



LA Galaxy Media Conference

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Greg Vanney

Press Conference

GREG VANNEY: For us try to win the west, finish the season at home unbeaten and there's a lot of things on the line for us.

Strategically, obviously for them when Riqui was able to slip away, they were certainly taking plenty of shots at him and so I think that also builds a little bit of emotion through the course of the game. Marc gets a piece of their guy in a transition play and it just kicked off from there, and as the game got nearer and the result was where it was, they took what I thought was a vicious shot at Riqui and one that's extremely dangerous. I was saying that there needed to be a standard set much earlier in terms of the types of fouls and the quantity of fouls that I think were on Riqui and started to set a standard, and the point here that this game was not going to get like that but it certainly did.

Q. When things get heightened, what's the discussion going forward?

GREG VANNEY: Again there's moments where we get upset, we get emotional. We can't go on the field and do things that put us in jeopardy for suspensions and things like that. But it was a horrific tackle right in front of our bench. So certainly guys are going to react. There were moments where their players were talking to guys on our bench, too.

We have to be able to control ourselves in the situation, as well, all of us included, everybody, because there's a lot on the other side of us that we continue need to continue to be mindful of. I don't think our group was expecting something like that. Maybe it's something we needed to go through to learn from it, but I love the fact that we were gritty enough to get it done.

Q. Do you think Delgado's foul contributed to that?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, it was the foul in transition from behind. I don't think it's a foul that's going to hurt anybody but it ended up being maybe a little higher than Marc wanted. Again that was one of many fouls in transition through the course of the game on guys whether it was Riqui or others.

They took offense to it. Obviously they felt like it was worthy of something different. So that's when I think that reaction and everything else sort of led to, I guess, some heightened emotions.

Q. I thought that kind of kicked off a lot of the things. I thought it might have deserved more than it got as well.

GREG VANNEY: I don't know, that's to decide. Again, I don't think -- it was a little late and from behind. He didn't have a lot of power and studs up. He kind of hit him across the leg. There's reasons there to think it's yellow. I think there's probably reasons there to maybe consider otherwise but for me it wasn't a tackle that's going to hurt somebody. It just wasn't. It didn't have that kind of force and it wasn't like studs up to the middle of the leg or anything like that.

So that's at least what I saw from where I was. I'll tell you what I see when I go back and watch it again.



Q. *Went straight to the locker room -- what was his situation?*

GREG VANNEY: What I saw, after a long sprint, I saw him sit down, I saw him stretching a couple times before that. I was trying to get Diego a bit ready for him and then we had a defensive set piece, so I held on to it. Then he went on a big sprint and next thing I know, he was down and holding the back of his leg. Hopefully it's not serious. Hopefully it's something that is minor and we can get through this break and see where we're at.

But yeah, it didn't look great because the mechanism is a sprint, you know. So we'll have to see once I communicate with the doctors and see where we're at.

Q. *One of the goals likely for you guys was to be undefeated at home as it started to build through the season. You guys do that and also set the record for most wins and points for the L.A. Galaxy at home. One of the things you said, you wanted to make this a fortress and looks like you guys did that.*

GREG VANNEY: I would agree. You know, between us, the energy in the stadium, because that's a big part of it, the fans and you saw I think one of the biggest crowds maybe ever in this stadium, and an attendance record for the Galaxy since 1996. Again, that just shows you the amount of support this group had this year, and they rode it. It's a relationship I think in the stadium. When the fans bring energy and the players are running and sprinting and competing and creating goal scoring chances, it feeds back into the energy of the stadium, and we got that right this year. It helped us to get results here.

Today was a different kind of result. I think we left some really good chances on the table in the first half that kept that thing a little bit hot but we did it a little bit different here today in terms of just being a little bit of a gritty, feisty, game didn't settle down a whole lot because of the way they were pressing and we weren't able to kill them off in some of the breaks they had. It's been a great year. That's something that this place, I always remember playing with and against the Galaxy that this was a place that was nearly impossible to get points out of, and tonight, or this year, we've been able to re-establish that again.

Q. *The Galaxy have not been to an MLS Cup final since 2014 and it's been a tough stretch since then. Maybe people that weren't paying attention don't look at this team, but all the records, and there's other records that you guys have set. Is this team as good as your Toronto team in 2017? Is this team a contender?*

GREG VANNEY: I think the team is a contender. I think the team certainly looks to be back. I think you've got to keep -- we've had a very consistent year. When we've had down moments we've bounced back with positive moments and wins. I think those are signals of good teams. We have made home field, like you said, a fortress, which is a symbol of a good team. We have been able to grind out and get some good road points. Maybe some others along the way we would have liked to have gotten.

But I think we have all the signs that the club is back and in a good spot. And we have a young group that is going to continue to grow together hopefully and continue to go through some of these moments. Like today has to be a moment that we have to mature from a little bit, and when we go through these next playoffs hopefully all the way to the MLS Cup, hopefully this group will learn from this experience, and then this group near will learn from Champions League and all these other things.

What I'll say, I'll speak briefly about the 2017 Toronto team was that was a team that had a couple of years to grow together. It went to an MLS Cup in 2016, lost in a shootout to a team that didn't get a shot on goal in 120 minutes. The bad taste that it left in in that group's mouth going into 2017 was a huge motivating factor for where that team was at and how they went and did their business on that season.

But that was a level of maturity that that group had to learn that this group is certainly taking on as quickly as we possibly can, and the playoffs are going to be another test for us to see again, through how most of the course of the season we've been able to mature and handle now the next phase of what's coming.

Obviously we have Houston and that's going to be an important game, too, with where things are at. But the playoffs are going to be a real test for us to manage emotions, still play the kind of football we want to play and execute in critical moments.

Q. *Inaudible.*

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, correct, and I think consistency is always a measure of whether your team is back or not back. You can have a couple of good wins and you're not back.

But like I said, this team is always able to bounce back from a bad moment. You typically bounce back from a bad half and show a resiliency, win games in some different ways but show some real excitement, and you can see the quality of the players that are out there and how they complement one another. There's a lot of reasons to be really excited about this team and now we have to buckle it down, finish the season, and then go after the playoffs. That's a big measure for everybody in this league. But we certainly have gone the ground work to give ourselves the best chance possible.

Q. *We hear the players celebrating in the back, very festive. But I don't believe that the job is 100 percent done.*

GREG VANNEY: Correct.

Q. *I think there's still -- the maths need to line up right. Knowing all that and that the team has had difficulties at Houston on decision day, what's the approach to decision day? Obviously there are celebrations but job not done.*

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, we've got to go there and get at least one, I think. Our mindset is that we've got to try to keep our rhythm. It's been a really strange, I've said this many times, sort of tail end of the season where we had two weeks off because of when we went out in Leagues Cup, the restart, and then we had international break and then we had a bye week and this weekend and now we have another international break and then, you know, things are going to get going again.

So managing this international window is going to be really important for us from a training standpoint, and then the Houston game is going to be, again, the kickoff to that final preparation for the playoffs. And the game has plenty of significance and importance, the way I look at it. It's a critical game. We have to go there prepared and we've got to be able to handle Houston and being on the road in the right way and get something out of there.

Q. *What did you feel like you learned from this game? Has tonight done anything to change what you think your ideal 11 might be?*

GREG VANNEY: I'm not too sort of focused on ideal 11. I think we've got a good sense of where we're at. Obviously Marco wasn't healthy today and available, and others to consider. I think we have a good team and I think it's going to take a good team to get through the playoffs.

Figuring out what the right solution on a given day or against a given opposition, I hold the cards to be able to figure out what that might look like. I think what we learned today is that when teams have their back against the wall or when teams maybe compress us man on man or they are willing to take the kind of risk that they were willing to take, and Colorado did a little bit against us in the first half, it's better how to manage those situations a little tighter, take advantage of it when --like I said in the first half Joe had an incredible chance early, plus a couple others. If you have a team that that's committed to the high press and man on Monday pressing, you have to punish them on the other side of that when you get your chances, and that gives them a reason to have to sit back and protect themselves a little bit more.

Today we have to take that, I think some of our emotional control, obviously, so that we can keep proper control of the game. I think it's going to be important. Some other things there, I just think it was actually probably good for us to have this type of game right now because the playoffs do have the potential to look like something like that. You know when the team gets down a goal and they have everything to play for and start throwing numbers high, start pressing high, and a lot of things can come out of that.

Again, it's important that we learn from this experience.

Q. *Gabriel Pec, a goal in four straight games, can you talk about just his improvement from when he joined the roster and to now?*

GREG VANNEY: He obviously was a talented player when we got him and he's a talented player now. The evolution, and



I've talked about this a bit. The evolution that I've seen and what we've been trying to work with him on is when he came to us from Brazil, he was very much a winger and a 4-3-3 who was heels on the sideline. The team's job was to get him the ball and he would go one-on-one and try to make things happen, and a lot of times he was in isolated one-on-one situations. He and I talked about that a lot.

And here, I wanted him to not just always be heels on the sideline. I want him to sometimes come inside, pick up the ball in the gap, but work in a relationship with two and three people to create different types of scenarios, not just him one-on-one all the time.

And so I think he's really evolved in terms of understanding how to take up different positions in the attack, how to work with other runners and other players and not always be one-on-one but also when he is one-on-one, he's incredibly dangerous to be able to go inside or push it on the outside. I think he's added a few more layers to his game. I think in the first part of the season, he was just kind of standing out there saying, hey, I'm open, get me the ball. It wasn't getting it to him as often and now he's way more involved and getting more touched over the course of the game; therefore, having more influence and more impact.

The other thing that I think he's continuing to work towards is we've talked to him about finishing actions at speed. You know, there's a lot of times where he'll cut inside and he'll decelerate and try to hit the perfect shot and then it doesn't have any power on it.

What I think we saw a little bit tonight was he was at speed on his finish, and he took it at speed and he hit it with power and low, and the keeper couldn't get down, and that's something we want to continue to take confidence in; that sometimes it doesn't have to be perfect, but if you do it fast, you're going to catch the keeper in a shift or not ready or oppositions or things like that.

But he's evolving and he's having a lot of fun, and when you have a player that's that talented and having fun, they are dangerous for the opposition.

Q. Inaudible.

GREG VANNEY: He'll be good. He trained with us for portions of the week, and because we have two weeks on the other side, it just was -- we didn't need to risk tonight. But he'll be ready. He's in training and ready to go when we get back.

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