



## **TRANSCRIPT (3/13): Match Preview Press Conference**

*Soundbytes from Head Coach Marko Mitrović, F/W Diego Fagundez & GK Matt Turner*

### **Revolution Head Coach Marko Mitrović**

#### ***On how he envisions Diego Fagundez fitting into the team:***

**Mitrović:** “I know Diego [Fagundez], obviously, as a player [coaching] against him. I never coached him. Since my first year in MLS, 2016, back then he was a young talent coming through the academy system and making his great steps within the league. I think within the timeframe that he spent in MLS, just the impact that he made in the games, the amount of the games and the contributions that he had scoring goals and making assists, but also, the impact in the game in the final third. We believe that he can help us. It’s also a position of need for us, so getting someone with his experience and his quality for this season will be very helpful for us.”

#### ***On playing home games on the new grass surface:***

**Mitrović:** “We went for a walk on the field today. Obviously, we haven’t been able to practice, but just to be there and be able to see the stadium and being inside. I haven’t coached here on the turf, so I don’t like to make comparisons. This is my first game, and we are playing on the grass, so when I was there it was a really great feeling. It looks like a proper soccer stadium when we stepped in there. I think the guys are also excited. There is excitement because it’s our first home game, but also because we know we’re going to play on the grass probably brings another level of excitement.”

#### ***On Diego Fagundez’s strengths as a player:***

**Mitrović:** “Diego is someone who finds his spaces between the lines very well; somebody you can combine off, or he can combine with the ball. He has a level of creativity, and as I said, impacting the game in the final third. We just got Diego a few days ago, and obviously we have to understand that Diego’s last game he played was in October. He didn’t have a preseason. He’s almost been five months off the field, so we will need time to integrate Diego. Also, we have to be patient with Diego because we had a two-and-a-half month offseason and then the team was, for six to seven weeks, in preparation for the season. Now, we have Diego who is almost five months off since he played last time, so we have to be patient and also patient with the expectations, especially at the beginning, until he gets in proper shape – which I have to be fair, I’m very positive with his fitness level and his standing knowing that he didn’t have a team training for so long.”

#### ***On increasing the offensive output:***

**Mitrović:** “We are working on that. Those numbers are not something that we like to see or that are our tendency. To create shots, obviously we have to arrive in the final third. The other thing is creating the shots, something that matters to me is average distance. You can get in spaces and take the shots from 30 yards and have a number after the game that says we took 15 shots. But how many of those shots are really dangerous situations? Obviously, saying that, we still have to improve, I would say, before the shots, arriving in the right spots in the final third and then creating opportunities to take those shots, especially from the shots where we can more likely score the goals.”

***On what he's expecting against FC Cincinnati:***

**Mitrović:** "Cincinnati is another really great opponent. A team that is established and has its own certain style that they are playing for several years. They changed certain personalities, but the way they play stays there. It's a fun one for me. I would say it's a team that has a high physical presence, one of the most physical teams on the field. A team that has that directness in their game and a team that has a lot of winning second balls and creating second attacks from those opportunities. Obviously, they were very, very successful in the last few years in the league. Maybe they didn't start the way they expected – three points from three games – but also, I watched the [Concacaf Champions Cup] game yesterday against Tigres and they had a very strong performance. Some teams need more time to get where they want to be. But definitely, it's going to be a very challenging test for us."

***On the advantages of using the extra week to prepare for Sunday's match:***

**Mitrović:** "It's always tricky to know how good it is, because on one side we just started the season and having continuity of official games brings a lot. You're just in a rhythm. It's like, okay, now we played two games, and we can start to catch our rhythm, and then you have a break. We used these two weeks, yes preparing for Cincinnati, but still reinforcing and emphasizing certain behaviors that we want on the field to happen. For example, you just asked me about the number of shots. How we can get there, again it's not about taking the shots, we have to get there. So how can we create conditions to get there. We were working a lot on our style in general, and our principles in the game. So, it was very positive. I really have nothing [negative] to say since day one, the players are very committed to every training session. I have literally no complaints about their effort in the training sessions."

***On the importance of the outside backs in creating attacking chances:***

**Mitrović:** "Definitely, for us, every player contributes when we attack. There are players that provide certain passes so we can advance the ball, there are players that have to receive those balls higher up the field, there are players that are running in behind. Definitely with Ilay [Feingold], he is a full back that has an attacking mindset. Obviously, we know Peyton [Miller] and how talented he is and with his speed how much he can provide us. Actually, he's a threat in behind and also putting opponents on the back foot when he is on the field because you have to defend his speed. Peyton started to train with the team after several weeks being out. He is going to be in consideration for Sunday's game. We are still creating the best plan and amount of minutes that would be best for Peyton on Sunday."

***On Matt Turner providing stability at the back:***

**Mitrović:** "Matt [Turner] is really doing great. His effort, his attitude, his experience, and his presence in the locker room, not just on the field but off the field, Matt is a great voice for the very young team that we have. He's someone who can support and lead younger guys. I'm also very happy with his performances in the trainings and in the games. I know we can say the number of goals he conceded in Nashville, but I also believe he had exceptional actions. For those goals, it's not that he could have done much. In general, I'm very positive with Matt and very happy with him."

**Revolution Forward/Winger Diego Fagundez**

***On his return to the Revolution and how he has evolved both as a player and a person since leaving the club:***

**Fagundez:** "At least I don't have to drive one hour [from Leominster] right now, I only have to do a three-minute drive from the hotel (*laughs*). But as a player, I think in five years, I've learned a lot of new things. I've grown as a player. When I was here, I wasn't really vocal. I would just show what kind of player I was. In the last five years, going to Austin [FC] and going to the LA [Galaxy], I've learned how to use my voice more and be a leader in certain ways, especially with the younger kids. So, that's one thing I'm trying to bring here is leadership. We all want to win. I think after being here for so many years and leaving with no silverware, that's the one thing that I want to come back and try to do."

***On the emotional aspect of returning to his hometown club:***

**Fagundez:** "There's a lot of emotions, actually. I always said I wanted to come back. I didn't know exactly when. I left here with hunger still because playing here for so many years, having so many memories, and

not winning something kind of threw me off, so I always wanted to come back. I'm excited to be here and hopefully help out the team. At the end of the day, everyone's goal is to win cups and trophies, make it far in playoffs and tournaments, and that's exactly what I want to do.

"They gave me a lot here. They gave me an opportunity to start my career. To still be doing it years later, and still enjoying it, is something that I'm looking forward to. Especially playing at [Gillette Stadium], where I grew up coming to games before that, and now being able to play again there after waiting five years. Of course, it's going to be exciting."

***On the first things he's looking forward to doing upon his return to New England:***

**Fagundez:** "I don't know, I already did a couple of things that I wanted to do. Of course, go back to my hometown Leominster, Mass. I've been there a couple times already this week. But, I think the most important one will be probably scoring in front of the crowd. I think that's something that I've always enjoyed. And you never know, maybe an old celebration might come out, so we'll see about that."

***On his excitement to play in front of the Revolution fans at Gillette Stadium on Sunday:***

**Fagundez:** "I think scoring in front of the home crowd will be amazing. Of course, I have friends and family that have always supported the team, always came to games, and that feeling has never gone away. We always want to score in front of them. You always want to win games in front of them. They have always gave me something special and they have something in my heart that I always keep. So, playing at Gillette will be something special and I just want to get that moment where either a goal or an assist, or just even a win, will bring memories. I came here to try to make new memories, try to do everything I can for this team, and give them as much as I can."

***On choosing 77 as his jersey number this season:***

**Fagundez:** "Well, 14 was of course taken, and I kind of retired 14 a little bit. Then I went to seven, and I said, 'Why not 77?' Seven and seven is 14, so maybe it's a good luck charm."

***On playing on Gillette Stadium's new natural grass field for parts of this season:***

**Fagundez:** "It's kind of a nice treat, I've got to say. Playing on turf all these years is definitely different, and coming back to grass is going to be amazing. I think we all need to enjoy these moments, because it's not something that you get a lot. I know I've played on grass for a couple games while I was here in New England, but being able to play [several] months on grass will be nice. I know everybody is looking forward to it, especially the way the grass is looking right now. Just going out there today, it looks really nice, so I think everyone is looking forward to Sunday and enjoying it."

***On the benefits of playing on grass:***

**Fagundez:** "I don't think there are [benefits]. I just want to be out there on the field and play. At the end of the day, you're playing 11-v-11 with one ball, and the better team is going to win the game. Of course, turf is turf, grass is grass, but at the end of the day, it's still the same game."

***On how he prepared in the offseason to return to action:***

**Fagundez:** "When the season ended in October in LA, I went back to Austin, and of course I took some time off. I knew there was going to be negotiations and that never happened. So, at the end of the day, I just had to make sure I was ready. I was training every day. I was trying to get out there, play soccer, play indoor, whatever it was, just making sure I was ready. You never knew when a phone call was going to happen. And in the last seven days, everything happened so fast. Everything had to be low key, and that was the most important thing."

"I had to make sure that I was ready, and I ran a lot. I did everything I could. I was playing, and I think they wanted to see exactly where my fitness was. When I came here, they thought I was good enough. So, I'm very happy that I made those decisions to keep training hard and keep being ready. Little by little, we're going to make sure my fitness gets to where they want it to be. But, I feel good right now. That's the most important [thing]. Like I said, if I have an opportunity on Sunday to play, sit on the bench, or whatever it is, then I'll be grateful for it."

## **Revolution Goalkeeper Matt Turner**

### ***On his feelings after the Revolution's first two games:***

**Turner:** "I'd say the number one overall area of improvement would just be to make the play that helps us win the game. I care more about how our team is doing, and obviously not winning our first two games is frustrating. Some positives to take away from the first one – it was a tough game, and then really unfortunate not to come away with anything from the second game. So, just making sure that we are getting results along the way and that we don't fall behind. And I'd say I felt really good in the goal, and am seeing the ball well. But, as we've seen this week, goalkeeping is something that can humble everyone very quickly. I'm just going to take things, and continue to take them, one step, one play, one moment at a time. Just one foot in front of the other and keep trying to build towards my ultimate goal."

### ***On his thoughts about the Revolution playing on a grass field for all of their home games this 2026 MLS season:***

**Turner:** "I think any soccer player, and I would imagine any NFL player, would tell you that they prefer to play on natural grass. It's easier on the body, easier on the joints. It's definitely been an advantage of ours. There's only so many synthetics fields left in MLS. So, I think it was probably something that teams didn't look forward to coming to Gillette Stadium, because they knew they were going to have to play on turf and we were more comfortable on it. So, it's great. We had a little walk around the grass. What they put on the field is amazing. It's not like that classic where they just lay the grass on top of the turf and let the chips fall where they may. It's rooted, it's real, and it's got an irrigation system. It's beautiful. So, it's going to be nice to try to play our brand of soccer on that field."

### ***On if grass going into Gillette Stadium takes away any homefield advantage:***

**Turner:** "Definitely not. This is our first home game, so we're looking forward to really just sharing the experience of it. And listen, the best part is if we win every single home game, we'll have a good fight for keeping the grass on that field. I think that's what we as athletes want. I understand that there's factors outside of our control because the venue is used for a lot of different things, but I think if you ask any athlete, they prefer to play on the natural grass than the synthetic."

### ***On Diego Fagundez returning to the New England Revolution:***

**Turner:** "It's great having a familiar face back. Diego [Fagundez] is an extremely talented player and I think getting out of New England was great for him. He got to have the experiences of building a club and a culture. I think he scored the first goal for Austin FC. Having that experience and then going to LA Galaxy and winning MLS Cup and having those experiences there. So, he's kind of traveled around, had successes' in different ways, and now he's coming home and he has the experience that guys can look up to. You look at the homegrown talent that we have on our roster and younger players that know Diego and were fans of Diego when they were young, and he brings an aura. He brings, like I said, experiences and mentality. He wants to achieve things when he steps out onto the field. He wants to win. He wants to perform at his best and he'll continue to drive our standards of what we're trying to build here every day in training and then in the matches as well."

### ***On reconnecting with teammate Matt Polster since returning to New England:***

**Turner:** "Absolutely. You know, we're on a similar timeline. He went over to Europe, came back. I went over to Europe and came back. He's a consummate professional. He's here [at the training facility] earlier than me every single day. He takes care of his body. We're similar - married with 2 kids, a boy and a girl. We have a lot in common, so it's always been easy for us. Even if we didn't stay in really close contact while I was away, just to pick up exactly where we left off, it's been great. And pushing each other as well, trying to get the best out of each other on the field. He's very demanding. If you see him on the field, he's very demanding of all the players around him, but it's really good to have a player like that on our team. We're really, really fortunate that he's been here for so long and helped the team in so many ways."

### ***On the importance and excitement ahead of New England's home-opening game on Sunday:***

**Turner:** "I think whenever you're going to play a home opener, it's really, really exciting. And we want to feel that energy from the fans, and we're trying to do a better job this season. I hope that the fans that have traveled, we had some away support in Nashville and Red Bull, and I hope that away support felt

appreciated. I know the results didn't go our way, but after the game, trying to find them in the crowd and show our appreciation for the effort that they put forth. We look forward to that relationship now coming to our home stadium, and like I said, getting to share the feelings of playing at home. I always say soccer fans are supporters. They're not just fans. They're people that need to be appreciated because they're there to support the team. They're part of the team in a lot of ways. So, I look forward to getting in front of our [fans] again and just the feelings of being at home. And ultimately, giving the fans what they really want in the city of Boston, which is a winning team, a winning style of play, guys that aren't going turn away from the hard yards, and they're going put in the extra the extra effort to get things done."

***On facing U.S. Men's National Team teammate Roman Celentano on Sunday:***

**Turner:** "Yeah, it's nice. You always have that mutual respect and understanding. Goalkeeping is a unique position, but anytime you're going up against guys that are in the pool, your approach doesn't really change. If you're in the pool, you're in there for a reason, and I think that's because you take every single game with the same level of importance. So, for me, obviously, Roman [Celentano] is a talented goalkeeper. He's done really well so far this season. He had a great game last night. And he's coming to Gillette. It'll be cool to see him, say hi. Then after that, it's just business as usual. It doesn't matter who the opponent is, I'm going to bring the same level of intensity and the same level of aggression every time I step onto the field with that same focus."

***On goals for the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026:***

**Turner:** "It's impossible not to have an eye on what's to come. I think I've done a really good job. I'm working with a sports psychologist about sort of compartmentalizing things, giving myself the grace and the time each day to have a moment to think about certain things, and then coming right back. It's not something that's easy as snapping your fingers, but it's something that I'm aware of, and I've been really working on for 18 months now. That's why when I speak now, I hope you believe it, because it's the truth of how I feel. And the reality is, on top of everything else, I understand that because I've been here before. What I do here and now, what I do here at the club level, what I'm trying to build, how Marco is challenging me in different ways - it's going to help me as a goalkeeper. It's going to help me as a leader and as a person. And then what I can control is here, when I get the opportunities again with the national team, I'll be able to bring that over and just keep things rolling. Controlling the here and the now is the only thing that I can do. It's the only thing I have any sort of power over. So, after that I'll let the chips fall where they may and I'll put my best hat forward."

***On his feelings about his odds of being called up to the roster for the US Men's National Team ahead of the 2026 World Cup:***

**Turner:** "Always feel great about [my chances]. We'll see when they announce the roster for the March for the friendlies and who's going to go. And if my name is called, I'll be ready."

***On his leadership development since returning from Europe:***

**Turner:** "I think that comes with the experiences that I've had – being overseas, playing at big clubs, and playing in big moments with the national team. I've always been somebody that loves to have a chat, loves to sit down and talk, but my understanding of the game has also grown tremendously. And I want to be somebody that people can always come to with any of their problems. As much as my game experience has grown, my life experience has grown tenfold. As a father, as a husband, as a brother, and as a son. A lot of things that people can struggle with in a professional environment, in the locker room, outside of the locker room, you can imagine, I've probably struggled with them at some point in my life and in my career as well. I think my story is very relatable and I'm not afraid to share it. That helps guys, and that's something that I can also have that side of me that's loving and caring because I understand the emotional side of a lot of things."

"Then the way I train, the way I prepare for games, the way I play on the pitch, is the other side where I can be very demanding once we cross the white line. It's a balance of things: Emotional intelligence and then just performance. You have to earn the respect of everybody around you and also be a constant force, because if you're there for people than maybe what you have to say on the field might land a little bit better. It might make somebody run the extra 5 yards to close a cross down or make the tackle on the goal line or whatever it is. I've always loved soccer because of the relationships that you build. That's really why I love

the game. People come from different backgrounds, different places, trying to relate to people – it's amazing. It's just like a microcosm for the world. I've gotten to meet so many amazing people and the relationships that I build are extremely authentic. I keep in touch with everybody from every club I've ever been at because I just try to be as real as I can. But I also am very demanding, so I think you have got to have a little bit of fear as well.”