NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION

TRANSCRIPT

TRANSCRIPT (11/12): Marko Mitrović Introductory Press Conference

Marko Mitrović officially introduced as Revolution's 10th Head Coach on Wednesday; Soundbytes from Mitrović and Revolution Sporting Director Curt Onalfo

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Revolution Head Coach Marko Mitrović and Sporting Director Curt Onalfo

[Opening Statement from Sporting Director Curt Onalfo]
Onalfo: "Thank you everybody for being here today. Please join me to extend the warmest of welcomes to Marko Mitrović, our new head coach. Marko is exceptional in every way. The perfect blend of old school, championship level coaching, with the modern tactical brilliance. He is very demanding, yet deeply compassionate. He knows exactly what today's players need to thrive, while using modern winning strategies that define elite coaching. He is a strong, humble leader, with relentless energy, and a fearless bravery. Humble enough to listen, caring enough to connect, and an absolute killer when it matters most. Welcome, Marko."

[Opening Statement from Head Coach Marko Mitrović]
Mitrović: "Thank you, Curt, for such a great welcome, and it's great to meet you all here, and see so many people. It tells me that I'm in the right place, because when I see that so many people care about this club and support this club, it means that we are in the right spot, in the right place, moving forward. I would like to thank Robert [Kraft], and Jonathan [Kraft], Curt [Onalfo], [President] Brian [Bilello], and all the people that have been a part of process of hiring me. Actually, that was one very organic and easy process. I felt from the very beginning that it's more onboarding than hiring, and somehow from the very beginning, I felt it was the right decision for me. I'm very aware of the club's history. I know that this club had so many great players and coaches and people that worked for this club to build such a strong foundation. The ambitions that we have moving forward – have strength, have conviction that we can do the things that we want to do in the future.

"When I spoke with Curt, and [Assistant Sporting Director] Chris Tierney, and [Technical Director] Remi [Roy], the way they see the next steps, and the process – I'm a very process-oriented person – it was great to see that we share the same belief. I just have to get to that training facility, start working, and do the best job I can do. Again, when I see so many people here – media, that you take your time, and that you're supporting this team the way you support, all the staff here, people at our training facility – it just gives me so much confidence that our ambitions are in [alignment] with people that we have. What matters the most for me is starting with the people that care and support our project."

On Mitrović's qualifications that gave him confidence and if it is a risk giving him his first MLS head coaching job:

Onalfo: “It’s no risk at all in my mind. He's exceptional, as I said, in every way. Incredible person, you start there. Incredible integrity. Life experiences that help him to be the leader that he is. He's super confident. He's a modern coach, exceptional tactically, and really has a clear identity of how he wants to play, and how that will look on the field. He's able to express those in very simple ways. It's easier to confuse players than make them understand, so he's an incredible communicator. Like I said, he's got what the old school coaches have to win championships, yet you need to be a modern coach to deal with the players of today, and he knows how to connect with people, he knows how to treat people, and he knows how to get the most out of players. So for me, there's no doubt. He's confident and ready. He’s got his opportunity, and he's been waiting for it.”

On Mitrović’s managerial philosophy and tactical approach:
Mitrović: “First, thank you for coming. Number one, if we speak purely on what's going on on the field, something that we can’t deny, before we go to any tactics, we have to have fighting spirit. We have to understand that we go out there to give everything we have, and that's, for me, non-negotiable. Before we talk about any quality of our player or individual quality, we have to be sure that every player gave, that day, everything. We will live with the outcome of our performance. Now, tactically, let's simplify this. I will use one word, it's attack. We will attack with the ball, and we will attack the ball when we don't have the ball, and we will be very aggressive with that.”

On how Mitrović’s experience developing young talent will help him grow the Revolution’s young players in the Pro Pathway:
Mitrović: “My last four years working with U.S. Soccer, I had a close collaboration with the club. I think the club has massively grown in the last years in developing young players. I just finished the [FIFA U-20] World Cup with [Revolution Defender] Peyton Miller on that team. The players that are coming through the system in the last years, it's a great resource for the club. I would say we have to establish our team. We have to use different resources, and having our own academy, that's one of the strongest resources that one club can have. Especially with certain restrictions that we know that league has, it should be a massive tool for everyone, and we are in a very good spot in this moment. Obviously, we are not going to be in sleepy mode, the [Revolution] Academy has to keep going. But everything is set and right now, everything looks very good.”

Onalfo: “To continue with that, Marko and I really developed a relationship over the last four years when he was at U.S. Soccer. I used to pick his brain on certain players when we were recruiting players into our Pro Pathway. We became very close with Esmir [Bajraktarević]. We saw Esmir Bajraktarević identically, which is not always the case when you talk to players or talk to people in the league. You could tell right there from the beginning, there was a good relationship there. Obviously, his time with U.S. Soccer helped, but he came through the Red Star Belgrade system, and they know what it's all about. He just gets it innately, where there are times where, as Sporting Director, you really need to push coaches into seeing the value in players that can come through the system. So, that was evident. But make no mistake about it, that's still just a very small part of what we do. If you put a percentage on it, it’s probably 25 percent of what we do, but it's important, so that was one aspect that we liked about Marko.”

On Mitrović’s thoughts on the current roster and opportunities to improve the team in the future:
Mitrović: “I can say that watching the games, I'm quite familiar with the roster. I actually can say that I'm very familiar with the roster that we have. Obviously, working with the players, you learn the context much better than looking from the outside, and what are their demands, what are their ceilings. I feel very positive with the roster that we have right now. The selection process in every sport, it never stops, and any given opportunity that we can improve our team, I'm quite positive the club will take steps. We have departments that work on that, but our current roster, we are in a very good spot.”

Onalfo: “Yeah, just to continue with that, a big reason why we were drawn to Marko and him to us is he likes our roster. We've been a transactional club as long as I've been in charge. We'll continue to be transactional, but we have a very strong core and a strong foundation to build upon. As Marko becomes more familiar with the team, we'll continue to look at those things and we're always going to work hard every window to improve the team. That's our commitment.”

On Mitrović’s staff and whether there will be continuity from the current staff:
Mitrović: “Thank you for your question. We are establishing the staff. We are in process and we are getting close to finishing that process. There will be people from the previous staff that will stay with us and help us, and have continuity with the work.”

Onalfo: “Like Marko said, we are in the process of filling out his staff. He will be bringing at least two assistant coaches to the first team. I'm not going to give the names yet because we're in the process of doing that. We already have somebody earmarked for the second team position that is currently on staff. We'll be announcing that at some point. But yes, those are conversations where Marko and I spoke together, because it's a collaborative, important process where we both want to make sure that we're comfortable with everybody that's on staff. We talked about that extensively during the interview process. It’s a small soccer world and we're in a good spot staff-wise.”

On his familiarity with current Revolution players including Peyton Miller and Matt Polster:
Mitrović: “There are several players [I coached] with the [United States Men’s] Senior National Team, I worked with Matt Turner as well. Every time you get in a new environment, and you know more people, it helps you. You mentioned some of the players that I worked with for many years together and they will help me to understand the context better. Obviously, I know what I can expect from them and what we can get from them. So, it's always great to have familiar faces on the field.”

On Mitrović’s knowledge of New England and what excites him about making it his new home:
Mitrović: “It's interesting. [During] my time with U.S. Soccer, we had a lot of travels and spending 24 hours per day together, and we opened many times [about] those topics, because the United States is such a big country with so many great places to live. One of the questions was like, ‘What was your favorite place to live?’ and ‘Where would you love to live?’ I had so many staff members picking Boston as a favorite city. I haven't had too many opportunities to be in the city, as I was at [Gillette Stadium]. I'm looking forward to learning more about the city, the place where we are going to live. To be honest, my wife is in charge of that. I'm going to designate that time for her to find. I know where my time is going to be, it’s close here. So, wherever they are happy, I'll be happy.”

On why Mitrović feels like it was the right time for this step in his career:
Mitrović: “I think I finished two great cycles with U.S. Soccer. We had the [2024] Olympic Games, we had the [2025 FIFA] Under-20s World Cup. Actually, my objective was, even before that, to get to this position. I will go back to when I came to the U.S. the first time in 2016, and after four years with Chicago Fire, when I moved to England to work, my family stayed here. That was the first time they didn't move with me, and I felt it's a strong decision from the family that this is our place and home. It connected with my love for the league that I got during the four seasons with Chicago Fire. It was kind of an organic decision for me. ‘Okay, this is my objective down the road.’ I got that opportunity with U.S. Soccer, which I believed in that moment would help me to grow as a coach and as a person, and would help me to get the opportunity with New England that I have right now. Then after finishing two cycles – I wasn't open, to be honest, before the Olympics and Under-20 [World Cup] for anything like this. I was waiting for those cycles to be done, because

I also had a commitment, not just to the federation, but to the players that I worked with. I think it's organic timing in my life."

On what makes Mitrović the right person to deal with the adversity that comes with a head coaching role:
Onalfo: "For me, it's just all of his qualities, but the thing that makes me drawn towards Marko [Mitrović] as a coach is that tactically, he's excellent. He has clear ways of playing. He's aggressive. He knows what it takes to win games at home and away. His teams attack in a way that creates lots of chances, lots of expected goals. When you do that, you end up scoring more goals. I just feel very confident, [with] his ability as a coach, for him to hit the ground running, and for us to have a really awesome 2026 season."

On if Onalfo wanted a coach who had not held the role previously in MLS:
Onalfo: "Not necessarily. It's important that our process, I wanted to make sure it wasn't rushed. It took eight weeks. He [Mitrović] was the last person to come into market. Basically, the cream rises to the top in these situations, and it becomes very clear who the person is you want to hire. It turns out he's not somebody that has coached before in the league and there ends up being – the word sometimes is used as 'retread'. But you could just see from the beginning, like he talked about it, it was easy. It was an onboarding. I gave him a lot of homework to do throughout the process, because I wanted to make sure that he understood our team, because we are a team that we have a lot of players coming back, as other people have alluded to. It's important that he understands the players that we have, the quality that's on the field, and that he's going to be able to work with those. During the process, it just was crystal clear that there was a great chemistry, and a strength of character and confidence that he's going to step in and just do an incredible job. We're very fortunate to have this, I'll call him a young man, as a head coach of our team. He's super talented and he's ready for this opportunity. So, let's do it."

On Mitrović's excitement about leading the Revolution in the same year that seven FIFA World Cup matches will be played in the stadium:
Mitrović: "Hopefully, we're going to get some tickets to watch the games (*laughs*). It's two different competitions. I think it's an exciting time for soccer in the United States in general. To have the World Cup here, I think it's a great spotlight to show how much soccer in this country is growing year after year, and we will have the whole world here. I believe all the people that are connected with this game have to take this as a great opportunity. It's not going to be given to us, not in recent times, and just to introduce ourselves to the rest of the world and where we are right now. That's if we connect with the World Cup. But we have our competition; the World Cup is a completely different competition. If we watch some games, it's always great to learn and get some new knowledge."

On if the World Cup presents an opportunity to grow the sport of soccer in New England:
Onalfo: I mean, absolutely. First of all, today is a really exciting day, celebrating Marko [Mitrović] and him being the next head coach of our team, and that's our focus. He used to work for U.S. Soccer, and I used to work for U.S. Soccer as well, and actually was an assistant coach in a World Cup. The World Cup is the biggest sporting event in the world and it's coming to Boston, so that's great for our city. It's great for our fans. It's something that will hopefully just help us get pushed over the tipping point. We've devoted our lives to soccer. I've been doing it since I've been four years old, and Marko the same. We want to win with the Revolution first and foremost, but we want the sport to thrive, and for our stadium to be as full as it can be. So, we're looking forward to both."

On Mitrović's passion for mathematics and how it influences his coaching:
Mitrović: "I don't know how – I mean, I was born with a certain talent for math. Actually, it's a funny story. When I was a kid, my dad was dreaming of me going to M.I.T. [the Massachusetts Institute of Technology],

and that was a topic in my house all the time. When I would come to Boston, I was always coming here in Foxborough. I never came to the city. I do remember we had two games here, one in New York and one here, and we stayed somewhere in the city. I don't remember where. Then I took an Uber, went to M.I.T. and called my dad, and just like that, 'I'm here'. Not the way that he wanted me to go to M.I.T, but now I'm here, I'm in Boston, so there is something in the universe there.

"I would say it like this probably: if we say two and two is four, you have to prove to me that two and two is four. Also, I have to understand how you get it. What's the process to get four? Listen, I don't know, maybe if somebody sits next to me and says, 'Oh, you do this because of your math?' I'm probably not aware of that. But, I just talk about that process. You have to prove me that this is right and how you get there."

Onalfo: "I'll add to that, as well. I mean, it's a lot for a head coach in Major League Soccer because there's a lot of [roster] rules. It's important to understand numbers when you're looking at the composition of the roster. So, that math part of his brain will be helpful for us."

On how Mitrović's previous youth coaching experience will impact the Revolution Academy:
Onalfo: "To answer your question, Marko [Mitrović] is an established coach. Our Academy is developmental. We don't look at him as a developmental coach. He's a proven coach that knows what he's doing. He's 47 years old and he just needs his opportunity. Part of what I loved in the interview process, he specifically said he's on the world stage because he wants to be an MLS head coach, and we acted quickly once he came into market. One of my first calls was to U.S. Soccer to give me permission to speak to him, but he was getting ready to go to a World Cup and they didn't want him distracted, so we waited until afterwards. He was highly touted, and other teams were not happy with us making a swift decision to make him our coach."

On is Mitrović has had a conversation with any players, including Carles Gil, and maximizing Gil's talent:
Mitrović: "Not yet. Starting next week, we have so many onboarding things and I want to be sure that when I start to talk to the players, my head is clear and I'm going to send the right message. I don't want to take those calls just to check the box. They have to be meaningful talks with the players. Carles Gil is one of the most talented players in the league. I'm really looking forward to working with him. He's extremely important for our game and actually, he's extremely important for the model of the game that I would like that our team plays."