



LA Galaxy Media Conference

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Greg Vanney

Press Conference

San Diego FC 2, LA Galaxy 1

Q. Overall, it looked like you guys had some pretty good chances here, third game in a row that you scored first. Obviously allowing the goal right after that probably would be a low point for you guys. But there seemed to be some real fight and determination to stay in this game against a top tree team in the west. How disappointing is it to have that mistake at the end cost you everything?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, it's brutal. Look, they are a good team in possession. They have been against everybody. In this particular game, they played with a false nine who is dropping in and overloading the midfield.

So for us, we knew there were going to be challenges in terms of getting at their center backs to try to really get after them. So we were comfortable to try to sit in a little bit lower position, crowding up the midfield, taking away some of that stuff through the middle of the field, try to make the game a little bit more predictable.

I thought by and large we managed, outside of a few situations, in particular, the first goal where they run off the back side of us while we are dealing with a ball wide, and they get in and score.

But I thought, by and large I thought we did a pretty good job of managing most of those through the course of the game, which is their strength.

Yeah, I think like you said, we got out 1-0, we gave it back right away, which is a bit of a gut punch to just how quickly we gave it back. The goal there was fight to halftime and get it. Second half I felt like we came back. We were pretty solid. We adjusted slightly how we defended and we got some opportunities, as well. Didn't finish them.

And you know, now then it comes down to seeing out the game at the end, you know, when you're in extra time and it's 1-1 you're on the road against, again, a solid team and you've got to make smart decisions.

The first bad decision is Isaiah trying to hit a switching pass when he's carrying out into space winding the clock down, they have got numbers behind the ball, we need to drive as deep as we can and spin out and keep possession and get ourselves into their half of the field and see the game out smart. Instead we try to hit a switching pass with our left foot to Gab on the other side, which is -- it's a low percentage pass and in a priority moment of the game.

While that's taking place, Emiro is sauntering up trying to catch his breath, I don't know but he wasn't engaged and focused on the play and the switched pass, it just becomes just a series of events of just bad decisions, not prepared, bad decision, and then the snowball just rolls down and builds momentum and finding the back of the net.

We have to be over that part. Like it's a maturity thing and it's an engagement thing for today. Because they had done so



much work for 92, 93 minutes, to allow that situation to be the one that costs us what would have been a solid result on the road with two home games in front of us. Instead, we give it away at the end and suffer from what could have been a solid road performance on the end. It's disappointing.

Q. After the momentum from El Tráfico, is this a step backwards, the frustration, that you're not taking advantage of the momentum and when you guys do play well.

GREG VANNEY: I think the frustration hit again at the end. The guys have been resilient. They bounced back. We know we have two home games for the first time in the season. We've got to bounce back. We've got to back up our partners here that at the end of the game made a couple tough decisions and a couple plays. We've got to back them up and try to come out on Wednesday fighting and defending our home turf.

But as you said, after El Tráfico draw, coming down on the road in San Diego, a draw. Given the way the whole day played out probably wouldn't have been the worst thing. They had chances, we had chances, and it would have been a nice build near two home games. Now we have to show some resilience and come back and battle again.

Q. What's your first conversation with Emiro on a play like that?

GREG VANNEY: It starts with no matter how tired you are, when you know there are two or three minutes left in the game, you have to stay focused on the game. You can't let your fatigue or whatever is going through his mind overcome him in that moment. Like you don't get to relax with a minute and a half or two minutes to go. In two minutes you can relax. You don't get to relax in that moment.

Because he relaxes, and he's tired and his head goes down and he's kind of walking forward, the whole thing catches him by surprise; and then when it catches him by surprise, he just flails at it with his left foot. I think if he's prepared, he probably heads it and he probably does something that's a little more secure than swinging at it with his off foot and trying to deal with it that way.

For me, the whole thing starts we put him in crisis because we play ridiculous ball across the field and then we're not prepared to deal with the situation when it comes to us. But these are moments that we have to learn from by this point. We don't get to take anything for granted on the field for 90 minutes and this is one of those situations where you know we have to see it out.

Q. On Novak back in goal, what led to the decision to put him back in the lineup?

GREG VANNEY: I thought he had a solid day. I thought his decisions with the ball were smart in terms of when to go long, when to try to play through the lines. I thought he made quality decisions. I thought he took some balls out of the air, a couple set pieces, things like that, that were nice for to us clean some things up.

I think probably the one that made a little bit of a mystery of was the one that went really high in the air that ended up misjudging it but bounced but I thought everything else was relatively clean over the course of the game.

What led to the decision? We had gone a bunch of games without a result, and at the start of the season, he got three games. Of course, he made a couple mistakes but we have also not been perfect. I think normally I get the goalkeepers a second, so whatever games when we go Eastern Conference, but I didn't in this particular trip.

So when he came back, I wanted him to have a proper chance to prepare for the match, which he had this week to prepare and give him a chance to see again where he's at. I thought he had a good outing.

Q. When you look at the season so far and you tally up the dropped points from mistakes, it must be frustrating for you, how do you go forward with that? And what's the mood like in the dressing room when one player makes a mistake and costs the team? How do you handle that?

GREG VANNEY: The lost points on errors and mistakes, it's high, too high for us to be in the mix.



When you get to this point, one of the keys for all of us, players, former players, is the consistency getting through games without, okay, you don't have to be perfect but you can't make big mistakes. There's a big difference between mistakes and costly mistakes.

I think for us, we've had too many of the version where we have compounded mistakes, is really what I get to. Because, again, the first ball that puts us into a bit of a crisis situation becomes sort of the start of it.

I think we have compounded too many mistakes on ourselves over the course of the season and haven't cut them off, where if one guy makes a mistake, then the next one. So if Isaiah plays a bad ball, but Emiro is engaged, he probably heads it out, and we can start yelling at Isaiah for playing a bad ball, but we live to fight another day. Instead, we compound the mistake by not being prepared or whatever the case may be.

Yeah, it's frustrating for the group because you get a lot of guys, everybody, put in a big shift today and when you drop points on little errors like that, it's frustrating, because it's hard to look back and go, okay, here are all the collective things that were going wrong that we really need to fix. It really comes down to us fixing our decision individually, or a couple of us fixing a play that shouldn't happen.

The frustrating part is it's tough to have a direct way of fixing it when you're saying, for example, it just becomes an individual error. We are always trying to seek the solution inside of that. The guys are frustrated, because again, any time you go out there and you put a big shift out and you don't really have a great explanation for how just lost the game because it doesn't really process, that series of events that just took place. That's just something that you have to process a little bit and that's what guys will go through over the next 28 hours or 48 hours, and then we have to turn our focus to a home match against San Jose.

Q. What was Novak's like from the first three games to now to working his way back in to getting a start? How has evolved over training? It's been a couple months now.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, it's been a tough road for him to be honest. Because when you come out from making a couple mistakes when at the beginning of the season, you feel like a couple mistakes at the beginning are just a couple mistakes in the beginning.

But when you look at 14 games in a row, not every game, but there's a lot of mistakes happening inside of that. And for him, I know because we talked about it, he starts to feel a little bit like, I made a couple mistakes and I'm not there, and there are a lot of mistakes.

For him it's been locking down, focusing, working on himself, his game, biding his time for his opportunity, and being ready when his opportunity came.

And so sometimes that's the challenge of a second goalkeeper or if you've been displaced at some point, it's just finding your way and battling your way in. It's one of the toughest positions to fight back into because you don't switch keepers a lot.

I have to give him credit for staying in and being able to show up today and being ready to play. I thought he showed up and looked like he had been playing games, not like he hadn't played a game in two months. So I have to give him credit.

Q. Has his performance in training been consistent?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I would say he probably went through a two-week period where he was frustrated. But you know, a little chat and he also recognized it and he bounced right back and he got right back into it.

In general, he believes in himself and he's been working for this opportunity.

Q. What positives can you take from this match? You mentioned a couple times that the team put in a tremendous shift. So what did you see out there that you liked that worked?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think, again, a team that's good in possession. They have a lot of good players that are very



comfortable in their roles. They really overload the midfield, which is something you have to deal with, especially with Dreyer who was playing at a nine but really dropping into midfield positions where they are boxing it up.

Each of their guys is competent on the ball and aware of their surroundings and their connections on the field, and then they have Lozano and others who will take off for the depth and guys who are clever about how they move.

For us, we knew it was midday. You can't get out and start pressing all over the field on a day like this and going man on man, which is when we disrupt a good possession team you have to be a little more calculated. I thought the guys did a good job staying connected and talking through the positioning of some of their players and movements.

Again it wasn't perfect, they had a fair amount of the ball but by and large, I thought we did a good job of dealing with those types of situations.

I thought at times when we started to get some of our movements and actions right, when we were able to secure the ball, I thought we were able to pull them apart a few times, and we had a couple moments in transition where we were dangerous.

Again, I think we managed the game from a defensive standpoint pretty well through it for a team that is very good at certain things for sure.

And so that gives you a chance to be in the game if you can be solid on the defensive side and so -- and I thought we were. We let a couple chances probably go that we thought we would have done something a little better with.

Sometimes we were setting up to play a little more in the transition, and that's why Joe was in the nine position was to see if we could spring Joe in some of the transitions. So I thought we were able to get a couple chances out of that, as well.

But by and large, I thought, again, great effort. I thought our defensive awareness and connectivity was solid and I thought that led to us being -- and even though we didn't have the ball I thought we were in reasonable control of the game, which is not something I would always say is we're comfortable without the ball for large stretches. But I thought we were fairly comfortable without the ball today.

Q. As it relates to mistakes that happened on the field, and as it relates to repeat mistakes, how do you deal with something like that? Is it something where you sit a player down, you've made a couple mistakes, and I'm going to go with somebody else this match? Could it get to the point where you are fining players for repeated mistakes, the same thing, over and over again?

GREG VANNEY: I guess you could. I've never looked at it from that perspective. For me, it's always been, one, is improvement because sometimes it's younger players. Like, how do you get them to improve so that they aren't making mistakes.

And two, there's accountability, which is playing time, things like that. For me, those are the two ways that you attack these types of things. When you take guys off the field, other guys have to step up and fill the roles and also can't make mistakes and things like that. For us, it's got to be about accountability, which is training field stuff and playing time.

If guys are out there putting in the shift and working and things like that, I don't know if financial penalties are the answer. I just never have been like that. But I do think everybody cares and everybody wants to be on the field.

So playing time probably hurts as much as anything.

Q. Sanabria nearly put you ahead seconds in.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, again, you see he's evolving. You see his dueling, his winning challenges, his capacity to run. All of those things that we see in him that are his qualities that we want to continue to grow are there. His combativeness in our midfield and we win duels and sometimes that's led to transitions and led to goals last week.

You know, he's a guy who closes fast and hard, and that's a nice piece to have. Again, I thought solid game. I think



sometimes just when he's between the lines and the spaces are tight, it's about tidiness on the ball, speed of thinking, knowing where his solutions are, being aware of his surroundings a little bit more sometimes.

But you see when he has focus and he's locked in and he sees a dual, he's excellent. I think of other games where the game is moving fast and there was a ball that was played in between the lines to him and I think he still had a fair amount of time, he lost the ball in front of our goal and we kind of dealt with it.

Again, moments of awareness inside the field, especially the way we want to play and being able to play through our midfield sometimes, getting him to continue to grow in that, but that's something he's absolutely going to learn. It's just a process. It's just a little bit different than what he was asked to do before. But you see those qualities that he has, which makes him a special player.

Q. With Gab, we talked earlier in the season about the difficulty he was having, how is he coming along? It seems he's still laboring at times to really kind of find what it is he's looking for.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think today was a situation where especially through the course of the first half, the left back was really aggressive to release and get to him.

So it's important for us, a couple things, as a collective group to help Gab out when a guy is that comfortable releasing and staying so close to Gab is making them pay for that guy releasing from the back line so soon.

So being able to threaten the space behind where that player is releasing, giving Gab some ways to help him get unmarked. Bringing him inside the gap but when he comes into the gap, he tends to stay too high, which makes it easier for the center back to defend him. If he will come lower, which he kind of fights, coming lower and works under the midfielders, he'll actually find a better pocket to receive it, and he'll be more open.

So some of it is on Gab and his detail and his positioning in some of these situations. And some of it is collectively in the second half we try to get Miki closer to him to create an overload on the fullback, but the overload where the fullback didn't feel so free to come releasing out to him all the time.

So there's different ways. But again for Gab, he's got to keep his intensity level up and do the things that he has to do inside of that to give himself the best chance to be successful and not get frustrated because things aren't coming so easily sometimes.

I feel like at times today he got a little bit frustrated because he couldn't necessarily -- whether it was shake the left back, or he wasn't getting the ball at exactly the moment he wanted, I could see some frustration building. So we tried to help him out through some of that positional stuff.

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