

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA



## Head Coach Raphael Wicky Press Conference

**Q. Just wanted to follow up on something from the previous game. You said that you didn't play Francisco Calvo as a tactical decision. What went into that choice? What were you seeing from Francisco that made you decide not to play him?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah. It was a tactical decision. I don't really want to go into justifying why in public. I spoke with Francisco multiple times. I spoke with him specifically why I am not going to play him.

For me, it's important that the player knows what I expect from him, what I expect him to do better. And I think that should stay between me and the player.

**Q. I didn't know what with qualifying and everything, is he available for this weekend's game?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: He had to get subbed out yesterday due to an injury in the game, in minute 88, I believe. So we're not entirely sure. It's questionable because he will have to see the doctor either today or tomorrow and see how it is. But he's questionable.

**Q. If he's healthy, will he be back in the lineup for you Saturday?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: I'm not going to tell you that today.

**Q. Rapha, how has Fede looked in the little bit that you've gotten to see him with the group? And do you expect him -- I know you won't tell us if he'll start or not, but do you expect he might play this weekend against Kansas City?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah. I'm happy that he's here finally. I think it's always a long time -- or sometimes it's a long time for a player between the signing and then all the visa process and all those things which need to happen and then the COVID rules, obviously, for two years or a year

and a half to be with the team. So he was very happy to be here. We're happy to have him.

And I saw him yesterday for about 25 minutes in a little scrimmage we had. And he looked good. He looked good. He confirmed -- during the 25 minutes confirmed what we know of him. He's a little bit of a different profile than a lot of our older midfielders. And I think that's a good addition to our team, an addition which we need.

We'll need him in these upcoming weeks and as well moving forward to the end of the season and next season. This is a profile which this team needs.

And, yeah, if nothing happens tomorrow in training and if he feels well, he will be in the squad to travel to Sporting, to Kansas City.

**Q. You guys are on a very lengthy road trip. I think it's six games away from Soldier Field. Have you ever been on this long of a stretch in your career, either as a coach or as a player? And then how do you keep the players in a good mental state and prepared knowing that they're not going to be at home for a while?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: No. I have never been in a position like that as a player and as a coach because, obviously, in Europe that doesn't really happen. It's all different there.

And last year, it didn't happen in that big of an amount. But it is what it is. I mean, I think they've dealt well with the previous three games. Then this break -- obviously, this two weeks now breaks it up a little bit and just gave us a little break so it doesn't feel like six real games one after the other away. So we had this two-week break where the players were able to be at home a little bit with their families and also have a day or two off.

And, obviously -- yeah. Now we're going into a three-game stretch again away. But we're taking game by game. And we finally got our first win in New York, which was great. And we're going to go with the same mentality and spirit to Kansas City.

And we know that we can win points way from home. We know that we need a really good and perfect performance to do a good result there. But that's what we want to do in Kansas.

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And I think for the players -- we had a lot of home games. They knew that this stretch was going to come. So right now, I don't think this is a problem for the players.

**Q. Just going back to Federico a little bit. Just kind of wondering what you think it is that he offers the club? What kind of holes he might fill? How he fits in with the rest of the squad? And where you see his potential being?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: I think Federico is a real defensive midfielder. I wouldn't call him a Number 6. He's just a defensive midfielder. He has the strengths of -- we call these guys a ball winner. We call these guys -- and I was for a big part of my career a player like that. I call them sometimes water carrier.

Their role is to recover balls. To do more of the dirty work. He's a good footballer; he can play football. But we have different expectations from him. And he knows his role. And he feels comfortable in that.

And that's what he did. That's how he's known in Argentina. He's a ball winner. He covers a lot of ground. He's a good footballer on top of that, but he will not probably be the guy who is always playing the last pass, the decisive pass. If he does, we're happy with that too.

But comparing him with, obviously, with Luka, with Alvaro, with Gaston, who are more like 8s, some of them are even 10s who are very, very dangerous also in the final third, who can be very dangerous in the final third.

Federico I think is a real holding midfielder, covers ground, recovers balls and does this kind of work. And that's a good addition for our team.

**Q. Rapha, I'm just curious with international window, how does the staff manage the games? I mean, do you like to watch the game on your own and get your own ideas from your players that are playing with the national teams? Do you guys split the games and get together after that to discuss what you saw? How do you guys manage that among the staff?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah. We want to watch as many games as we can. We are following the players. We're looking -- we're following their games. And if they're not in the middle of the night, then we try to watch them or one of the staff members watches them. We talk about that. And that's how we manage it. Yeah.

**Q. To shift gears a little bit. Saturday is the 20th anniversary of 9/11. And I believe you were in Spain at**

**that period. What do you remember most about that period of world history? And what was your reaction to seeing that unfold and now the 20th anniversary of that tragedy?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah. I mean, this is always, I think for many of us, for almost all of us, is one of those moments where you exactly remember where you were at the time. I was playing in Spain. But at the moment, I was in rehab in Zurich. I had a knee surgery I think a week before. So I was in rehab in Zurich when this obviously very tragic and sad incident happened.

And, yeah, what do I remember? Obviously, it changed -- it changed the world. It changed a lot for a lot of people. And it's obviously a very sad moment in the world history and in the history for the United States. It's 20 years.

But, yeah, I mean, for me, as a European and when you go to New York, when you see these pictures, it's just crazy. I mean, obviously, every year when the date arrives, there is always documentaries and movies and stuff coming in. You see these pictures again. It's just unbelievable that this actually happened.

And, yeah, I think it just remembers us always to this moment and to be grateful for what we have and thankful for what we have. But it obviously changed the life of a lot of people and I think for the whole world.

**Q. Not quite going to ask a 9/11 question. But back to soccer really quick, Rapha. A few weeks ago, Alvaro Medran was out with health and safety protocols but has since come back and come off the bench in I think three games in a row or so. What is his status? And how is he doing since that time?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah. His status is fine. He's with us. He's training. He's ready for the weekend. He came in a little bit in -- very, very short I think it was in Miami. Then he had a little bit more I think in Orlando, if I'm correct.

Yeah. He's there and he will be available. And he's a big part, an important part for our team.

**Q. I would like to ask you, do you have any injured players or some concerns about players that are not going to be ready for Saturday? Or how are the players looking like?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah. Obviously, we have obviously Kenny, who is still out. We have now Francisco questionable. And we will have I think Guti questionable, who deals with some foot problems since quite a while and doesn't really get better. So we have to really -- we have to

really make a decision on what's the best for him so it doesn't get worse.

I think that should be -- Nacho is still questionable. He's back in training. He's back since a few days. So we'll see how he feels tomorrow and see if he is ready to make a trip to Kansas.

**Q. Raphael, for people that are still figuring out Fede Navarro, it's fair to say that he, the expectation could be that he turns into your Diego Chara?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: I think -- if that's what you say. If that's what you say, if you compare him with him. I think it's not a bad comparison.

Like I said, he's a holding midfielder who covers a lot of ground, who is aggressive, who wins a lot of balls but who is also, like Diego Chara, a good footballer as well. I think -- yeah, similar player like that. Yeah. That's not much to add from my side.

THE MODERATOR: Rapha, thank you for your time, and thanks everyone for joining us today.

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