

Jurgen Klinsmann talks about the game vs. Italy



U.S. head coach Jurgen Klinsmann spoke with ussoccer.com about his goals and expectations during the USA's time in Italy.

“Playing Italy is a huge opportunity for us to see how a team on a really top, world-class level plays the game technically. Italy is a team that reads the game ahead. If you read their players, if you analyze their players, they always think one or two steps ahead, meaning they know far before they receive the ball where they’re going to play the ball. Players who see that one player receives the ball already run into the space in order to get to the pass. You’ve got to be very awake and you’ve got to be very alert. So this is a great introduction to our players to play these types of games.”

On what the staff will focus on in training and meetings in preparation for Italy:

“We’re going to really focus on the technical side of it, shifting really early, reading the game ahead. The defense needs to read when there’s possibly a penetrating pass coming between the centerbacks and full backs or over the top of the back four line and all these things. When you play players like [Andrea] Pirlo, [Daniele] De Rossi, [Riccardo] Montolivo, you need to make sure that you close them down before they can open up and play the ball, otherwise if you’re even one second late, they’re going to finish it off. They’re going to kill you. This is a great learning step for us and that’s why I wanted this game so badly here in Italy, on their soil, for us to give them a real fight. We are growing as a team and the spirit of the group is getting stronger and stronger, and they get challenged in the training sessions and they get challenged especially in the games. We need these types of games, and I’m looking forward to it.”

On what he is looking for from the U.S. team in the short preparation window:

“We want to see from them that they can adjust within two or three days to such a [high] level of a game. These guys, they play for Juventus, AC Milan, Inter Milan. They’re playing for big clubs, Champions League clubs. We want our guys to be really focused in and say, ‘We’re going to give you a fight here.’ We adjust to a new environment, one that’s maybe a little bit uncomfortable. It will be a great atmosphere in the stadium – it’s a beautiful soccer-specific stadium. They’ve got to control their nerves, they’ve got to control the mental side of it and then go from there and take their risks and be confident and try to push up and play the game with them and not just react to them.”

On what he hopes to get out of this camp and the game:

“We want to see a progress every time we get together. We want to see that more and more they kind of make certain things automatic: that they know exactly what to expect when they come into National Team camp, that they adjust to a higher pace of the game, that they adjust to a higher speed of thought, that they’re really alert when they come in here. And they’re doing great. We see that. Here and there, we still have our moments where I’m not happy – I want to have it sharper, I want to have it faster – but that’s why we’re in the process of two and a half years or three years almost until the World Cup.”