

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Ezra Hendrickson

Press Conference



EZRA HENDRICKSON: It doesn't really change our preparation. We have a way of playing that we are always going to play, whether we are at home or on the road. So nothing changes. It's a benefit to us because it's a team that we've played before. So we know them more than before, so to speak.

But likewise, they will know what we are about and what we are doing also because it's been five games into the season. We won't change anything. We will just go there and defend together as a team and go forward together as a team, just play our style, trying to play the front half and try to keep the ball there in their half of the field. So nothing will change as far as tactically what we do.

### Q. Wondering what the status is of Xherdan Shaqiri and Rafael Czichos?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, Shaqiri is day-to-day. That's something we are monitoring because it's a type of injury, it's a calf injury and we want to be careful because he's a very important player for us. So we don't want to rush that back too soon. So we are monitoring that. He's day-to-day for right now.

As far as Rafa he's still under health and safety protocols, and that also is day-by-day as far as when he gets back. So as of now, you know, I'm not sure when either one will be back.

### Q. Is Shaq training? Has he trained yet this week?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: No, he's not in training. He has not trained this week. We gave the guys a couple days off. Today was our first day with the full team back training but he did not train today.

Like I said, we are trying to do what we can off the field to make sure, you know, we get that thing ready as soon as possible.

### Q. Okay. And then was there an MRI or anything else, any sort of test done on the calf for him?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yes, but nothing serious is wrong with the calf. He just felt some tightness but you know we want to make sure that because he did play a couple games the week before leading up to Dallas, the international break, so we just want to make sure that that thing is rested and he's healthy enough when he does return.

### Q. Orlando is the first time that you are going to have a second look at a team this season. How does that change your preparation, and what are you expecting from them this time around?

### Q. Just to follow up more than my previous question, if you guys don't have Shaq for Saturday, how much will that change the game plan moving forward and just are you concerned about not being able to create anything offensively if he's not on the field?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, well, you know, we will lose some creativity if he's not on the pitch because like I said, he's that big of a player and he's that important of a player for us. Once Guti came into the game on Saturday, we didn't change anything. Don't expect anything to change. We will still try to play the same way that we always try to play. We may not be as effective because of how -- of the quality of Shaq, but I thought when Guti came on, he did a very good job for us in that position.

So we won't change anything tactically.

### Q. We are getting ready to speak to Federico Navarro, what are your thoughts on his performance coming out of the match against Dallas?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Freddie was great. He was awesome for us. He played the way we know Freddie can play and had it not been for an injury the last couple weeks of preseason, he would have been starting from the get-go.

But when you look at his physical loading and the ground he covered, it was just amazing. It was very high level, and that's what he brings to us. We are a team that we want to possess the ball but part of possession is being able to win it back as quickly as possible when we do lose it. And he brings that to the team when he's on the pitch.



He gives us that ability to win the ball back as quickly as possible, and then going forward, also, he made some key passes.

So he's a very good player for us. We're happy that he's healthy and able to play. It's amazing the amount of ground he was able to cover on Saturday not having played 90 minutes in forever, a very, very long time. But that's what we expect from Freddie, so were very pleased with him on Saturday.

**Q. I noticed you were at the Chicago Fire 2 home opener over the weekend. What's going well so far and what do you need to improve?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, this is an opportunity for our guys who don't play with the first team on the weekend to get minutes. And I think it's going well. You know, the results haven't showed but if you look at the game on Sunday, for instance, there's a lot of good things. We're able to get Terán some minutes. I think he got 30, 40 minutes in the game. Guys like Offor and Missa and Monis and those guys were able to get a lot of minutes. So we have a lot of guys who need minutes. Kendall Burks was able to get 90 minutes, A.J. was able to get minutes.

So it's a bridge for us as far as guys who don't play on the weekend to get minutes so they stay up game fit and they keep continuing to improve because a lot of the young kids, they need that game time to further improve and develop, and it's an ability and opportunity for us to get guys coming back from injuries on the pitch to get some minutes, in this instance, Carlos Terán.

**Q. Freddie expected to be a starter, and I think he expected to be a starter. How has he handled it emotionally and mentally not being part of the first-choice 11 even when he was 100 percent healthy?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, Freddie, he's young but he's a professional, and he knows what it means to be a team. He knows that, yeah, maybe he was picked to be a starter but he got injured. We got off to a good start, and so it's hard to really disrupt that midfield pairing of Gastón, Pineda and Shaq.

But I spoke with him on a weekly basis and I reassured him that his time will come and just make sure that he's ready.

Because I've been on teams where guys will not get on the pitch and mentally, they shut down and they don't remain a professional. They don't work hard and they don't train hard, and then when they get their chance, it shows on the pitch.

So Freddie did not do that, and we saw that on Saturday that he worked hard the weeks leading up to the game, and when he had his chance, he was really sharp and it was like he never missed a beat, so to speak.

So we need that from our players, even the guys who are not week-in, week-out starters, we need them to remain positive, continue to work hard because we want players -- as a staff, we want to put players on the pitch that when we put them on there they will be ready to play, and so that's a very, very important part. Because if you shut down mentally, and then you get on the pitch and you don't do the job, then you might not stay on the pitch very long, you know.

So we were happy to see that Freddie was ready and went out and performed as he did on Saturday.

**Q. The last couple games have been pretty chilly later in the day, and this one in Orlando is expected to be quite warm, early in the day. Does that change how you approach the game at all?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, there are different variables that happens with games but we're going to go in on Thursday and so we'll try to somewhat acclimatize but it is what it is. We'll definitely have to take into consideration that it might be a little warmer, a little humid than what we are used to.

But from a tactical standpoint, no, it will not change but we will be definitely conscious of the fact that we are different temperatures and set out accordingly.

**Q. I'm the soccer Cal men's soccer SID, and we recently hired Leonard Griffin as our new head coach. Just wanted to get your thoughts on Leonard's hiring, how do you think he'll do coaching in the Pac 12 conference.**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, first of all, I want to just say congrats to Leonard. He's someone that I know very well. We played together in Columbus and we've remained friends. It's good to see him get an opportunity to coach like this. He's been moving up the ranks, first as an assistant and then a couple head coaching jobs, different universities. I think the last one was Grand Canyon University.

So it's good to see him get an opportunity to coach at a big soccer school as Cal. I know he will do well. He's a good coach, a young, up-and-coming coach. It's always good to see these guys get an opportunity and I'm very happy for him and Paige and his family.

