

TRANSCRIPT: Post-Training Media Availability (November 17)

Soundbytes from Asst. Coach Michael Morris & D Will Sands

Revolution Assistant Coach Michael Morris

On balancing the excitement of the playoffs while staying focused on the day-to-day process that has set the foundation over the past 10-11 months:
Morris: "I think it's just being present in the current moment that we're in. I didn't realize that it has been 10 to 11 months [until] you pointed that out, or really considered that different level of excitement. I mean, there is obviously the context of playoffs, but we're so ingrained in the day-to-day, in the present, and in the current training session that we had today, that that's pretty much just the approach. We're not really ramping up the excitement or anything. We're just staying in the specific moment to prepare like we always do."

On opening postseason play at home on Saturday:
Morris: "It'll be special to have the first playoff game at home. It's something that we earned and worked hard for throughout the season. It's been really exciting to see the turnout at home gradually increase in numbers as the season has gone on, and I think any club is built off that special relationship that they can have with the fans. I've mentioned this in so many different interviews before, but the relationship that the fans have in Boston, in Massachusetts, with the sports teams is something I think that is really unique to this state and these cities specifically. So, for us to continue to try to build that relationship with the fans, as well as put together performances, is something that's really important for us."

On what can be learned from the season's previous meetings with Philadelphia:
Morris: "We did face them after a considerable amount of time that they had with [Interim Head Coach Ryan] Richter up to that point, so we have an expectation of how they're going to play. One of the things I enjoy about Philadelphia is they're very ingrained in their behaviors and their approach to the game, and they offer a unique challenge compared to some of the other teams that you might face in MLS. It's interesting going into playoffs where we have recent experience against them, and then we'll have quick matches in succession against them again. It goes two ways; when you have an opponent that's so clear in the way that they want to play, you can look at different solutions. But then at the same time, when teams are very consistent with the way that they want to play, they're strong in that identity. I really enjoy playing Philadelphia because we know it's going to be a unique challenge with different problems that we have to solve. It's really enjoyable, in my opinion."

On how the staff determines which tactical adjustments to make while remaining true to their identity and principles:
Morris: "I'd say adapting to the opponent is one way to put it. We also want the opponent to have to do whatever they can to try to adapt to us. I think principles is the best way to probably define it. There might be tweaks here and there and things that we have to be mindful of, because Philadelphia plays different than a Columbus might play. Different teams have different problems that just require us to use different solutions based off our identity and our way of playing. We're not going to change who we are, but there will be little tweaks and potential adjustments in how we want to leverage maybe our positioning or the way we adjust how we defend in different ways. Each opponent is different, but again, we're not really going to

change who we are. We're just going to try to reinforce different ways that we play, maybe different than we would to different teams."

On if he "prefers" the best-of-three format for Round One and how preparing for a series is different from a traditional knockout match:
Morris: "I can't prefer it to be a different way because it isn't a different way. So, the way that it is, we have to deal with that situation. You could look at it and be like, 'Oh, why is it this way?' But you can also look at it as like a brand new unique opportunity that we get to face in Major League Soccer. I enjoy whatever circumstance we're up against. The priority for us is what we're going to do on Saturday. We're aware that there is a guaranteed game that comes up where we play Philadelphia away. Again, both teams will take what happens in the first game, and there's going to be tweaks and adjustments. But we can't really even discuss that until we get the situation against Philadelphia on Saturday through with."

Revolution Defender Will Sands

On balancing the excitement of the postseason while maintaining the team's day-by-day process:
Sands: "I think this whole season has been kind of step by step. We're building an identity, and I think it's that identity that comes first, and that was the foundation we instilled in preseason. Then when we get into big moments like this, it's kind of falling back on what you've trained and what you've built. It's a very exciting part of the year, but it's only building on what we've already built throughout the last 10 months."

On how Head Coach Marko Mitrović has helped the team stay composed while maintaining its energy and motivation heading into the postseason:
Sands: "It's just kind of like the cherry on top. Like again, as I said, it's the training, the fundamentals. I think there doesn't need to be a ton of extra motivation because all the players here, we've been waiting for this for a couple of years now, and I think we're all ready to go. It's just kind of being composed while keeping that energy and motivation going."

On the challenges posed by the Philadelphia Union:
Sands: "[Philadelphia] is a very dynamic, dangerous team in the counter. I think all year, one of our strengths has been kind of controlling the games. As long as we don't let it become a track meet and counter versus counter, if we can maintain a solid shape offensively and defensively and try to mitigate those people in the counterattack, I think that's where our strength will lie. But obviously it's a very good team, very quick team. It's definitely going to [be] a challenge, but I think it's one that everyone on this team is ready for."

On his observations of Philadelphia Union's attack:
Sands: "[Philadelphia] Union is known for having just a ton of energy, especially in their press and when they attack, they attack with a lot of numbers. I think at least in the [away] game that I watched [on Oct. 24], I think our defense was really composed and trying to absorb that pressure at times, because there will be times in the game where they do generate chances, they do have the ball, and they're just trying to stay composed and kind of mitigate those errors. Then when we do get control of the game, just kind of maintaining that control."

On how the approach changes in a best-of-three playoff series versus a single elimination format:
Sands: "I don't think [the preparation] changes all that much. This is honestly the first time I have played a best-of-three format. I think it's a very interesting tactical dynamic that's going on. When you face teams in the regular season, you kind of know what their identity is, but you don't have a ton of time to prepare. When it's a team like this, where you have a couple weeks to prepare beforehand and then you have multiple games, it provides a familiarity that kind of really induces a very smart and tactical game, and I think that's what our coaching staff thrives upon. So, I'm really excited for these games."