

TRANSCRIPT: Match Preview Press Conference (Nov. 5)

Soundbytes from Head Coach Marko Mitrović & D Ethan Kohler

Revolution Head Coach Marko Mitrović

On matching up against Orlando City SC for the second time this season:
Mitrović: "I think nothing changed in terms of who they are. Like you said, since our [first] game, I think this is a team that really has a strong identity, especially when they are in possession, the way they build up, the way they will arrive in the final third. They have a lot of talent higher on the field and a lot of options. I think that's something that they show game after the game, how capable they are with the ball and how much talent they have higher on the field."

On approaching Saturday's match at Orlando as another high-stakes game, with a chance to build momentum before the playoffs:
Mitrović: "I don't think it's necessarily like building momentum. For me, it's more just to keep doing what we are doing. It's another game for us, it's another great challenge. I think if we go to our last seven, eight games, every game was like a playoff game. Somebody [asked] me the last [press conference], if it's kind of 'do-or-die' games. It felt like it was kind of the last game of the season and everything is on the table, and I think this game is going to be another game like that. Those games can really help all of us to keep growing, myself as a coach, players as players, us as a team, and challenge us enough. I'm always happy when we have these kinds of games ahead of us."

On maintaining the team's identity and approach despite the playoff implications of the final matches of the regular season:
Mitrović: "We never talk about [the standings]. We never talk about three points as well. I mean, by the rules, everybody knows if we win the game, there are three points. If we tie, it's one point. But I still strongly believe that there are things that we have to do on the field to earn one point or three points. I think that's something that this team really is trying to do every game, to push for that.

"We can't change our mentality or approach in a week because there are things ahead of us. We are very aware of what's ahead of us. When you play a [full] season, you have 34 games, there is always time for something. When you get to playoffs, you put everything into [two or three] games in the first round, and then after that, everything is in one game. We're very aware of that. But we can't be one team for 11 months, and now we are a very different team for one game. So, we just have to stay to who we are and try to be at our best when those games come."

On how the club's younger players have turned 'potential into performance' this year, including defender Ethan Kohler:
Mitrović: "I think for all of our young guys, this season is amazing because a lot of them got so much playing time. In one moment, you have to go from being a potential to being a performer. When you're a young player, maybe the first few games people think about your potential, but right after that everybody expects performances from you. I think [that is why] the whole season was great for the guys, the way they took it, the way they grew, and the way they took the responsibility and ownership of their performances. They never hide behind their age, and that's something that I appreciate from all of them.

“But Ethan [Kohler] is obviously one of those guys that got significant minutes. I actually used the wrong word. He didn't ‘get’, he ‘earned’ them game after game by everything that he's doing. And not just in the games, but also in a daily basis in our environment.”

On maintaining a day-to-day approach when managing player minutes:
Mitrović: “It's more like we really keep [being] who we are. We have circumstances every week. We evaluate players on a daily basis in our training sessions, and that's everything. It's not just their performance, it's level of fatigue. Maybe some of the guys, in the last few games, didn't start a game, which maybe people would expect. But that's just because of everything that we evaluate on a daily basis, and we have to have a bigger approach, not just very narrow. And are there going to be some changes in this game? We still have one more day to work. I'm very happy with how the team was doing when working this week, and we'll make that decision tomorrow for Saturday.”

On the leadership and influence of the team's veteran players, including Carles Gil and Matt Turner, who continue to set club records:
Mitrović: “I think all our guys that are veterans, I think they are all really great models. I would start with Andrew Farrell, and that he announced his retirement, but that longevity and consistency that he had throughout his career. He’s rarely been available to play games, but just how he took care of himself. On the other side, he’s been very unselfish and dedicated to the team through these 14 years that he was playing.

“I think now we can go, to what you mentioned, to Carles [Gil] and Matt [Turner]. Actually Sean [Hughes], our assistant coach, says all the time, ‘The best ability is availability.' Just being available all the time, it's a massive value because you're not missing what is most important - the games. To do that, there are certain actions that you have to do on a daily basis. I think what the two of them do with other players, they're creating a great picture for our young guys, like how and what they have to do, how to behave to have that long career, steady career. They're very consistent, not just with playing, but also with their performances.”

On Leo Campana and Jack Harrison recovering from injuries with the postseason starting in two weeks:
Mitrović: “Obviously, Jack [Harrison] had a very significant injury, but he's on track. There were no setbacks. We are very happy with how he's progressing, and he's going to miss this game against Orlando, but if everything goes well, he'll be available for the first game of playoffs. Again, I know there's going to be questions about how much he can play, but we cannot forget that he's now almost three months out. We have to be smart with that, but he'll be available for playoff games. With Leo [Campana], it's a very tricky situation. I hope that Leo will get some playing time in playoffs, but we still have to go week by week with Leo.”

On the staff and players helping to support Leo Campana throughout his long-term injury:
Mitrović: “First of all, I think the most important thing is what you just said, to understand how difficult that is for the player. You can always say as a coach, ‘I don't have the player,' kind of like crying under your destiny. But, just going purely from the player's perspective, [Campana] is missing it and he's not doing something that he loves most. He’s not just missing the whole season with the team, but also missed the World Cup. There were amazing events this year for Leo that I feel really sorry that he just couldn't do what he loves to do most. When those things happen, I think we have to separate being professional from being human. We have to support each other, first from the human perspective.

“Obviously, there were ups and downs with Leo and his enthusiasm, which is normal. But people like our medical department were great day after day, because they spent so much time with him and supporting him, in both recovering him from the injury, but also from the human perspective. I think the players have amazing support for Leo as well, and we are all rooting and hoping that we will have Leo at some point by the end of the season.”

On defenders staying composed on the ball and supporting the build-up:

Mitrović: “It’s very important. We say that we have to learn to behave as a team, no matter where the ball is. And if our center backs have the ball, that means that we cannot fail because they have the ball and they have to provide us with what our team needs. If we talk about us defending, we cannot just rely on our backline and the goalkeeper, we have to rely on the whole team. It's great that you have players that can provide you that certainty and clarity, that wherever the ball is, we can still be who we are. We are very appreciative of all our defenders, that they have that quality to support our build up.”

Revolution Defender Ethan Kohler

On putting forth a strong performance in the MLS regular season finale on Saturday at Orlando City SC:
Kohler: “It's super important, and as I kind of always say, every game is super important. Obviously, with the international break following it, it's always nice to go out of that with a good feeling. I think over these past games we've been doing the right things, and in the training session today we continued to do so. I have no doubt that we're going to put in a very good performance on Saturday that'll carry us well into the break.”

On the biggest areas of growth this season, individually and collectively:
Kohler: “For me personally, obviously playing my first full professional season, I think just learning how to manage that, the minutes, the load, the pressure, so on and so forth. Also, of course, I felt like I've developed as a footballer as well, but that's in all areas.

"And for the team, I think, from a mentality standpoint, tactically we're a lot more honed-in, and everybody's on the same page. You can just see the change in mentality, even from the day-to-day training from the beginning of the season to now. Everybody is operating on kind of the same level, and everybody has the same common goal.”

On how much it has meant to play extended minutes under Head Coach Marko Mitrović:
Kohler: “It has been a great feeling knowing that [Mitrović] put his trust in me, and I was able to hopefully give back to him and to the club. He is obviously one of the main reasons why I came here, and for it to work out the way it did has been great.”

On how he views his chances of making the U.S. Olympic Team's roster in 2028:
Kohler: “Well, the [2028 LA] Olympics are a little ways away, so I think my focus now is just on doing everything I can here and making sure that we perform in these games, and I perform as well. I think my focus now is everything I can do here in the club, and if the [U.S. Soccer] Federation likes what they see, then I think my chances are good. But right now, like I said, my focus is here.”

On the support he has received from coaches in teammates through his first season in MLS:
Kohler: “Honestly, I didn't look a lot into the skepticism because I knew at the beginning of the season, I had the full trust of Marko [Mitrović] and the staff. Obviously, it's good to know that I've put in good performances throughout the season, but none of that is possible, like I said, without the club taking the chance on me and ultimately giving me the ability to play to my potential. Like I said, it's really more so about the fact that the staff put me in the right position, and I have guys around me who make the game a lot easier for me. It’s such a great locker room that's allowed me to grow more into a professional and into this first team environment. I can only just be grateful to those around me for kind of helping the success for me personally, and for the team this season.”

On how easy it has been to adapt to a new team and league having teammates he has played with previously:
Kohler: “It's really cool to see, and sometimes it's somewhat surreal when you're off the field, you're messing around, and you kind of realize that you guys are still all pretty young. Peyton [Miller] is still just a kid, and me, Brooklyn [Raines], and Josh [Wynder] aren't too old either, and Griffin [Yow] as well. I think that part has been really cool, and being able to see their success has been, for me, also personally amazing.

"That's also been great is that there's no real age divide in this locker room. At the team dinner, I sat next to Luca [Langoni] and Carles [Gil], and we talked for two hours. I sit next to Matt Polster and spend about half my daily conversations talking with him, [Andrew] Farrell, [Matt] Turner, or the other veterans in the locker room. There's this cohesiveness throughout the age groups, throughout where we're from, and I think that started, obviously, at the top with Marko [Mitrović]. But it has been great just to create friends with everybody."

On pairing next to Josh Wynder and Mamadou Fofana in central defense this season:
Kohler: "First and foremost, it was awesome to reconnect with Josh [Wynder]. We had a really good relationship in the [U.S. Under-20s]. He's a guy that I'm very close with off the field as well, and when you have that kind of friendship, it translates onto the field. I've been lucky to play with a lot of great center backs this season, and two great center back pairings more so, as in Mamadou [Fofana] and Josh. I think both are very talented and very good players. Mamadou obviously has more experience, but Josh is an incredible talent, and I'm lucky to be next to both of them. They both made my life a lot easier this season."