

**POST GAME QUOTES**  
**Wednesday, September 27, 2023**  
**LAFC vs Tigres (Campeones Cup)**



**STEVE CHERUNDOLO**  
**LAFC HEAD COACH**

**Re: Was there clarification on the Denis Bouanga goal; do you know what happened there?**

"I was told the ball was moving prior to taking the free kick and that's why they called it back."

**Re: Before the season started, we talked and you said this year was going to be a lot more difficult in terms of competition and the ability to compete for all these trophies - what do you feel is behind those opportunities that have slipped through the hands for LAFC?**

"It's a game of margins and in these games, like tonight, I thought was a very good performance and I'm really proud of the guys. They almost rewarded themselves, but it didn't workout. I don't think there's anything that we need to do differently. I think the only game where we were disappointed in ourselves was in Leon. Other than that all the games were fine; all the games we could have won. So there is nothing we are doing wrong, it's actually a hell of a lot we are doing right - we are in these positions; we are in finals, and we deserve to be there. It's only a matter of time before we start winning them, so we move on, we try to gather as many points in MLS and moved towards the playoffs."

**Re: The start for John McCarthy - obviously a well known PK [penalty kick] stopper and won you guys the MLS Cup - what was your guys' thinking going through that?**

"Just trying to get every advantage we can. Obviously both keepers understand and are good at PKs - theirs as well - but sometimes having fresh legs and a little bit of focus can help. It's us coaches doing as much as we can to give our players an advantage to win a trophy. And we came up a bit short."

**Re: You went down a man about half an hour left, and it seemed like we actually picked up our intensity and played better going down a man. Can you talk about the team's response after the adversity?**

"The team did everything we asked of them tonight - they defended with intensity; they defended in a smart fashion. We were at a higher block, pressing, or a lower block, which is what we ask of the players. You know their tactical discipline and implementation of our plan was near to perfect. Just the goal was missing, not really, but we know what happened there. So I am really proud of the guys sticking to the plan and they did a great job, so I am proud of the performance."

**Re: On Diego's first yellow, it was right before the bench, you had a good view - was that a yellow card for you?**

"I am not going to sit here and discuss what is and what isn't. My only concerns with referees is - my only ask is - that they're consistent with their calls. If a referee pulls yellows in the first minute, then he has to pull them the entire 90 minutes, and that is the referee's discretion, not mine, not yours, nor the fans, or the players. I do have a problem when referees are not consistent, and in this case I think Drew was not consistent. There was a play where Mattie

[Mateus Boguz] gets pulled around going to goal - no yellow cards. Chiqui [Diego Palacios] second yellow card, same play, not much at fault at all. Certainly unnecessary and obviously they called a goal back. My worst fears came true, and they usually do with Concacaf referees in these competitions. I've been doing this for a long time now as a player and now a coach - my worst fears are when referees change the results of games, which is exactly what they're not supposed to do. Their first priority is to keep players safe. Their second is to be nonexistent. Sure enough, Drew and his crew came out tonight big and decided this game, which is a shame for the fans and the players because we didn't deserve that."

**Re: For the group, four league games left, can't feel down after this, right? Because you have to go and you have work to do. So what do you think of the energy inside of the group? Can they let go of this performance and move forward? Where are they?**

"I think that's fine. I think we're all professional enough and if you look back at the Champions League final, three days later against Atlanta at home was one of our best performances all season. So I am not concerned with this group. They are still hungry for more. This actually should piss us off more, so we will be ready for Sunday."

**Re: You talked about before the physicality of MLS vs. Liga MX, sometimes it doesn't matter what you plan - obviously you said they followed it - what did you feel about that in the game today? Did it feel that way with intensity between the two leagues?**

"Yeah I think so. I think there was some mutual respect there but also some intense fouls and some intense plays. I think both teams played hard. I think with the exception of the first 15-17 minutes, our gameplay worked. We were quite happy with our performance. As soon as we started to settle down a little bit, connecting more passes, we were getting inside their box and creating chances. It was a fun match to watch. These matches make us better. I would love to more of these so we will see - this will not be a repeat next season. Actually it might be. We don't know that yet, but we will try to repeat this match next year."

**Re: You talk about all these different situations: Concacaf, Leagues Cup, US Open, whatever the case may be - what do you guys learn? This is the second time you guys are seeing a team celebrate here; what are the learning lessons that you guys take to get to the next step?**

"Through all the competitions we've been in this year, for any team that's going to do that next year, I can tell you, the rules and regulations of MLS roster building are not ample enough and we are not equipped enough for all these competitions. I think we have done an incredible job to stay in all competitions very late, but our guys are depleted. Our stadium ops is tired. Everyone in the organization is tired. Maybe it's too many games, or we don't have enough people to cover all these games, and I think moving forward, to create a competitive advantage for MLS, I do think the owners, and the commissioner, and the rest of the league office need to sit down, and come up with solutions. Because status quo is not gonna work; I do know that. And I can tell you that is the opinion of other coaches as well."