

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Ezra Hendrickson

Press Conference



Q. Just wondering, what's the message been to the team the last couple days after a pretty trying two games for you guys?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, we've kept it positive because you have to look at the reality of our situation, and that is at the end of the day we've only lost two games. We've tied -- we're tied for the least amount of goals that's been given us. But then also address some issues that we have going forward. That's putting the ball in the back of the net.

But we try to focus on what's been going well for us and making sure that we continue to play good defense, and we've done a lot of work on trying to improve on a daily basis our play going forward because that has to be better. If we can score some goals and continue to play the type of defense, team defense we've been playing, we'll be in a good position. Not that we're not in a good position now. I think a lot of people are taking everything out of context here. At the end of the day we're one point away from being above the line, three or four points away from being in fourth place.

It's nothing negative here for us. We are continuing to be positive and continuing to get better as the week goes on.

Q. You're due to get Jairo Torrez here in Chicago in a few days. What's the process going to be like for him and how soon after he arrives to you expect him to be able to play?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, hopefully ASAP but there's some things that has to go right there for us, ITC and all that clearance and stuff like that. But he's someone that we've been expecting for a while now. The time is here, and hopefully we can get him on the pitch in time for Atlanta next weekend because he's the type of player that can help some of those offensive woes that we're having. His individual ability can really, really help us.

We hopefully can get all of his paperwork and all the legal

stuff done in time for the ATL game.

Q. Just wondering how you're assessing the match against the Red Bulls. Obviously they've been very strong on the road this season.

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, we're very aware of their exploits on the road, most recently down in Orlando last weekend. So we know what they're capable of. But it's a Red Bull team, and there's no secret about what they like to do, how they like to play. We've been preparing for that all week, and I think the guys will be ready to go on Saturday.

A lot of people are talking about how good they have been on the away games, but also we've been very good at home. We've only conceded one goal and have not lost at home. They have to come in here and try to figure out how to break us down, also.

It's twofold. It's not just them playing good soccer, it's also us being solid and hopefully get some goals this week. I think coming back at home, getting Shaq one game under his belt, so to speak after being out with injury, we should be ready as a team to score some goals this weekend.

Q. I believe the transfer window closes the 7th --

EZRA HENDRICKSON: No, I think May 4th.

Q. Thank you. Just wondering, obviously you guys have Jairo coming in. Are you expecting anything else? Are there any other things in the pipeline possibly before that window closes?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, yeah, we're trying to get a couple of situations across the timeline. But it's such a crunch moment, I'm not sure if we're going to be able to or not, but definitely trying to get a couple other pieces to help fill out the roster because as you know we have room to make some moves, and we're trying to do that.

Q. Just to continue on that point, where do you think this roster, included Jairo, needs some more reinforcement?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, I think on the wings. I think we definitely need some pace on the wings. For two

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things: We need to be able to get behind defenses off the ball, stretch defenses, and that would help give Shaq and Gastón and Jairo when he comes, guys like that, more spaces to work underneath, because as is, I think teams are -- the back four know the player they can keep in front of them, and it's a little easy to shut a team down when you know there's no real threat to get behind.

We've been working on different scenarios with the players we have right now, but I think adding some pace on the wings would help just stretch the defense a little bit to give us more room to operate in the front half like we like to do as a team.

Q. Ezra, the CONCACAF Champions League final kicks off tonight. Do you think that Seattle has a chance to pull it off this year for MLS, and two, because you worked in that organization and because they're successful year after year after year, what is it they do differently there to have that level of success and how do you bring whatever they're doing, whatever magic it is, how do you bring that to the Fire?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, I think first and foremost, I think this is the opportunity for them to do well in this final and win this trophy. I know Brian Schmetzer is a guy, having worked with him, that he knows how to get his team ready for matches like that, so I know for one thing they will be ready, and tactically I think they'll have a game plan ready to get a good result tonight and then come back home and finish it off.

As far as the organization, it's just the way it's ran, top down, from the owner down to the last guy off the bench. I think everyone has a way of professionalism that's expected of everyone in that organization. It doesn't matter who you are, where you work in the organization. Everything is professionally done.

That's something that we're trying to do here, and I think our owner is similar to Adrian Hanauer in that he wants the best for this team, for this organization, for this city. Adrian is a local Seattle guy, and Joe is a local Chicago guy here, so we've been here for a while now, so he wants to see this city succeed and this team succeed, so he's doing his best with his resources to help us.

I think that's something that the Sounders have gotten from Adrian and the rest of the owners on that team.

It's just a very professionally ran organization from top to bottom, and I think that leads to success on the field.

Q. How would you evaluate Gabriel Slonina's performance recently, and what are some areas, even

though he's obviously a great talent and a real good shot stopper, what are some areas you think he needs to improve on?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, I think his last game in Minnesota, if we're being honest, probably wasn't his best game. But we can't forget that he's still 17 years old. I think after that first shot, that first free kick that kind of went off the crossbar, it kind of rattled him a little bit, and it took him a while to get back in the flow of things.

But he's our No. 1, and I think he's doing really well. Like all keepers, like all players at every position, they all have different things that they've got to work on. I'm not a goalkeeper coach so I can't really say specifically that it is he needs to improve on. If I have to guess at anything just by looking at maybe the last game, maybe some of the timing on the crosses.

But again, that's something that Adin, our goalkeeper coach, will be dealing it or will be working with him. But the kid is a very good keeper and he's just going to continue to get better. We like the way he's been performing. Like all players, we're going to have not-so-great games but I'm sure he'll be back on Saturday and bounce back and we'll get a victory on Saturday.

Q. How is everybody doing from a health standpoint, Shaq, Fabi and anybody else that might be battling an injury?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: So Shaq is back. He's fully in. Fabi trained a couple days this week, but he's still not quite there yet, so he'll continue to be there today. Hopefully we can get him back because that will help us on the attack.

As for now, everyone is doing well, and we really want to come into this game. We're home, and we want to make sure we don't lose the game, but more importantly we want to pick up the full three points. I think it's high time that we pick up a full three points again at home. We haven't done that since the Kansas City game.

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