



LA Galaxy Media Conference

Saturday, October 19, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Greg Vanney

Press Conference

Houston 2, LA Galaxy 1

Q. Tough way to end the season. I know you guys were right there and Daniel scores that goal. Talk about the game as a whole and how the ending feels for you.

GREG VANNEY: The game as a whole we knew it's not an easy place to play. They are good in possession. They get into good spots. We wanted to try to stay connected. We didn't necessarily want to be as deep as we were in good chunks of the game.

I thought in possession we were fine but after our attacks, I just felt like our presence in the midfield area was not sufficient. And so especially in the first half whenever the ball transitioned, they were able to get to our half of the field relatively easily. And we recovered back and were in lower block positions for a while, and then we would transition out and be really fast. And if you're going to do that, you have to take advantage of some of those moments, and we have got to get goals when we are in those situations.

But we have to do a better job of controlling transition moments, for sure, so that the game doesn't get so end-to-end and we aren't defending so deep in our box. But I felt like that became and defined much of the first half.

We had some good attacks. Like I said, we had some things that were looking promising. But it was -- I felt like just in terms of the overall control and where we wanted the game to be played, I just didn't love where that was happening.

Let's see, then we gave away a foul, a set piece goal that we don't win the first touch, and the second one kind of bounces off some people and falls to their player. He taps it in. Again, another moment where again a ball crossed in the air; we don't deal with it, which ends up playing I guess a role in our season at the end.

Because we end up in the second half, I feel like just a little more aggressive. Defensively a little bit more proactive which in times I think worked out for us in terms of recovering balls in better areas and not ending up so deep so much. We started attacks in slightly better areas.

So I felt like we were able to get a chance. Obviously Joe scored. We get that called back. You know, we get ourselves back into it with the penalty, and then it's just about seeing the game out. One play at the end of it, and you know, a cross from the sideline where we've got enough numbers to defend the box, and we get beat to the spot and the header finds its way into the back corner.

So one play at end of the season, when there is a season of a ton of plays, but the one play being the last play of the season, just really, it hurts for everybody.



But as I said to the group, let this be a lesson that, you know, this one today, it hurt us and it cost us first place, but the next one like that will cost us our season. So we need to be able to, again, mature from the moments and be ready. Because the tournament starts now in a week, and every moment like that is critical.

When we say we have to play every moment and we have to deal with every situation, that's a good example of it right there.

Q. It felt like at the end of the game after the penalty that not every player was mentally playing to the final whistle. A couple of plays they were maybe looking for the whistle. Would you agree or disagree with that, or is that something that concerns you?

GREG VANNEY: I think it's a fair assessment. I don't know if that was necessarily what was going through their head but I certainly think it's a fair assessment because we can -- again, as I said, playing every play is kind of my point that guys can't dribble through us. And to start attacks, we have to be able to, again, create density in the middle of field and make sure that we are connected and make sure that we are taking away all dangerous areas and that that we can deal with stuff.

I feel like, again, we were a little bit -- a touch disconnected. In the end we still had the bodies to make the play, but I don't like that they are able to get to that spot two times. They got there once, and then we got them -- forced them back out, and then they got there again at the end for a chance that ended up costing us the goal.

Again, this is the moment, especially where any moment can kill you, and that was exactly what happened,, and again, we have to recognize it, grow up from it and recognize it. Again, we take a play slightly off or don't get all the way to where we need to be and we don't do the things we need to do, it can be the end of our season really fast.

As I said, it's a harsh lesson, and it's not like our first lesson of this year, but it's a harsh lesson, and we'll certainly make example of it. Because the guys feel like crap right now, as everyone should at this moment, you know, with the way that it ended. But at the same time, the tournament and the Cup is in front of us, and now we have to make sure that these things aren't -- don't happen again.

Q. With your experience in this league, is this more of a gut check? Do you lose momentum from this, or does this light a fire under your guys?

GREG VANNEY: I don't think it's a momentum thing. Because I think you come back home, it's going to be -- our fans are going to be there. They are going to be roaring and ready to go. It's the Cup, which is what everything is about in our league.

I think it's a harsh reminder when you have a group of guys who are competitively haven't had a ton of these moments together as a group; that we have guys that have had these moments, but together as a group, this is a reminder of how quickly it can potentially end. I think when you are not a super competitive, mature group that has a lot of positive things going for it, sometimes you forget there's a dark side on other side if you don't get your stuff done correctly all the way through the game.

Now tonight was a harsh reminder that there was a dark side. We should have a healthy level of fear that we can be out of the playoffs in a hurry. But we've got to use that motivation, and now the momentum and the energy of being at home and the Cup starting to get ourselves going, and I feel like that's how this group is going to respond, and they have all year.

Q. How close have you watched the score in the other match tonight, or was that not top of mind?

GREG VANNEY: Second half we were keeping track of it. You know, even when it was 2-1 up until pretty late, we knew by goal differential that we still had the West won, even though we weren't winning the game.

As I was trying to get message to the group, with a certain level of calculation, we want to try to go get the goal back and get the draw, but we shouldn't be exposing ourselves in a way that we're opening up ourselves to give away maybe potentially that goal that would separate the goal differential one more. That's kind of a position that was happening for a little while, and trying to get that across.



Then, obviously, there was a goal that happened on the other side, and then it became, okay, we've got to really push and we've got to try to maybe throw caution at the wind a little bit and see if we can't get the balls in front of the goal. That's about the time the penalty happened, and now we're back in the game. Now it's a quick shift into now you've got to protect yourself.

So we were playing a little bit on it the last, say, ten to 15 minutes maybe, but not -- nothing -- nobody was really thinking about it before that.

Q. Looking at Joseph Paintsil and that goal being overturned, I didn't know if you had thoughts on that. And then playing all the way to the 101st minute, seemed like there were a couple extra minutes in there. Thoughts on either of those?

GREG VANNEY: I didn't see the challenge. So I don't have -- I don't have a position on the foul or not foul. I do know and feel like there was probably three or four more of those challenges throughout the game where center backs were being aggressive in trying to recover balls like that that weren't always called.

So I feel, again, without having seen it specifically, to take a goal back, seems a little bit harsh. But I didn't have specific eyes on that play.

It was a great finish by Joe. I love that he hit the back of the net. I wish it would have counted because he could have used that for momentum and everything just for him. But the group stayed in it and got the goal back. Unfortunately the play at end cost us a lot.

As far as the extra minutes, yeah, was told it was going to be three. Three would get you to about 110. I wish they would have called it right at 110 because I don't think the ball was quite in the net yet. Maybe, maybe not. But whenever there's like an attack on the way, I just don't think they are going to blow the whistle.

Again, I didn't see the clock specifically where it was at any given time. But I certainly wish they would have blown it a little bit earlier. But we still have to see the play out. That's the way it's going to be in these nail-biting, sort-of-end-of-the-season-playoff-time stuff. You've got to do whatever you've got to do until the final whistle, period.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...