

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Raphael Wicky Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Coach, we'll go ahead and get started. Good afternoon, everyone. Appreciate you all joining us this afternoon.

We'll get started with questions.

Q. Rafa, for you guys, what is the importance of making the playoffs, not just to keep your season alive, keep your chance at a championship alive, but to show the progress of the project that you and Georg and the whole front office have embarked on?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, I mean, look, that's one of our goals, like it's a goal for every team in the league to make the playoffs. We also told our team and with our team together we made some common goals. One is to make the playoffs. It's something we want to achieve.

We're in the race. It's a difficult year, but I think next to the progress we have seen from this team, and we have clearly seen those progress over the last three months, the play would be the result out of it. That would be great to make that.

Obviously once you're in the playoff, we know everything is possible. You can beat any team in this league if it's only one game. That would always leave our chances open to win something and to be in the race to go all the way.

Yeah, that's what we're working for. That's what we want. That's what also gives all of these five games a big importance.

Q. Could you walk us through what's going on with Miguel and Gaston, when their flights got in, how that affects whether they could play tomorrow?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, it's pretty simple. Miguel is available tomorrow because he got in on time, on that day they even have to arrive. Gaston is not available because he had a problem boarding an airplane in South America due to a stamp from Brazil he had in his passport,

something like that. He missed that flight and didn't make it to the certain time he had to be here to be available for tomorrow. That's the case.

Miguel will be available. He will be in the roster. Gaston will be training with us normally again I think from Sunday, Sunday or Monday on.

Q. I know you always like to take things one match at a time and everything. With five games remaining, three of them being on the road, how important is it for you guys to get a maximum six points from your final two games at Soldier Field?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Obviously very important. Obviously you always try to win your home games. Home games are big. But we also know, and I have spoken to you guys as well, that we know we need to make points on the road as well if you want to go into the playoffs. You cannot only rely on your home games. There is with almost every team moments where you may draw a home game or you may lose a home game. We cannot only rely on that.

We're taking it game by game. Tomorrow is a big game for us against Red Bull. We're going to do everything to keep the three points here and then think about all the next games. It's clear that in these three road games as well we need to get points.

Q. How is Carlos Teran fitting in so far? What are your plans for him over the next five games?

RAPHAEL WICKY: We're all happy that Carlos is here and finally able to train. He has trained now Monday with the non-starters from last weekend, then Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday he had full team training. That makes him three team trainings. He will be available for tomorrow.

He is overall, I have to say, a very good person, a very open young kid still, which integrates well into the team. He's not only waiting for the team to open the doors for him, he's actually giving something. He's open, going to the guys, trying to speak English. He's a very, very open person, which helps a lot.

On the field I'm happy with what I saw this week. He has a big presence, physically has a big presence. He's actually calm with the ball. But we all know it needs time. You



need to give those kids time. Carlos didn't play a game since I think, as well, March. In the last time since he signed the contract and couldn't come here, he didn't really train with a team because of the risk of injury.

We need to give him time. It's great to have him here, great to have him now integrating with the team to get to know the way we want to play, to get the feeling of being close to the team, also being on the bench. Maybe at one point I have to throw him in, getting the feel of MLS, that for sure next season he will be quickly ready and already knows what to expect here.

Yeah, he's available and we will see. One thing for sure, we have to give him time.

Q. Back to the question about the road games. What is the explanation for the discrepancy for you guys between the home performance and the performance away from Soldier Field? Is it the travel or something else or just something that can't really be answered right now?

RAPHAEL WICKY: It's difficult to give you an answer on that. I'm not going to blame the travel because that would be too easy. Does the travel affect most of the teams in the MLS? Probably so. I think most of the teams would tell you yes, it affects a little bit. But there is enough teams who went on the road and won games.

We lost games or drew games away not because of the travel. If you remember, there were a lot of games we actually had a lot of chances, played pretty good football, created, just didn't convert the chances or the goals were disallowed or whatever happened. I wouldn't blame that. I think it's a little bit of everything coming together.

I think the most important thing is that you go on the road and say, okay, we're going to try to play the same football as we play here at home. We know we often create big chances. We have to convert them. I wouldn't blame only the travel. But a clear answer I don't have for you.

Q. Obviously C.J. is out in California with his new baby. If this was when you played or before you played, that might have been a difficult decision for a coach to let a guy go to deal with a family issue, a new baby. Things are changing. When you made that decision, what went into that for you?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Look, I don't know if it was different 10, 15 years ago when I played. I don't know. For me it was no question.

Look, this is our job. We all love this game. We all love

football. We all always say there's more important things than football. That is family. With everything he went through during the pregnancy with his fiancée, then with the birth of the kid, when he came to me already before actually the kid was born, he wanted to be there. For me it was clear. These are things which are very, very important.

When he now was back after quarantine, he was available to play, he played. Now he came back and said, Rafa, look, this is the case.

I said, No question, this is important, this is your child, and I understand that.

That's the human side. For me that's not a question. I also told him of course, I told him that as well in August.

From the sporting side as a coach, I want you here. You're an important player for this team. We need you. Like I said, there is just things, they are more important than this game. So I understand that.

I hope everything goes well. I really hope that his daughter is healthy, stays healthy, and he can be there for his family, then hopefully he can come back whenever he needs to come back and be here again for the team hopefully before the playoffs start and otherwise for the playoffs.

Q. Djordje Mihailovic mentioned something last week after the game saying the pitch was I think a little lumpy is how he described it, Kansas City. What was your perspective on that? Are there any kind of concerns or tactical adjustments you might need to make with the weather being so rainy and cold?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Look, first of all I want to say the field, there is great experts who work on the field and try the best. It was to be expected. It was to be expected that after being American football games on it, it not going to be Wembley.

This is not an excuse. I never let this count as excuse for the players. That is for me too easy, like it would be too easy to talk about the travel when you play away.

It is what it is. We have to deal with that. I know these people working on the field do the best. We have to deal with that and be better technically than we were last week in the game against Sporting KC. Obviously last weekend there was a lot of things. The wind wasn't easy for both of the teams. With the wind, the field was very dry.

Look, those things you can't control so you have to be very focused on your job, on what you can do, not put in your

mind the field may be a little bit bumpy. No. If the field is bumpy, okay, be ready for that and play and be concentrated so your first touch is good.

Not only here in Soldier Field. A field can affect a tactical choice or a game plan choice? Yes, of course it can. But that's something I have to think with my staff and then tell to my team. If a field is in certain circumstances, maybe we play a little bit different. Overall the field was good so far and we have to deal with the way it is.

Hopefully it rains a little bit everywhere we go. As a footballer, you always like the field a little bit wet so the ball goes actually a little bit faster. That's not only here in Soldier Field. Personally I would be happy if it rains a little bit.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Rafa.

RAPHAEL WICKY: Thank you.

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