

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Thursday, March 4, 2021
Chicago, Illinois, USA

Fabian Herbers Press Conference



Q. One of the bigger decisions the club made in the off-season was selling Djordje Mihailovic to Montreal. Djordje led the team in assists last year, so curious how you both personally and as a team try to replace his creativity.

FABIAN HERBERS: Yeah, I mean, Djordje was a good young prospect obviously. Was a very good player on the team. And yeah, he had his contributions with his assists, even though he wasn't always starting. You know, was in and out and sometimes a little inconsistent.

But yeah, the team made a trade and we got some new guys in with Stanislav and Offor, too, and I feel like the new guys are looking sharp in training already. They are looking good, and we as a unit, the core guys that have already been there just have to step up and try to create assists ourselves. I don't think it's too big of a loss for us. I think we can compensate for that this season and I think we can be successful.

Q. Enjoying your new Podcast with Julian Gressel. Why did you take on such a thing, and what have you learned from doing that so far?

FABIAN HERBERS: Yeah, I appreciate you listening. I have one fan more; that always helps.

No, Julian Gressel, he asked me in the off-season if we wanted to do it. I'm a huge Podcast fan myself. I always listen to it when I'm driving in the car or cooking at home or cleaning or doing some stuff in the house.

So he asked me to do it and I was open for it. I think it's a cool perspective, especially for an MLS fan to have two players, you know, talking soccer, because normally you have like journalists or commentators, like Alexi Lalas, those kinds of people talk about soccer.

But if you have two active players, I think it's quite, yeah, interesting perspective for the neutral fan even and for Chicago Fire fans, as well. So I think, yeah, it's an

experiment. I'm enjoying it so far. Not everything went well in the first couple episodes but yeah, appreciate everybody tuning in and it can only get better from here on out.

I hope we have a lot of interesting topics to cover throughout the season, and yeah, hopefully you guys keep listening, as well.

Q. You guys, other than Robert Beric last year didn't get a ton of consistent goal scoring. Where is that going to come from this year and how important is that for a team to get support for their one main striker in terms of scoring?

FABIAN HERBERS: Yeah, of course. I mean, Robert did a great job last year starting every game and landing those goals in. That was very important for us to get those goals.

I think, yeah, I can't really tell you who is going to be the second goal scorer, but I think it has to come from a collective. We all have to contribute. We have Luka who was out last year. He's obviously looking sharp in training and scoring a lot of goals. Frankowski can certainly bang a couple more in. Me myself can do so, and then you have Medrán, Gastón, Giménez and even the new guys, Stanislav and Offor that can contribute in that instance. I think hopefully Beric can repeat what he did last year or even do better, but I think we need to help him collectively and if each of the offensive midfielders and wingers has their fair share of goals, we can look pretty sharp and have a good run.

Q. Last season, last off-season was obviously kind of crazy, Rafa coming in as a new coach, not knowing where you as a returning player were going to fit into the squad and the plans. How would you compare the mood in camp right now to a year ago, and for you personally, how does this year feel different?

FABIAN HERBERS: Yeah, I think overall, it feels more familiar because last year, you had so many player turnover where a lot of the old guys that left and then obviously Rafa and the new front office, they brought their own guys in. So yeah, it was a lot of new faces and to get to know the new players and the new staff.

Right now, it wasn't that much of a big turnover, so I think



the core guys of the team from last year stayed together and are now together here, so everything feels more like you already know it and you know the system and you know the style that Rafa wants to play, so it's not that much new things to learn.

But yeah, we did bring in a couple new key guys that hopefully can contribute.

Yeah, for me personally, the same thing, basically. You already know what the coaches are about. You know what the teammates are about. You have your hierarchy in the team almost and yeah, you know where you fit in. So it's an easy adjust to make and hopefully that helps us come off hot with the first couple games that everything was familiar and we know each other as a team already.

Q. Speaking of your Podcast, you and Julian had talked about the CBA negotiations a little bit. I wonder if you can tell us about what those negotiations were like, especially coming off a difficult season for every player because of COVID-19 shutdowns and protocols and everything involved with that.

FABIAN HERBERS: Yeah, it was tough mentally coming in. You know, normally the preseason starts in January like 20th about, and you know, at that time we didn't even have a deal yet with the MLS.

To be honest, it was almost like looking like we were going to face a lockout if we stood strong with our core values and our ideas, what we wanted for the feel. But yeah, at the end of the day, the players gave in to the MLS, gave them to the year 2027, which we initially didn't want to do, but I feel like the fear of a lockout at the end was too big and we couldn't take the responsibility for all the players because you never know how long a lockout could take, and then not receiving a paycheck for however many months, it was very difficult and very frightening for all the players.

In the end we gave in quite a lot and yeah, to be honest it was a frustrating process for me to be a part of for the first time. I was in the bargaining group, always on the calls with the MLS PA. Yeah, frustrating. But at the end, we're here. We got a deal done. We're getting our paychecks. We can play. You know, let's play. Let's have a good season and let's just get this started.

I'm glad it's behind us now and we can just look forward. But overall it was a frustrating process, but yeah, we got the deal done and let's move forward.

Q. We don't know when this is going to happen, but looks like there will be some fans in the stands at least

some point. Did you ever get used to playing in front of no fans in a 60,000-seat stadium last year, and just what will it mean to have some fans at Soldier Field at some point this season?

FABIAN HERBERS: Yeah, it would mean a lot. That's the reason why we moved, right, to have more fans in the stadium, even though it's only going to be, yeah, a low percentage of the full capacity, I think it would help us a lot as a team, you know to, have the Chicago, the city behind us and the fans behind us and push us forward in every game.

Did you get used to it last year? Yeah, probably, at some point, because you know it's going to be the same game over and over with no fans. But you don't want to get used to it. It's more exciting with the fans. It's just like the whole game day experience is second-to-none if the fans are there.

Yeah, I'm just really looking forward, even if it's low capacity, to have some fans in there and hopefully rather sooner than later we can have a packed house there. That would be exciting.

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