

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Raphael Wicky

Press Conference



Q. Just looking for an injury update on Omsberg, Terán and also just where Ivanov and Kronholm are right now in their recoveries.

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, hi, everyone. So the injury update is that unfortunately Kenny is not yet with the team training. It's, again, day-by-day and see how we react on his session coming back towards the team.

Carlos Terán is not training with the team. After the Cincinnati game he had a problem in his leg, which is still not good.

Omsberg is back in training, so if everything goes well, he should be available hopefully.

Stanislav Ivanov is getting closer to team training. He is getting reintegrated in certain parts of the team training. But he is still a little bit way from being able to compete for the weekend, but it's positive that he's actually getting closer and closer to team training.

Q. Following up on Kenny, what's the level of concern that it's going on a year now since the injury and he's still not in full team training?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, his knee will react -- shows a reaction after certain trainings, and that's where we are now. So it's not yet there where he can be every day in team training. So that's why he's doing partial training with Adin, our goalkeeper coach, and we are trying to reintegrate him slowly but we obviously have to see how his knee reacts. That's all I can give right now.

Q. We're coming up on July and we've only seen two players go on loan this season, A.J. in Memphis and Chris Brady to Madison. Why is that, and might we see more players go on loan the second half of the season?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I think it was good for, or it is good for A.J. to go and lay and have minutes because A.J. is a

young player who in the last two years for injury reasons and other reasons didn't really get many minutes. And right now, it will be difficult here for him to get minutes on the first team. So I think that's a good choice for him to go in USL team, training there and getting minutes.

We will see in the upcoming weeks and months if we have the numbers in training and if we have the possibility to send some players sometimes on the weeks to Madison.

I think if I understand right, it is also the MLS Next League starting at one point or there will be more games in I think July, August, September, for the Under 23 team. Like we had after the Columbus game the next day, there was a game where some of our young players had games there. Hopefully that will come more in July, August, September, so the young kids really get minutes.

That's what they miss, talking with Monis and Javi and Allan Rodriguez, and even Guti before he played four or five games didn't really have games for over a year, and that's obviously not when a young player needs. So young players need high-level training and then they need games on the weekend. That's what a lot of these young players didn't have for the last year, year and a half, or even two years.

Q. You switched formations at the weekend going with three center backs against Philadelphia. Was that a change specific to that match or something you might want to continue going forward with Atlanta this weekend?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, the switch, which is not only for one game. I think we want to be a little flexible. We would like to be able to play different or multiple systems. And we played last year a few games, as well, in the back three, and yeah we choose to go against Philly like that and I think the team did pretty well like that. So I think that this is always going to be an option going forward.

Q. I wanted to get your opinion on the importance of Bobby Shuttleworth. He has made countless, countless big saves for your team this year, including one late on in the match that kept the score line at 3-3 and he just seems to be a vocal leader and has quite the presence on the pitch. Can you speak to his importance to your squad?

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RAPHAEL WICKY: Yes, I can agree with what you said. You said almost everything. I think Bobby has a good year and is a good goalkeeper back there. I think teams need good goalkeepers. He does a good job. He does a good job, as well communicating. He is vocal like you said. He is a true professional coming in every day and wants to work hard. We have behind him obviously with Chris Brady and Gabriel Slonina, two very, very young goalkeepers who can also learn from his and his professionalism. And I think each other -- and the way they all push each other; I think the way he lives as a professional is an example for the young players, as well.

We are happy with the season Bobby plays. We are happy with the way he trains and is a leader in this group and obviously happy with the two young kids behind who progress and who also can learn from an older, veteran teammate.

Q. You guys on Saturday are going to be able to open the stadium fully, 100 percent capacity. How important is it for the Fire players and the coaching staff, how aware are you of the importance for giving the fans a reason to support the team and come back, and not just because they can, but because they want to and that the Fire are something that they want to be a part of and support?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Well, look, we are aware of that. We know that we need to play well. We know that we need to win games and play well and with doing that, we attract more people. We know that. Obviously we want our fans to come. We need the support from our fans, but we know that we need to play well and win games so that more and more people are interested and come to the games. We know the importance of that.

We can tell you that the team goes into every single game and wants to win and wants to play well and wants to play exciting football so the people come. The team wants to make the people happy who come to the stadium. We are aware of that importance of what we do for our fans.

Q. How much thought is there around the technical staff that the Fire are not just a soccer project but a business project and part of the job of the franchise is reintroducing itself to the market? How much do you guys by that and the importance of what you're going to help the Fire move forward, not just as a soccer team but as a business as well?

RAPHAEL WICKY: We are aware of that. We are aware as coaches and as a team that, look, the first team is always the locomotive of the train. We know that we are a

very important piece of this club. I think the club has done a great job in marketing and bringing the club back to the City in Soldier Field and doing a lot in social media and marketing, so they are doing a great job.

But we know at the end of the day, it's us on the field who have to deliver and who have to make people want to come back, and that's only one way of doing that and that's winning games and playing good football. We are aware that this year we have not won many games, and we are not in the place where we are, but while I can promise you and what we are always promising is that we try to work hard and we try to do everything. But we are aware of the importance that the first team has for this club.

Q. Second time this season facing Atlanta. What are you expecting from them this time?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, same as the first time. We know the way they play. We know they are a very aggressive team, very man-marking team, very forward-thinking team, a team who has in every game a lot of possessions who dominate a lot of the games almost every opponent, and so it's not going to be any different than it was in Atlanta. We don't expect anything different.

But at the end of the day we have to focus on what we do and we have to focus on how we are going to play and what we can bring on the table. That's what we are doing and that's how we are preparing this week.

Q. Frankowski was maybe a surprise inclusion on the bench in Philadelphia considering he was just coming off the Euros two days before maybe. What was his fitness like coming off the Euros and is he ready fitness-wise to start on the weekend?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, he is available. He looked good when he came in. Obviously he was one month in Europe training. When he left, he was very good in the last game he played for us against Montréal. Left for the Euro. Obviously was very excited going, there trained for a high level for a month. Had minutes at the Euro and he looked good when he came back. He obviously was a little bit tired from the jet-lag and the flight, but he looked good during the game, actually he played, and he looked good this week, so he will be available.

Q. I thought there were some real bright spots for your team on Saturday. What are the top two or three things, positives, that you can take away from that match on Saturday that you can hopefully bring into this does and moving forward and start getting more results like you did on Saturday?

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, I think one very important point I think was the reaction of the team once they were 2-1 behind. I think in a situation this team is right now, obviously not having a lot of points, sometimes when you don't have much point, the confidence level is not that high and then just giving up a second goal before halftime, which usually hurts you a lot, the reaction from the team was great in the second half.

Coming back from there, going up 3-2 and showing a real fight against one of the top teams in the League all the way until the end and having opportunities to win the game, I think that was a very, very positive which we take from this team and a lot of that mentality is working together and working hard and putting the hard work in. I think that's what the team has to take and has to do again on Saturday.

Q. Score prediction for Friday versus Spain?

RAPHAEL WICKY: I think everyone who watches the Euro, it's pretty difficult to predict anything. No one predicted 5-3 and 3-3 in the quarter findings or in the round of 16 in the last game. It's going to be an interesting game.

Obviously crossing fingers for Switzerland. I think Switzerland has prove every own the last against many, many teams in nation's league and qualifying that they are at the level of many big teams. So everything is possible in these stages of a tournament. I am pretty confident that Switzerland will make a good game again and that with the team spirit they have right now, I think they can go through.

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