



LA Galaxy Media Conference

Saturday, April 4, 2026

Los Angeles, California, USA

Greg Vanney

Press Conference

Minnesota 2, L.A. 1

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for head coach Greg Vanney.

Q. There was a lot of talk before the season about getting off to a fast start at home. This year fourth game, you only have one win. How concerned are you with the start?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, it's not good enough, the start's not good enough. We've given up too many points at home. We're all in there, understand that clearly.

I think, yeah, it's got to get better. We just said home results, this has got to be the last points we're dropping at home. We have to be much cleaner, much better.

Am I concerned about it? Well, of course, because I think one of the things we have to really understand is as a team how we're going to win games without Joe, which is one of our big pieces and chance creation, our winger on that side. We've got to have a better vision collectively of how we're going to win.

I feel like in the first half when we broke that initial pressure, when we got to the attacking half of the field, we were so fast to try to go score and try to go finish an attack. And felt like we never really established our control of the game in the first half on the ball in the attacking half of the field I felt like again.

We spend a lot of time working on that, how to break down a team when we put them in a low block, be more possession-oriented in the swing ball, finish attacks. It's like we don't give ourselves a chance to breathe. We get to the attacking half, and we are so pulled by the goal that we have to go score it right then, in that moment. We turn over the ball, then we go back into the defending moment. We try it again, we turn over the ball.

Again, we talked about in there collectively we need to be clear when we step on the field about the decisions we make and who we are to win games. I don't think we are, especially without Joe, a defend for stretches and play on the counter. That's not going to be who we are. If we have Joe, maybe we have a little bit different of a setup and situation.

That's why we need to be clean with the ball and make good decisions and create motion in our attacks and movement. It's better at the end of the game but why is it at the end of the game? Why isn't that who we are at the beginning of the game? That's what we've got to get right.

Yeah, for me, I thought trying to set up the team, I didn't love how I set up the team in terms of trying to fill the left side up and our width and all that kind of stuff. I didn't love that. I feel like we finally got into a better scenario in the later part of the game.



We tried to use Joe inside and outside just trying to create a better ability to play forward and build forward and get some guys into good pockets and spaces so they couldn't keep step-out pressing us and forcing us back.

I think we got to a better structure at the end. I felt like we broke pressure enough in the first part of the game that we didn't need to race to goal. We needed to get across, bring the other side into the game, force them to defend in stretches.

When teams are on the road in this league, you force them to defend and work hard, they will fade over the course of the game, then you can start to find bigger gaps and bigger pockets and finish attacks and get first attacks, second attacks, third attacks.

When you attack fast, it's one attack at a time and then the ball comes back into your half of the field. That's the way we were for too much of the game.

Again, I go back to it, we just have to be clear as a group how we feel like we're going to go about getting results and how we're going to perform, especially at home. When you're on the road, it might be a little bit different because it's not so easy in terms of the conditions and things like that. It's never easy.

But at home we've got to be clear about how we're getting results. It's part of why I feel like we're losing results and we're giving up simple goals again. It's one ball over the back line. That is just too easy. Then the second goal we've got more numbers than them in between the ball and the goal and guys. Just kind of scoots around us, plays a ball where we have more number than them in the box, and it finds the back of the next.

Again, the concession of the goals while we're working to get ahead of the game. We have to be able to play to zero at home, too. We need to be stingier in that regard.

I think we do end up putting ourselves in some of these situations because of the way we attack, impatient on the attacking half of the field, then we create transitions that over the course of the game, they become expensive as a team. Then you're a little bit more tired each time you have to defend.

So again, the collective identity of how we're going to win games just needs to be clearer across the board for everybody.

Q. About the setup, you had Sanabria on the left side higher. Why did he get to start there, not Thommy? What were you thinking there?

GREG VANNEY: It was going to be an inverted position as we saw we were trying to give a little more freedom to our fullbacks to start low and build into the attack, overload in the midfield using him. Probably suits Erik a little better. I'm thinking about a lot of things coming up here in the next few days, who I'm going to play where, what role they're going to play.

Yeah, in the end you saw just more mobility and more comfort in the role with Erik than what Lucas was able to. When Marco, when we're using Marco in the 10, Elijah and Eddie in the pivot, it's looking at the possibility of being able to overload the midfield with Lucas, what that can be. We wanted to see it.

It's part of the setup I didn't love. It's not Lucas' fault. Part of the setup that I didn't love.

Q. You also had Cuevas on one side, Aude on the other side. A more offensive sort of back line. Were you trying to get more out of the back line because of how unbalanced that was in the midfield?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I was giving more green light to Julian, who in the past has been sitting a little lower. Part of that was, again, playing against a back five, holding Elijah at times a little closer to home so that we could again try to overload the back line using Marco a little higher, Lucas coming inside, things like that.

We were trying to get numbers ahead of the ball and be able to have width and be able to have enough of an overload in the middle.



Again, we looked at if we were building a three, they're going to step straight out to us three for three, because they had three at the top. We were looking at building with the four.

Again, all part of the setup that I didn't love, was working sort of that trying to keep Gabe wide, then it was who was wide on the left. We went with Harbor late. Felt like we started to pin them back a little bit more, created more pockets for us to work. That I put on me.

Q. You talk about how you win games. Where does that come from? You think they can go out and play and win. You probably train that way. The fact that they don't know that or that they haven't figured that part out yet this far into the season, does that concern you?

GREG VANNEY: I think it comes down to -- yes and no. Yes, because it comes down to decision making on the field, too, right? Like, being pulled forward by the goal and thinking we have to attack the goal in three or four passes is a process of decision making, guys recognizing to slow it down bring us forward.

I think some of our personnel really want to go score goals, so they are attracted to the goal. They want to go fast. They want to take those opportunities when they see 'em. Some of those opportunities are really low-percentage chances that we take high risk in terms of turning over the ball and we end up turning over the ball.

I think, again, it's got to be a combination of accountability for decision making and making sure that guys are understanding and getting guys to adhere to the ideas of what we're trying to do in terms of setting up and breaking down.

I think they were also aware, as we felt like, and we didn't establish long enough possessions to force them to drop into that low block, but going into the game there was a sense that they'll go into a lower block 5-4-1. I think some of the internal motivation to go fast for the guys up front was to try to attack before they dropped into a low 5-4-1.

I think sometimes when you prep for a team who will sit deep on you, sometimes the inverse result is the guys try to go really fast before the opposition gets set.

Again, that's where we need to be disciplined, set up and play the long game, not just play the short game, if you will, of trying to score on every single possession at the start of it.

Q. The desire to attack very quickly, is there any residue from Riqui in that when he was here, you guys would attack very quickly at times?

GREG VANNEY: Unsuccessfully, to be fair. It's a different group of players. That's something we have to recognize, right? So it's not the same.

We're not going to win games exactly the same way we did before. Again, especially without Joe, we're not as dynamic at the top on both sides and going through it. That's where I think we need to be able to control games a little bit longer and be a little more pragmatic about how we manage 90 minutes, per se.

Q. Is that in the head?

GREG VANNEY: It could be.

Q. Gabriel is one of the ones...

GREG VANNEY: He wants to score and he wants to win the game. Those are the two things he wants. He's perfectly happy being the guy who can score the goals and win the games. But he wants to. He's driven and pulled by the goal.

I don't blame him for wanting to take that responsibility and score and win the game. But in the context of the game, it's making the right decisions, right? Not just him, but everybody. It's making the right decisions when it is to go fast.

Riqui was the one in the past, I don't want to keep talking about Riqui because he was the one that changed the speed of the game, but now it's different. We're not the same team, we are not going to win the same way. Pragmatically as a group, we have to recognize that adjustment.

That's why I want us to be a better defending team so that we can manage games for longer stretches and not have to win 4-3 or 3-2 or these kinds of things. We need to be more solid defensively and we need to put in a better shift on the defensive side, make sure we stay solid on the defensive side because games are going to be 1-0, 2-1, things like that. We're going to need to be mindful of that.

Q. Third straight game that JT has started? Has he become a de facto number one?

GREG VANNEY: I would say it's still a work in progress. Really busy season. They're two really different goalkeepers. I'm not committing at the moment.

I felt like he brought more calm to the team in the early part of the season. So we'll see. We're in seven games in 23 days again, lots of travel, stuff like that. We'll build through that.

Q. You may disagree with this, but it seems like more the beginning of 2025 and not the second half of the season. What happened to those lessons that we all talked about that you learned in the second half? Have those gone away or what's happening?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think again it's understanding how we're going to be successful and win games with a different group -- not an entirely different group of players, but with Joe not on the field, with different things.

We have to be more clear about it. We have to be better about it. We have to be all collectively committed to it.

I think it's a fair point in terms of the home results. Still early on in that, but I think it's a fair point in terms of the group needs to be clear about how we're going to get results. That's something we fought through in the beginning of last year. It needs to be clearer now, right? That's certainly a fair point.

Q. The fans made themselves heard tonight. Obviously no team, no coach wants to disappoint the fans. They obviously are quite disappointed. We saw the team come over to where the fans were post match. What was that like? Do you have a message for the fans at the moment?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, listen, we're all competitors, every single player out there hates the results, hates to lose a game at home or lose any points at home. We're on the same page.

We understand that collectively we need to be better. I don't think they said anything to anybody out there that we aren't very aware of. I think it hurts when your fans say that to you because you want to please the fans and you want to put on a good show and you want to win games and send them home with a positive vibe and energy.

I think that's why we go down there, 'cause we need to hear it and we need to accept it and we need to show up and be better. I think that's part of the relationship between us and them, is we've got to do our job, they got to hopefully keep showing up and supporting us. We've got to do better.

Q. For the first goal, it's a ball over the top. The second goal is a giveaway. How much does it hurt to see a cheap goal given out from a coach's point of view?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, they're difficult goals to give up. Again, you play against a team that's stingy, they're playing five in the back. I don't think we're a team that's going to be scoring three, four goals every single game.

Again, as I said before, when teams score goals, we have to make them earn the goals. They can't be simple goals. We don't track our run, no pressure on the ball. We have to track our runs. We know these things.

Instead we try to track and we hold an off side line. That's kind of what I saw, have to watch back. Instead of just tracking the



run and dealing with it.

The second goal, how we lose the ball and where we lose the ball is so important to us. We put ourselves in a bad situation. We still had numbers in the right guys to deal with it, and we didn't. Then it makes it very difficult to get a result in a game because, again, at the moment we're fighting to get goals, right?

We had some good looks. Even the goal we score, even though we were in a great position, it takes two attempts to score. Gabe had some great looks from what I would call more midrange, not as close as we'd like to be. We're kind of in the keeper's wheelhouse with some of those things.

Yeah, we can't give up soft goals. We've got to be cleaner about that. I think some of the soft goals is a product of the, again, the way the game gets transitional from the start and you start doing a lot of work to defend early on because of the way we attack so fast and then we're defending in longer stretches, then we attack so fast that over time guys start to get fatigued.

We make mistakes, but we want that to be the opposition, not to be us, right? I think again, our failure to take care of the ball in good ways is putting more physical challenges on us or more transitional defending challenges on ourselves.

Q. The modern game is so demanding. We're seeing that more and more. We see it affect players mentally, physically. With some of the players in the team who maybe haven't played multiple competitions in a season, how they're dealing with that? For you as a manager, you've done it for multiple seasons, but it's still just not easy where you're thinking Tuesday you got to travel, then... It's one onslaught after another. Does that take away from the football?

GREG VANNEY: Look, I like to think we can all compartmentalize and focus on one thing at a time. That's what we talk about. That's how we try to pursue things.

We had a longer break because of the international break, so we did cover more things in the course of these two weeks that looked a little bit bigger picture than just this one game.

Maybe that's something that we should consider because we do play some very important games that are going to be very different than the game tonight, coming up pretty quickly on Wednesday and after that.

But yeah, look, it's demanding. It's physically demanding. The travel is no joke. All those things are true. It's true for everybody in the competition, not just for us, but true for everybody in the competition. They challenge a roster in all levels of it. You want to be as healthy as possible.

But at the end of the day you got to step out and be competitors and compete and put your best foot forward, whoever gets called upon as well as in terms of my preparation of the group and all that. We all have to step out and be there.

If you want to beat a club like the Galaxy, you should expect to be in multiple competitions and be ready to deal with it. From that regard, we have to accept what it is and be better and be more competitive in each of these competitions and games.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

GREG VANNEY: Thank you.

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