

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA



Ezra Hendrickson Press Conference

Q. Wondering what the status is of Gabriel Slonina?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: He's day-to-day but we expect him to be ready for Saturday.

Q. Did he go through training today?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: No, he did not train today.

Q. And then if he's not ready, who would be your starter on Saturday? Would it be Spencer or Chris?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Spencer.

Q. What have you seen from Spencer so far in training and then some of the preseason matches that he has played?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: He's been doing really well for us. We're very happy with him. Especially the past couple weeks, he's really had good training sessions. So we will be confident if we have to play him at that point -- still be in the lineup on Saturday.

Q. One guy that's had a very good start to the season is Wyatt Omsberg. What has he meant to the team thus far this season?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, he think Wyatt has come in and filled in really well for Carlos. Carlos came into preseason a little injured.

We got him fit and then he got reinjured, so the bulk of the playing time has been given to Wyatt and he's responded really well, and I think he's growing as a player. He has a guy like C.J. Brown that's really teaching him the ropes. I myself was a center back and played defender also. He's done well being thrown into that starting role, and like you said, he was rewarded last week being named to the team of the week. We're happy for him and we like the way he's progressing.

Q. You've harped on the importance of this mantra of tradition, honor and passion, keeping those club values in mind, and in line with this, there are a lot of Fire alumni in the club; how is it important to have that and just interested in your point of view on instilling those values.

EZRA HENDRICKSON: We want to get the club back to its glory days so to speak so what better way to embrace those three words, that mantra for the club and having guys here who were there during those times, who feel those words to their heart. That's a great way to go about instilling those values in the regime.

I was never a Chicago fire player but we have staff in the office who have been there and done that, so to speak and bleeds Chicago Fire. That's a good thing for this organization. Some of it was my doing, but you know it's a collaborative effort throughout this organization as far as what it's going to take to get this club back to where it was once. And I think that foundation, reestablishing that foundation, those values, was a very good first step and the players are buying into it.

Q. Much has been rightfully made of the defensive performances from Rafa, Wyatt and Gaga but what are your thoughts on the play from Kacper (ph) and Miguel, what do they bring to the team?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, I think it's easy to point out center backs and a goalkeeper, but this is a team effort. Every time we step on the pitch, everyone, from the guys up top, you know, Kacper and Shaq and those guys to the guys in the back, we all defend together as a team and the way the team is set up, it's a good, organized structure.

But you know, when called upon to make individual plays in the back, and from Gaga, they have stepped up and they have done it. You know, it's a funny thing, when you're taking goals, they can blame themselves. When you're not taking goals, I can see why they will get no credit but a lot of it is a team effort and the guys up top defend just as much as we do in the back.

So you know, it's good to see that those guy when is called upon are doing their business individually but a lot of what we do and how we defend makes it very predictable for them in the back. So in the back, you kind of know where

the ball is going to go. You kind of know where the only options the opponent have and so it makes your job a little easier from the back, and our goalkeeping is exceptional. The few shots that he's had to make saves on, he's come up well with that.

So all in all, I'm just happy that everyone when they step on the field put in the effort defensively to make sure we don't take goals, silly goals. Eventually you're going to get scored on. You can't go the whole season without getting scored on but I just like the way they are taking control of the defending aspect of our game.

Q. What are you expecting from Sporting Kansas City on Saturday?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, knowing Peter, they are going to be angry, aggressive. Start of the season has not gone so well for them so I'm sure he's going to have them fired up to come in here and steal some points from us.

But one of the things that we are trying to do is establish Soldier Field as a fortress, as a place where teams are not going to come in and get easy stuff off us. Teams are not going to come in here and beat us easily. We are going to match every effort, every wave of energy that they have, and I think it's going to be a very good game. I expect them to come out and press and push the issue a little bit but we'll be ready for them.

Q. In earlier press conferences you've referred to Navarro, he's a starter in your eyes, and I know he has not been match-fit for a full 90 and that's why you've taken him off the bench. Is he getting close to being ready for that full 90 minutes and getting that start?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, definitely. He's a big part of our team. But the way it's gone the past three games, it's really hard to take someone out from the midfield. I thought gas tone and pin he did a have played really well there.

As a coach, that's a good problem to have. Your prospective starter comes back from injury, but the guys on the pitch are doing well and getting the job done, so it's hard to disrupt that. You don't want to just disrupt that chemistry that we have going at the moment.

But Federico will find more and more minutes on the pitch. You can see when he came in against dc for us, his ability to get us from the back half to the front half is excellent, his mobility. He's a player that we know we have to get on the pitch and as long as we keep winning and as long as the team keeps doing well, keep going like this, it's a situation where it's a good problem to have as a coach.

And all the players, they know that the way things are going, I've spoken to Freddie, so one of the things I like to do is let players know exactly what's going on, what is in my mind and what my thoughts are, and he's been very understanding every time we've spoken about slowly bringing him back into the fold and knowing that he's going to be a big part and have a lot of big minutes for this team.

But right now it's going so well that we don't really want to disrupt things.

Q. How is the defense from the first home game to the teams you'll have this field and how will is Shaqiri's chemistry with the other guys?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: I think the chemistry with Shaq and the rest of the team, it's growing. You flow, I think we still need to find him a little bit more, a little bit sooner, sew has more time on the ball, and these are things that we've been working on for the past couple weeks. We saw some improvement in that on Saturday in dc, even though he didn't get that assist, that was us breaking lines, finding him with the ball and him being able to make that final pass. Defender got a touch on it. But those are things that we expect from him but we have to put him in position to do that more often. He has a deadly pass, but he can only do that with the ball.

We have to improve our ability to get the ball to him a little sooner. I think sometimes we miss him or we don't get the ball to him quickly enough so he can, you know, do his thing. I think the chemistry is coming long very well.

Q. We talked about a health update on Gaga earlier but how is Carlos?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: He's close. We expect him to be back in training starting next week, in full training. He's on the pitch right now but not in full training but he's very close. He's very close.

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