



LA Galaxy Media Conference

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Justin Haak

Press Conference

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Q. Justin, thanks for talking to us. How much do you like that midfield position for you right now? Seems you're really starting to settle into that and you've been getting a lot of minutes there. I would suggest, I think you had a pretty good game.

JUSTIN HAAK: I enjoy playing the midfield a lot. I think you can do a little more than at center back, but especially I think this team needed maybe a little bit more bite. Sometimes we've been talking a lot about playing to nice and trying to be a little bit more dirty, and I think that's something that I can definitely bring. And I've definitely been trying to bring that the past two games.

And I think that's why maybe we weren't so good on the ball. We've had less possession these past two games but we're still able to get good results. Could have been better today but a big part of that is just having more fight and I feel like I'm able to bring that in the midfield.

Q. Following up on that, the grittiness, RSL not the prettiest and today not the prettiest but certainly in moments you guys had that. How important is it to have that part of the game, the gritty physicalness, and then what needs to happen now for you guys to get the three points instead of the draw?

JUSTIN HAAK: Yeah, I mean, first of all, I think great teams find different ways to win, and I think we found a different way to win versus RSL, and we were very close to finding a way to win today.

We just let ourselves down, really, on the set piece.

But I think going forward, it's adding the two parts of our game together. We showed really good fight the past two games. We had moments where we're very good on the ball and have some nice plays moving forward.

But it's really about if we can sometimes slow the game down and keep possession a little bit, we can also rest with the ball, and then we'll be even cleaner. Because I think especially in this first half, there was times when we're doing a lot of chasing and everybody's putting the work in.

But once we regain the ball, it's a little bit more difficult just because we've been defending for so long. So you see more turnovers and that's why we found ourselves in the position we were today.

But like -- I'll say it again: The fight has really been there, and I think it was there today throughout the whole game.

Q. If you can talk a bit more about the intensity Vancouver brought in, a lot of falls from them, and maybe how did that affect the way you guys wanted to approach this game?



JUSTIN HAAK: They are in the multiple final for a reason. They started this season really well, seven wins and one time one loss now.

But they are a good team for a good reason. They have good players all around the field and I wouldn't say that we were outmatched at all intensity-wise. I think we were up for the fight completely. I think they were probably a little bit better on the ball than we were.

But in terms of intensity, I think we did a great job of even setting our own intensity from the start.

Q. If you could talk about the progress the team is making, this is one of the top teams in the West and you guys are able to battle it out, not the ideal result for you guys but still a testament to maybe where you guys were at the start of the season?

JUSTIN HAAK: I think always we added a few players, which caused some growing pains, maybe everybody was getting used to playing with each other.

But even now, I think we have a lot of injuries affecting the team but Harbor about a great game against RSL. He's really been stepping up the past two games at winger.

Lucas has been playing very well. He's a big -- works very hard in the middle.

So right now with the injuries, everybody is stepping up to the moment, and we're really doing it as a team.

Q. Was Marco behind the playing dirty thing? He mentioned it a few times last week.

JUSTIN HAAK: Well, Marco is a big voice in the locker room and obviously he is one of the greatest player to ever play. He has a full career of amazing experiences.

So we all -- when he talks, we respect it a lot. And there was a moment where he kind of brought everybody in and he got a little bit mad at us and said we need to be more dirty. We can't always play nice.

I think the team has done a good job of listening to that.

Q. Coach talked about that gritty sort of play. As a player is it more taxing on you, or is it something in the moment you don't think about or feel days later? Is that sustainable, game-in and game-out playing this sort of style, and what effect does it have days later on you guy?

JUSTIN HAAK: I mean, right now, I'm very tired. But I would say it's definitely sustainable is more of a mindset-type of thing.

If we just get in that mentality of competing every single minute of the game not taking any moments off, and always trying to be the team that brings that -- that raises the intensity in the game, during the game you don't even think about it. After you might feel it a little bit, but we'll rest and recover and do what we need to do to be ready for the next game.

Q. How much confidence did it give you guys on the defensive end, knowing you had that quick early goal to begin the second half?

JUSTIN HAAK: It was a great start to the second half. I thought that also came from the energy of the team and the intensity, how -- you saw a similar moment in the RSL game when maybe Joe took it off the goalie and Gab had a chance to score.

This game, it was Lucas to Joe. I think that just goes back to the intensity that we've been bringing and that put us in the right foot starting off the second half like that just unfortunately warrant able to close it off.

Q. We had Nico Benalcázar on our show recently, and your name was dropped. So I figured I would take the chance to ask you about him real quick, for people who don't know, he plays for the Orange County SC in the USL Championship. He was



talking about guys that have that NYC background and then mentioned you. Have you -- do you guys hang out at all since you've arrived here?

JUSTIN HAAK: No, he's been a little bit fake. He hasn't been answering my text messages but I've tried. I've made the effort. He's always busy.

Q. You play the role of the disruptor really well, and today, it felt like you were popping in the back a little bit in midfield, as well, and you have a smile on your face when you're talking about like the grittiness and the dirty side of the game in a sense. But how much do you enjoy that disruptor role, breaking plays up and stuff? You were really good at that today?

JUSTIN HAAK: I honestly enjoy it a lot. If a big part of my game is trying to make other people's games easier and put them in the right spots. And if that's doing a little bit of extra work defensively, breaking up a play so the other team finds it more difficult, that's something I enjoy to do a lot to be honest. It's not the prettiest or most fun but I take a big pride in doing it.

I think that's something that can really help the team, so I try to focus on it.

Q. Talk to me a little bit about having a play like Glesnes behind you. He's so vocal. And just watching him kind of conduct the back to the midfield and having a player like him, what's it like having someone like him behind you?

JUSTIN HAAK: It's very nice. Always competing against him the past few years in the East, it's nice to now have him behind my back. I think you can always count on him to win his 1v1 duels. He has a loud voice and good presence on the field. He's been, again, one of the defenders for a reason.

And now he's finally back from his injury he's getting in the games again, and he's just going to continue to keep getting better.

Q. Tonight the team draw with Vancouver, just incredible thought as one of the better teams in MLS. The Galaxy went into this match an underdog in the odds, Vegas odds here at home which is unusual but you guys got the draw. What can you point to as kind of like a proof that this team can pretty much hang with anybody in the league? Do you see this as an indication and progress in the right direction?

JUSTIN HAAK: Yeah, first of all, I think it says even more that probably everybody in the locker room feels like we lost today because of how we were winning for the first 70, 75 minutes. That really shows the mindset we all have.

And I don't think there's any game we ever step on the field and think the other team is better than us. We know we have a talented locker room and we can play against anybody.

Q. You're about ten games into the regular season for you, and how are you just settling into this team? And what's the one thing you're looking forward to improving upon personally for your personal game?

JUSTIN HAAK: I'm starting to get more and more comfortable and really find, like I said, where I can help the team most, and I think that's helping my game start to really see I didn't come here.

I think I'm just looking forward now to the next game, and getting three points that I think we deserve today but that's our focus now.

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