



September 29, 2019

POSTGAME QUOTES: New England Revolution 2 vs. New York City FC 0

New England Revolution Head Coach Bruce Arena

On what it says about the Revolution, to get the results needed this week, to qualify for the playoffs:

Arena: "Well, it says a lot. I think, unless you're blind and perhaps a little stupid, and I'm not accusing you of that, I think they've done this since May. They really have. We were not in position to lose many games, starting from the middle of May. So, they've done an exceptional job. This week wasn't any more difficult than we've faced over the last three months or so. So, they've had a heck of a performance. I don't know how I always see the probability of doing this and that. Like when the USA played Trinidad in the last qualifying game, (they) might tell you we had a 99 percent chance of winning that game and I think we had a 99 percent chance of not making the playoffs. So, as they say, shit happens, you know."

On if this Revolution side has met or surpassed his expectations from the start of his tenure:

Arena: "They have surpassed my expectations. I thought we had a team that was better than the results at that time. We're still getting to know players. We're still learning about our players and they're learning about us as a coaching staff, but we have a good, solid group. I wouldn't think we're going into the playoffs as the favorite, if I'm not mistaken. But, I think we have a good group of players. The goal is to keep getting them better. I think the game in Atlanta is a terrific game to play in preparation of the playoffs. And then, this whole second half of the season gives us ideas on how to build a roster after this season's over, to get ready for 2020. So, I think it's been a very productive year, since May. I'm really excited for those players, they way they've worked, to position themselves to make the playoffs."

On when he realized that he could do something special with this squad:

Arena: "Well, I'm not sure you'd call what we've done special. It's really a positive. I'd like to think our best years are ahead of us. So, I'm not ready to be dancing in the woods or having parades and stuff because we made the playoffs. I think, the goal here, is to get this club better positioned to be one of the top clubs in the league and one day, win an MLS Cup. So, we're not there yet."

On what has been learned about the Revolution players' resolve to get themselves into the playoffs after such a poor start:

Arena: "They're coachable. They're just a good group of players in the locker room. Of all the teams I've had all the years, this is as good as any of them to coach every day, to deal with away from the field. That says a lot. I give them nothing but high marks, even if we didn't make the playoffs this year and kind of failed towards the end. I still think this season has been a real positive."

On if he had any expectations with regards to the togetherness of this group when he initially took over:

Arena: "No. I had no idea what I was getting into, to be honest with you. I still don't know why the hell I took this job, but I'm here. There's nothing I can do about it now, right? No, I mean, I knew very little about the players, to be honest with you. A couple of them, I knew from being in and around the league and maybe the [U.S. Men's] National Team program. But, I didn't really know anything about them."

On if his initial unfamiliarity with the players was been beneficial:

Arena: "Probably. I think, for the players, it was great to get a new start in May. They were excited about that. They've given us everything they have. They've been really good. They've been a good group to coach."

On if he feels as though the turnaround is complete or if there's more work to do:

Arena: "I remember, maybe three months ago, we had a major crisis here because we drew in a game. So, now you think we need to win in the playoffs too, huh? It would be very nice. I don't know. If we lost in the playoffs, would you then say the season's been a failure?"

On who the team's leaders are and who stepped up into a leadership role this season:

Arena: "I think, one of the characteristics of our team is, it's bilingual. A number of players are bilingual. However, a number of players do not speak English, understand it that well. So, there has always been communication challenges, and our players have stepped up. Teal Bunbury has been excellent. Scott Caldwell, if you know anything about him and Brad Knighton. These veteran guys that have been around, have been fabulous. And then Andrew Farrell and Jalil Anibaba and Diego Fagundez. Those players who are able to help bridge the gap that we had in communicating with players, have been fantastic. They all, for the most part, every day, they get after it and they do a good job. So, I've probably left out a few names there, but all the guys have really been really good, very supportive of the coaching staff and each other."

On beating the top club in the Eastern Conference and if that momentum matters:

Arena: "Sure, it helps, but when playoffs come around, it's a whole different ballgame. And this year, the one-game playoff series is really interesting. I think it probably favors the underdog more than the favorite. I think in a two-game series, the home team really has an advantage. One game off, anything can happen. Our guys don't step on the field thinking they're going to lose a game. I've been around. I don't even know how many games I've been here. I thought I came in close to mid-year, but they've only lost twice, so they have a good competitive mentality, and the playoffs are close games usually. They're hard fought. I think we have the right characteristics to compete in those type of games. So hopefully, that'll be the case, but I'm really excited to see how they do next week in Atlanta. I don't even know where Atlanta's positioned. It's always a big game in Atlanta. They get a great crowd. They have an outstanding team and it's just another good challenge for us on the road. And we've done well on the road. I think we've lost only once on the road since I've been here. So, I think, we can go into a playoff game with the confidence that we can hang in there and hopefully win a game."

On what he likes most about the current defensive structure:

Arena: "Well, just their communication, their movement, has improved. And then we have a goalkeeper that makes big saves. Those are all positives. We've all learned as the season's continued how to work as a unit. Our backline has done well. Our midfield joins in. Carles [Gil] does a great job in joining in when needed. We have a good mentality, as to how to play with each other. And a big thing we've wanted, is we've wanted clean sheets and we haven't had a whole lot of those. Getting one tonight, I think, was important. We've actually had two in the past week, I guess. So, that's a positive. I think we need to be a strong team defensively to position ourselves to hopefully win a playoff game."

On if the fans and writers can dream of the Revolution winning the MLS Cup:

Arena: "Oh yeah, we can dream about it. I dream about a lot of things. I'm not sure MLS Cup is on top of my list. I think we want to dream about getting on the field and being better the next game. And even when I was in position with other teams in the league to win the MLS Cup, we didn't talk about it. We just did it. So, we'll prepare the team to play in Atlanta and then hopefully, playoff time, we can get it together and win the first one."

On if the Revolution are more comfortable playing from behind:

Arena: "I wouldn't saying anyone is comfortable playing from behind. I would say, our team is hard to play against. We're not easy to play against. We're not an easy team to beat, and I think our record shows that."

On Gustavo Bou's impact since his arrival:

Arena: "You become a much better coach when you have a guy that can get a goal for you. That's one of the hardest skills in our sport. I think Gustavo [Bou] has nine goals now, since he's been with us. To have players like that, they're difference makers. I think that's a positive, even on a day when things aren't going right, he can still get a goal. That's a real positive to have on your team."

On if he thought it was at all realistic to reach the playoffs upon his arrival at the club:

Arena: "No, I thought it was not likely, but they hung in there. I don't even recall exactly. I thought for some reason, when we started in May, that we were like 15 points behind most of the teams above us. So, it didn't seem like that was realistic. I don't know exactly what the numbers were. So, this team has probably had one of the top-five records over the last 18 games or so. They've done very well."

On Matt Turner's role with the club:

Arena: "You know, I said in the case of Gustavo [Bou], he can get you a goal. And when you have a goalkeeper who doesn't lose you games, he doesn't make mistakes that cost you goals, and he still can make one or two outstanding saves a game, that's huge. So, he's been equally important as anyone to us, getting results."

New England Revolution Goalkeeper Matt Turner:

On tonight's result:

Turner: "It's hard to put into words. It's definitely been a really long season, but there's been a belief in this group amongst us for the entirety of it from when we were in last place in May until now. We still have work to do; making the playoffs is one thing. Now, we will buckle down and we've got Atlanta next week and then we want to do well in the playoffs; we're not just there to be there. Yeah, it's nice and we are really happy and pleased that we were able to do that and clinch before even the end of the season. Because in the past three years, I think it was like going into the last game of the season, we didn't even have a chance to make the playoffs. It's nice to be able to clinch and we're sad we didn't get a home game for our fans; they were excellent tonight. We will just keep building and, like I said, there is a huge belief in this group."

On how far he thinks the team can go in the playoffs:

Turner: "I mean, I can't really say anything other than the MLS Cup because we all believe that. We all play this game because we want to win and win trophies."

On how important it was to win tonight and make the playoffs on the team's own terms:

Turner: "Yeah, the way we won; 2-0, clean sheet, scored a couple of goals. We were clinical every time we got in front of the goal, so it was just really important and it was really good for us in all facets of the game."

On Gustavo Bou's goal:

Turner: "It was just excitement. Everyone in the stands was going crazy, and it was just one of those euphoric moments. I never would've pictured it back in May. It's tough to describe. Once we went up two, I knew for sure it was going to be enough. It was, obviously, we got the clean sheet, and we'll just look to build off of this performance."

New England Revolution Forward Teal Bunbury

On the chaos of this season and clinching playoff berth:

Bunbury: "I think everybody's been working extremely hard this season. The past four months has been pretty wild, pretty crazy. There's been a lot of adversity, a lot of guys just sticking with it coming into training, working hard. As players, you don't want to lose games. You don't not want to be in the hunt for the playoffs. All those things are tough mentally, physically, emotionally. So, right now I'm just super excited, super happy with everybody, you know, the fans, the organization, everybody stuck around, stuck with us, and it's fun and an exciting moment right now."

On what was going through his head during his goal:

Bunbury: "I'm going to keep making runs. I'm going to keep taking my chances. I'm just happy with the team right now. Everybody put their work in. New York City FC is a really good team and they created a lot of good chances as well. But, I think we did extremely well, defensively. I think we were able to shut them down. [Matt] Turner had to come up with another big save and [I'm] just really proud of the guys."

On if this season has been the most emotionally draining season during his New England tenure:

Bunbury: "Yeah, it has. You go through a whole coaching change, general manager change, losing games, winning games, tying games, new players, I mean, all encompassing, it's a lot of stuff. As a human being, that's a lot in a workplace, that's a lot to kind of deal with, but I think we've all been able to do it together. That's the big thing with this group that we were all able to stick together through it. And I think a lot of people outside of the locker room don't really get to see how tight-knit we are as a group and I think that in this league, that's what you need, you need guys being able to work for each other."

On the determination of the group:

Bunbury: "Yeah, we've been down, we've been up, we've been even, and we've found ways to win games, ties games; even sometimes lose games when we shouldn't have, but it showed a lot. A lot of hard work, a lot of grit, and this league is a lot like that. You have to work hard every game. Every game is going to be a fight and I think we showed that."

NYCFC Head Coach Domenec Torrent

On the match overall:

Torrent: "I think we played well. We deserved goals in the first half to score I don't know, maybe two goals. But you know what happened, like so many times in soccer, if you are unable to score goals, the soccer [will] punish you. That happened for me in that game. I'm not angry with my players, because the better men won for me. They fight every single ball, they win the duels, and they created opportunities. We make two mistakes and they score two goals."

On NYCFC winning more duels in game:

Torrent: "I saw the stats and we win more duels than New England, but after that, you know what happened. They may fall, and fall, and fall for five seconds, six seconds. It's not easy to play that way because the fall, fall, fall, fall every single ball. It's not easy to play in that way. We play even well especially in the first half. We could not score in the second half after one-zero. The last minute of the contest, we lose the ball. This kind of ball I don't like to play inside, you know. Something happened in the last two minutes. We tried to score one goal to win the game, and they score the second goal. That happens. I'm not happy, happy with my players, but I'm not angry with my players, because the better man was good. I don't know what will happen in Columbus, but if not, I say to them, 'We have to be ready for the next game.'"

On Matt Turner's big saves:

Torrent: "Sometimes happens in soccer. The keeper, the job of the keeper is to try to save opportunities, you know. The difference for example, we play Ronald [Mataritta] against Atlanta, but the first three, four opportunities, we score a goal. That sometimes makes the difference. I'm happy with the players, they played well. ... We play very brave here in New England. I like right now, when they play in that way. I prefer to play in that way, but you have to be ready when you are in travel. You have to be brave and they did it, and we lost the game. ... Sometimes you play much better, in my opinion, in the opening and they win the game, and sometimes it's the opposite. You play worse at the opening and then you score a few goals in two, four opportunities."

On the loss requiring NYCFC to need help from Columbus to clinch the first seed in the Eastern Conference:

Torrent: "Tonight was the time to clinch the first position, but New England played well. It's not New York City didn't play the second team of New England. They deserve to be in the playoffs. We lose, they did a good, good job. We try to draw -- not to draw, to win the game -- but sometimes it's almost impossible. Sometimes it's about openings, sometimes you concede or you make a mistake, or sometimes you are not able to score a goal when you have clear, especially in the first half, opportunity to score."

New York City FC Goalkeeper Sean Johnson

On emotions after tonight's match:

Johnson: "I think it's a bit of a rollercoaster. Obviously, we're a team of competitors. The result tonight here in New England was disappointing. Walking off the pitch, we were pretty upset with the result. In an important game we needed just a point and we came up a bit short. Then, obviously not knowing what happened in the other games and never being in the position where you have everything in your control, you don't want to leave it up to another result or something out of your control. Free to become champions of the Eastern Conference, but once we got back in the locker room I think all the phones went on to the game and we were all just locked to the screen. We didn't know there was a weather delay as well. We stuck through it for about 30 minutes just watching the end of the Columbus game. Sometimes, you need a little bit of luck elsewhere, if you will. That result was great for us and we'll take it as a win. Eastern Conference champions and [Concacaf] Champions League as well is something to be happy about."

On how the performance of tonight's game:

Johnson: "The game was a bit weird, honestly. At the end of the day, we needed a result. A win would have been great for them, a win would have been great for us, but a draw would have put us both in a decent spot. We set up to win. The game was a little back and forth. They had one quality chance in the first half. We had a few quality chances in the second half and it just kind of one of those nights that might end up scoreless or 1-1, but they scored that first goal then they scored later on. It was just a bit of a weird game. We're competitors and having nine unbeaten coming into this game, I think we were just in the mindset of being able to take care of business and we came up a bit short, but that's the game of football sometimes. We'll look at the performance, reflect on it, we'll enjoy the moment."

On mood at halftime after his save on Teal Bunbury:

Johnson: "Yeah it's 0-0. That's a perfect spot for us in a game like this. To come out in the second half, I thought the game stayed a little bit the same as the first half. It opened up a little bit but they were quality when they countered I think. In moments where they got their front runners going, they had a bit of quality as well. Teal [Bunbury] had a good finish to put them up 1-0. In moments where you want to keep your team in the game, today we came up a bit short."

New York City FC Defender Sebastien Ibeagha

On his emotions after tonight's loss:

Ibeagha: "We obviously came off of the field pissed off, you know; like you said, a missed opportunity, a missed chance, and just take it for ourselves and keep it going. But, you know, we came in here, started watching the [other] games. 0-0 at the time in the 55th, and we just kind of watched it the whole time. Columbus scored, we were like, 'okay, this could actually happen.' Then, they scored another one, and we were all really ecstatic and they could hold that until the end of the game."

On receiving help in clinching the Eastern Conference:

Ibeagha: "A little disappointed not to just do it ourselves and get the three points here. I mean, the goal was still the same no matter how we get it."

On the delayed celebration:

Ibeagha: "I mean, we still lost. You never want to lose. I think that kind of was hanging over it. Then, when you realize you just clinched the first spot in the eastern conference, it's something to celebrate no matter how it happened."

On how they found their way throughout the season:

Ibeagha: "I think the culture was something Domenech [Torrent] was trying to bring in last year. I just personally thought he didn't have enough time. I think he came in halfway through the season, there was

already a previous culture that was kind of set already, and this year he kind of got to come in with a blank slate. I think it's big, the culture he has preached in the locker room has been great and you see guys performing under him."

On how they came about finishing first:

Ibeagha: "Well, [in] preseason we always talk about the goals as a team. Our goal was to get a better seeding going into the playoffs and that was one thing. Obviously, you have that and the MLS Cup, Supporter's Shield. So, I think it's kind of been a goal of ours since the beginning. Kind of wavered a bit through the first games as we struggled. But, I think, as a team, we always knew what we were capable of and what we still are capable of."

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