



LA Galaxy Media Conference

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Greg Vanney

Press Conference

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Q. Your first game in two weeks, took awhile to get your foot into the game. How did you see it develop, and the second half, scored four goals.

GREG VANNEY: I thought the first half we were pretty controlled. I thought we were pretty solid in possession and good stretches except there was too many, I think just missed passes over the course of the night that led to transitions is that led to extra work.

But I thought our positional play in the first half was very good. I thought our solutions were there. When we connected, they were there. It just came a little bit down to kind of the final action. Maybe a little bit more decisive when they had moments to break the back line and we could turn some of the possession into attacks. I felt like that was something that was there and just at times, like I said, where we lost possessions that we didn't really need to or we just missed passes.

But the windows -- we felt like at halftime as I said to the guys, the windows of opportunity were there for us. We just were missing them or we were not organizing ourselves and playing for them in. In the second half, I felt like we found them a little bit more. Getting a goal late in the first half meant that they were going to have to come at us more and spaces would open up. If we could get the ball into those spaces fast enough, our transition game could come to life a little bit more.

So again, I think with one of the few times that we've played without Riqui, I thought the group was very smart about how we dealt with the game, how we built speed in the attacks and how we find guys in good positions. And we still, again, manufactured through transitions. We manufactured some great moments where we were able to go fast and take advantage of the space in front of us.

So yeah, I thought we were solid. What I was disappointed with was the goals we gave up because I don't think they were great goals. We gave up a lot of shots, not a lot on target and not a lot of them that were dangerous. Dejan made one incredible save, and we have to deal with that better. But just situations where we have lapses of judgement or we don't deal with, again, a ball that's whipped into the box.

But in general, I thought through stretches we were pretty sound defensively but it's just these moments that we have to eliminate.

Q. I wanted to ask about two players. Yamane, two assists, and especially that ball over to Pec. And Paintsil coming back after a month and getting a goal.

Yeah, with Miki, the way we used him today, he was certainly more involved in more actions over the course of the day. He was just in different positions where we could find him and he was involved in the attack. He was, I felt like, getting more



touches in more decisive areas than sometimes he does when we use him as the third in a build, and in that way I think we were able to see some really good moments from him.

The pass that head to the goal was just incredible because Shelton was kind of gambling on the player that was dropped off, I think it was Diego in the gap, and Miki just side-volleyed it, laced it to behind and Gabriel was in. I don't know, hell of a vision, just to see that kind of transpire and play into the depth, and then it was on. What a pass.

And Diego had one, I think it was a little bit before that, that was similar. Again, the vision to play behind because they were gambling a little bit in the press that got us in behind and got us a chance. He was very solid on both ends, the defending find and attacking side.

The last one that was crossed into the box, I have to look at again. I felt like it was a combination of whether John could come get it because it finished really close but I know it was Miki's guy that got behind him but I felt like maybe that's close enough for Jhon to be aggressive and take that one out of the air and there's nothing to do. I have to look at it again. I thought he was pretty solid.

As far as Joe, it's great to get Joe back. He's got to get, again, back into match fitness, and just get sharp, again, you know, which there was -- he scored. He probably had three chances to score. He was like, I could have had a hat Riqui in that 30 minutes. But it's also just getting his match fitness. He does so many things at a high speed that that repeatability is something you have to work back. It doesn't come overnight. There were moments in the run of play where he probably would like to be a little sharper or a little tidier, but again, it comes down to that repeat ability because when he's able to repeat, he's impossible to deal with. But he had the chances.

Gabe was fantastic on the night. He was just a super handful, whether it was on the right or left. He was just so hard to deal with for them, and created a lot of different looks for us, and I was happy for him to get a goal. Then he got a couple assists I, think. It was a really solid night for him, and I thought he worked with the group on the defensive side through lots of the game. So I was proud of him, too.

Q. When you don't have Riqui, what are the greatest elements in terms of figuring out how you are going to move the ball? What are the biggest challenges to that?

Yeah, you know, I think for me, we are positionally a little bit more stable. Our two pivots stayed in our pivots. We were able to -- we were more predictable even for each other in terms of our spots. You know, when Riqui is on the field, he starts high, comes low, he defends high, he drops low. That sets a series of moments into play that are hard to defend, and Riqui has special qualities to be able to change the tempo of the game like nobody else, I think, in our league.

So we have to to manufacture that through good positional play, speed of ball movement, things like that, that -- there wasn't many guys on the field today from our group who were in the building section who are going to pick up the ball and skip through the lines and create speed in the game. It's going to happen through just sharp, one-touch passing, one-touch, two-touch combination play, opening our body, play through the lines and let's go. Because we were in good spots and we knew where each other were, we were able to manufacture speed in a different that I want sometimes when Ricky is there.

If Riqui is here, if we can do both, stay inside the systems and use his qualities in the best way possible, and we have even another level that we've seen for sure tonight or at other points in the game. I feel like that's when we are at our best when we are going that more often, and when we are at our worst in this improvisational, moving-around-too-much kind of mode, and that's what we've been talking about the last couple of weeks. Talking about the balance between being a somewhat fluid team and staying within the structure a little bit more and that's what we've been focusing on is the defensive side. It's the repeat ability of doing each of our roles on the defensive side so we can win balls in more predictable ways throughout the course of the game.

Q. Can you speak on the injuries to Puj and Brugman, and how has the team assessed their situations?

With Riqui, he was kind of down the stretch before the break. He had a bit of a growing pain issue. It wasn't super significant, not something that he couldn't play with, but the issue became: Do you keep going little by little or take the two weeks and try to get him over the hump. That's what we're doing. He got treatment, a couple PRPs, and the idea is to really



try to get him over and not try to get him game-to-game. That's where we are at with him. He's on the right path and it should not be too terribly long. Might even be at some point during this week, we'll see, once we start pushing him back into return-to-play stuff.

With Gastón, I think it was our last home game in the warmup, I think he took a shot and ended up with a bone bruise on the knee, I think on the plant leg. So for him those are tricky. Because it's like one step forward, one step back, and that's what was happening. He was feeling good and we start taking it slow rolling him back. And the second he starts to accelerate, decelerate, he starts to feel it again. So this week, we just made the decision, we are shutting him down and aiming to get him over the pain, maybe a two- to three-week process of which we are already at least one week in, to try to get beyond the pain and then start the progression back so it's not up and book, and we've got to keep moving forward.

So we'll be down a little bit in midfield. I don't think for exactly how long with Riqui. We'll see as we start pushing him back into. But Gastón is going to be at least another probably couple weeks and then we'll see where he's at.

Q. Could you talk about Perez, his performance in the first half, and then you had the sub for Cuevas in the second half. If you can explain that.

Yeah, so I thought Johnny was doing great. He felt at about 40 minutes, he felt the hamstring kind of bite on him a little bit. So then it was super precautionary to be honest. We wanted Johnny to get us to the point that we were safe to get Joseph on to the field. So then we ended up with a gap because we didn't want to -- we didn't want to push Johnny and we didn't want to run Paintsil too long.

So it was a little bit of a sacrifice but to be fair to Mauricio he was fantastic in the 15 minutes, and I told him, You were incredible. So I felt bad about it but for the sake of the long run, we did it. He knew what was coming. So it wasn't a shock to him. But he was -- he sacrificed a little bit for the team, and I'm proud of him. He was fantastic when he came on, he really because.

But that was why we were trying to close the gap there. Johnny, we hope and think we kind of caught it early. We didn't put him back out there. We probably could have but it would have been high risk and it doesn't make sense right now for us to take that risk. But I thought he had a really good first half.

The thing beef been working on with Johnny a lot and we put a lot of decisions on Johnny today defensively between step and press the center back or stay and manage. So I thought he showed maturity of choosing good moments and being decisive on the defensive side. On his side it was pretty straightforward, him against the outside back in some of the attacking moments, and I felt like he got the best some of those moments.

I thought he was good in Chicago, too. For me two good performances back-to-back by Johnny that has shown he's continuing to mature as a player that's really nice to see. So I'm really happy for him and I hope whatever is going on is something that is very short term and we can keep working him through that rotation there.

Q. We've talked about ways you want to see him improve. You've mentioned times he can elevate his game?

When Dejan has a little bit of space to move and find areas in front of the goal and stuff, he's at his best. There's probably a handful of more plays to link up, to be a little cleaner in those moments. Just I think he would say the same thing where he should try to fight through that contact and maybe keep it or utilize the contact and bounce and then get going again where there's that. But he has this nose for the goal, especially as spaces in the box open up, he knows where to be. His timing is excellent. Great cross across the face of the goal, too, when he got himself a little bit on the outside.

He's not a guy who necessarily always has to stay in the middle of the field but when he does have moments where he needs to be our outlet and we need to be able to have him hold and bring somebody in I think just a little sharper in a few of those moments would have put him at a higher night

Generally I thought over the night, his defensive work with Diego was pretty sound and pretty smart. I think one of the things we talked about at halftime was when we got up 1-0, I felt like at the top we got a little more passive defensively and then we ended up having to defend lower. So really in the second half, encouraging us to stay more proactive on the defensive side



so that we could try to move the ball where we wanted it instead of just letting them go everywhere.

I thought their work was solid. I thought Diego did a really good job. Just really, again, I can't say enough about how much he understands the system and how things need to work, and he makes really good decisions and he can adapt inside of the game, not every player can adapt inside of new situations and scenarios in the game, and he does a really good job of that, and I thought he did a really nice job of kinds of helping to orchestrate things from the topside with Dejan and the others.

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