



LA Galaxy Media Conference

Sunday, February 22, 2026

Los Angeles, California, USA

Greg Vanney

Press Conference

LA Galaxy 1, New York City 1

Q. *(Indiscernible.)*

GREG VANNEY: (Sound issue.) Yeah, for me it's who makes the initial contact and how does it happen. Again, this is one quick look so I don't have a big opinion on it.

But when I saw it in the run play I thought it was going to be trouble for us. When I saw it a little closer I think forwards can be clever about running into the angle of the defender who's recovering as soon as they fall down, and they put the referee.

But we have such a high standard of. (Video frozen.)

Felt like we weren't showing up for each other in preparation for what needed to happen next and we were getting forced into a lot of areas of the field that we didn't necessarily want to be in.

So I thought we had a hard time with the ball today. I thought we did some really good defensive work. They gave us the ball back, we gave it right back to them probably 15 to 20 times in the game I feel like. Good defensive work. They hit the long ball, we hit it right back to them. They give us the pass, we give it right back.

When you do that you end up in a lot of low block situations because you're losing balls between your lines. Guys just have to recover underneath the ball.

So, again, whether it was the starting of our possessions, because we were having to recover balls deep, or when we even got good pressure to the ball and they gave it to us, we gave it back.

Overall tonight our use of the ball was really poor I thought, and that led to long, long defending stretches and ultimately a situation that led to a penalty.

So we have to be much, much better on the ball and keeping the ball.

Q. *Hey, Greg, two for you. Within the defensive order, what did you like most? In the first half, it was superior to the second half. Part of that is situational.*

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think just our compactness. We were really close together and we were all underneath the ball for large stretches of the game, especially in the first half.

I thought the first half, one of the things that is Gabe was in the back line a lot the first half defensively, which means it was



very hard for them to penetrate us and also very hard for us to get pressure to the ball sometimes.

So there is always the potential for risk-reward. I didn't think we necessarily needed Gabe in the back line as much as he was in the first half. There were times when we could push him out the back line because they weren't really overloading us in the back, so it wasn't really necessary.

Halftime the read was if we don't need Gabe, let's keep him in midfield, let's keep him ahead of us so we can get initiate and also get out of some of these mid-block, lower block defending situations with Gabe a little bit higher.

So still think the use of the ball was the biggest problem today. If you don't use the ball well you're going to defend a lot. If you're losing balls between your lines, then you're going to defend low a lot. I felt the start and the energy and some of the flow of some of the actions started to show you that I think the attack for this group is going to be really interesting.

We have got to be able to get the ball to the attackers in the right ways and the right places for them to make their actions happen. If the back guys are struggling to get them the ball the right way, it's going to be hard for the attackers too. That was disconnected tonight.

Q. After the red card, what did you like and what did you feel from you guys? And before the red card, they've got 60% possession. Is that in part because of the difficulty with the ball?

GREG VANNEY: For sure, yeah. For sure on your last question. What I liked was just the mentality of the group. You know, you got to have -- even on your best days with the ball if you have that kind of defensive mentality and willingness to work underneath the ball and work together and you're much better with the ball, you're going to win a lot of games in the league.

And so I thought we were that poor with the ball. I felt like in general our defensive work was we were connected, not always perfect, but we were connected and we dealt with situations. But it was a lot of defending for a lot of guys.

So I thought that was decent. It's just the mentality part of it was important. When we went down a man, we didn't really have -- like all of our so-called midfielders are injured at the moment. Not all of them. The replacements that would normally go in for Sanabria or even Justin who just played a lot the other day, we didn't really have those like-for-like guys so they were grinding it out in the midfield and it was lot of work today for the midfield.

The mentality is important early in the year. I would've liked three points, but if you can have the games where you grind early in the year and get results, they pay dividends long term. I think in 2024 I think we drew four of the first five or something like that. Then you start to find the attacking rhythm and things can come out of it. Things to work on. Also some positives in some of those aspects.

Q. Want to ask you about goal score, Klauss. Seemed to be active. Overall thoughts on his first performance here at home?

GREG VANNEY: I thought his work rate, commitment to the group, the goal, some other moments where he's just strong and holds up the ball and gives us that extra piece, all very good. But the striker is only going to be as good as we can get him the ball in the right ways. Because we were bad with the ball it became a lot of defensive work for him over the course of the game and some duels to keep things up.

So when we get better with the ball I think you're going to see an even better Klauss for us on the attacking side and a better connection with those groups. Today, he, like everybody else, laced on his work boots and did the work up top that he had to do, and I appreciate that from him today.

There is a lot to be excited about with him up top. I think getting that first goal in the first game is great for his confidence and we haven't -- he hasn't been here very long. Since he's been here all we've done is play games every couple days. The last part of pre-season we played games every couple days and then in Panama, so haven't really worked with him on attacking actions with the group and finishing and stuff.

It's been like game repetitions. So there is a lot to look forward to I think with him. I'm excited for that. Right now we just got



to get through these games and get good results.

Q. On Klauss, his hustle is unbelievable. I've not seen him play live a lot.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah.

Q. Wonder if he's going to be the benchmark for the press, i.e., can the other players match that intensity and keep up with him?

GREG VANNEY: I hope so. That's the expectation. When your striker is leading you in those kinds of ways you have to commit and go with it. I don't think -- one of two things will happen. He's either going to stop working or the rest of the group is going to keep up. For me the rest of the group is going need to keep up.

So I think that's wonderful. I think that's one of the things we really liked about him. He's defensively aware and he will put in the work. It's important. It's one of the things I thought was good today is as a group we were connected. There are times in pre-season, a lot of times last year when we were disconnected and isolated and moving all around the field.

I thought today we did a good job of staying a little bit closer together. Even if we weren't high up the field pressing up the field, we were still under the ball and connected. Again, if we're better with the ball the amount of times we have to do that and the amount of time we have to do that is going to be much, much lower.

Probably flipped, 60/40 if we can be better with the ball.

Q. One real quickie. A new season for you. Doesn't get old, does it?

GREG VANNEY: No. The one thing I love about my job is that it restarts again every year. Last year it's nice to put it behind us and now we come in with not a new group, but some new faces and certainly a new mentality. The guys came in fit and motivated. They were also all disappointed for last year.

I think there is a mentality that's in this group that we need to use to build to keep improving, but the mentality is certainly better and ready to go.

Q. Two straight draws that begin the season, 1-1s. What were the improvements that you saw from Thursday to today? And then just quick follow up on that one, JP seems really motivated to start this year. Perhaps he's trying to get that (indiscernible) spot.

GREG VANNEY: So first, just the first game in these games down in Central America, they're so hard. It's so different playing a game down in Central America than playing a game here, and especially at home. I just feel like everything down there was just so slow and the ball was slow and the field was sticky.

We didn't -- they were just waiting for us and we didn't do a good job of finding the ways to increase the speed of the game, and our mobility was limited? We struggled putting speed into the game both because the opponent was really low and also because the game is just heavy down there in general.

So we started well, again, last game. Part of that was because they were separated. They're 4-4-2. They gave us a little bit of space to work with between the lines and we created some early real changes. After they saw that, they put five, six guys in the back line and they really bogged the game down and we had a hard time speeding it up.

Some of that is the ball just moves slow on the field, and so you came here, and even yesterday in training when the guys started to play, the ball just was moving so much faster. That's going to be important as we get to Wednesday because if they come with the same mentality to bog us down just everything needs to move quicker. If it does, we'll create our advantages and out time edges and our chances.

So the games are just so different it's hard to say. But I liked -- today, again, the only thing I can say I really liked out if it is just the collective mentality and some of the individual gritty performances. I liked the start of the game. The rest of it I felt



like we just did what we had to do by the end down a man.

So there are some other things I didn't like but those are for another day.

Q. Another Klauss question. I know they're very, very different players, but in what way do you hope that he can help fill the void that Riqui Puig left in terms of productivity?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, very different players for sure. But one of the things that I think Klauss does well that has some similarity to Riqui is for us he always came down low, picked up the ball, played the ball through the lines, built speed into the action, and then he arrived into the boxes, the trailer.

He was able to set Gabe and Joe in motion and change the speed of the game. Joe and Gabe aren't great at changing the speed of the game, but they're great at keeping the speed of the game once he's been changed. What Joao does is because he's a good target and passer, he can -- you can play into him and he can strong and hold the ball and get on the half turn and he can play the wingers into the space and then he arrives into the box. It's something that I think he's very good at.

I keep referencing a moment in pre-season the Gabe scores where we play into him, he gets on the turn, and he's patient and Gabe runs off it and he slips the ball between the two defenders and Gabe finishes it first time. That's an example of what I think he can do for this team, which is unleash our wingers into spaces and then arrive into finishing areas to score.

That's probably the only similarity I would put in those two, but we're hoping that he can come. I think he can be a guy that can get as many assists as he can goals because he has that vision and that eye for the pass.

Q. Just one for you. I hope I didn't miss it at the beginning. Garcés picks up the yellow in the first half. We know Emiro can be a pretty aggressive player. Was there concern of keeping him on the field and picking up that yellow card? Did you think of pulling him at halftime?

GREG VANNEY: We actually had Maya standing right next to me ready to go in for him. I just needed one more stoppage and it was happening.

So, yeah, unfortunately the timing was the timing. Yeah, we were talking about it. I told Maya within 15 minutes or less he was going to be going.

It's something we knew we would be dealing with. I was as much concerned just as he was getting what looked like a little bit tired and things were running off him and stuff like that. He's been managing a little bit of an issue physically so just felt like we needed to.

The yellow is part of it. We wanted to change part of our defensive rotation so he wasn't stepping out of the back line and trying to close people down into the midfield. We did change that and his job was to stay more in the back line and we were going to release Julián to some of those situations and Emiro would cover the back so he wasn't stepping out into these highly aggressive situations.

When he stayed in the line, he just sometimes doesn't see the runners that are coming off his back shoulder. We have to do a better job communicating across the line. It wasn't the first instance, but it was the one that caught us on the night. We have to be better about dealing with those situations.

Q. So you have three important Brazilian players on the squad. How much does their versatility expand your options especially in games like tonight?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, the three Brazilian players was the question. Yeah, they give us all three attackers, all three very competent on-the-ball guys. Obviously all three of them for us especially you mentioned some of the transition situations can be very useful for us.

For me it's going to be just how they connect within the rest of the group. I know there is a good relationship amongst them off the field, but it's continuing to build that relationship on the field so that Joe and Klauss specifically because -- not Joe,



sorry, Gabe and Klauss because they haven't had many repetitions continue to get used to each other.

Because Klauss is going to be a great resource for Gabe when he's picking up the ball and he's coming across the middle and he can play into the striker and keep moving off that. That's one of the things we want Gabe to do is be on the move a lot more this year than I felt like he was last year.

So, yeah, they're a great addition to our group and I think their level is going to keep rising.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

