



TRANSCRIPT (6/30): Technical Staff Press Conference

Soundbytes from Curt Onalfo, Chris Tierney, and Brian Bilello

Opening statement from Revolution President Brian Bilello on new leadership roles for Curt Onalfo and Chris Tierney:

Bilello: "I want to start out by saying that over the last 20 years, but more specifically in the last five, our league continues to grow, become more complex, and more involved at all levels of the game. Not just the senior level, but in our pro pathways. What we're trying to do there, not just locally, but recruiting kids from other parts of this country. [We are] using our second team to bring in players from other countries as well as this country. Something that Curt [Onalfo] and I have talked about over the years is how do we continue to position our organization to be the best we can be at all levels of the organization. How do we continue to get better? How do we think about league initiatives, what they're doing, what our league rules are, how those are modified, and how do we use those to take the most advantage of making our team as competitive as possible?"

"In that process, and most recently, we got to talking about Chris [Tierney] a little bit. I've known Chris for a very long time as a player here for the Revolution for many years. Then, we were fortunate enough to be able to bring him on board in a capacity in our front office, working on player personnel matters. Over the last few years, Chris has really flourished in that role. I think those of you who are involved with soccer, understand the sport, and know people in the sport, Chris' stock has risen pretty dramatically over the last few years. I think it was something that, both myself and Curt, got us thinking about how we could figure out a way to retain Chris, knowing his capabilities and his ability to lead an organization.

"I do want to thank Curt for coming to me with an idea of how we could grow our organization and continue to be not only competitive, but really strong across all aspects of it. He came up with this idea of promoting Chris into a Chief Soccer Officer role and giving him control of our first team and all the activities. So, I want to first thank Curt for, in a very selfless way, thinking about ways that we can improve our organization.

"At the same time, we both recognize, and all of us recognize, the importance of everything we have in this organization. From our facilities, to all of our teams, our academies, and how do we continue to be the best we can in that. I know Curt, since joining us, has not only been working on all our first team activities and building that organization, finding and hiring [Head Coach] Marko [Mitrović], but has really taken our Academy, our second team, and our whole pro pathway to a really elite level. As we think about the future of MLS, we think about the future of this club, we know that all of those things are going to be critically important to how we build and how we think about the strategy of this club going forward, and how to have long-term sustainable success.

"Of course, when it comes to any soccer organization, the first team [and] the performance of the first team is always paramount. There's a real need to focus every single day on how we are doing that today. How are we getting better today? How are we winning today? But at the same time, thinking about systems and processes to keep your club competitive over a long period of time. For me, I feel really fortunate that we were able to have [Chris and Curt] both stay with our club for a while. To have Curt have the ability to sit back a little bit, obviously be focused on many things in our club, but also think about what we're doing to move forward, and how we remain competitive in all those areas. Then Chris, with his

talents and ability to really take hold of everything on our first team side and make sure that we're being competitive every single year to win MLS Cups.

"With that in mind, I'll turn it over to these two to talk through, but I would just say from a club perspective, I think we have two great leaders now, either one of which could support an organization. But by having both of them here, I know we're going to be really competitive not only now, but for many, many years to come."

Curt Onalfo on his promotion to Senior Vice President of Soccer Operations:

Onalfo: "Thank you, Brian, and thank you to everybody who's here today. I'd also like to extend my gratitude to the Kraft family for their continued trust and confidence. They're an amazing family and support this team in an incredible way.

"I'm really excited about this new role as Senior Vice President of Soccer of the New England Revolution. I look forward to continuing to build on the foundation of a lot of hard work and a lot of really great things. I also look forward to putting my energy into other things and the renewed focus on our academy. I think we can do better in that space and in our pro pathway. Then, really just being able to focus on and making sure that we're good for the long haul. I'm really excited about this opportunity.

"I also want to congratulate Chris [Tierney]. This is a well-deserved promotion. [Chris] was my first hire seven years ago. I came in literally almost seven years ago to the day - June 1st was actually my first day, of 2019. I hired Chris in August. Through those seven years, we've developed a really great working relationship, a trust, and we have excellent collaboration. [With] the partnership that we've fostered, I feel very confident that we're going to be able to produce outstanding results on and off the field for a long time."

Chris Tierney on his promotion to General Manager and Chief Soccer Officer:

Tierney: "Thank you to Brian [Bilello] and to Curt [Onalfo] for your collaboration and for making this opportunity possible. I joined the Revolution as a 21-year-old kid in 2008 and was honored to wear the badge as a player for 11 seasons. I have amazing memories here as a player and really built a connection here. It's my hometown. It's the club I grew up as a supporter of. I've always been a fan of this club. To be able to continue to contribute to this club in a meaningful way is a responsibility that I certainly don't take lightly.

"I'm extremely optimistic about the near and long-term future of this club. I think we have really taken steps to move this club forward to be a perennial contender, with our goal always to be competing in meaningful games at the end of the season. And those are ambitions that we're comfortable stating openly. Our head coach, Marko Mitrović, is very ambitious as well, and we look forward to continuing to drive the Revolution into the next iteration of MLS.

"It's been a really exciting time around the World Cup. It's been great to see the development of this league over my time, both as a player and in the front office. We're committed to working relentlessly to make this club better and better in the future and put a team on the field that both our fans can connect with and that represents the fighting spirit of New England. I wanted to thank you guys for being here today and happy to answer any questions that you guys have."

On how the new leadership roles will help the club meet its short-term and long-term goals:

Bilello: "Thinking about the next six-to-18 months, that is relatively short term. That [goal] is pretty easy, which is just filling up the trophy cabinet. How you do that? I'll leave that to [Curt Onalfo and Chris Tierney] to talk to, but that's certainly the goal. We're in a strong position right now. Marko [Mitrović] is doing a great job on that side. We have some opportunities this summer to improve the team which we're going to try and take.

"This is only Marko's first year in charge. When it comes to MLS and roster building, some of those things you can impact right away. Some of those things you might need a year. So, certainly in the next offseason before our 2027 shortened [sprint] season in the spring, I'm sure Chris and Marko will want to

make even more moves. So, certainly from a short-term [perspective], [we are focused on] taking advantage of our position where we are now, trying to improve the team, and obviously put trophies in the cabinet. I'm sure [Onalfo and Tierney] have certain things they're looking to accomplish very specifically. For me, I'm just thinking about that big picture goal on the field and what we're doing there."

On the club's short-term goals:

Tierney: "Just to build off that, I think our immediate goal is going into this summer transfer window and leaving the window with a better team than we entered. These windows can be challenging in that there are always unexpected variables that come up in terms of player movement and interest in our players from other clubs. We've entered this transfer window with a plan and identified positions where we'd like to strengthen the team. It's certainly our goal to add some impact players that we feel like will help us in the short term.

"We're going to be very considerate about the players that we bring into this club going forward. They have to be players that not only help us on the field in the positions that we've identified, but they have to be the right culture fit as well. Since Marko [Mitrović] has been here, the culture and commitment to the standards that he's set are key characteristics for any player that we bring in. We're not going to negotiate on that going forward. We've identified targets and areas of the team that we want to strengthen, and it's a matter of executing during the window."

On the timing of these promotions:

Bilello: "There are two things. We, and I think all organization in MLS right now, are trying to realign a little bit around the summer window. Going forward, your season is going to end at the end of the spring and start a little later than now, about a month or so from now. We're always thinking about... everything in the organization. How do we align that? I think the timing is good given the schedule change that we're facing. I also think we recognized, especially with Chris [Tierney], that the clock was probably ticking on him. If we wanted to secure him for a long time, it wasn't something that we wanted to risk and wait until the end of the year."

On Curt Onalfo's philosophies in building an organization:

Onalfo: "For me, the best organizations have a pathway, and they're not stagnant. I believe in people. That's how I manage. We have a building full of great people that all have potential. I looked into the future and thought there would be a good chance that Chris wouldn't be with us come January. For me, I've been working on this for a while. I just felt like it's the right thing for our organization. Certain people just belong, right? Chris, like he said, played for the club, he's been with the club, he's from Boston. It just made sense to me, in the short-term and long-term, on how we can build something sustainable. My job now is to make sure throughout the organization that the way in which we're going to play, we'll make sure that we match it from top to bottom. That takes a lot of work. We could be at the office every single night until 10 p.m. It just never ends. So, we're dividing and conquering. We have great people and there's a pathway, and this is evidence of it."

On goalkeeper Matt Turner's status as his loan from Lyon expires:

Tierney: "Having shared a locker room with Matt [Turner] early in his career, he's a player that you could see right away was going to be an elite talent. Matt has always been committed to getting better and improving, and you can see that evidence by his move to Arsenal, to [Nottingham] Forest, to [Crystal] Palace. Matt has now played at the highest level of the game. It's really been an incredible trajectory for him. I think if an executive from any of the other 29 teams was sitting up here talking to you, they'd say that they'd love to have Matt Turner on their team. We are certainly no exception to that.

"Anytime there's one of these transactions – Matt is a Lyon player currently. We are in conversations with them to try to find a deal that satisfies all parties. You have Lyon, you have [New England], and you have Matt, and I think a deal has to make sense for all three of those parties in order for it work. We are working diligently to make that happen. We would certainly love to have Matt here long term. Like I said, I think it's plain to see his quality on the field. But what Matt brings to our locker room, our dressing room, the standards that he sets for our group, have been critical, especially in this transition with Marko [Mitrović] coming in. We're certainly going to make the best efforts to keep Matt here."

On what Chris Tierney learned during his seven years in the front office that prepared him for this role:

Tierney: “In any industry, when you start a career, you’re a product of the mentors that you have. Curt has certainly been a great one for me, Brian as well. I’ve leaned on many executives around the league that I’m friendly with. You try to take a little bit of everything from people you admire, people you think have good ideas around the league. I’ve certainly tried to increase my capacity to learn, to study the industry, and understand what works and what doesn’t in our league.

“I do think that quite often former players end up in these roles and sometimes that’s just something that former players say to corner the market. But I do think there’s value in knowing what it’s like to be a player. We have such unique challenges in this league in terms of travel, playing on different surfaces, style of play. Our league is very unique, and I think there is value in having experience as a player. In terms of the specific roles, I have gotten to see all different levels of our organization. Again, I’ve had some really good mentors that I think are really high-level operators. I’ve just tried to soak in as much as I can from all my time here.”

On what it means for Tierney to lead the club he grew up rooting for and where he played his entire career:

Tierney: “It means a lot. It probably got a little tiresome for [the media] speaking to me as a player, talking about what this club means to me, but it’s hard to get away from. I’ve been a Revolution fan as long as I can remember. I remember coming to the old Foxboro Stadium, sitting on the aluminum benches, and idolizing all the guys on the team. To be able to continue and have the run that I’ve had at this club as a player, now the opportunity to work here as an executive – the responsibility of this role is not lost on me. I don’t expect any extra leeway being a former player here. We have to deliver on our goals. I’m willing to accept the pressure and consequences that come with that. I’m really excited for the opportunity, that’s all I can say.”

On Tierney’s strengths and characteristics as a person:

Bilello: “Again, knowing Chris [Tierney] from when he was a player here, through his various roles that he’s had up to date, he’s just a guy with really high integrity. I think it’s really important and not talked about enough, when you’re talking about the front office of an organization. Obviously, I’ve been here a very long time with the Kraft family. They’ve known Chris for a very long time, they’ve known Curt [Onalfo] now for a while. Seeing them operate and how they act is really important. When you work for a club like this, you’re representing yourself, but you’re also representing not only the club, everyone else who works for the club, the owner of the club, and all our fans and supporters.

“I think that’s an important thing from a personality standpoint that I’ve known about Chris for a very long time. His work ethic is unparalleled. When you see those relationships that he has around the league, those are really important. Sometimes, someone is looking to move a player and they’re going to call two or three people they trust to say, ‘Would you be interested in this? Would you do this?’ Or that you can call someone and say, ‘I have an interesting idea, what do you think?’ Chris has unparalleled relationships across the league. I think that’s a really critical component of it.

“Again, his ability to operate around people, to lead people as a former player, and again, not just a player. There’s a lot of players that have played in the league, but [Chris was] a player that was always well respected by his teammates and coaches. He’s just had that understanding of how to interact in the locker rooms with the coach, with me, with the owners, or with peers around the league when he’s doing transactions. From that personality side and the person side of it, I think what Chris has is outstanding. I’ve always been very comfortable with Chris in whatever role he’s in and I’m certainly comfortable with the new role he’s going to have.”

On Tierney’s strengths as a front office executive:

Onalfo: “The best organizations hire really good people. In the case of Chris, he has superior intelligence. He was a professional athlete and he’s super bright. He’s very motivated, he’s eager. He has all the attributes to continue to get better. He’s been very laser-focused on lots of things. He’s great with contracts.

“It’s funny, I had a conversation with Robert Kraft yesterday. He’s incredible in so many ways, but whenever Robert speaks, I listen. He has built an incredible empire. The words are so wise. When I was in the suite with him yesterday, he said, ‘We have to make sure that we always have closers.’ And he’s right. Chris is a closer. He’s great at getting deals done. He was instrumental in bringing Matt Turner here. It was a very complicated situation, and he just navigated through it in an incredibly graceful way. So, that’s a little bit of insight into Chris.”

On how Tierney intends to put his own stamp on the team in his new role:

Tierney: “I don’t really come at it from creating anything in my vision where this is a ‘Chris Tierney team’. This is a very collaborative organization, and we have excellent people throughout the organization with a wealth of expertise and experience in different fields. It would be silly of me to think I could do all this by myself or make decisions completely on my own. If you look at the recruitment side, our Technical Director Remi Roy, has been with us for, I think, 17 years now and has been instrumental in bringing in some of the best players that we’ve had at this club. Leaning on a guy like Remi Roy and taking in his expertise is something I’m certainly going to do.

“We have Todd Kingston leading our data analytics department. Certainly, a goal of mine is to try to incorporate the data and analytics side more into all our processes and the way that we think about how we make decisions. We have excellent performance and medical teams. We have a coaching staff and a special leader in Marko Mitrović who brings a wealth of experience in the player development space, as well as his staff who all have unique experiences of their own. Every decision and transaction that we think about doing here is going to be a team effort.

“To answer your question on the philosophy side, when we were thinking about, in the offseason, going through the hiring process [for a head coach], my belief is that the style of play and the playing philosophy on the field is really led and executed by the head coach. So, the way that we were thinking about how we wanted to play and what we wanted this team to look like, we certainly had our ideas and were looking for characteristics in a head coach that were aligned with our vision for it. That’s why we landed with Marko. Marko is extremely intense, and the character and standards piece that Marko has brought to our club has been a gamechanger for us thus far, and we expect more of the same going forward. So, to answer your question, the philosophy of the club was really set with the hiring of Marko, and we’re fully aligned with the way that he sees the game and the way he wants to play.”

On how Onalfo’s day-to-day role and responsibilities will change in this new position:

Onalfo: “I talk a lot about energy, and the first team takes an awful lot of it. The amount of time and energy that needs to be put on the first team is enormous. So now, with Chris [Tierney] focusing on that, it frees up some of my time to leverage it to work on other things that can expand our club. There is so much to be done, and so much to be enhanced. We already have a good pro pathway, but we can be better. We have a methodology Chris is talking about, what Marko [Mitrović] is putting into the first team. We have to make sure that that works all the way through with the vertical integration of the methodology. Those are some of the things I will focus on.

“It’s endless, and [I have] the goal of making sure that everybody is supported in a way that they can be successful. The best organizations do that. That is something that’s a huge strength of mine, and that’s what I will focus on. It’s extremely exciting, because like Chris echoed, we have great people and it’s just a matter of continuing with that. We want to deliver something special to our fans, both in the short term and in the long term. I can help focus on more of the long-term stuff while we have other people in place to focus on the day-to-day.”

On academy success stories like Esmir Bajraktarević and how the pro pathway can continue to impact the first team:

Onalfo: “It’s a really important part of what we do. We’ll continue to make it better. The better the ingredients are, the better the product is going to be. We’ve seen some great examples. You alluded to Esmir [Bajraktarević], who is going to play tomorrow against the U.S. [Men’s National Team], which is an exciting thing. He came through our system and was a recruited player into our club. I was instrumental in

helping that happen. I will now have more time to focus on helping us recruit better and better players into our pathway, and then look at how we can make it even better. It's constantly evolving. You can never get complacent, and it's just taking the energy.

"We have great people in place. [Director of Youth Development] Rob Becerra runs our Academy. He's done an incredible job. He's a close friend, someone I've worked with for years, and we're going to be working closely to make sure that we can continue to enhance that part. [Revolution II Head Coach] Pablo Moreira has done a really good job with the second team. We can help focus, with him, on all those aspects. How can we just make it better so that we just keep putting these talented players into our system and just keep churning them out? We have a head coach that understands that. Again, it's just a portion of what we do. But if you do it really well and you construct your roster in a really intelligent way, they're going to eventually get opportunities, and that's when it's their opportunity to thrive. As Marko [Mitrović] will tell you, when you have a player and you're actually able to get him from a young age, you can really influence him the way that you want. We're going to look at all those things and make sure there's a buy-in from the top all the way down through. I've been doing this a long time. It's my passion. I'm really excited to be putting more energy into it and to see where we can go."

On the possibility of adding a Designated Player in the upcoming summer transfer window:

Tierney: "I think the way we think about our Designated Player spots going forward, of course in collaboration with Marko [Mitrović], is that we're going to bring a player in that we feel is a perfect fit for us. That includes the on-field product, it includes the players' capabilities and what they can provide us, but again, it has to be the correct cultural fit for us. He has to fit into the expectations and the standards of our club. We're evaluating a number of options to bring in a Designated Player this summer, and our hope and expectation is to be able to do that."