



# LA Galaxy Media Conference

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**Greg Vanney**

Press Conference

Austin 1, LA Galaxy 0

*Q. Your thoughts on that game and your message to the guys in the locker room afterwards.*

**GREG VANNEY:** I thought when you kind of aggregate the 90 minutes, we have probably as good of chances, as many good chances as we've had all season.

Gab is into some great spots and has some good looks. I think Joe had one. So I think you know, on the attacking side, again, not all things perfect on the build. I think we lost some balls in some situations that we shouldn't.

But I felt like in terms of chance creation, it was a good night for us on that side. We just didn't take anything out of it. We didn't execute on the final action. But they fell to guys we wanted them to fall to, and we would like to bury one or two of those.

On the defensive side, I thought we were a little bit stretched throughout the course of the game. I think that at times, we were a little bit low in the back line, which was stretching us out a little bit from front to back, which created little problems in terms of controlling them and managing it. A little bit too much space in the midfield.

But again, it came down to a few moments, and a few moments that we should have and could have dealt with better. The one that's a penalty, fortunately we save it, but it's actually two of our defenders against one of theirs. And there just needs to be communication that Eddie has the inside and John can take the outside and take the line. And it doesn't seem like there's a communication that's happening there because then he beats John and we end up with a foul.

So we've got the numbers and the situation to deal with it, and we don't deal with it.

The second goal that ends up being the game, we deal with the play. We lose possession, get caught into it, caught from behind in possession, transitions. We still have numbers between the ball. We guess on the wrong side, which allows the player on the ball to face forward, and then that allows him to play the wide player into the space. And then it deflects on the cross and it redirects in front of the goal.

But, again, we have enough numbers before. We kind of compound a couple mistakes with mistakes, and then we give away.

So again, playing on the road is a challenge and I thought we created the chances and we held our own in most situations defensively, and -- but we didn't come away with anything.

So that's -- you know, there's plenty of that inside of that that we can improve upon to improve our margins and there's plenty



of things to talk about in terms of the overall game.

But again, the game sort of comes down to key moments and chances, and who executes in terms of results. And we didn't execute, and they were able to punish us on a couple mistakes, but really one mistake.

*Q. We saw during this game and afterwards, the tensions between the two teams. Seemed a little heated at times, as well. Just do you feel like that impacted the way that you guys maybe attacked in the game and where you guys mentally were at, chasing down the goal? And if you can provide any insights on the clash between the two sides. Thank you.*

**GREG VANNEY:** I think there's a little bit of history between the two teams now over the past couple of years.

You know, we came here, Riqui got tackled from behind and he got hurt and there was a tackle on Riqui on the sideline a year ago at our place. You know, even in preseason, there's a lot of guys getting pieces of Gab and others.

So I think just the tensions between the group have risen over the last several meetings. I think in the end, frustrations boil over a little bit. I don't think there was too much in it other than just a lot of, you know, chirping back-and-forth.

*Q. The season prior to the championship-winning season, one of the things that frustrated you was being able to control the ball and having patience on the ball versus trying to run through the processes. And it seems like that tempo and ball controller in midfield isn't there, and that seems to be leading to, like, the spaces in the back line but then also maybe Gabriel Pec trying too hard and not being patient enough. Do you think that's a fair or foul observation in terms of having that ball controller so you can control the tempo of the game?*

**GREG VANNEY:** Yeah, I think it's very fair. I mean, our midfield has taken some big changes over the course of the last few months.

So you know, with no Riqui and the other guys that aren't with us any more, it's taken a big change in terms of the personalities of the players in there, the qualities of the players in there, just the repetitions together are fewer.

So yeah, and I do believe, honestly, like in the way we want to play and that controlling the middle of field is so important with the ball especially and without the ball, too, but with the ball, if we wanted to take the game in possession, and those connections have to be -- have to be solid. And they have to be consistent.

Being able to work off of each other and read each other, show up for each other at the right times, solve different problems through the game based on how the opposition is choosing to defend at any given point. Sometimes they are going man-to-man. Sometimes not so much.

So I just think all of those things, we are not as sharp in that regard. So it does -- it has an impact on the overall flow and rhythm of the game and it has an impact sometimes on how and where we are able to create chances out of our ball possessions.

And so yeah, I think sometimes it means we have to defend more because if you have the ball a little bit less, you defend more. And if you're not as efficient with the ball you don't necessarily create as many chances through your possession moments.

So yeah, I think there's some of that but that's also -- we've also got to recognize we are not exactly the same group at the moment that we were a year ago.

And we have to be able to adapt within the game and adapt -- and again, I thought while we weren't as efficient through the midfield at times through the course of the night, we still got Gab on the ball in some really good positions and really good looks on goal that I think on another day, he can put into better spots and possibly get goals.

So there's still -- I thought in this particular game, we still had -- for a team that's now had five shutouts in Austin, I thought we created some very positive-looking moments. Like I said, I think we had a guy or guys that we want on the ball in those situations with the opportunities at their feet, and it's about execution.



But yeah, in terms of rhythm, flow, 90 minutes, all those kinds of things, certainly the midfield is a big part of dictating what the vision of the game is going to look like.

*Q. And a real quick one, a positive after having some tough moments so far this season, John McCarthy had some really good saves. Saved the penalty. That must be a real positive for you, for him, to kind of -- for him to be in that moment despite the challenges today.*

**GREG VANNEY:** Yeah, I think John, again, had some good saves today and that's kind of what he was for us last year in those one or two moments where you need your keeper to come up big. He was there.

Collectively, this year, I think we've compounded more errors in moments, you know, whether -- whether those are -- those are starting ahead of John or, you know, or he's been involved in a couple, as have plenty of guys.

I feel like we've just -- you are always going to make errors in the game of soccer. It's going to ham. It's a matter of not compounding them and when an error happens, we've got to close off whatever exposure we have in that moment.

And right now, we, in too many situations in the game, when we make one error we compound it with a second error or a third error, and those are some of the moments we're getting exposed. Those are things we've got to shut down and that's work to be done.

But John was there to save us on a couple of those moments where things broke down for us.

*Q. The team is still looking for its first win. Christian Ramirez the other day shared with us that the locker room is still firmly united and behind your ideals. But do you personally worry about, is there some part, perhaps of the message of your game plan or the system that's not sinking in or that you're not personally satisfied with the team firmly getting a grasp on yet?*

**GREG VANNEY:** No. I think we all have a reasonable idea and vision of what we want things to look like. I think, again, executing is a big part of it for us. You know, today, we had a slightly different look just in the back line with Eriq. We've had a little bit of instability there, and with Eriq there, a little bit different. We went back to find of a midfield.

So we're making a lot of changes through this process, and having guys settle into roles and responsibilities while settling into things like that; again, I think it's a work-in-progress in the way we want to play the game. And I don't think we are going to do a 180 on the way we want to play the game which is to be ball-oriented and to use the ball well and to create our opportunities.

That's not to say we are not trying to create opportunities in transition as well because we had those tonight. A couple of Gab's great opportunities came through transition moments. We know Joe is going to get some through transition moments. But until we got Joe back, we rarely had any transition moments.

So we're adding that layer to our game, inside of some of the possession stuff; the efficiency through the midfield is really important. I thought -- there are pieces here that still need to come together. I think everybody understands that the vision for how we won a championship is still a vision for how we want to play.

It's about some guys coming along. Some guys who haven't played a ton or haven't played a lot in MLS are needing to learn and come along, and obviously the stress level builds when you're not getting results right away.

But there's been a lot of guys kind of in and out or guys out and coming in into the lineup. I don't sense -- oh, from the whole group there's a belief in what we're doing because everybody is here because they want to be involved in a ball-oriented team and what we are trying to do to create and set up opportunities.

So I think there's a process here in which everybody has got to get connected and find their level and be in sync, and you know, through various changes and guys stepping up levels, it's just something that is still a work-in-progress.

Again, it's really not completely surprising when you lose three of your top midfielders that you have some disconnect in your



midfield. It's not as smooth and clean as it was before. That's a part of the process here is we've got to bring guys along to bring them to where we need to get them too.

*Q. You mentioned getting guys back. Today you had Zavaleta making his first start in about a year; Reus came back; Mauricio Cuevas got some action. What did you think of each of their performances today?*

**GREG VANNEY:** I thought Eriq got through the game pretty well. I think Eriq did what he does, which is he generally makes good decisions in defensive moments. I felt like our line was a little bit lower than normally it would otherwise because I think Eriq is a little bit more used to, at times, being in a three and used to not necessarily being so active in produce -- in getting the team higher and lower. I think he's a little bit more comfortable at setting a line and working from that particular position, if you will.

And so I think at times, we were a little lower in the back than I would like us to be, which led us to be a little spread out. And I think Emiro together and all that group can probably work through that a little sharper over the course of the game. But it's also, like you said, he has not had a ton of minutes over the last, whatever, year, year or so.

I thought Marco came in and he gave us some quality on the ball, and he helped to get things sort of moving. We created some good moments when he came on. We initially put him on as a bit of a false nine.

We felt like we could roll him into positions that we could establish some more control of the ball in the attacking half, and allow him the opportunity to slip Joe or Gab or some of the guys through or get our wide players more involved in the game. And then he dropped into the midfield and then he helped us to kind of dictate things from there.

So I thought from a possession and control period, all those kinds of things, I thought he was fine. Ultimately we would like to get him, you know, more goal dangerous, whether that's setting guys up for final actions or for himself getting some more looks on goal.

I know there was a corner kick that dropped on and he chose to pass back instead of maybe looking to shoot it. You know, things of that nature. But we need Marco as he comes along to be a guy who is really contributing to the final action and goals, goal production.

As far as Mauricio, it was about to see Mauricio come on because he gives us a guy who really can get into great crossing positions, and he played some great balls across the back line into some really dangerous areas. And so now we've got to be committed to making the runs and beating our guys to get to those spots to see if we can redirect it.

But I thought Mauricio did a good job of doing what we asked him to do when he came on, which is get himself as high as he could and get into positions where he could whip some balls into the box.

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