

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Chicago, Illinois, USA



Jonathan Bornstein

Press Conference

Chicago Fire FC 2, D.C. United 0

Q. How are you?

JONATHAN BORNSTEIN: Extremely happy the team won.

Q. So a road win for you guys, I don't need to tell you about, the struggles to say the least that this club has endured when it comes to road matches over the last couple of seasons and beyond, two road matches, four points, two clean sheets, is there a different mentality this season at all and if so, what's the source of that different mentality?

JONATHAN BORNSTEIN: Yes, I would say there's definitely a different mentality within the group. I think in general, something we wanted to do as a club, make it part of our culture was not to receive goals, and whether that's at home or it's on the road, that's just something we are trying to define ourselves by. To get those clean sheets over the last three games, those are very important for us, and obviously two of those come on the road and this time we were able to get some goals to get a big road win for us, first win of the season. I think it's something that we talked about during present, we continue to talk about, and it's something we want to continue to build on and continue to keep doing as we go along. So kind of a culture thing that we want to build into the group is that even on the road, we can get points even though in the past it's been tough for us.

Q. Just wondering, Ezra puts you on the wing tonight, I don't know how much you've done that in your career. Is that something you guys are going to have to be ready for that Ezra might try different things; that he might experiment, is that something that's going to test every player's versatility and also since he's never been a head coach before at this level, are you guys still trying to get to know some of his tendencies and some of his philosophies about coaching the game?

JONATHAN BORNSTEIN: I think any time you get a new coach, it's always a learning process, a learning process from the coaching side to the player's side as well as from the players to the coaches. But I think the transition in this period that we've all been together has been very smooth. It's a lot of trust has been gained from both sides as we've been through preseason as we've been through the first couple games. Obviously the team is playing well. We have great defensive shape. Something that was lacking was the goals and we all knew that and tonight we were able to get two goals, and so I think it's just one of those things that it takes a little bit of time but I think we do have a good connection already, and obviously five points from our first three games is a great start for us. We can continue to build on all of that.

In terms of the versatility thing, I think every player needs to be versatile. Obviously I can't speak for all the other guys but throughout my career, I wasn't always a left fullback growing up and I played forward my entire youth career, college career, and so my first actual professional game was at left fullback.

Then throughout my career, I've been able to kind of play different positions, a little bit of left mid, right mid, up top. Might not have happened over the last, I don't know, five, seven years that I've gone up top or even on the wing but it's something that I've done before. I think as players we need to be ready for anything and not just this team but any team we could ever go to in our careers.

Q. I spoke with Ezra just a bit ago, and he obviously praised you for your performance today, and spoke a little bit about your role. I'm just curious what those conversations with Ezra have been regarding your role, you're not going to be starting every single game every single week but you certainly were brought back, one of the main reasons was to be a leader. So I'm just wondering heading into this season and beyond, what's your mindset, your mentality around your role in this club?

JONATHAN BORNSTEIN: I mean, first, I always take it from my personal view, my personal goals, are to play as long as I can and play at a level as high as I can, so in order for me to be able to do that, I need to be training harder than anybody. I need to be working out harder than anyone and any time I do get the opportunity I need to be

making the most of it. I am aware of the fact that I might not be starting all the games like you mentioned but I don't feel like that's the only way you can lead on a team. There's a lot of guys in the locker room at all times. We're actually on the field very little minutes compared to how often we are all together.

So I try to be that presence within the group, always pushing guys to be better than what they are. I think this team has a great, great energy, great attitude, a great mentality in general terms, and I think I can always try and add to that and build on that, and you know, obviously when you step on the field, you've got to perform. So that's how I take my role and the conversations I have with Ezra are always basically very simple, okay, you might not be starting today but be ready. So I try to keep myself ready.

Q. This team has not gotten off to a good start since I think probably 2017, and the last couple years not great starts. So what can it do for a team, not just obviously in the standings but just emotionally to know that, hey, instead of having to fight back from a bad start that actually have a little bit of momentum coming out of the first few games what does that do for a team emotionally?

JONATHAN BORNSTEIN: Emotionally, it is a huge driver in a positive direction. I think I've always spoken about it every season that we start in preseason, the importance of starting well in this MLS season. I think it is a long season and a lot of people kind of think about it that way, but I mean, the earlier you can get points and especially on the road at home, keep your points, and you know, if you get off to a good start, you definitely set yourself up for success at least to try and make the playoffs at a much higher level. So yeah, not easy when you don't start well. In the past we haven't, at least while I've been here at Chicago Fire but this year feels great. It feels good to have five points, no losses, no goals received. I think we can continue to build on everything that we've been doing well, and then -- I'm sorry, continue to build on everything we haven't been doing well and then also just keep going with what we're doing well. I don't want to jinx it but feels good. The group is happy, everyone has good energy, and we've got to keep going.

Q. You talked about leadership a couple questions ago, your role specifically, but I wanted to ask you about your opinion about Czichos. He's just joined the club yet he's already the team captain. You can tell he has this calming presence about him in the back four. Just wanted to gather your opinion on him as not only a center half on the pitch but also another leader to complement you in the dressing room and off the pitch.

JONATHAN BORNSTEIN: Yeah, I think the acquisition of Rafa was great for the club. I think he's been able to step in, not only at that centre back role and do an extremely good job but like you said, he came in and he's our captain right now. He's doing an amazing job.

He's a very motivating guy. He's very quiet, like away from the pitch, but once you get him on there, he has got this fight in him, and I really, really like that. I feed off of that, and you know, we've had conversations, him and I, about what this team really needs to succeed, and we're always on the same page about most of that stuff. So I think we're good complements for one another. He's got a lot of experience in a very big league in Germany, third division, second division, first division, and it's not easy to fight in those leagues. Third division in Germany can teach you a lot of things about who you are, especially when your dream is to play in the Bundesliga and you're not there.

And so to have that perseverance, to have that and passion and fight is a great. I love having him here, and now let's continue to keep moving forward together and let's do great things here at the Chicago Fire. FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...