

POST GAME QUOTES
Wednesday, June 7, 2023
LAFC VS. ATL United



STEVE CHERUNDOLO
LAFC HEAD COACH

RE: Thoughts on today.

“I’m very happy with the performance tonight. I’m proud of the guys after the disappointing weekend. To come out tonight, a couple days later and to perform like that, hats off to them. At the same time, I’m just really feeling for them right now because they deserve more, they deserve three points. That’s just how this sport works and I’m sure it’s the same in other sports. You know, things aren’t going your way, you really have to take small steps forward, and not just one giant step. So tonight, was I think more than a small step, you guys played fantastic and deserved to win. Just a quick look at the stats as well, so it’s obviously a pretty dominant performance from us. It’s exactly what we wanted, we wanted to play that way and so my message to the guys was exactly what I’m telling you here, just keep going. Keep going. We play like that, we win a lot of games, and I think things will take care of itself. And hopefully next game. VAR will have a better night.”

RE: Talk about your defense again, for just a minute. No shots allowed on target, just four total for the entire match. Was that more a product of what you were trying to do out there, or what Atlanta couldn't do or a little bit of both.

“Atlanta has some fantastic offensive players. I think it was a collective effort by us. If you’d look at the first 10, 15 minutes, we were still a little unsure of how Javi wanted to press and we fell into the trap we’ve kind of been in the past couple of weeks of just dropping, just to drop for no real reason. Then the boys started stepping up and we started winning balls in their half and we continued in the second. So, it was a step towards the football we want to play, against the ball. Obviously, our defenders, Murillo and Denil played fantastic. Again, Chiqui had a great game and Ryan as well, but in everything, it’s not just those four, it’s the three in front of them and the three attackers did their job, too. We were quite mobile defensively, we were committed to pressing high and that’s the only way it functions. Everybody has to be committed and to understand their role in the moment. And it looks a lot like the clips that we show guys in preseason. So, our example clips from pressing high against teams who play like Atlanta, so we get in a good performance defensively. Offensively, we created enough chances, like I said, just all about lucky timing. I’m not sure we need to overanalyze this game.”

RE: On those chances a lot created, but still only one goal in the past four games. Is there anything specific that you're seeing on the finishing on why they're not going in? Is there any thought to maybe put Bouanga on penalties when he's chasing that golden boot?

“Not sure we need to go as far back as the cup game. But you know, the penalty is – we write two guys on the sheet and those guys make a decision. Both are quite experienced and capable of connecting a penalty. So, I’m just not sure we need to discuss that, I think next time it will take care of itself. So, consider it in that fashion. I’m not worried. If you don’t create chances I’m a little worried, but we’ve created chances in Leon. We’ve created chances against them here and plenty of chances again tonight. So, nothing worries me about the way we’re playing. Goals will

start to fall, they will not fall if you do not continue down that path and I promise you we'll continue down that path."

RE: Talk to me a little bit about Dueñas. A very good performance in midfield, a tough position to play. One of the things that Ilie told the young guys, "we're not gonna get mad at you for making mistakes, but we will be upset if you play scared," and it seems like they are not playing scared. So how do you know when a player is ready? How do you foster that? Because to say "don't play scared" in one thing, but to actually see them, do it? How do you foster that with the young player?

"It's certainly not just the work of the coach, you already spoke about what Ilie told him and that's very important. So creating an environment where everybody has a role is very important. Ilie's role is obviously to play well, but also be a leader amongst others and creating that environment for young players to come through and thrive and to teach them and not to block them is very important. It's something we try to culture and help a lot. The atmosphere around the club and our balance between experience and non-experienced players is excellent. It's perfect for your players like Eric and Nathan. And when they are called on so far this season, they've gotten the job done."

RE: What's the frustration level among the group and how are they handling it?

"Judging by the performance I think they're handling it quite well. I think we've already digested the Champions League final. There's no way you play a game like that tonight if you haven't. There's frustration of course by not getting three points, not getting rewarded. Everybody in the locker room has been in that position before and there's no reason to panic at all. Just keep going and keep playing in the same manner and things will take care of themselves, but at the same time putting in the extra work in the final third on the training field and we'll do that on Friday."

RE: How much will the international window affect the next few weeks?

"We're not quite sure yet, so I don't have a clear answer for you which is why I haven't addressed it yet. I'm hopeful that all the games that involve players of ours getting canceled spontaneously so they all stay here and play, so that's my hope. We'll figure it out in the next couple days, who's gone and who's not, but for us, just like any other club, it's not the right time."