

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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## Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Columbus 2, Chicago 0

### Q. Just in general, what did you see from the guys today?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I mean, I think, look, for me, we talked about being competitive every game, and trying to win every game, and that was the most important thing. I told the guys when I stepped in, you know, that it was important to finish strong, and I'm proud of the guys because that's what they did. I think that, look, we didn't reach -- like I told them, the objectives, the goals we set from the beginning, but there was never any point that the team gave up. They didn't compete. They didn't try. And that's what I'm most proud of. We didn't reach the objectives, but I think for me, they fought and they worked hard all the way to the end and that's all we can ask for.

So, yeah, I mean, as far as the game tonight, I mean, look, we're playing away against a team that needed to come out and we knew they were going to be very aggressive. They had a slim chance to get in. A lot of things had to happen. But it was their last game at home, so great atmosphere, they came out hard but I felt that, you know, there were moments in the game from turnovers that we gave them opportunities but for the most part we were right there. We were in the game and we had our moments and we didn't capitalize obviously on some of the chances that we had, and then I felt that the guys that came in, the changes we made, I think it was great to see some of the young guys that came in. They looked really good. They looked really sharp. And you know, so we wanted to be competitive but then also, you know, I'm thinking about the club and the future of the club and in doing so, I made some changes and I thought the guys performed well and we had some chances in the end.

But I'm proud of the group and proud of the guys all the way to the end. They fought hard and that's all you can ask for.

### Q. I know you had to deal with this week the report

**that there was a mutiny going on in the locker room. What did you feel when you heard that and what do you want everybody to know about that?**

FRANK KLOPAS: First of all, I didn't watch the game. I was sleeping. And then you get up in the morning and obviously my phone has blown up and I'm saying what the heck is going on.

Look, the thing with that, when there's reports out there, you want them to be accurate. And the club did talk, which was the truth, to the players, to the guys that had option years, and then they told them before the final game that, you know, they weren't going to be back.

Look, you can debate about that. Some people might say, okay, that's not a problem. If you're a player, sometimes you like to know what's going on right before the end and start making plans about the future. Some other people might do it a different way. I didn't have a problem with that.

But it was the total opposite from what the report said because not one player came and said, "I don't want to play, I don't want to compete." It was the opposite. Everybody wanted to play. The training that we've had leading up to this game was very sharp. It was very competitive. So at the end, I always make, what's the best decisions for the team, and what's the best decisions for the team also as I'm thinking about the future.

So in the end of it, for me, the only thing that bothered me was the integrity of the players. Because for me, the guys are professionals. They will work all the way to the end and I don't want anyone thinking anything else than that. They were true professionals. I'm proud of the group. I'm proud of the guys.

Everybody wanted to play. Everybody wanted to compete. Obviously you know with Fabi, he broke his those yesterday. Gaston's wife is due expecting, maybe due any minute, maybe she had the kid already, we don't know; it's hard to know, it's his first kid. Those are hard decisions that had to be made but in the end it's what's the best lineup based on performance, past performances and performances in training, and that's what I did.

But from the report, you know, I think the thing that wasn't

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true was like there was a mutiny and players didn't want to play which was the total opposite and I want to set that straight, because we have players with integrity and they were professionals all the way to the end.

**Q. First of all, did you address that all with the players? Because the person who reported that is a pretty loud mega phone in the U.S. soccer landscape. And have you been told anything about where you fit in with the club for the 2022 season?**

FRANK KLOPAS: No. I mean, first of all, the first part, I did address it with the team before we were in training the next day because I wanted them to be aware of it. Obviously the players were sleeping. No one even knew what was going on. I told them, look, this report was out which was -- the fact that it's true is that they said that the club talked to seven, eight players, and they told them already about that they are not picking up their options. That is true.

The thing that bothered me and I wanted them to know they said there is a mutiny and you guys said you came up and said you didn't want to play, which is the total opposite. So just making sure that if you guys get asked for anything like that, that you answer in a true way and in the right way saying that that's not true and that everybody is ready to go and play.

I wanted to be in front of that and address it with the group because it bothered me and it bothered me because it's questioning the integrity of the players and myself and the club, and so that's what bothered me. Anyway, we put that aside. We went back to training, which is what the players wanted to do, anyway, and started preparing for this game.

As far as me, you know, stepping into this role in a difficult moment, I wanted to make sure I finished the season strong with the group and make sure that the fans had something to look forward to next year. Going into the last game at Soldier Field with 31,000 fans was the one game that, you know, leading up to it, we had some good results. We won a couple games and obviously that was huge to go get a result there in front of our home fans and finish strong.

Obviously we didn't get a result tonight but the guys fought hard till the end. As far as I'm concerned, and my situation, I stepped in to help the club. I would do anything for the club. I feel like I said before, I have a lot to offer. Let's just see what the next step is for me. Let's see what happens wherever they talk to about who the next coach will be, and then I'm sure that there will be a role for me to be involved in this club.

So right now, I haven't even thought about it. I'm sure that in the next week or so, I'm sure I'll have some conversations and talks to the sporting director and our owner.

**Q. When we talked to you mid week, you had some thoughts on the next head coach, and you didn't want to quite say it yet. I'm wondering if now you wanted to share any of your thoughts on that?**

FRANK KLOPAS: No, not yet. I don't want to share any opinions. Look, I think the club is doing -- looking at different people. I don't think that they have said these are the finalists. I think they are going to talk to certain people. You know, so I think for me to have experience to know the league and to have also experience I think is important. You're coming into a big club with big -- I feel with big objectives to reach. We have an owner that's been amazing, and we have a great -- we are in a great city and a city that is massive, that's huge. The soccer community there, it's massive.

We have to be able to unite the soccer community. Whoever they hire, I feel has to have the league and also experience to come into a job like this because whoever it is, just know that they are going to have the backing and support of all of us to help them to try to reach the objective, which is next year, this club, and every year, has to be competing for championships. In order to do that, we have to be a team that's consistently in the playoffs. That's one part. How we get there, you know, how we build this team, I think our owner is big; he cares about the community. He cares about building the team with home grown players and we have to do a good job in developing those players, identifying them, and I think that's a great objective because we have a massive soccer community that's a big market. It's a big city.

So it's not going to be an easy task, but whoever comes, they just have to know that they have a lot of people that are going to be working and supporting them to reach their goals, which is to make this team a competitor every year.

Thank you for all you help and all you do for the team and the sport and it's been great, at least for me, to come back in and get that excitement, that bug back, you know. But even though if I say anything, my wife might kill me, you know. But it's been great to kind of come in obviously in a difficult moment and really for me bring the passion and get the guys back on track and finish the season strong and give the guys something to be excited about. Even a lot of the home grown guys that came out, there's a lot to be excited about. I'll miss you guys but see new two, three months. I'll be counting every day. Thanks for all that you do. Thank you.

