

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Tuesday, September 1, 2020

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Raphael Wicky

Press Conference



Q. Thanks for making some time for us this afternoon. First of all, on Saturday night, you subbed out Robert Beric in around the 65th minute. What was the thought process behind that and what have you seen from him the last few games, because obviously he's still looking to score his third goal of the season?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Of course, I take time for you guy, it's a pleasure.

Look, Robert, right now, without having C.J., without having Luke who can play as a striker, a second striker, as well, Robert is our only real No. 9 and there's only so many games and you play every three days, and we have the feeling that, yeah, there is a little bit of tiredness, of fatigue to see.

So we thought we'd bring fresh legs. He had one or two chances in the first half. Actually had two, three good chances in the first half. And then we said, let's bring a fresh guy with more legs. We play so much, those guys have now played, so that was the thought process. Nothing else.

Robert is the No. 9 who I believe who I trust 100 percent who will score always his goals. Yeah, right now, the balls don't go in, but I'm 100 percent confident that if he keeps working and he's getting his chances, he will score again.

Q. I'm hoping you can give us an update on some of the -- you've got a bunch of moving parts with some of the players right now. Frankie, is he gone on international duty? C.J. and Kappelhof, how close are they to coming back and what's the latest on whatever is going on with Djordje?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Frankie is here. He didn't go to the national team. I think you guys have seen that the league doesn't let players go to the national team, so Frankie is here with us.

C.J. Sapong is back here since yesterday or two days ago,

if I remember, but he is in quarantine, so he cannot train with us for another ten days. That's just how it is. He's training individually and as soon as he will be back in team training, hopefully he will be available to be an option for us, an option, obviously. But again, the expectations of him, he has not trained much in the last three or four weeks due to some personal reasons.

Kappelhof is not training with the team. That will take awhile to be honest with you guys, he has had the last training 14 March, so that's obviously going to take a while.

Djordje is training. He's available. I got the message from our athletic trainers during the game or in the beginning of the game that Djordje's stomach doesn't feel well and feels something -- that's why the reason I didn't didn't sub him in. We need him, a lot of times, starting or not starting, he is a good player and can help this team. Hopefully this time he will feel 100 percent.

Q. One thing that has been a struggle for you guys this year has been getting consistent results. You'll have a good game, draw, win, loss, whatever -- how important is it to get a result on the road against a team when you have a home match coming up a few days later?

RAPHAEL WICKY: That's what we want is to win games and get sports. You know how it is in football or sports in general. You get your confidence through results. Results give you confidence. Even we do a post game analysis and show the guys, look, there were good moments. We didn't come out of New York City's game with a really bad bad feeling because there were good moments, of course.

Again, we talk about the same thing every single game, that we give up two easy goals, but in general we have really good moments against a good team, again.

So we try to give confidence with that and trying to get better in the things we have to get better. But in the end of the day, in every level of sports, it's the wins who give you, who give you confidence.

So it is important that we go and get a result in Cincinnati. That's what we are going for. But I still say, and I believe tell that to the players every day, play with confidence, play with courage. There is no reason that you don't have

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

confidence. But it's easier said than done. I was a player and I know how it feels, but that's how it is.

Q. So Wednesday marks the first time that you guys will have played four matches in a row without interruption all year long. Are you and the group starting to feel the effects of that consistency, that run of play, and how the routine has set in?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Well, yeah, I mean, I think you -- from our standpoint from a coach and from a staff, we see things certain things going better. We see some consistency. We are trying to build a team. We see some movements, like in New York, as well, against a very good team in this league, even they struggled this year, but we actually had big parts of the game where we dominated or where we had really good possession phases and we actually made them run and created chances and half-chances and moments. So that's very positive and I think that's what we need and comes with games.

It is for almost all the teams the same; that it's quick turnovers with all the travels. Unfortunately for us, we almost only play away. We have played in Seattle. We have played in New England. We have played in Columbus. We have played in New York and now we play in Cincinnati. That's a little unfortunate, but it is what it is. We can't change that. It's good that the team has games and has continued. That's for sure, good. That's what we want. That's what everyone wants.

Q. Two very different kind of questions, but first of all what is Bobby's status for tomorrow night? And also, since last Wednesday, there's been a lot more talk about social justice and with a lot of teams boycotting, going on strikes instead of playing. How has that been approached with the team and what have the discussions been inside with the group about that topic?

RAPHAEL WICKY: So Bobby is back in training. He trained yesterday and today. We will have to see how his reaction is, how his body reacts to today's training and then we take a decision tomorrow.

The other topic, obviously we have followed it from here, as well. We have spoken to the team. It's always, like I say, we fully support the players. We are fully behind them. If the players decide not to play, I said it last time, we are behind them. But the players decided to play. They want to play. So we support their decision. That's how it is and that's how we handle it and I think we -- as a club, we have given a statement, we have given the pledge and that's how we're dealing with it, with the situation.

Q. I think we're scheduled to talk to gas ton pretty soon. So as a guy who played a holding role or similar role in your career, what does gas ton bring to the team?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I mean, gas ton is a really good player. You can see that he's getting -- he's getting better and better. He will have a huge impact, I believe, in this team and also I think he can have a huge impact in this league because he can set the rhythm and the tone in buildups for our team, but he also can play the final pass if he's closer to goal, he has a good -- a very good shot.

He, as well, that's what he said when we spoke together as well, with him. He needs games. He needs rhythm. That's all he needs. This year was difficult for all these players. It's not an excuse but you can see with him that he's getting -- he's getting better and better. Now it's just a matter of, yeah, how well can he cope with playing so much in a short time but I think at the end of the day, that's what he wants.

He's a very, very good player and the leader in the game. I think once he will speak better English and hopefully that will be in the next few months or by the next season, he can also be more of a leader -- even more of a leader on the field with talking. That's something I expect from him, as well, but I think he's a very good player.

Q. Brian Guittierez made his debut over the last week, kind of flew under the radar, but how did you think he did and what's he been like in training so far?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I mean, he didn't have a lot of time, obviously on the field but every time he played, he's in Columbus and I think he just came in when it was 2-0. We wanted to change him before and hits that beautiful goal so then obviously was kind of difficult for a young kid to come in for the first time, having an impact, because the team actually just got hit on their head 2-0. But even there he showed actually courage in defending and courage in going after the players and trying something.

Same against -- same against here against Cincinnati. He almost scored in his first action, and then we gave him again a few minutes to give him the feeling of the MLS and the level in New York City. I wouldn't give it to him if he wouldn't deserve it in training. I told you guys he has been really, really good in training in Orlando, during Orlando and then he came back and that's why he is an option for us. That's why we give him these minutes because completely believe in him that he can be a good roll in the future for this club.

But in the other half, we have to give him time, 17 years

old, but it's good for him to get these experiences.

Q. Just wanted to sort of build on the answer you gave about gas ton. What are your impressions of how the midfield is coming together?

RAPHAEL WICKY: In general in these games, we have seen really good moments and really good moments in possession phases where we were able to control parts of the games, where we were able to control and play through some really good teams in this league, like Columbus and New York City and obviously Cincinnati, a team not easy to break down with the help of these two, we scored three goals.

So I think those are -- those are really good players. I think they are getting slowly the chemistry together. They -- like I said, as well, they need games to build that chemistry, to keep building that chemistry, but I'm sure once they have rhythm and once they have -- once they are fully game fit over a long period of time, they can have a big impact for our midfield in this league, I believe.

Q. It's actually two questions, the first one is very simple. You have games midweek, weekend and midweek again. You plan any kind of rotations with the players or are you going game by game?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I'm going game by game. That's how I always have it. We're always thinking of who could rotate in, does it make sense. On one hand, we have to build -- we have to start building a team but we don't have a preseason to do that. We have these guys now together so we've got to give them some continuity. On the other side we have to see, how are they, how are they physically because you only have like two and a half, three days travelling in this country, which obviously has a big impact. So we are going day-by-day and game-by-game.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...