

City Set For SoCal Clash Without Main Midfielder

by Nathan Tucker, Sports Reporter
March 15 2024 9:20 PM



ST. LOUIS - Fresh off a full week of training in Downtown West, St. Louis City SC is back on the road Saturday night, heading to sunny Southern California to take on conference rival LA Galaxy.

After a bit of a jumbled start to the season, City is settling into a bit of a groove of playing every weekend, as opposed to every three days or so. The team is finding a “cadence,” one that could be beneficial in the long run.

“We have a good cadence now, week-to-week,” said St. Louis City head coach Bradley Carnell at City’s pre-match press conference on Thursday. “We prepare as well as we can for these trips, and we head out there with confidence.”

“We want to become road warriors,” continued Carnell. “We want to prove that when we’re on the road we can play the same way as we do here at CITY PARK, we want to put those types of displays on away from home too.”

With a bit of a more open schedule than those teams still currently in Concacaf Champions Cup play, City is finding more time on the training ground. Well, some are, there was one notable absentee from Thursday’s practice.

City’s star midfielder Eduard Löwen wasn’t a part of training on Thursday, and Bradley Carnell cautiously noted that the midfielder would be re-evaluated in two weeks’ time.

“(Löwen) felt something early on in training yesterday,” said Carnell, who looked as if he’d rather not break this news to the media. “We’re going to look into it further, but we’ll review after two weeks.”

The news came as a bit of a shock to start City’s pre-match presser on Thursday. Löwen tweaked his hamstring, the same hamstring that forced him to miss time last season.

When asked if Löwen’s issue was at all related to last season’s lingering hamstring injury, Carnell didn’t give a definitive answer one way or another.

“Not sure. It’s still very acute. We’ll just have to check and monitor it.”

It’s undoubtedly a huge blow for City even if their midfield maestro was only to miss a few matches. The skill and soccer sense that Löwen brings to the City midfield simply cannot be matched by others on the roster. Carnell is optimistic that whoever is called upon to fill the void will do so with gusto.

“We have a bunch of hungry guys and some good qualities that we’ve shown previously,” Carnell noted. “We’ve been through these things before. (Löwen)’s a big player around here, a big character, but we always rely on the collective, and everyone has the ability to step up if needed.”

As for City’s “on the mend” contingent, midfielder Njabulo Blom and center backs Josh Yaro and Kyle Hiebert, it was a positive week of work on the training fields in the shadow of CITY PARK.

All three will be questionable for the Saturday night contest, with the team assessing their ability to join the squad before heading to LA.

“Getting there, back in contention, they had a good week of training,” said Carnell. “We’ll monitor that and make a decision later on to see if they’re travel ready.”

So some bad injury news, but some positive injury news as well. City’s depth has been tested thanks to this early season spate of strains and pulls and tweaks, but luckily they’ve come out of it picking up at least a point in every MLS match so far.

It will be a tough task to get a point against a much-improved LA Galaxy side. The Galaxy sit just ahead of City in the early MLS Western Conference standings based on goals scored, but both sides have won a game and drawn two so far this season.

Some big players have left the Galaxy this offseason, notably Mexican star striker Javier “Chicharito” Hernandez and former Juventus and Bayern Munich winger Douglas Costa. Chicharito returned to his boyhood club, Chivas Guadalajara, and Douglas Costa is now plying his trade in his native Brazil for Fluminense.

But the pieces the Galaxy have added make them a far more competitive team than the Galaxy of last year. Ghanaian winger Joseph Paintsil looks like he’s every bit worth the near-\$9 million LA paid Belgian top-tier team KRC Genk.

The Galaxy also brought in right back Miki Yamane from Japan’s Kawasaki Frontale, where he was a three-time J1 League Best XI honoree, and won two league titles. Yamane is a huge defensive upgrade on the right side for LA and the team that leaked late goals last year is staying in games in 2024.

Seemingly, it took until this offseason for the Galaxy to realize they need to invest in the team around their young star Riqui Puig. Puig is not just the best player on the Galaxy, but one of the best players in the league, including all those old Barcelona guys that play in Miami now.

It’s the early days of the season still, but you can see that this new Galaxy team will be much more of a force to be reckoned with. It should be a tough challenge for St. Louis City to figure out, as City only managed two draws against last year’s Galaxy team.

St. Louis City takes on the Galaxy at Dignity Health Sports Park in the Los Angeles suburbs Saturday night. It’s a late start for us in the central time zone, with kickoff just

after 9:30 pm. The game is streaming on MLS Season Pass on Apple TV, and local radio broadcasts can be found on KYKY 98.1 FM in English and KXOK 102.9 FM in Spanish.