



LA Galaxy Media Conference

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Greg Vanney

Press Conference

LA Galaxy 2, D.C. United 1

Q. Congratulations on the win. You guys probably started I think the way you wanted to getting a goal in the 23rd minute was good. Getting the goal at the beginning of the second half, so things were sort of going your way.

I think you guys had a chance to make it 3-0 and put that game away and out it to bed. Instead, D.C. comes back and scores so you had to do a lot of work in that last remaining third of the game. What needs to change there for you guys?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think because the first half played out in a way where there was so little space in the attacking half of the field, and we would be trying to build attacks and then they would end up with a ton of numbers behind the ball. There wasn't a ton of space to work and run and things were getting bogged down at 2-0.

I think they were starting to show themselves that they were going to come out and start to pressure a little bit more. So that means that there's going to be more space behind them if you break the initial pressure, and at times I felt like we broke the initial pressure. We were so focused on trying to go score the next goal, and some of the situations looked promising and some of them we just missed passes, but I think at that point when a team is trying to change their intensity level now compress you, you have to drive them back to their end of the field and make them come back low and defend low and make them win balls deep in their half of the field. Make their attacking guys who are pressing come low to find the ball. Force them to have to defend deep and then you can start to turn the pressure back on them and the counterpressure, which I thought we did in the first half.

So I felt like we were between trying to force sort of that third goal and finishing attacks and then just missing some passes in some of those sequences, I feel like we just kept giving them the ball to come back at us.

And then it became a momentum game, right? As they bring Benteke on and they bring others. They obviously have... Leal is a very good player, they bring on some guys who have some quality, and obviously Benteke's a dangerous player. We keep giving them momentum back when we had the chance to just put them deep in their half and force them to have to really work to recover the ball.

I feel like, again, we gave momentum back and we had to battle it out at the end and at times suffer a little bit just because we didn't see it out the way we wanted to.

But I feel like maybe the sense of having space to run started to really invite us and the feel for the third goal was maybe too enticing at times when we needed to think, play more about winning the game and seeing the game out at times.

Q. Does that hurt you, the fact that if you go up 3-0 in that game, maybe you can make some subs and do some stuff when you have a short rest week. Instead you guys had to battle through the hundredth minute. Was there wasted energy out



there because of that?

GREG VANNEY: I prefer us get the third and see it out and get some guys out to do it. I think we kind of stuck more or less with what we anticipated our sub pattern to be. Maybe a few minutes more here or there, but for the most part we stuck with our thought process for how we wanted to go about the week.

Certainly just in terms of the broader effort, the amount of defending and transition work that we had to do through the last third of the game was definitely more than I would have liked us to do. I would line us at home to establish possession, control of the game. If they're going to come stepping out, I would like to see us break through the pressure cleaner and be a little bit smoother.

But I feel like different circumstances in the game also led to us being not quite so... I thought Marco kind of got beat up a little bit through the course of the game and I thought Nasci wasn't as effective in linking up as he had been in a few other games. When we were breaking lines, it wasn't quite as clean on the other side and I feel like that's a piece of the inside of all of it.

So I thought, again, Marco is always fantastic. I just felt like he was getting beaten up around the field tonight.

Q. The game did seem a bit physical, maybe more than a normal Saturday night game you think?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, it could be. I mean, you have, in the first half the spaces are quite tight because they're dropping pretty low and we're trying to figure out how to break through the lines so the bodies are a lot closer together in those instances where things can get a little bit physical.

Look, you have a team that just lost their coach and isn't in a great spot, and so at some point, they're going to respond to that. If they feel like they're still in the game or there's something for them, there's something inside of that that's probably going to happen.

So it got physical. I think maybe to neutralize players, they looked at some guys specifically in terms of getting physical. Joe took a lot of fouls over the course of the game. I thought Marco... so, you know, different ways for the opposition to choose to manage the game or manage people inside the game, but there certainly was physicality inside of it.

It's okay. For the us it's about being more efficient with the ball at times and putting them away when we have opportunities to do so.

Q. Your second consecutive win, I think you were at least a point in four of the last five. Where would you say the confidence is in this group right now?

GREG VANNEY: Good. I think the spirits are high. As I said to you, we... for a little while now since coming off the eastern coast, the East Conference road swing, by and large, if you just look at the performances, we have been somewhat pleased, too pleased, with a lot of our performances, disappointed with the way we have given away results in certain situations or points.

Our emotion sometimes is off of the results we're not getting, but our thought process on where we are as a team in terms of performances I think have been fairly progressively getting better over the stretch.

So I think guys are confident. I think what's important, again, I said to the guys, I'm not sure we win this game earlier in the season. I think there's a possibility we give away the second goal because we didn't see these types of games out. We didn't have many leads at the beginning of the year.

But I think we held steady. We did what we needed to do. We took the three points, and we move on into the next one. So I thought we had a good sort of resiliency at the end, so, yeah. Confidence is high and guys are ready to move on to the next one to keep momentum moving in our favor.

Q. Congratulations on the win. Can you talk to us about Diego and how you're using him recently? Earlier in the season we saw him play primarily on the wings and now we're seeing him a little bit more on the midfield as well as coming back,



dropped back a little bit back and receive the ball and kind of link up play. Can you talk to us about what the method behind that madness is?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, Diego's just versatile in terms of how we can use him. He has been. He can play on the wing and everywhere else but inside the midfield, there's times when we want him to come lower and to be almost like a second pivot with Edwin and really work together with him. There's times in this game where we pushed him up into the higher, which is where he scored the goal. We pushed him into the higher gap and brought our fullbacks a little more inside. Because of his versatility and because of his kind of understanding of how we want to play, I feel like it's helped the midfield just to be at times a little more fluid where I think Lucas is still learning midfield, but you see the second Lucas comes on, his combative spirit brings something different to the field as well.

So it's between the two of them. I think both of them do a great job, they're just different players at this moment in time and the team has been rolling pretty good with Diego sitting in that position and working together with Edwin at times and so it's been flowing, so we've been sticking with it because it's been working.

Q. You have had them exchanged back and forth for the past two games. Can you talk about how they're settling in with each other and then potentially what you saw on the goal that was conceded?

GREG VANNEY: So first, yeah, I think the group is, you know, in the back has settled in the over the last couple of games. I think Amiro has done well sliding over to the left in the last three games. I think his performances have been solid. He's looked similarly comfortable on the left as on the right in terms in possession and when we put Maya or three games ago Zonka was on the right. They're more comfortable on the right and they can add a little bit more in terms of in-possession stuff and in terms of their selection of passes when they're on their right foot versus they're left.

Amiro is always going to choose pretty simple things in general, so I think we found a pretty good rhythm in terms of those guys getting comfortable and everybody as a line getting a little more comfortable. Inside of that, there's things I want to keep pushing with our line to be a little more proactive with our movement and things like that but as a group, I feel like they're pretty connected at the moment.

Q. More of a crowd this summer to enjoy it than there was on the recent holiday but still some silence in the stands with supporters groups still in an active boycott. Do the guys notice that? And what is your message to teams... to fans, sorry, who want to support the team but might be feeling punished but also want to advocate for their communities?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, again, I recognize that there are fewer people in the end for sure. We recognize that the volume in the stadium is different for sure. I think the players understand when they step on, their task is to try to win the game and to solve the problems of the game and to find the solution inside of the field and score goals and do the things they're supposed to do. Entertain the fans who are here.

As I have said before, fans, I believe, have the right to take the positions that they want to take and our job is to go out and to try to win games, so that's what we want to keep doing. We have another home game coming up in another few days. It's important for us to recover. We want to put on the best performance we can and hopefully get three points, and we want the fans to come and we want them to feel safe and we want them to feel like this is their club and the place they want to be and we're trying to do our job on the field to try to help that to take place.

Q. Been watching you for the last probably ten years. One of the more methodical, smart coaches I've seen.

GREG VANNEY: You paid him to come and ask. No, I appreciate that.

Q. Yeah, different than most of the coaches I have seen on MLS. What are you doing to these guys to keep them going? You seem like you have a decent demeanor and decent character to push the team. What are you doing to keep these guys going?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I appreciate the kind words. I think it's a couple of things for me that's important. One is connecting with my players on an individual level. Understanding that every player who plays the game, they want to win. They want to improve as a player. They want to enjoy what they're doing and they want to feel like somebody cares about them in the



process. This game and the business can be the opposite, and so I think for me I try to develop rapport with our guys so I know what motivates each one of these guys and what they care about and to know that I care about them and I want what's best for them and I want them to be successful individually and collectively. Inside of that, I try to put forward a methodology, if you will, that they enjoy training, that they enjoy the way we want to play.

We emphasize using the ball which I think a lot of I players, especially the types of players we get appreciate and try to help them find solutions and ideas and ways to think about the game that are a little bit different, or maybe not, than they're used to.

The guys I have worked with over the years have just enjoyed the way we play and try to be methodical with the ball and use it and break other teams down. In general, I think guys enjoy that because I think that's what a lot of players we get, that's what they see as the beauty of the game in certain ways.

So between the connections, the way we want to play, how we run our training sessions to try to bring the right kind of enjoyment, try to hold a standard. All those things fit inside that. I appreciate it.

I have learned a lot from the players I have had over the last ten years, too. From the guys in Toronto to the guys here, it's a collaboration. I'm not a dictator out there, I'm a collaborator. I work with the guys. I know what I want it to look like, but I also want to take into consideration each of their qualities and what they bring to the table.

Q. The team's definitely hit rock bottom this season, and it feels like in the last couple of games you guys are coming out of some football rehab. What do you think is the most important step that you've seen where you see the team kind of getting to this space of improvement?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think a couple things with this. One is inside of the way we play, it's really important for us to win the midfield and I'm saying that with the ball, without the ball, it's really just important for us to win the midfield. In the stretch where we had two games over four weeks, we spent a lot of time and energy working on midfield play and the connection of the guys in the midfield and it's no secret that's where we lost some of the guys from last year and that's where some of our newer players are coming in this year. So we spent a lot of time trying to really emphasize those connections and relationships and the things that we find that are important inside of what we want to do. That's one.

The second is defensively, we had to eliminate the way we were giving up goals. Like I said, we were undermining what might have been different I goals that we can't give up if we want to win games.

So solidifying those two things, obviously finishing off some chances that we have been getting which I think has been coming but getting Joe, Gabe, Marco, Naschi, those guys kind of connected and flowing up there so we can put things away. There are pieces that I feel like have been coming together, but our focus has been on some of the defensive stuff in the back and some of the midfield play that we think is so important to our style of play and things that we want to do.

Q. Greg, you've had a bunch of stars over the last few years and now you have Joseph. You got Marco, Pac and all these guys. These guys, from what I was watching today, they're just really -- they look hungry. Have you really spoken to them about what they're doing in the attack? They look loose and they look free.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think for me for a lot of those guys, Marco I think right now for the last seven, eight weeks feels good physically. One of the first times since he's gotten here where he just feels like he feels good and now when he feels good he just plays the game and you can see his quality come out.

For Joe and for Gabe and for Nas, Diego, these guys, just trying to get everybody in a rhythm and feel inside of what we want to do to find the right sort of freedom to express themselves to use each other, play off each other, to build speed, to trust one another in the final actions, things like that, and just try to build confidence in each of them to go for it when they're out there and to be mindful of what things we want to do and what their functions are inside of the team, but also for them to express themselves and to trust each other and play for each other while they're out on the field.

Q. You go up 2-0 and they make their subs and one of the things they found was a lot of space. At 2-0 up, I got to think you don't want to be giving up so much space, what happened there?



GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I said this earlier, Scott, if you would have come earlier when it started but... (Laughter). I'm just teasing.

No, I think what started to happen at 2-0, and maybe just a fraction of time before that is they started to release their press on us, so just a little bit earlier and we get to 2-0 and they're still coming in the press and the moments that we break the press and we're attacking, we're just attacking fast and just trying to score the third goal. On the vast majority of those, the attacks broke down pretty quickly inside of three passes or so. Out guys at the front are sprinting forward to go take it and the back guys are trying to keep up and then we turn over the ball space exists in between the lines and that was happening over and over in my view.

And what we needed to do was as we drove into that half of the field, we needed at times to spin out, be responsible, bring our group together, force them to defend lower and their half of the field to these attacking guys and pressing guys to come down to help them have to recover. Then we can keep the game tight, keep the game in the attacking half of the field. They don't get as much space or build momentum because we keep giving it back to them.

So they were finding space because of our decisions once we were breaking pressure in some of these situations.

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