



LA Galaxy Media Conference

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Greg Vanney

Press Conference

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Q. I guess that first 14 minutes are the best way you can start a final game in a four-game, ten-day stretch. How did you see that early stretch?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, the message in the locker room going out was, let's win the first 15 minutes, just because it's the fourth game and you just want to start the game with energy and intensity. They certainly won the first 15 minutes.

That's what we were just talking about. I thought it was two, but it was three inside the 15, so that was great. Yeah, I was pleased with the energy. Felt like we unlocked some things tonight that felt like have been a little bit maybe slow to come in some of the other games.

I thought we were good in every phase of the game. Thought we defended really well. Thought we attacked well. So really pleased because it's been a long week of just quickly getting from game to game and been a long month to be fair.

So really pleased with the energy and the performance. Much as I said to the guys, we get to rest, recover, and work on a few things. This is just the warmup for what's to come next, which is five in 15 or 16 days.

So we used bunch of guys. I think we rotated through the group pretty well, so guys were -- a lot of guys got an opportunity and it was good stuff for everybody.

Q. It's not often we see the final game in that stretch where teams come out and just jump on somebody like that, but going through what you guys went through and then what's coming ahead, how important do you think that stretch was that can set you guys up going into March?

GREG VANNEY: Really important. Again, I think because offensively the last few games have been a little bit challenging for us, playing in a really slow Panama stadium with a team that was really blocked up behind the ball, it was tough for us to build speed into the game.

Then we got off to great start, similar to tonight in New York City, but then we felt like struggled in the build to give our attackers the opportunity to really go in the game and then went down a man.

And then, again, we didn't find the speed against a low block. The Panama team came and they never really opened themselves up. So for us tonight to play a team that played us kind of straight up and for us to find the momentum and the speed in the game and the connections that came out of it was important, I think for the group to feel that couple together the way we know it can.



So it was nice for the guys. Nice for João, Lucas, these guys to get on the scorecard, too. Again, gives them a lot of confidence moving forward.

Q. I think you mentioned a little bit about the midfield. About Lucas Sanabria and Elijah Wynder today, seemed like they had the midfield mostly on lockdown, some great turns in the space from Wynder. Just seemed to be an extra level that you haven't had that yet in the first three games.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think -- and I kind of have alluded to it in some of the press conferences and some of the meetings. I felt like just in our midfield when we played the double sixes or when Lucas was earlier on was lower, we didn't have that guy that can carry at a pressure sometimes and eliminate the first guy by driving with the ball.

And even taking -- because Elijah is a strong, he carries the ball under pressure. And then he will add into the attack. The other night when played against a back five with the two sixes I knew it was going to be the case. Elijah, we were trying to get healthy, and we needed an extra guy to join into the attack sometimes.

And we were always numbers deficient the other night which is also what hurt our tack but kept us solid defensively.

Tonight we saw some of that where our pivots could move forward. I mean, Eddie I think got on the turn and unlocked the first one with a forward pass, which I have been encouraging him and pushing him to look forward more, to play forward more.

So feel like the combination of those guys, and specifically for sure the two pivots in getting the game moving forward was much more efficient tonight than it was, which then speeds up everything on the other side.

I thought Gabe was flying tonight again. We saw shades of Gabe when he's flying and he's doing tricks and he's going at guys and playing at a different speed. That's where we need him to be more often.

Q. On the defensive side with Jakob back there anchoring it, I know we've seen it through all the games we played how solid defensively he is, but especially tonight he seemed to have pretty good control. Including Maya and the rest of the defense, but Glesnes especially looked in control tonight.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, well, he's an excellent defender. The combination with he and Maya are very predictable in experienced, good game reading kind of way. They know what they're going to do in situation. They're comfortable.

Some times I think our back line doesn't cover enough ground and pick up enough guys, maybe in past. Now I feel like they have their spacing right, they're getting across the line quicker, which helps our midfield.

But his individual defending, his timing, his reading of plays, his aggressiveness at the right moments. Even his -- there is a couple occasions where he has to defend kind of in open field. I feel like he's probably done a lot of that in Philadelphia, open field defending the way they played.

So gives us some balls in the air dealing with some crosses, all those things. He brings another level of good solid defensive centerback play for us, which is really important.

Q. How happy were you to see Sanabria in the six yard box to get that rebound? And is that something that gives you a different look when Marco is not playing in terms of the speed and the midfield being able to hit up speed early on in a game?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, it's just different work, right? From Lucas, it's just he's out there and he's a grinder and he's tracking plays, he's running through, he's following things down. He's not going to probably give you the savvy pass that Marco will give you, but he does give you some of that ground covering, just dueling actions, and like you said, following up right behind the play to be able to pick up that kind of thing.

Just that gritty work he does. Sometimes he does it low for us and sometimes he does it high. He did it tonight. I loved seeing him get in the box. I feel like he's a guy that can pick up four, five, six goals a year getting himself in that box trailing plays, even picking up just scraps sometimes.



So I was happy for him. This is a kid who had a tough year last year with injury and just trying get into a rhythm. For him to get out there tonight and get on -- like I said, score a goal but have a good game, really good game, I felt like was really important for him.

Q. You mentioned Gabe and I wanted to ask you about Joseph and Gabriel. Felt like they were really in sync. They were really frugal with the ball, like giving it away, second ball. Maybe the final third in terms of the final shot was the only thing lacking. The two of them today seemed like they were almost vintage Paintsil and Pec.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah. I think Joe had an incredible start to the season, so I didn't mention him because I think every game he's been really good and been flying. He showed up in pre-season with his really focused, really fit. I know last year came in and he was disappointed that he got injured right at the beginning of pre-season, which led to ups and downs in the season and took him a while to get going.

Has a World Cup chance in front of him. That's always motivating for everybody. I feel like not only is he out there playing and pushing and doing those things, but even in the locker room and the group he's holding a standard within the group as well. When your guys are doing that, it only helps everything.

Yeah, the two of them I feel like are flying. Now with we can get them to connect in the final action, see each other in the right moments, which I know they will, then they'll have another big year with goals and assists. I think it's there for them.

Q. You said that you emphasized winning the opening 15 minutes; you did that. I had just spoken to a few people who were a little bit worried after the past few games. You said it was a little slow on attack or difficult due to circumstances maybe. Is this a game that you had circled in the calendar for whatever reason, referencing the opponent? Was it specifically for this team or any team would've been the same approach?

GREG VANNEY: No, I think context matters, right? A lot of us maybe who aren't in the middle of it and in the games and maybe haven't played in Central America or other things, you don't quite grasp all the context.

I had a meeting last night internally. I'm not worried about this team's ability to score goals. We'll score goals. What I love is we're not giving up goals. A team gave up 66 goals last year, I don't give a shit whether we're scoring ton of goals right now or not. What I care about is we are defending as a group and we're giving up nothing. Hardly anything tonight. That's to me is important.

I know Joe, Gabe, and João, and Marco and Erik Thommy and Lucas. We're going to score goal. The context of each of these games matters, and I look at the context. That's not what everybody else looks at. I look at the partnerships that I put on field, the things we were missing, and the injuries in the guys we were trying to prove.

I knew even Elijah, it just unlocks another layer for us that was going to get speed going in the game. I looked at how the opposition played us. You're never going to play -- for me you're rarely going to play in a game where the opposition has zero desire to come try to like play against you, which I feel like was Panama, right? Both of them, they were just hoping for that moment they could catch us, but never opened themselves up.

They stayed discipline and the organized and they're athletic and good individual defenders. We didn't find the rhythm and the speed, and I also made a calculated choice to not put an extra attacker on the field, because if we kept it at zero we were going through, so I didn't need to.

But if that would've been tonight where we needed to win the game, I would've put another attacker on the field. I think we could have got things loosened up. For me, it's always about I know the players, I know the context of these different games, I know we're going to be a good attacking team because I know what we have in that locker room, and I just -- as soon as a team wanted to play us straight up -- and we were scoring goals in pre-season, too, by the way.

It was a matter of when a team wanted to play us straight up and some of the spaces were there, I felt like we could get things running. So doesn't totally surprise me at all. I hope there is more of that to come. That we did it, three goals it 15 minutes was wonderful. It set the tone for the game. I didn't necessarily expect that.



I think this team is going to be very good and very difficult to handle when teams are going to try to play us straight up. I think we can be very, very good.

Q. You guys struggled to put teams away way last season. What does it mean to finally be able to maintain...

GREG VANNEY: Yeah.

Q. To be able to not get complacent with an early three-goal lead and maintain the shutout?

GREG VANNEY: Well, you just said it exactly, which is a good defending team doesn't give teams away. A team that plays to zero, doesn't give away chances, that's a team that gives itself a chance to bury the other team and out the other team away.

Last year we gave away goals way too easily. We played from behind a lot, especially obviously in the early part of the season. We played from the top. We played from upper a goal in the last two games of MLS, right?

So if you can get on top of a team and you be a solid defending team, the guys that we have that can play in transition and what they're capable of doing when the opposition has to come before the game is special.

So I was happy. The halftime conversation was we're up 3-0, but this game is far from over. To win in the first 15 minutes, we need to give them nothing to think about. The message was how we win the next 15 minutes is to keep the game at zero. If we score, we score. We're setting a mentality in this locker room that we have to be a good defending team. Everybody loves to attack in that locker room. I need to make sure they concentrated on the defending, because the attacking side, they all want to do that.

So we'll be fine.

I think you put teams away by making sure they get nothing, they build no momentum, they have nothing they can believe in as the game progresses. That's how you bury them ultimately.

Q. Erik Thommy was on the bench tonight. He didn't get subbed in at all. Was there any consideration to put him in, or what did the process look like?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I mean, to be fair to Erik, he's probably ready to go. But also to be fair to Erik and the group he's gone through maybe one full training session.

So I would rather -- and I told him, look, I'm going to get the young guys out there and give you another week of training. Then we will get you going next week. We got a lot to come in the next couple weeks. He can on benefit from a about solid week of training and getting his legs under him.

So it was an option, but it's also an opportunity to get some experience to guys. He has lots of experience. But give some experience to guys who don't have as much.

Q. This game shaped out pretty similar to the one last week against New York. Early goal, and then after that MO shifted into controlling the game, which you mentioned. In New York we didn't necessarily have that possession; today we did. Besides that it felt similar in that the goals came early. The difference there in that back line was Emiro Garcés. I feel like there was a lot of control against New York until what happened in the 60th minute happened. Then things kind of fell apart there. Tonight he's not there. The result stays the same. Similar context but they manage to preserve it. In 2024 Emiro was a massive part in terms of winning the title. His speed was a really important element and that felt like kept him in the squad. Whereas now it feels like maybe that's becoming a little bit less important and we're seeing the IQ come into playing with players like Yoshida kind of keeping everything calm and being in the right places. How has the thinking around Garcés' position in the team shifted from 2024 to now?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, what I would say is it hasn't shifted a lot. We have more depth and competition in the position.



Second, what I would say is Emiro is physically having a hard time and he just needs to get better.

So we kept him out Wednesday because he needs a week to ten days to recover from a foot issue that I think is bothering him even in the game. That's why I was going to take him out in the game. I could see him starting to struggle physically which means he wasn't moving the way he's capable of moving, so I had Maya ready to go into the game and that whole situation happened.

So we had known going into it and the docs said in order for him to get over this inflammation, pain, he's going to need ten days or so of just rest. He got the right guard, so we didn't play him Wednesday so when we go into the next five game in a 15-day stretch we have a healthy, feeling-better Emiro.

I can see that a little in the tail end of pre-season as well, that this thing is bothering him. He's probably changed shoes 100 times to try to find a show that's not hurting him.

He won't say anything. I just have to make a decision for him, which is we're going to let you heal. No matter -- when your foot is hurting and your basis of your game is athleticism and running and being physical, you're one step behind what you want to be. I'm not concerned about him. Just concerned about him getting healthy, and then he will continue to earn his spot back into the group.

There is a lot of competition. Haven't even seen Justin play in the back yet, which is another guy certainly capable of and very good that position. There a lot of competition there. It's good for us that we're going to be playing a lot of games and we can rotate through. Guys got get used to playing with each other.

Playing with Emiro is a little bit different than Maya if you're Jakob and so on and so forth. They all got to get comfortable with one another so we can rotate as we need to.

Q. Congratulations first of all for the winning. I don't think you really dreamed did those 12 first minutes, right?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah.

Q. I notice that what you use was like flexible 4-4-2 at the very beginning and made explode Gabriel Pec on the side and they were not able to stop him. My question for you is: What about using like in the future, I don't know, you are the coach of course, but the two double nines that would close Nascimento?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, it's definitely something that we would look into. You know, we started down in Panama with a double nine. It wasn't Klauss on the day, but it happened to be Christian that day and Nasci. So there are times you probably will see a double nine. It wasn't going to be tonight. There are times and certain situations that I think our team sets up to be able to do something like that.

We'll see. I think we got it right for tonight and we'll figure out what those combinations look like as we look at our other on position.

Q. Greg, Klauss is off to a prolific start on the score sheet. What do you like about the way he's brought into the team and just having a guy like that, a veteran come in and contribute immediately?

GREG VANNEY: He works his ass off. That's what I love about him. He sets the tone. When everybody behind looks to the guy in front who is working like he's working, you have to choice but to work with him. That's what I love. His mentality has been fantastic.

He's a great guy for ou locker room, and when he goes out there he goes out there to work. He leads us on the defensive side. Never takes shortcuts. Obviously he's big and he's strong and hard to deal with for centerbacks. I like the work he's putting in.

For our group we need that at the front, and it sets the momentum of everything for us. And so I know he's going to get goals for this group. Again, if we can defend front to back well, we set ourselves up for good transition moments. We have very



good transition wingers and the guy who benefits from good transition will be the striker. The more he can put that in and, make the game predictable and help us recover balls between our lines that we can now play forward to. Nasci almost got a goal there at the end as a good example of that type of scenario. So I love that he has a wonderful mentality and sets the tone for the work of the group from the front which is fantastic.

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