



LA Galaxy Media Conference

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Greg Vanney

Press Conference

LA Galaxy 2, Salt Lake 1

Q. Greg, first of all, how important was that three points for you guys tonight?

GREG VANNEY: Man, massive for a lot of reasons. Obviously just the last couple results at home haven't been what we've wanted, what we had hoped or expected. So that's one.

Two, it's just been -- like, it's been a grind for the group. Like 15 games I think we are now, 16 maybe; 22,300 miles that we've traveled since the start of the season. Guys have given everything in my opinion, and to just kind of dig as deep as they did today to get that one across the line is massive for that locker room and for those guys.

I wish we'd have made it a little easier for ourselves in the first half. I thought we had a really strong first half and had a number of chances to give ourselves maybe a little bit more of an advantage, but I knew the second half just because guys are banged up at the moment and two games on the road coming into this game makes this game, even though it's at home, it feels like it's a road game because you're traveling in to come to play it.

So I knew guys were going to be gassing and they kept battling and scrapping and found a way to win it, so I'm super proud of them. It's huge for the group, and that's the most important thing in this moment.

Q. The first half it seemed like you guys could have taken a 3-1 lead since they scored late. Was there anything (indiscernible) did in the second half or you noticed guys just getting worn down a little bit there?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, a combination of things. We had to take Jakob out. It's a load limit thing. He hasn't played a game in a long time. He's coming off of a calf issue. We knew we were going to get half out of him; we chose the first half to try to get momentum in the game if we could and we were able to for the most part.

I think it sort of changed how we were defending in a way because it brought Justin out of the midfield and into the back line, and then Edwin in, and then Edwin was locked up caps wise and he just couldn't cover the ground.

So I felt it just changed how we had to approach the defending side of things, and I did think that in the first half our defensive work and our step-out presses and some of those things are what really created some of our best moments in the game. We really made it difficult for them to play.

Obviously everybody adjusts inside of a half. They adjusted a little bit, but I feel like between us getting at times getting a little tired and us having to readjust some of the way we defended, it started to give them more possession of the ball.

So we had to do it a little bit different.



Q. Edwin was locked up calves-wise?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah. I won't say all the time, but he has these occasional moments where his shins and calves lock up on him and he has a hard time running. He's done a great job of managing it, and I don't know if it was the road this week and coming back or what, but we've used him a lot at the beginning of this year as we normally do, and we've tried to manage him.

We knew we were going to have to make the halftime so, I tried to give Eddie a first half break and bring him in. It's the circus, merry-go-round that we are doing to try to get as many healthy bodies and give us what we can.

He's okay. It's just something that we manage through sometimes.

Q. You brought Miki in; you went to a three-man center back. What was the thinking and what did you get out of it? Were you happy with what you got out of it?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I mean, again, it's a little bit of -- we were kind of a hybrid in the first half and Justin was playing kind of a dual role.

There was times when he was dropping in the back line, times when he was staying in the midfield. Luna's positioning played a little bit of a part of that. Justin kind of being that hybrid between center back and defensive? Midfielder gave us some flexibility to do something maybe a little bit different, when we didn't have him, it's not really Edwin's thing, so part of what took us to settle is when Edwin couldn't go and seeing what the objectives were was trying to figure out how to -- if we couldn't get pressure to the ball, how to make sure we were protecting ourselves.

The one thing about Salt Lake is they're a very vertical team, and they're looking to run guys through the lines, they are going to put crosses in the box, they are going to challenge you vertically, and you need to make sure that if you're a back four that you're shifting fast enough to cover those different run-outs and those different channels. And if you're not, then you need to be a five and be able to close those things off.

It became a way to adapt and using Harbor a little bit lower at times and sliding John a little bit in. We had to reposition a couple guys in order to make that make sense. Once I think we got settled, I felt like we were okay.

Yeah, and then we found a way, obviously, to get out of that a few times. But also, what ends up happening, if you want to get tactical, and we are for a second, but what we actually ending up doing is shifting into the same shape that they're in, so that becomes difficult.

When you win the ball actually matched up with them and it becomes a very difficult transition period. So then we were trying to shift out of that shape into a slightly different shape once we won the ball to give ourselves the superiority to be able to play and gain possession.

It was a little bit of a unique shift that I don't think everybody on the field was quite ready for because it was different. Like we were having, for example, John go into the pivot, into the second pivot, and I don't think guys were really ready to look for the second pivot.

So, again, we're getting very tactical here, but I felt like the solutions were there. We just weren't always seeing them sometimes. Either way, it doesn't matter. I often think of things tactically. I'm just proud of the effort and the fight and the scrap and the three points that the guys pulled out.

The games always have some twists and turns, especially when we are where we are with personnel and managing guys and everything else, and guys fought through it. Today it's about the players' grit and determination.

Q. The goal that you gave up, unfortunate in the way it played out. Also a guy was wide open over on the right, right before halftime.



GREG VANNEY: Yeah, the timing was terrible. Again, I felt like we had a very solid first half, created a ton of dangerous moments. I thought by and large, they had a couple -- JT makes a couple important saves, as always, is important, and we need at times.

But I felt like if we could get to the half at 1-0 would be reward for the work that the guys had put in. So it was a tough moment to take it. A couple things. I think Jakob was anticipating a cross that he was looking to block and I think he went down to block it and the player cut it back, and so he gave himself a little bit more of an opportunity to swing in a different type of ball.

Then, yeah, we get a little unfortunate on the bounce off the post, I think, into JT. I haven't seen it all again, so I don't have all of it. But the timing of it is what stung, but I have to give credit to the guys. They came in the locker room, they were positive, and they were ready to go fight again in the second half.

Q. Marco with his two goals, he feels like he's been one of the most consistent players this season. Talk about the importance of kind of having him getting in that groove and also just you guys are at your best when he's also at his best as well?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, the reality of it is Marco is our quality when it comes to setting up final actions in our midfield stuff like that. The other guys are grinders. They're hard workers. They're facilitators of the game.

But Marco is the creative guy who sees something different, who has the technique and all those things to get Joe and Gabe and guys hopefully in scoring positions and he's been getting some himself because obviously his experience and knowledge and understanding of space and where to go.

For us, he just brings something that nobody else on the field brings for us, and we need that. I think it elevates the opportunities for Joe and Gabe, and it helps in our midfield to give us something that is an experience that I don't think we have with the rest of the group.

So he's been great.

The key for us is that we've got to find moments in the game that we make sure we turn it into a soccer game and it's not just that we have possessions and that we give him the ball and give him opportunities to do the things that he does and it's not always a grind the whole time because that doesn't suit him all the time.

But he was still able to find ways to be a difference maker inside of even a tough day like that.

Q. There was a couple of occasions today where we saw Harbor progressing the ball through the middle. Is that something that's been worked on? Is that something that just kind of happens naturally? What did you see out of his performance? And quick sidebar, what is Julian Audi at with his injury?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I think for Harbor, one of the things he gives us is his ability to run with the ball. He's got power, and as a lefty on the right side, it's kind of natural sometimes if you see space to the inside to drive to that inside space and put the ball on your strong foot, especially when you're playing against a man-to-man setup that sometimes it's just about where is the space and how do you get away from your guy.

When it's a wingback that's closing him down, to drive to the inside sometimes takes the wingback into a position that he doesn't really think or want to go to, and I think it became important for us when he's able to drive out of situations, find a new space, get looking forward, keep the game flowing in a forward position.

But he has those qualities. That's part of the special skill set that he has.

As a former winger who continues to play wing for us, but we think might be better at right back, he does have that ability to move with the ball that is special. And you need it in certain times, especially days like today.

I don't want to compare him to, but it's a thing we sometimes miss with miss with Riqui, his ability to take the ball at speed and



move into a space and create a new scenario by eliminating your own man and then setting up another situation.

Sometimes you can create a superiority by dribbling past your man and getting into a new area. He gives us a little bit of that from the wide position, and I thought he did a great job of today of some of the moments in transition. I felt like the ball was at his feet and he had to do some things, but I felt like the work that he put in was really important for us.

Julian is a high ankle sprain, so he's probably a couple weeks. I could go through the laundry list of things that guys are carrying. He unfortunately in the last game picked up a high ankle sprain.

Maya wasn't in the group because he picked up an MCL, a slight MCL strain. I don't think it's going to be long-term but it definitely kept him out this week.

So guys are just beat up a little bit. We're looking forward to a couple days off and a few days of training and then a game and another week and stuff like that. That's one of the reasons the game was so important, because we finally maybe over the next couple weeks can catch our breath just a little bit here.

Q. I don't want to continue the theme about guys being injured, but now for the foreseeable future this is life without Klauss, a guy who was a go-to when it comes to headers and stuff. How do you see the roles changing of the guys up front? I know you can't replace or teach size, but how do you see other guys stepping in maybe replacing him? Does that mean also Marco moves up a little bit more up front? Have you thought about it yet? I know there's still fresh and there's a lot to tinker?

GREG VANNEY: I think about it all the time. It's a little bit of nine by committee at the moment. Different guys bring different things. Obviously Joe's mobility and speed, especially in transition moments, as we saw kind of at the end of the game, and at times can make it hard for center backs sometimes if we go with Marco.

It's because he plays it as a false nine and he comes off the line to create overloads and challenges the center backs to make decisions whether they're going to stay or come.

So it's going to be what we feel like is the way to give ourselves the best opportunity inside of the game, depending on who we're playing, how we think the game is going to go. It's going to be a little bit of nine by committee for the moment until we can get one of the other two guys ready to go, and João is not going to be after World Cup break.

It just is what it is I think for us at the moment, and we've got to find solutions, and today we were able to find some solutions, and some of those came from our defensive work. Maybe not all of them have to be through incredible passing and all that kind of stuff. Sometimes it can just be through the defensive work and the step outs and presses and creating turnovers in good spots and then attacking fast out of those situations can be some of the evolution I think this group can take on in this time period if we need to.

Q. (No microphone.)

GREG VANNEY: Maybe a few weeks, but I'm not really sure because it's a muscle injury and I'm not quite sure where he is in his rehab stuff. I wish I could give you a better -- I'll ask somebody. I'll find out.

Q. Coming out of the last game you spoke about how the team struggled to match Columbus' intensity and speed. RSL provide a real challenge on both of those fronts today. What's your read on how the team handled it, and did you see the improvements you were hoping to see over the week?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, I'll jump back to Columbus. I just thought we -- in Columbus I think maybe we -- I don't want to say why. We just didn't match the intensity level. We were expecting -- maybe we were expecting more of a Columbus soccer game and Columbus came and got into us tight.

One of the things we talked about is I think we had given up between four and five six shots and like six fouls before we even committed our first foul. How do you show the opposition you're here to compete and you're here to battle and you're going to make it hard for them if we're that passive?

It was a challenge to the group on being more aggressive. Not necessarily just fouling, but making it harder for the opposition to do the things that they're wanting to do and announce our presence there and whose responsibility is that on the field to make sure those things are happening.

I thought we did a much better job, as I said. I thought the first half they had a hard time establishing much in terms of possession. I thought we were disrupting a lot of things and actions that they probably like to live on and like to play.

I thought we were creating transition moments for ourselves. I thought Lucas won a ton of balls in little dueling situations, which is his strength, and creating out of that transition moments. It's important for our midfielder. It's the heart of it all that those guys can battle it out when they need to, and I thought we did a much better job, especially through the first half.

In the second half I felt like we were a little in between at times trying to sort out some moments which allowed them to have some possessions, but we still dealt with situations. But today was much better in regards to the things that I asked from them and the things that they came through.

It was also what they asked of each other and of themselves, not just me. They recognized it, too.

Q. An interesting quote from Taylor Twellman during the match. I was wondering what you thought about it. He said if you lose games trying to be aggressive it sets the tone. It doesn't feel like LA Galaxy want to do that for 90 minutes. I felt like that was before you got the second goal, of course. I actually felt like today you really did put in a shift in both halves, but that first half was really impressive, so it was a points and performance for you today. Is it nice to kind of quiet the chaos a little bit --

GREG VANNEY: Taylor has forgotten since he has been living in the broadcast booth of what it's like to be a player, and in being a player when you have traveled 22,300 miles and played double the amount of games as the opposition, you come home after being three games on the road and all the games that we've been playing.

You're asking for everything from everybody. We've got injuries around there. It's fucking hard, and the guys played fucking hard. He can have whatever opinion he wants. I don't really care. Our guys battled, I thought. We were super aggressive, and we were trying to find ways to be aggressive in the second half. He can have whatever opinion he wants. Doesn't matter to me or us. That's the end of that.

Q. I was going to ask about Glesnes. You could see in the first half the stability and how good and confident everyone felt. Is he going to be okay? That was just precautionary to give him just the half today?

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, he's okay. It was a planned 45 minutes. Normally would bring a guy back for 30, but we felt like his presence and his willingness and desire and confidence to be aggressive sets the tone for the group and for the back line, and we missed that.

Whoever is next to him gets to follow his lead, and he provides us with that courage and also that capability to be more aggressive. I thought we missed that a little bit in the second half because he's willing to take on one-on-one situations. He's willing to go personal in moments. And then he shows his capacity and confidence to defend properly in some of those tough moments and his ability to read and be proactive and all that.

You need that if you want to be aggressive team. You need guys, especially in the back who are willing to go personal and individual and don't feel like they always have to be one forward against two center backs.

So I felt like he gave us a lot of the courage in those moments to be aggressive and to step out, and I think he gives the guys in front of him that confidence, because when they go, they know that line is coming with them. All those things fit together.

It was huge to have him back. The plan was 45 this week, training this week, and be ready for 90 coming into next week.

Q. Do you think you caught a break there with (indiscernible) play late first half?

GREG VANNEY: If I'm being honest, I haven't seen it back, so I don't know. I know he was coming from an angle, so I don't know exactly without really reviewing it to have a strong opinion. I'm glad that it wasn't. I think coming to angle. Not sure if



he gets some shoulder-to-shoulder on the bump or how it works.

I'm glad we didn't, and I don't have a strong opinion on the call or no call because I just haven't seen it. I don't have the luxury of (indiscernible) while I'm sitting down there. They reviewed it, they looked at it, and it is what it is, as well. I don't have a strong opinion.

Q. You were there for Cobi Jones' ceremony. Talk about the moment, celebrating him.

GREG VANNEY: Yeah, it was a beautiful day, one, for me, Cobi is the legend of this club respectfully to all the guys who have statues out there. For me he is the legend of the club. He's been here since day one. He's played every game. His whole career was here. His blood, sweat, tears, everything were about LA Galaxy and the city of Los Angeles, and he's a close friend, but he's a guy who gave his whole career to the Galaxy.

It was a beautiful day to see people show up and support him and honor him in the way that I think he deserves. I think seeing a stature in front will feel appropriate, in my eyes. And he's a guy -- and I said to him, he came in the locker room after, for me he's a guy that while he had some flash and he did some incredible attacking things, for me it was his grit and determination and desire which made Cobi Cobi.

He was a guy who was told over his career that -- he was a walk-on at UCLA, and he just showed what it embodied to play with desire, to play with a passion, to play with somebody who might be telling you no, and he's going to find a way to get it done.

I felt like today's performance, and I said this to the guy, was kind of an embodiment of who Cobi is, which is just find a way to keep persevering and keep getting it done and success will find you when you keep earning it the way he did.

I was honored to be out there, as I've told him many times. He's earned it. He deserves it. Now for me legends plaza is a little more where it should be.

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