

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Raphael Wicky Press Conference



Chicago 2

Seattle 1

Q. Your thoughts on the team's performance today?

RAPHAËL WICKY: I'm obviously very, very happy with the team spirit, with the fighting spirit the team put on the field. It's tough condition for everyone.

It's our first game since four months, and so I wanted to see a team who works together, fights together. We saw that.

I think we, in the first half, actually we had three, four, five quite good chances, half-chances, where we were a threat going forward, even we didn't have the ball as much as Seattle, we were well-organized, and in the second half it became more and more difficult. We dropped I think a little bit too deep. We couldn't really keep the ball any more and we couldn't really then create stuff and make them run.

But in the end of the day, it's the first game. It's a big win for us against a champion and I'm really proud on the performance the team has put on the field.

Q. What was the mindset for the team going into this game and then what was the plan that you guys executed to kind of get revenge against a Sounders team that beat you in the first game of the season?

RAPHAËL WICKY: Well, the plan was to be well-organized defensively, which for along time I think we were. We wanted to pressure a little bit higher I think in the beginning, but it was tough to put them really under pressure. But we were very well-organized in our own half. Made it hard to play against.

We wanted to be good with the ball because we know in these conditions, if you have the ball a lot and you move the opponent, at one point you will find gaps. We could have been better at times there.

But like I said before, we were a threat going forward, especially first half with CJ and Robert who are always very dangerous and that was the plan, and yeah, I'm very happy with what I saw. Things to get better, but I'm happy.

Q. A few weeks ago you called Mauricio a pleasant surprise, but kind of bringing it back to when you first joined, the club were are still in talks with hopefully signing him to a homegrown deal. What did you know about him before he joined, and what were you expecting from him when he first signed?

RAPHAËL WICKY: To be honest I didn't know much about Mauricio. I obviously saw some video clips, but I knew he was a player that came up through the academy and then left for college.

Then as soon as we started, I was very -- I saw the tension; I saw the talent he has, and I saw the work ethic he puts on the field. He has I think surprised a lot of people in the preseason. We are very happy about that. He came back the same way after the pandemic, so he's doing the same thing as before.

We are very happy to have him in our team. That gives us a big option. Obviously now he starts scoring goals which is helpful as well. He just needs to keep working and keep improving. There is a good future in front of him, but the most important thing is to keep right mentality.

Q. How do you see your team physically, and do you think it was an advantage playing against the Seattle Sounders who already played their first game?

RAPHAËL WICKY: I know that we will struggle physically. We saw all these games. We saw a lot of teams cramping. I was always -- for me, it was always clear that the morning games are more difficult than the evening games. Even the evening games are tough, as well, because in the morning, you're actually really in the full sun shine, and you have 90 minutes the sun shining down to you. It's very hot. It's brutal.

And so we knew we have to suffer. It's our first game since four months. The guys worked hard in those last three and a half weeks but as usual you go into your game without real preseason games. You don't really know where you

stand. I expected it to be like that.

And I'm happy that we have a roster with good depth where we can bring in substitutes who help, who did a great job coming in today and that will also be the case in the next game. We will need everyone and physically we will get better and better with more games. That's for sure.

Q. How much is the mental side on this first game, having in mind all the changes, the game that you didn't have on the first group and moving to the other group, for the players how much is that playing into the game, maybe in favor to adapt to difficult situations during the match, or how do you see that mental game going on on your team?

RAPHAËL WICKY: I mean, the mentality and the right mental awareness is very, very important. We spoke about that with the team a long time. We didn't complain about having been delayed or having changed the group. We didn't complain about that. That's a loss of energy.

We always said, guys, there is tactics, but the most important will be the mentality and be strong; be strong in your head and keep working, keep fighting. We knew we have to suffer. Football is a game, when you want to win big games, you have to suffer. It's not going to go easy, and we were ready and I think we will be ready in the future, as well but we are not going to lose energy for things which we can't control.

Q. I wanted to ask about what went into the preparation of changing the formation to 5-3-2 and is that something we can expect regularly going forward or will you change it based on matchups?

RAPHAËL WICKY: No, it was my objective already in January when I took over the team to be flexible and to play multiple systems, a back four and a back five. I have played with both in Champions League, a back five in 5-4-1, 3-4-3, and I wanted to have this option here as well.

It often depends on what players do you have in your roster, but I knew once we have the full roster complete, that we can play both of these systems. So we started working a little bit on a back five and a 5-3-2 after -- well, when the full team training started, and the team has adapted very well to that. And we will continue working on this, but also be ready to go into a back four which the team has played for a long time.

Q. How does getting three points today set you up for the rest of the tournament, considering that these group stage matches count for the season?

RAPHAËL WICKY: Yeah, I'm actually very, very happy about that. I mean, those are three big points against a champion, and it counts for the league which is very, very important for us.

After two good games against Seattle and New England, where the results didn't really go to our favor, I'm very happy with the three points. For the tournament, it's always important or good to have a positive start, but it's just a first step.

So it's good to start with a win. We still have two more games. It's going to be hard games against two good opponents, and we will have to keep working hard to make more points. That is very, very important that everyone knows that this was just the first step. If we now start relaxing then we risk to not continue like we started.

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