



LA Galaxy Media Conference

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Greg Vanney

Press Conference

Philadelphia 3, LA Galaxy 2

Q. Obviously we can talk about the first half and how you guys came out, but I want to focus on start of the second half and where everything went sideways for you guys. What were sort of your instructions to the team at halftime and why did everything sort of fall apart there in the second half?

GREG VANNEY: Well, first, I'm going to say I was super proud of the guys and their response in the first half. I think came out and executed on the things we wanted to execute on. We got ourselves ahead, which has been a battle for us. We kept the game at zero. I thought the guys did a lot of good things.

In the second half, I think at halftime, we knew they were going to come out with another level of pressure and more Philadelphia Union type of aggression, whipping balls in, running behind. And I think you know, I have to see the goals. The one on the corner kick, Emi's responsibility is Glesnes; I think he got picked.

And off of that, then Elijah has to try to help him and pick up and we are late to getting to the pick. He wins it over our heads on the back side of which -- where they were targeting most of the game, and Ariel (ph) slips away from, again, I don't know who specifically was picking up Ariel, I have to look at the marks but he finds enough space to redirect it.

So again, I just think the intensity picked up on us early at the beginning and we needed to manage the first ten, 15 minutes where we knew the intensity was going to be high. We needed to be calculated about how and where we lost the ball, things we talked about is making sure we don't get pulled forward in situations that we need to make sure that our line is staying connected; that we are not getting pulled forward trying to step into guys and allow runners to get in behind us where they can whip in balls.

And when they are getting behind and whipping things in and it was leading to, you know, all kinds of problems, whether it was things leading the corner kicks or things leading to second chances or us having to deal with things in front of our goal.

We needed to keep the game from us better in the second half. They came out and were getting behind us and into dangerous positions too frequently. Yeah, I think that was the first part. The second goal was across from the outside. I think Maya was dealing with Tai Baribo, I think it was, in the box and on the cross got out -- got beat to the ball.

But I felt like, again, we know they are going to cross. We talked about closing down crossing situations by making sure that we were connected and understanding, I'd have to see the play to understand how because it was on the opposite side of the field where I was and I didn't exactly see how they got to the crossing position. I'd have to look at it.

So yeah, it wasn't a lot of -- more of things that we saw in the first half of where they were getting positions where they could get crosses and get the things that they wanted out of it that we wanted to close down and I think we exposed ourselves a



couple times early. It took them five minutes to take back a lead that we worked 45 minutes to get which was obviously prescription drug.

After that, again, they have momentum now. You know, on the road, I think some guys who haven't played a ton of minutes were starting to look like they were getting a little bit fatigued and tired on some of it. I thought our lines were getting a little farther apart, which is dangerous against a team that wants to play into strikers and play off of strikers. We were continuing to try to find ways to close down the spaces between our lines; so they couldn't play off the strikers and bounce out to wide guys and whip balls in.

Just wanted to make sure we tried to stay as connected as we could. They were get something things in front of the goal. We were managing situations and then we get to the third goal. Referees swap. The guy takes the throw-in from ten yards ahead of where the throw-in was.

Maya has position on the forward to win it. I think he gets bumped from behind. For me it's an easy call. You make the call because the forward has no -- there's no repercussion for the forward to take that risk and see if he can get it. The worst-case scenario for him is they call the foul; the best case is they put the whistle in their pocket and it turns into a corner kick, and again, you know, the corner kick situation turns into a goal. Again, I have to see the corner kick to know what would happen.

But I was extremely frustrated and angry at where the throw-in was taken and the fact that Maya, in my opinion, was bumped from behind which takes him out of a position, and now we were dealing with the corner kick when we should have been having a foul going the other direction.

But then my frustration, again, comes down to seeing the play out and seeing the rest of the halve.

Yeah, I went from incredibly proud of the group from the response the other night to just really frustrated that we gave the lead back in five minutes.

And then I felt like down the stretch, as we were in position to try to still take something out of it, I felt like the combination of not managing a situation but the combination of getting put in a situation I don't think we should have been in I think is frustrating to me. Very frustrating.

Q. Want to get your thoughts on the formation with Marco, sort of was like in a false nine role there a little bit with Cuevas on the wing. How did you see that play out in the first half?

GREG VANNEY: I thought, again, it went to the plan that we wanted. We wanted to muscle up a little bit more in our midfield. You know, try to, I don't want to say lock up the midfield because it wasn't that specific.

We were more, when we could step out and get pressure to the ball, guys had some responsibilities and they had movements that they were responsible for. But we also wanted a sturdy midfield to try to protect their striker play.

They bring their two strikers and their two outside midfielders in really tight and there's lots of action that come off the inside that you have to deal with and the fullbacks are try to get into high positions to whip in crosses or play balls in behind your line.

We tried to beef up the midfield a little bit to try to protect the space in front of our back four, and I thought, again, I thought we did a good job of that in the first half. One of the things that Philly does is they just hit so many balls in behind you, and they just change the field position so much.

It's just direct, in, behind, even if they don't -- whether they connect it or not connect it they keep putting the ball in your deep half of the field, which forces you into build outs or forces you into what I think is a long field or defending a fair amount in your half.

I thought we were able to catch them on the counter which is something we were looking for, playing off of Marco, having his link-up play bring our running midfield and our wingers into the game, I thought if all of that worked the way we wanted to; and



then at 2-0, it becomes a game of being able to be solid on defense it side and work for your transition moments, protect yourself and try to possess when you can but try not to possess in dangerous areas. Because obviously they are going to step on the gas and keep coming pretty heavy. We tried to evolve as the game progressed.

Q. And also, just your quick thoughts on Sanabria, 60-plus minutes. You talked the other day about his toughness in duels and his competitiveness there. How did you see him tonight?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I thought he did a great job.

Again, it was a game where references were pretty clear. They don't do a lot of place changing and moving people around. I thought his reasons were pretty clear. I thought he was able to step in and win some challenges. One of those led to the transition that led to, I think it was the first goal.

I think he was able to use his power and strength a couple times to get us out in from defending into transition and being able to ride tackles or step through some moments.

Again, he showed a lot of the physical qualities that he's going to be bringing to our team. I think it was a perfect game for him because these duels and matchups, they are up his alley. I thought he did a nice job. He started to cramp and he was starting to suffer a little bit, and so that was the reason for the sub, not because of his performance.

But he was gassed and cramping. It's been a long trip and guys are certainly feeling it a little bit in this stretch.

Q. You mentioned last week that the goal at this point was to stay connected, stay together as an organization, as a team. Is that still goal after another tough loss, and do you feel like you and your staff and this group together can still salvage the season?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think that's two questions. I think the group is connected. I know the group is connected. I'm with them. I'm with them on a physical way; I'm with them.

So I know where they are at. They are frustrated as a group that we couldn't get tonight across the line. They were frustrated the other night.

But they are open and seeking, again, both solutions and execution things that we each individually need to do better, collectively we do. The group, they are fighting. They are fighting. There's nobody in there that isn't fighting in the game. You know, it's a matter of the more contingency have been thin for us and the other night, the setup wasn't right for us.

And I felt like guys were a little bit uncomfortable in the five and the decisions weren't great. I didn't feel like guys were making great decisions in it. I felt like trying to adapt inside with the players we had, trying to adapt inside of not having Joe and Gab and so on, we went for a different look to try to keep the Red Bulls in front of us. And I felt like the guys didn't settle into the change of system and the decisions to rotate and stuff like that. I think we got punished for some mistakes and being uncomfortable in a different shape.

Tonight, I think we went back to a more traditional shape, being a false nine versus a regular nine. But it was a more traditional shape for us, and I feel like the matchups and the battle and everything was there. And the frustration is just not seeing out the game.

You know, it was all -- it's always going to be difficult coming to Philadelphia on the second game of an East Coast road trip. It's always going to be difficult. It's about suffering through the moments that are going to be hard and not giving up things in those moments, and tonight we got ourselves the 2-0 lead, and it has to be about seeing that out, trying to see that out in the best way possible.

It's unfortunate, sure, in terms of staying together and keep fighting for the season, that's the goal. Everybody keeps fighting along the way and putting our best foot forward to try to do what we can do fight for every one of these games one at a time. That's what we're trying to do.



Q. You know, you mentioned it, and I think we all saw this team put out a good effort competing out there. You know, given the last two results, does it feel like a mental issue? A maturity thing? Maybe some cerebral aspect of the game that the team is lacking.

GREG VANNEY: Do I think it's a cerebral thing? I think the guys are fighting. I think sometimes, you know, sometimes we're fighting so hard to make a play that occasionally we over play ourselves and we expose ourselves. Like I think there's so many factors, details, that go on inside of it. You know, there's so many details.

What I know it isn't is a commitment and a battle and a fight and everybody out there trying to do their best to get a result, see a result, everything. I think inside of a game, there are thousands of decisions that get made, hundreds or thousands of decisions that get made by each player. Moments that we need to execute, things along those lines.

And it's because I feel our margins are thin, you know if we get just a few of those wrong, we're paying. We're paying. And that's the frustration for the group. We're trying to pull together as a group. You know, there's a lot of goals that aren't on the field for us, and guys are just trying to step up and battle and fight and put their best foot forward.

I think the effort, the scrap, the fight is all there. It's just, you know, we're trying to find ways to win inside of the group that we're working with and guys are balloting. I can't tell anybody, I would never say they were not. They are freaking fighting. It's just the game is tough and the game can be truly and we're -- guys are giving it. I have nothing to say about the guys' effort.

Q. You have every confidence in the player that you can pull this together, and of course with the injuries we talked about that last week. That just doesn't help when you're missing your three best players. I mean, any team would suffer because of that.

GREG VANNEY: I appreciate you for noticing that because a lot of people don't seem to notice that you take three DPs off of any team in this league and go on an opposite conference challenge, the margins are so thin. Like that's the reality of it. I'm not making excuses for our guys because they f-cking fought and battled. But then, thank you for noticing that because that's part of it and these guys feel that.

But everyone is trying to step up and do their best to get a result and I'm proud of them for that. We are not getting things to go our way and we make some mistakes. We do. But damn, the guys fought tonight and they bounced back. We didn't execute and we didn't close it out. I know people are going to take a shot but the reality is, we're missing a lot of guys. A lot of it guys.

Q. Do you feel like that first half is a really good blueprint for going into it the derby this coming weekend? Because you had some good stuff out there.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I do. I do. And part of it was the other night in New York, I tried something different with the group to see if based on the players and the qualities of the players and the positions that they normally play, I try to adapt them in a way that I was going to put them into positions where maybe they would be more comfortable, instead of staying with something that, you know, maybe some of the group is more comfortable with but other guys wouldn't. We trained it. We liked it in training it. The guys felt confident with it. It didn't happen and we took an embarrassing beating for it.

Tonight we went back to something that was a little closer to where guys were in their slightly more natural positions albeit Mauricio played a slightly different role.

Obviously Marco has played a nine before in his career. It wasn't new for him. He's a very smart player and we put the physical midfielders in and we went for it. I think part of it was, again, to reestablish where we want to be to be able to move forward and not try to overly adapt with things that can confuse them or they are uncomfortable with.

Part of it is just getting guys into comfortable positions. Giving them the green light to go out and duel and battle and see if we can't get the margins to turn our favor; get a couple goals like we did tonight.

But we weren't able to see it out.



Q. As you guys had he back, is there an update on Pec and Joseph for Sunday?

GREG VANNEY: I suspect they will both be available for Sunday, barring we hear of a setback or anything. I think the trend is towards the weekend. So part of it is our expectation that those guys will be ready on the weekend and hopefully they can fit into some of our thoughts on what we're doing tonight as well.

Q. Inaudible.

GREG VANNEY: I don't know if you guys can hear. The Jim Curtin team between this team and similarities. To be honest I think there's a ton of similarities.

Tanner is the ideas behind the philosophy of playing and kind of the Red Bulls-ish style, I know they hate to hear that in Philadelphia, I'm sorry, but that's where he came from. It's a forward-thinking, aggressive, powerful players, put you under pressure, create transitions.

I think always in that style there is an extreme version and maybe a slightly less extreme version. There's a super high press. There's the mid black press where they open up. I think there's a lot of similarities.

Again, I think with Bradley, maybe he's just tilted a little bit more towards the extreme end of the Red Bull philosophy and ideas, just a touch more than Jim.

But I think, again, I think philosophically they went out and found a coach that was in a similar line, and so I think the team has been able to kind of pick up on things pretty quickly. You know, it's just subtle differences, and not major differences.

Like I said, sometimes with Jim he played more in a diamond, things like that. This was more of a 4-2-2-2. I think, again, philosophically, I think things are pretty aligned and Bradley has done a nice job since he's gotten here with the powerful forwards that he has. He's got three different forwards he kind of rotates through.

All of them have similar types of characteristics and qualities. They are hard runners. They work together. Those wingers tuck in. They get underneath those forwards. They run out when given the opportunity. They are trying to draw fullbacks off the line and the guys, the full whacks get in position to whip in crosses and give the forwards a chance in the weak side winger to get a chance -- they just keep coming at you.

Sometimes it's not about possession. They will sometimes just kick the ball behind you so that they put it out front of them, and they give themselves another chance to press you and turn it over and win it.

It's a tough game to play -- team to play against, just because, again, their goal the whole game is to put you in awkward positions, not so much like to out-possess you and make you do all these other things. They are just trying to impose themselves upon you, and I thought again we managed it for a while, and I thought we started to get a little bit gassed in the second half and then giving up the two goals early was a tough one because then we were really balloting it.

But I think some similarities for sure.

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