you want to take it, and we were able to do that tonight. I think that's big. I think that settles the group in going into Wednesday and going into the week because it's another busy week. So really important.

*Q. When you look at how Miki played today, how important was he to how you guys played and his progression in the last five games?*

Yeah, you know, with Miki, I think when he first got here, he was super eager, really spry. Really active. Super involved.

And then, I think, the league kind of let's you know it's a tough league. And I think he had a tough penalty called on him at LAFC and a couple set pieces that maybe get redirected at the front post, ended up a goal. I feel like he carried those pretty heavily for a little while, and I feel like he's kind of emerged out of that recently.

We are trying to find more ways to keep him involved in the game and not let him get stuck in the back where he's just kind of hanging out but getting him more into the midfield and getting him high. The second half, we used him more as an attacker and wing back. Again, try to keep him involved.

I think the more involved he is; the more you see him; the more quality that you see that comes out of him. I just think he had a stretch where he was out there but he wasn't involved enough, and I think he was just taking up very conservative positions where he was almost -- I wouldn't say this about him, but he was almost like hiding a little bit.

Now, it's like, go get involved; we have so much quality. We have been working on that with him and talking him through it, and I feel like he's really coming to life again in terms of that role, and that's important to us. He's a very good soccer player. So he was important for us tonight again.

*Q. Gabriel Pec, he goal -- what changed in the performance today? How do you think he looked?*

Yeah, I felt like he was really competing and he was dynamic and he was aggressive and whether it was in transition or times when we were getting him on the run -- use some of his power and speed from and that you see more of his qualities come out, right, and so that's two things.

I think some of that is us getting him involved and some of that is him not just being kind of passive in a way and looking for the ball at his feet and trying to play one-on-one all the time but to play aggressive and for us, to play him moving into some faster actions, whether that's in the space he goes or whether that's him getting it and he's already on the move. I feel like



what he does that, you see a lot more of what he can bring to the occasion. He did it on the right-hand side in the first half, and he did it on the left-hand side in the second half. So he's capable of causing problems on either side and tonight he showed that.

He probably wishes he had one more because Riqui I think set him up for a really good look there in the second half. But I felt like he was aggressive and he was running aggressively, too, and competing out there, which it gets him involved.

*Q. In the second half, it seemed like you were a little bit more animated than usual, and it seemed like when I was watching you watching the team play, you wanted them to press more forward, where there was more back passing today. Would that be accurate?*

That would be accurate, and it's mostly when we were up 2-1 and it's the latter part of game.

These are battles, and guys, as the games progress, maybe they get a little tired, and I feel that guys then tend to go what's easy. Yeah, playing backwards is easy but it's not necessarily what's right or what's good for us.

And I wanted us to do the little extra work to try to play forward and play in the opposition's half versus continuing to go back to John and have John hit long balls that don't necessarily even get us far as we were when we passed backwards. Like to me, it doesn't add up.

It's doing a little more and being a little confident to play through lines and play forward to try to keep the game away from our goal versus back towards our goal. That was part of my animation for sure.

*Q. You spoke about being patient. Do you feel like the deem --*

I thought we struggled in the first half. I thought in terms of organizing our defensive responsibilities, I thought we were not good. And that kind of set the tempo for the game. Because if you can't get pressure to the ball and you can't win the ball in a reasonable area, then your attacks are starting in bad places; you're always kind of under it.

Hence the switch at halftime was more of a defensive switch in many ways to try to reorganize sort of our numbers. They overload the midfield, right. They bring Carrasquilla, who is supposed to be a winger on paper; he comes inside. They create a four-man midfield. They are all very comfortable with the ball.

We were not matching their numbers, and it was creating difficult decisions for Marc and Gastón on do I step forward and defend the pivot that's in front of me, but then I have a guy behind me. And there was all these difficult decisions, and I felt like we were between everything. And that's never a good place to be.

So we tried to reorganize it on the fly with Gabe on the left. It wasn't really coming off clean. So then we switched those two and let Diego just come inside and really defend more narrow, and that way Gabe could defend the outside back who was taking a higher position and Diego could really defend narrow, and if they wanted to play out to that side, then we were comfortable with that because we could organize the defending.

I feel like we matched their numbers, which helped to defend things and control the middle of the field better, which then led to us, again, having the ball more. Us being able to break out in transitions that were from better areas versus in our box. I feel like we were able to kind of reestablish a level of control of the game that we needed to then go on ask get something out of it.

So that kind of was the impetus of the adjustment. I feel like we needed to do that just to kind of get ahold of the game and get guys to the right spots.

I'm not sure if I answered your question. I think I just went on a tangent.

*Q. Guys starting the game -- where you've allowed the other team to score first and running behind, and coming out --*

Yeah, back to the first question with John.



I think John is trying to find the -- he's an experienced goalkeeper, and I don't love when we go back to John and he just launches it up to midfield. I feel like for us we need to get guys to the right spots, provide John with the solutions, and then John needs to make the right solution and execute upon the solution.

Sometimes we don't get guy always to the right spots fast enough depending on how aggressive the opposition's pressure is, and sometimes John on very few occasions, John doesn't necessarily execute the right decision. I feel like that's more rare.

John is usually one who plays a little more conservatively versus aggressively, and so I don't want him to shy away from still looking for those opportunities to play because I think it's important to our team and it's important to how we play.

I don't think we win a ton of balls to get launched up to the top, you know. So it's important for us to provide him with the solutions and him to play. Today, he got one pick that I'm sure he wishes he had back and maybe that was a moment that we could have gone longer.

But I think it's important to how we play that he -- that we get there and he try to find the right solution in that situation to help us. It's good for us when teams try to press us if we can break it clean because we do have -- especially when Joe is out there, we have pace and things on the other side that if they want to stretch themselves out and we can get through them and get, that we create some really good opportunities for ourselves.

I want John to stay confident and keep finding the right solutions, and if he doesn't see them, then he plays long and question live to fight another day if we don't recover it.

*Q. (On being behind in the game.)*

Yeah, I don't love that. Again, I think, look, when you talk about home at RSL we started fantastic I thought and we didn't execute to store. That's one situation. And today, I don't think we had a great first half at all. But I don't think it's a great cycle to get behind in games and have to come back to win them.

But this team has showed a lot of resiliency. Maybe playing on the road is part of that during this stretch, but this group has shown a lot of resiliency to make up some deficits. But it's not something we love to do.

I'd love for to us have a better first half than we did today, get on top of the game and manage from that side of things. Something that we obviously talk about and that we want to try to do. But you've got to play the game that's in front of you, and you've got to deal with what you deal with. Maybe with some home games, not tonight withstanding, that maybe we can get the front side of things and maybe play from there.

Damien? I think -- Damien, in the back.

*Q. (On moment in last part of game with referee.)*

Oh, I thought you were going to ask the stats, and then I was going to tell you to go get them from Kevin. Just giving Kevin a hard time tonight.

I did. You know what happened, I don't want to speak for Ben, but I think he was disappointed that the three minutes was like three and a half minutes. Maybe felt like there was a little more to that.

So I think he was having dialogue with the referee. I think one of our players kind of stepped in between him and the dialogue. He didn't appreciate that and then it kind of just start into a nothing personal but a battle of word and maybe a little bumping and all that kind of stuff. I don't think there was much in it. I just think it was -- you know, he didn't like that one of our players stepped between him and the referee as he was trying to have a discussion. Whatever, it happens, it's emotions at the end of the game and everybody moves on.

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