

Nelson Rodriguez's opening statement:

"I wanted to have an open and transparent communication as we could. I hope this is just a continuation of that and a reflection. I'll just start for a moment and ask all of those in their own way to keep the thoughts of the Polster family in mind. Matt's grandfather passed away and on behalf of the club we've expressed our condolences. I know I've come to understand that Matt was very close to his grandfather. If you would, please do that.

"I think it would be disingenuous for me to begin today in any other place other than acknowledging our record. Sports is about winning and losing and we don't shy away from that. The results are obviously not as we expected. Simply, it's not good enough, yet. For me that's the key word (yet). Winning and losing is the ultimate measure of sports, but it's not the only way to gauge progress. It's my job to see beyond the results, to see beyond wins and losses, to ensure that the foundation that we are building and the process that we are following is on track. And I can't stress that enough because sometimes you can be on a winning streak and believe that everything is fine when it really isn't, when the foundation is actually faulty. I need to ensure that we're disciplined in our approach. I didn't expect to be here, although we knew that there would be a point in time during the course of the year where results would not go our way. It's one of the things I spoke to Pauno about before the season even started, that how we handle those moments are going to be the real indicators of the type of team that we will become.

"I've always tried to study sports teams, those that are successful and those that aren't and try to draw references and educate myself. In this instance one of the reference points that I look to is someone that I consider to be one of the best soccer coaches in the world. That's Bob Bradley, who started his career here. One of the lessons I've learned by following Bob's career from time to time — I can't quite say I was inside, but I was close — is his focus on the environment and performance through the environment. And what does that mean? Well for me it means what we talked about in October, which is it's people, it's process and it's focus. I remain optimistic because I believe in the character of the men in our locker room. I think we have men of great integrity, men who have learned from their past and are learning daily and men who will not yield to circumstance, who will not yield to what will be a natural creep of pessimism that would come about as a result of our start. I feel strongly about that.

"I look in the eyes of Eric Gehrig and I see a competitor and I see someone who recognizes that everyday he has his chance and he takes his chance. I know there will be a point in time where he will be rewarded. A lot of people mistake the game as their chance. It's everyday in training that's the chance and the game is the reward. I know and I believe that over the course of the season you need everybody and we've already started to demonstrate some of that with our approach and our willingness to play lots of different players.

"But it's not just Eric. There's a lot of guys. In a different way it's Joey Calistri, who perhaps was our No. 1 player coming out of preseason, had a few scattered minutes early in the year, then went dark and then reemerged against Vancouver and had a really wonderful match and

perhaps a bit unlucky not to finish one of two clear chances. But there's a young player, a rookie pro, who is learning what it is to compete. I think that's incredibly important.

"I think David Accam has demonstrated new mental strength. He could easily have been frustrated by the injury he suffered, but instead he chose to work hard, rehabilitate and again when he got on the field I think performed quite well. Unfortunately, I'll also break some news here, David has been suspended by the MLS Disciplinary Committee for Saturday and so he won't be able to play. I think it's important just to say that we don't believe David to be a dirty player in anyway. He plays hard for sure and he competes hard. We accept the punishment, we accept the suspension and we'll move on from it.

"The other men in the room who I have great belief in are Pauno and his staff. They fuel me with belief and optimism and so I have no doubts about those guys, but this period of time will be the true measure of whether I've assessed that character correctly or not and how we come out of it.

"That leads us to our process and how we move forward. Look, as I just mentioned, I believe we are learning how to compete on a daily basis. Admittedly, candidly, we have not made other teams suffer during the course of games, but we have not been an easy out. There's only been 22 minutes the entire season that we've been down by two goals. 22 minutes, and I think six or seven of those were the last few minutes of the New England game. So that also tells me that we're right there. We need to learn how to make a play. And I also reflect upon how we've been beaten and from the first game, Tommy McNamara's opening goal was a golazo, Piatti's game-winner was a golazo, Blas Perez's bicycle kick in the 89th minute, doble golazo. And even Lee Nguyen's first goal against us was a stroke of magic and a masterpiece. So it's taken a lot to beat us. Now, again, that's not enough, but it does show me that we are progressing and that we are moving in the right direction. We are starting to forge our identity. It's not complete yet. We have nine players under the age of 23, six of whom play regular minutes for us. This is new. This is different. But I feel we are growing.

"Bill Parcells has a great line: blame nobody, expect nothing and do something. And I believe that's where we've been so far. We've blamed nobody. We expect nothing to be given to us and we need to do more. We need to do more on the training field. We need to do more in preparation and in recovery. Everybody in the soccer operations staff needs to give more, not take, but give more. I believe our attitude is such that we will.

"So people, process and focus. And here I think we've done an outstanding job. We have not looked beyond our next opponent at any time. We are fully concentrated on the opportunity that Houston gives us to start a positive streak. I think that coaches are very good in that. I think they are very good in keeping players in the moment and I believe that those are key ingredients to really help us move forward and become successful.

"With that I'll close kind of my opening remarks and I'm happy to field questions."

On the balance between looking forward to the future and having to win now:

“We owe our fans and we owe ourselves to try to win now. We define competitiveness as relentless in the pursuit of victory, at all times, but not at all costs. So that balance is my job. It’s not Pauno’s job. Pauno’s job is three points on Saturday. He’s very clear about that and he understands that. It’s my job to ensure that what we build is sustainable and that’s the part of the future that I try to keep in mind. It’s not to construct something for a fleeting moment of success, but to build something that will be sustainable. So far Pauno and I have been in very strong agreement on all critical matters and most matters in general. That won’t always be the case. There will be times where I’ll need to learn to bend and give him something that he needs today, that I might otherwise feel differently on, but overall it’s my duty to ensure that I set us up for sustained success.”

On potentially telling Pauno younger players should play ahead of players that won’t be with the team much longer:

“At the present moment I don’t ever envision myself telling the coaching staff whom to play and whom not to play. They are hired to coach the team. They are hired to make those decisions and I’m hired to evaluate that. Pauno and I have a great working relationship where we confer on most matters. He seeks my soccer opinion from time to time. He seeks my counsel on different issues. He is very self aware. Despite having played in the league, despite having lived in the U.S. for a short period of time, he is willing to recognize those moments where he says ‘Help me out here. Make sure that I’m understanding this situation correctly or how can I better understand something?’ So inevitably there will be change. There always is. I can’t think of a champion in any sport that return the following year with everybody intact, every coach intact, every support staff intact, every player intact. So there will be inevitable change. Right now the key is ensuring that we identify, attract and keep and then cultivate those that we believe have the same mentality that we do and that we need. That competitive, relentless drive to win and compete.”

On improving the team’s scouting:

“I think we’re slowly getting better. Matt Pearson has been given more time and he’s settling in and we’re building a database. It’s a reason why we worked really hard to try to make our summer acquisitions, if you will, earlier in the year. Now one of those went well when we were able to secure Khaly Thiam in advance and the other one didn’t quite go the way we hoped. Michael de Leeuw will now have to join us on the Fourth of July. We had made a significant transfer offer back in April, perhaps even late March, I’d have to check the date, for his services. His club, FC Groningen, believed he was too key of a player for them. They had just lost Johan to us and didn’t want to lose a key player both from the backline and the frontline. So then we were left to the mercy of results that went against us. That was the reason we wanted to frontload our signings and take advantage there. Have them incorporated well before other teams brought in their reinforcements. As I look forward now, I’d like to — unless some special opportunity arises, which we are still capable of incorporating through budget and all of our other MLS means — I would prefer we skip the summer window so we can really be identifying

and tracking players of interest to incorporate in January. We are internally working on that list, those positional requirements and those characteristics that we seek.”

On de Leeuw’s eligibility and the visa process:

“His contract is signed and we’ve already undergone the start of his visa process. While he can’t compete until the Fourth of July, we expect his arrival to be in early June. We’ve already been in touch with him, we’ve already been discussing a recovery plan for him as well as the beginnings of a new fitness plan so that when he does join us and begins training with the club, he’ll be ready to step on the field in early July.”

On filling the vacancy left by Academy Director Larry Sunderland heading to Portland:

“It will be filled. I don’t know if we will call it an Academy Director or not. I’ve spent I’d say the last six weeks speaking to people around the world to try to get some ideas and some names of people in whom we should have interest. I think that the Academy has always had a great reputation. I believe we’ve already done a better job of starting to integrate the Academy into our first team. I think having Logan as our PDL coach is another example of that because, you know, it was interesting, the PDL starts its season tomorrow and I went to watch Logan run the team through the session and then I came to the stadium field to watch our team prepare and they were doing the exact same things. I think that integration is really important and seeing some of our Academy players on a regular basis, training with our first team, is important. As I said for the coach hire, this is a very important position so I’d rather get it right than get it fast. The staff has done a great job of keeping things going in a positive way, but I’m interested in making sure what we build and develop complements what we are doing on the first team serves as a link to the Fire Juniors program, which will be the next piece of the soccer puzzle that I started to look at. I’d like to think that we’ll have someone in place early when the Academy resumes its new season August/September.”

On how the team is progressing towards Rodriguez’s previously stated core of key players to build around:

“It’s far too early to make that assessment. We are only 10 games in. I think players need more time to adapt and to adjust to the particular demands that we are making on them. I think Pauno and the staff still need time to adjust, to the team, to the league, to the culture and everything else. It’s a fluid process. Certainly, and I don’t want to overstate it or give anyone a false impression. You can start to make some general assumptions. For me, “Campbellhof” is a good one. That pairing between Jonathan and Johan is suggesting, only having played together nine games, that could be a winning duo. There’s a lot of ground to cover and Jonathan is a very young player, who we didn’t necessarily even want to put into this position so early in his career. Johan, although an experienced player, is new to the league and learning that by golly there’s a lot of good forwards in this league and they’re very different from week-to-week in how to play them. Using them as an example, that could be something that we could feel pretty good about. Maybe we get to the end of the year and they’ve played together 25-30 times and we say ‘OK, we’ve got something there and we can build off that. It’s still premature for those two or for anyone to think we have it.”

On how expectations have changed from the preseason:

"My expectations are unchanged. Again, we knew every team in this league runs into this patch where they don't get a win. They might get some ties or have an unfortunate string of losses. It's magnified because it's the start of the season. It's exacerbated by the fact that we are trying to do something a little bit differently with a new group. And by a new group I don't just mean a new coaching staff. I mean a new group in the locker room. It would be foolish for me not to recognize for myself that that doesn't make it more challenging, because it does. Look, New York City Football Club hadn't won any of their first four or five home games and then bang, bang, bang they stayed true to what they are trying to do. They stayed true to the identity they are trying to develop. They got a couple of results and then now they've strung that together and I think they're tied for first place in the East.

"My expectations remain the same. My expectations are that when we hit October, we are competing for a playoff spot. That we are playing meaningful games in October. And that's the same message I delivered to our ownership group when I met with them last week in Los Angeles. It's the same message that Pauno believes. There is still no reason for us not to triumph. It's just a matter of staying together, continuing the hard work and going back from that Parcell quote, do something, do something more. We need to learn to make one more play in a game to push us over the top."

On MLS scheduling:

"When I was at the league for the last four years of my run, scheduling also fell under my purview. It would take a little bit of time to explain how complex it is to put that together. Clubs can volunteer preferred home dates and clubs can volunteer blackout dates, dates where their home facility isn't available. From that point on, it rests with the league, but it is very, very difficult. For sure it is not ideal to have the type of schedule that we have had, but no excuses. Again, every team is going to have some similar stretch or every team is going to have their moments in the schedule where they feel aggrieved. It's about adapting and about overcoming. On the flip side, it gave us more time to train, which for a new group getting together and trying as versatile and adaptable as we try to be that has actually been a little bit helpful. A regular steady diet of games is also helpful because you get into a rhythm and a routine. I would say four games in 11 days is not that. It will flatten out, it will even out. We're going to go dark again in two weeks when the league takes a break for Copa America, but we'll use that as an opportunity to have a second preseason. We'll use that as an opportunity to further inculcate Thiam and Michael de Leeuw and we'll use it to our advantage."

On being emotional during and after games:

"I am passionate by nature. It is different. I've coached in my past and I think as a coach I was able to remain in the moment and stay unemotional. Not lose my passion, but stay unemotional and clear thinking. This is a different beast. My emotion right now comes from there's a great group of men in that locker room who are really digging in and we have just not found the way to reward ourselves. Now part of my job is to ensure that it's natural. It's natural from the media,

although I think the media has been quite fair. It's natural from the fans, although I think the fans have been quite patient. It's natural for the players for some degree of pessimism to creep in. Oh no, is this another Fire year like it's been five out of the last six. No it isn't, but saying that is not enough and we ultimately will need to find a way to make that one more play that will turn some of those losses to ties and some of those ties to wins. But I believe that we're close. I want to be clear here, we're not close to being a finished product. We're not close to finishing the designs of our championship program, but we're close to not being the only team that suffers after 90 minutes and having some other people suffer instead."

Nelson's impressions of Jonathan Campbell as a man:

"You know when we drafted him I went to his parents and I said I have two daughters and I said 'I hope my daughters find a son like yours.' He is respectful, self-aware, intelligent. He is multi-faceted. He has a lot of interests. And what I love about him as a player is that he does not let a mistake bring him down. Young players are going to make mistakes and Jonathan has made some, but I've not seen one mistake then lead to a batch or a series of mistakes in the same game. He is very able to brush it off, remain in the moment and make the next play. That type of trait I think is essential for that position and is one that again gives me confidence in how we're identifying and recruiting people. I think it will serve him well as a player. The other quick thing I'll say about Jonathan was, and he might be embarrassed about this, when we interviewed him he said he didn't study soccer a lot and that has changed. He's asking Pauno for more videos for more players to emulate. Pauno has told him that he should watch Matt Besler and try to copy his game a bit and you know that Pauno feels strongly about his future potential. But even there we haven't noticed any change in Jonathan's approach to training or games, even though he has gotten some flattering commentary whether it be from the staff, from fans, from the media and from opponents. Very level-headed."

On if he thinks the team has the players to score enough goals:

"I do. This team scored a lot of goals last year. One thing that we have to keep in mind is by way of example, David and Gilberto have played together 45 minutes. The first 45 minutes of the season, they haven't played together since then if I'm not mistaken. They complement each other very well. Kennedy has stepped up and is producing, honestly at a level that we expected. I thought Kennedy would experience a good run with the way Pauno wants to play and how he's been utilized. We need more, but it's not limited to just attack. Possession can help in attack, pressing can help. To press more you need to be able to possess more, you need to be able to possess higher up in the field. All of these things are interconnected so we believe that Thiam will help us with possession, will help us with an aerial game. He needs time. When I look at the last game, the Red Bull game, that may have been the first game where we outshot our opponent and I know that they had a lot of statistical possession, particularly in the first half, but I don't think it was a very difficult game for Sean Johnson at all. Now we have to do better. In the limited opportunities that we've created we have to do better, but again that's that fine line. The first good chance in the Vancouver game is Calistri's. That goes in, I'm not saying we win and we win 4-0, but the game is different. The tenor of the game is different. Our attitude is different so even just scoring the first goal will help us. We obviously believe Michael will help us a great

deal. He's a proven goal scorer who is hungry for that. We've seen already through the 45 minutes that David played in New England and the 60-plus minutes he played at Red Bull that he is a menace and it forces them to play to treat us differently and play differently. We are able to press higher up the field in that second half and change the complexion and the look of that game. We've got to get our guys on the field and we've got to get them on the field together. We need to give them time. We need to help them and if we can make further additions that we think will improve our team, we will do that."

On if the team is confident that this is just a rough patch and they are still moving in the right direction:

"This is where I think my honesty and transparency sometimes get me into trouble and I should learn my lesson, but I'll put myself into trouble. The group remains committed and the group continues to have belief. I wouldn't say confident though because confidence is aided by success. We haven't had enough success. So that's why I keep saying we need to keep a play. We need someone to step up and either finish the expected so anyone of those chances where we think this is it or give us the unexpected, whether that be an unbelievable save, a game-saving tackle, a clearance off the line or a finish and a goal. I think that once we get that spark and once we experience success again then I think we stand a chance of building more sustainable momentum. The group is committed to each other. I'll say it again, but that's a good group of men in there. What we need is either the collective to step forward again and will us to another rung on the ladder or someone to drag the rest of the group. This is comments that I've made previously. This is where there are very special leaders in sport. And I don't believe this is a criticism of the guys in our locker room, but there's not a lot of guys like Mark Messier. They just aren't. They're not easy to find and when you find them they're not easy to get. Why? Because no one wants to give them up. We can do it through a collective experience. I think we have the right collective in there and when we get it, when we get that spark, I think think more confidence will emerge and I believe you will see improved play as a result."

Is the team looking at the East and seeing a only a couple wins putting them back in the race?
"It isn't. We're looking at three points. We're looking at Saturday. This is the focus that is important. Well-meaning family members, well-meaning friends talk to me about all our games in hand and all that stuff, but they don't mean anything if you don't win the game in front of you. We need to remain focused right now on Houston and secure those three points. What I do believe again is there's not a game on the schedule that we look at and don't believe we can't win. I remember when I was the head coach at Lafayette College sitting down with our team my first season as a head coach. We did a goal setting session. I said is it realistic for us to be 20-0? Lafayette College, good students there and they said 'No, coach, it isn't.' I said 'Right,' then I went game-by-game on the schedule. Can we beat Houston? Yes. Can we beat Portland? Yes. And so on and so on. No, it's not realistic to go 20-0, but it is realistic to go 1-0 20 times and that's how we look at it. That's how we look at the balance of the season. We have an opportunity Saturday to win a game and gain three points and take a step forward. That's where our focus is. It doesn't hurt that the Eastern Conference teams keep tying each other (laughs)."

Did the Masato Kudo situation show the team's character?

"I think any player on any team would have done that in that moment. I don't necessarily believe that Razvan and our guys were any more special than any other. That's the code. That's the brethren of being an athlete. But I do like that we are not making excuses about anything. We're looking in the mirror. We're looking inward. We need to find the solutions ourselves. We need to create the solutions ourselves. That character I'm proud of."

On if Saturday's game vs. Houston is a must-win:

"I hope not. Must-win to me is when you're facing elimination in playoffs. In sports vernacular that to me is the only must-win game. A win would help. A loss makes it more difficult. I can't deny those things, but it's not must-win."

Was there any thought to trading Sean Johnson?

"No. There have been teams that have inquired about Sean and there have been teams that have inquired about other players on our team. I think this experience is going to prove to be great for Sean. One of the things that we've tried to impress upon our group is that your chance is everyday. Just because you played Wednesday does not mean you're playing Saturday. Just because you didn't play Wednesday doesn't mean you won't play Saturday. Look at Nick LaBrocca. He wasn't even in the 18 for the New England game, but then he came and gave us great minutes on Wednesday at Red Bull. I know this is different for a lot of guys. I know that in general you kind of slide into a pecking order and your rolls are defined. We are not subscribing to that. We are subscribing it to because we look at it at a per game basis, who gives us the best chance to win this game tomorrow again Saturday. It's each player's responsibility to be ready because they don't know when they're being called. That's intentional by Pauno. He doesn't want guys to be comfortable on either side of that. We want to stretch the comfort zone. I actually believe this will prove to be and is bearing out into forging our identity and will be an advantage. Next man up and our next man is ready. I think we've gotten good performances from a lot of guys who perhaps didn't play for two or three games and then were called upon or who have had similar roles."

Does that mean Sean was benched just to send that message to the team?

"Absolutely not. No one was benched. Matt Lampson earned it in the eyes of the coaches. He earned it and he kept it. Sean earned the opportunity on Wednesday by how he performed in the trainings that led to the decision for Wednesday. Tomorrow's starter will be earned by how the coaches have felt Wednesday's game went, of course that's always part of the equation, Thursday's training went, today's training went and what the gameplan is for tomorrow. It is earned on a daily basis. It is not given and it is earned on the field. There is no other way to earn it, but on the field."

On if he still believes Paunovic is right for the job:

"Absolutely. I still think we're in the midst of, and this is too much pressure, of a great coach at the start of a great career. I love that he is willing to stand up and say I got something wrong and

admit that, admit that to the team and not be threatened by or weakened by it. I love that he remains focused on the next game and the next result. I like that he continues to seek input and to learn. I like that he remains convicted to our principals and values.”

Any regrets not keeping Mike Magee, Harry Shipp, Patrick Nyarko?

“No. First I don’t believe in regret. I say that sincerely. I think it’s a wasted emotion. I believe in learning from mistakes. I believe in learning from the past and from history. I like the group of guys we have. The decision we took were taken knowing what it meant and what it means for the future. We don’t begrudge any of those guys and in fact we want other people to have success. We don’t measure ourselves by what they are doing. We measure ourselves by what we are doing.”

On if being adaptable is about the opponent or if that’s part of figuring out how the team wants to play:

“We believe as we’ve said in adaptability. Adaptability does not necessarily mean reactive to what the other team may do. Adaptability can be proactive as to how we will look to play. For me a good example is, again, let’s just look at the last game. We sat in, we surrendered possession. Everyone has their view. I don’t think we really surrendered threatening chances at goal. Then in the second half we took a completely different posture. Now I’m not about to say we took over the game, but the game was different in the second half. Again, I think our ability to switch from one way to another. Those two approaches take very different mindsets, I think bodes well for the future.”

What kind of preparation can you do during the summer window to set up moves for January?

“First it’s with identifying targets. Who are the players that we see or that are recommended to us that as players seem to suggest the characteristics that we’re looking for. Once we have that list, now it’s about going and seeing them in their environment. How do they train? How do they play? And then wherein there’s not the risk of tampering, or there’s not actual tampering, learning about the player as a person because who we bring in as a person matters to us. It’s very important. It’s a critical part of our recruitment process so speaking to people who know those players individually, who know their history. That’s the type of work that we’re trying to do so that when the leagues around the world resume in August and September, we’re in their backyard studying the players as players and learning them as people first hand.”

On what Pauno has learned about the league:

“We have conversations about that. I don’t think he’s been surprised by anything really. I think it’s been as he imagined. He also still believes in our group and our team and our opportunity to achieve what we set out to achieve this year. And he loves it and he loves the challenge. He remains enthusiastic and invigorated.”

On how de Leeuw will fit in and if he will feel pressure to be some sort of savior:

“We expect and are looking for him to provide goals. I think that concern about savior is a fair one, but Michael has a healthy ego and attitude so he might relish that a little bit as well. We see

Michael as having the ability to play any one of the front four positions if we stay in a 4-2-3-1. We will look to see whether it makes sense for us to change that alignment, to take more advantage of how he might play, whether it be with Kennedy or with Gilberto or with Joey or with Alex Morrell or any of our attacking players. Whether he slides as a traditional forward, plays underneath, maybe even shades outside, we think he can help in any of those roles.”

On Rodriguez’s previous comments of the team needing a veteran presence:

“First I think you have to allow a team time to take shape and see how the relationships form and is there an emergence of a leader or not? But again, I think that there are certain individuals it’s their nature as people. It’s their ability to influence and drive that is different. It’s not to say that we don’t have leaders, but there are levels of leadership. There’s levels of respect. There are those who lead strictly by example. There are those who lead by a kind word. There are those that lead by a bollocksing. One of the ingredients that we feel we could add to the locker room to give it a proper mosaic is some spice. Someone who perhaps isn’t always politically correct. Someone who isn’t always dutiful. For sure there are potential issues that come with that. You have to manage that. You have to manage that in the group setting. Pauno would have to manage that, but again, I think that we have a very good group. That group has the ability to take itself forward, but we recognize that maybe just adding a dash of Sriracha sauce in there might actually help.”

On how MLS expansion in the Midwest affects the Fire:

“It will be great because I have to imagine the schedule will change. Then if it’s four games in 11 days and we’re just going to St. Louis and Detroit, it’s a lot easier than going Vancouver to New England. The growth of the league is phenomenal. We will be excited to go into those markets because we know we’ll be met with fans who will be inclined to hate Chicago because Chicago is a great sports town. Because we carry with us the tradition of six trophies in our cabinet and we also carry with us the reputation of Chicago sports in general. I’m looking forward to it. I think it’s a wonderful thing. There are some cities I haven’t been to so I hope to stay in the job and visit those cities.”

On continuing the naming rights with Toyota for Toyota Park:

“My understanding is that the Village of Bridgeview owns and manages the stadium so I believe that’s their purview and decision. It’s certainly not soccer related so we have enough to work on.”

On getting a USL side:

“We do have those internal discussions. We also have groups that have reached out to us. We have a great partnership with St. Louis though. Again, I don’t know how it was last year, but it’s been great for us this year. St. Louis has been very helpful with our players, with our requests. We have weekly dialogue with them. Matt Pearson went down last week to watch Drew Conner play and we’re keeping close tabs on him. Saric, our goalkeeper coach, went to watch Drew play and then went to watch Patrick McLain play as well. So I’m not in a rush there. Again, I know I’m bucking the trend a little bit, but if we can continue the relation and the benefits that we

believe we're getting out of the relationship with St. Louis and hopefully in turn they are receiving benefits, too, that's working for us for the moment."

On an incident that occurred nearby a Habitat for Humanity appearance by the team:

"First I think it's important that we continue to contribute to the community. I think Habitat for Humanity is a fantastic organization that is helping people have lives that we should all expect in the United States of America. I'm proud of our guys for wanting to contribute to events like that. There were some unfortunate incidents in and around the area. We followed the protocol set forth by Habitat for Humanity, by CAPS, by Chicago PD in those situations. We were never in immediate danger as advised to us by those groups. Upon a second incident occurring, at that point we made the decision to abort the balance of that appearance. We then followed protocol set forth by Chicago PD on how to leave those premise and we did so without further incident. It's important though, and it's important to me that we demonstrate we're a learning organization so there were elements that I think we as a club could have done better. Communication elements. I admitted those to the team, personally and upfront, but to take that learning a step further, on Sunday we're going to have Soccer in the Community. And we're going to go to another area where some might say there's degree of risk. I think there's risk everywhere, and in Chicago these days perhaps more so, but we shouldn't shy away from those opportunities to give. What we've learned from the previous community event is we've now put into place. We've now changed some security protocols, added some security, provided the guys with more information upfront to try to give them more comfort level. Again, I think what happened was unfortunate, unique, I wouldn't wish it upon anyone to have to experience, but it can't deter us from one of our core values and core principles, which is to be a good neighbor."

On what positions he thinks Designated Players should be:

"I believe that the Designated Players have to make a difference. They have to be difference makers so to me in our sport that means the creation and the finalization of goals. That's not to say you can't go away from that and you can't get a playmaker, you can't get a defensive midfielder or you can't get a stud centerback. I'm not saying that because it does matter, the team, the circumstance and everything else, but in general that's how I view it. I'll just repeat what I said I think back in October. The DP has to finish the puzzle, not start it."

On how patient owner Andrew Hauptman is:

"He is a proud man and his family is proud and they suffer when the team loses. On a personal level. Andell as a company is accustomed to success and this is why I think he is a great owner. I think he asks really good questions. I think he prods and pokes and wants to know there are contingencies. I also think that he has handled all of our requests reasonably. One request was we asked for a charter flight following the Red Bull game. After the three games in eight days. We gave them a rationale for why and then he approved it. I think that's the way it should be. He wants to win and I don't think he is sparing expense against that. I think the choices and the decisions that have come have all been well-meaninged and they haven't worked. I don't know why that's a reflection of him. If the players that we bring in don't work, that's a reflection of me and Pauno. Those are the choices that we are making. Those are the things that we're asking

for. If someone wants to say you should have taken the charter from Vancouver to New England instead of from New York, that's a choice we made. That's a decision we made. That's what we thought was the best choice to make. That's not Andrew Hauptman. That's us. Look, is he disappointed in one win in the first 10 games? Yeah, you bet he is. What keeps him OK with it is that I communicate in advance. I say this is where I think we are. This is where we're going. When things don't go as I've diagramed, I think he appreciates that we don't give excuses, but that we give not only reasons, but corrective measures. How are we going to fix this? By way of example, early, early, early in March I said to him I think we need help in the attack. I'll use this example, the very first game of the year, the story was the defense. Everybody wanted to blame the defense. Honestly, for me, it was the offense that failed us in the first game of the year. We should have scored six or seven. It wasn't about the four we gave up. It's about the four we didn't score that we should have scored. So we said to him, here's our plan, and we targeted to have Michael now quite frankly. May 10th. Because the season ended May 8th and we were going to let him have a day to salute the fans and come here. We gave him the path and it didn't happen. In that I always let him know, hey they've rejected our transfer offer and there's a chance that Groningen gets on a run and goes from 10th to eighth and the other results conspire against us and we don't have him until July 4th. He accepts that because he knew because he laid it out that way. He also said 'Are there other alternatives to Michael? Is there someone else that we could get ahead of time?' But we think Michael's complete mix as a person and as a player were the right ones for us and so rather than try to fix something we want to build something. So we remained patient with Michael and he remained patient with us. And for me, that's a great owner. One than I prefer to work for (rather) than someone who wants to micromanage, which he doesn't, or wants to second guess every decision that we make, which he doesn't."

On the success rate he looks for when bringing in international guys like Thiam and de Leeuw: "Very quickly, those two players are very different. They're at different places in their life cycles as players. Thiam is still very young. He is still very formative. We like that he left his native country and had experience acclimating to a new language, which leads us to believe his acclimation to the United States will be easier, not necessarily easy. But he's still far from a finished product as a player. Michael is what he is. Not to say he can't get better, everyone can. So there's a little bit of a difference there and we evaluate differently or we evaluate our risk tolerance against each a little bit differently. We are very deliberate. It had been customary to receive recommendations from agents and now we're moving away from that. We'll never completely get away from it, nor should we because there might be some good players that are brought to our attention. We're starting to formulate our own lists through our own profiles. Individual meetings have to occur. Our international players, we have them take a profile that gives us a little bit of a measure of how they are. We like to know that because it helps us design our coaching for them. We believe that each individual needs to be coached in a very particular way and knowing how they respond and what personality type they are is helpful in that regard. We would like to see an international player at least three times in person. We'd like to have at least two different people see that player live so we're not just reliant on one set of eyes. There's video work that has to come before that because there's an expense to going to

see a player play. We'll do video work first just to give us a notion that he has the characteristics that we like, but there is no substitute for that good old-fashioned eye. The last layer that we have to put into that is analytics. What do the stats say about the player and do they match up with what we're looking for? If they don't, is that a product of when we get him we're going to play him a little bit differently or what we have around him is a little bit different? You're extrapolating a judgment there, but we will be deliberate. I'm willing to miss on a player, I don't want to miss on the person."

On the new scouting method compared to what was used before:

"I don't know if it's more successful yet because we don't have enough body of work. We only have this, if I could use a college phrase, class that we brought in. In that class to me includes Michael Harrington and Matt Lampson, Michael in particular was very important for me because he had been around winning programs. He knows how to win. He knows to be patient with young players, but he knows how to demand and drive. I think he's demonstrated all of that on the field. He's been a great presence in the locker room. But just like I'm not ready to anoint Jonathan Campbell as our savior at centerback, it's a long career. Drafts you should probably evaluate after three years, not after three weeks and the like. I try to get a handle on what the recruiting was like prior. It left me unsatisfied. It led me to the decisions to make changes. It's led to Matt Pearson having this opportunity now to see if he can grow into being more than a scout, but the director of scouting and build a program and a process and a department. I'm working with him on that because there's a lot of layers. We still want to be able to recruit more younger players like Thiam, who maybe we can help develop and have for a longer term, and or difference makers like we're hoping Michael can become for us. We need to do a better job of scouting for our Academy, which is something I didn't believe needed to be done and through the double pass evaluation I'm now convinced we need to do and will do. So it's too early for me to take out a trumpet and say we're doing it better than anybody or we're doing it great. It's still in a formative stage and it still requires constant self-analysis and evaluation."

On analytics:

"I see it as a point of information, just like a 40-yard dash time is a point of information, just like the personality profiles that we give international players is a point of information, just like a scout's report is a point of information. All of those are little tiles that make up the mosaic of a player or the mosaic of a team. I use analytics a little bit differently for some aspects of my job than others. Whether that's evaluating a player or evaluating a player's value vis-a-vis what we're comfortable having him on the team salary budget against or evaluating it as to trends to help find deficiencies in our team's performance or deficiencies in another or strengths in our team or another team. So there's a few ways that we look at using it. We have a gentleman who helps us on a part-time basis. I'm also very candid. I'm curious. I'm studying more to see. I read that the Sounders have seven analytics guys. I got to be honest, I can be criticized for this and I accept that, I didn't know that we needed seven yet. So we'll see what competitive advantage they glean out of that and whether that's the model for us to follow or there's another one. I think analytics has its place and for me the key part is to keep asking questions. Just keep asking

questions and then see what the analytics produce. Does it marry up to what your eye and your experience tells you? If not, how do we adjust?"

On the team's allocation money and if it has an expiration:

"We still have resources. TAM and general allocation. We have used resources. We used resources to acquire Johan, as an example. In the rules within MLS we'll have to use some resources to buy down salary budget charges so the team can fit. But we remain with sufficient resources that if we think a great opportunity does present itself, say in July, then we can capitalize on that. We want to be nimble enough to be able to do that. The other part of, I prefer reserve to warchest, is keeping the group together. As we start to zero in on those guys that we want to keep together, this MLS pool of money, which not only helps acquire players, but it helps you keep your team together. Because the more successful you are or the more individual players are successful, their salary budget charge exponentially starts to jump beyond just the five percent that you are allotted on a yearly basis. So those are the uses, but if the right opportunity came and we felt comfortable with it, we could and would move in that direction."

So you theoretically have to keep some in reserve to use on someone like Kappelhof again next year?

"In theory, yes. It's a jigsaw puzzle. It all depends on all the other pieces, but yes. And Michael will come into that equation as well because he is also a TAM player. Now, upfront, we'll get a new tranche of money from Major League Soccer before the start of next year, but that's gone into our planning and that's why we are also trying to look at the January window to see what other pieces we might be able to incorporate at that time."

Closing comments:

"Look, I appreciate you giving me the opportunity. I do. You don't have to do that. I thank those who stayed with us on the phone as well and we will do this again on a regular basis through Doug (Hicks) and his group. You can always come to me with questions. So I appreciate it. Thank you."