

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Jairo Torres Sebastian Pelzer Coach Ezra Hendrickson Press Conference



And, like I said, he's a player that can really change the fate of a team. We're very happy to have him and looking forward to see great things from him on the pitch.

JAIRO TORRES: Hello. Thank you all for being here. Really, I'm just really, really happy to be here. I'm very excited to finally be able to be a part of the Chicago Fire.

I'm also really grateful with the coaching staff and with all of the directors in the club because they waited for me to get here. And I'm just really happy to finally be able to come here and help the team out, and especially because the Chicago Fire is such an important team. It's one of the first teams to join MLS when the league started.

And I'm very excited to finally be here in the city and to be able to play with all my teammates. And my teammates received me in the best way possible. Everyone was really kind. And I'm ready -- I can't wait to start learning from them and to adapt to this city.

Q. [Spanish].

JAIRO TORRES: This league has been growing for many, many years. It's very attractive. And it's really exciting to come here because a lot of players have been coming here, with the growth of the league, have also moved on to play in Europe. At the end of the day, that's everyone's dream, right, to be able to go to Europe.

So it was really attractive for me. And the project that they showed me when they presented it to me was also one that I really liked and really enjoyed. And hopefully we'll be able to put it through and see it through to the end.

Q. You are coming to a city -- to a club that has seen a lot of great Mexican players and there are a lot of people here from Guadalajara who have already congratulating you on your social media. But there have been players like Cuauhtémoc Blanco, Pavel Pardo, Jorge Campos, did anyone reach out to you? Have you spoken with any of them for them to talk about this club and see what you were thinking that made you decide to sign here?

JAIRO TORRES: Yes, I know there are a lot of Mexican players that have gone through this club, players that have been very important for us as a nation and players like

THE MODERATOR: We're pleased to formally introduce Jairo Torres as the newest Chicago Fire player and Young Designated Player as well.

SEBASTIAN PELZER: Welcome again all here in the room and those tuning in via Zoom and the live stream.

It's a pleasure to welcome our new player, Jairo Torres, to Chicago Fire. Jairo is a player we scouted for a month, scouting, analyzing and we believe that he will be a good addition to our team and also a good addition to the greater Chicago community.

Our club has historically always have had good Mexican players. And we're excited to have Jairo following in the footsteps of those great players.

Jairo joined us now in a very important stage of the season, and we're all looking forward to see him playing at Soldier Field on May 14th.

Again, I'd like to say a big thank you to our owner, Joe man, with his continued belief and investments throughout the entire club. He made it happen that we were able to sign Jairo, thank you.

EZRA HENDRICKSON: A player like Jairo, he's someone who could make a coach's life a lot easier, take away some of your sleepless nights. He's a very good player, great player with good technical ability, especially on one-v.-one situations, something we need on this team.

I think he's going to help us going forward in the attack, and we're very, very happy to have him here. I think the fans are going to enjoy watching him play week in and week out.

Cuauhtémoc and Pavel. And I know also the people here, the people have been great. There are a lot of Mexican and compatriots, and I've been really happy and grateful for their messages on social media. They've received me really well.

And yes, they made a video for me, Jorge Campos and Pavel Pardo, they explained to me the importance of this club and what a great club and city it is. I'm grateful to them for having done that.

Q. You left an Atlas team that was champion last season and now they're in playoffs and on the verge of potentially another championship. How difficult for you was it to leave the team in those circumstances?

JAIRO TORRES: Yeah, we had talked about it from the very beginning that it was a possibility, and it was one of the terms for me to be able to come here. So it was a little bit sad for me to leave them like that, but I had already mentioned it in an interview in Guadalajara that I said I was completely concentrated and focused with Atlas until April 30th. And on May 1st I was going to be completely focused on Chicago Fire.

It's a new challenge for me. I'm always going to be grateful to all my teammates and the club, and I'll be following them and cheering them on from here. But my mind and my body are here in Chicago. I'm concentrated here and I'm going to do my best here.

Q. A lot is going to be expected of you taking on a bigger role as leader both on the pitch and off the pitch. How prepared are you to take that role at such a young age?

JAIRO TORRES: I think that I matured a lot in Atlas. The team that I was on really helped me to grow and to mature into a better player. And, yes, in reality I knew that coming in there were a lot of expectations on me, but I'm going to try to take on that role to be a leader always on and off the field.

I mean, there's a reason I came here. So I'm going to give everything that I have to be a role model on and off the field, be completely concentrated and do my best here.

Q. Sebastian, there's been some reports about you guys talking to Chris Mueller about bringing him in. What can you say about those reports? Is there any accuracy to them? And are you expecting that to get across the line?

SEBASTIAN PELZER: Yes, we're aware of the reports. We know Chris Mueller very well from his time in the

league. We know he grew up in the Chicago area. At this moment I don't want to get into details too much. However, we might come back and share with more news in the upcoming days.

Q. Ezra, it seems like we've been putting, like, media, the fans have been putting a lot of expectations and pressure on Jairo. We've got to wait until he gets here. Jairo is going to help unlock this offense. How do you manage that as a coach those expectations while still trying to get the most out of him?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: He has the ability to do that and to really change this team as far as our attacking prowess. But we understand that when a player joins a new league, sometimes it takes a while for him to get used to the traveling, the style of play and stuff like that.

So the pressure is not being put on by us as a team. I'm sure the fans are happy to have him here. We're very, very happy to have him here. But we also are realistic and we know that although he has such exceptional qualities, that there might be some -- it might take a while before he gets used to the league.

Sometimes it happens right away for foreign players. Sometimes it takes them a while. And hopefully it happens sooner for us rather than later. But no pressure would be directly put on him from us.

We do have a lot of good players on the team already. And he will complement us really, really well with his technical ability and one-v.-one individual skills that I mentioned earlier.

Q. Sebastian, with these additions, potentially Chris Mueller in a couple days and Jairo today, how do you look at the roster build now and how does it change maybe the way you think about the summer window and areas and places you want to add or reinforce the team?

SEBASTIAN PELZER: Just going a bit backwards, when we started to build the team in the beginning of the season, for us it was very important that we give us a few options, that we have additions possible during the first transfer window but also have an opportunity to add one or the other player in the second window.

So now with Jairo coming in, another potential player coming in, this is exactly how we planned it out. And Ezra was always, and the coaching staff, they were always involved with that.

So we're trying to build something steady but also we'd like

to see the development also of the side, where we need some more players, and we still have an opportunity to add another player in the next transfer window.

Q. Where do you prefer to play, more on the wing or more as like an attacking winger?

JAIRO TORRES: In truth, a coach once told me that I'm a player that is very versatile and that's how players get seen more when they're able to play everywhere. So I'm going to play wherever I'm needed. And wherever they put me, I'm going to do my best wherever I'm on the field.

Q. Jairo, first of all, welcome to the club, welcome to the city. And the personal level, you're one of the players from the Atlas Academy, one of the few players -- they have a great academy system -- but you're one of the players who was actually able to go through the system and come out as a champion. How do you feel about that, about being able to go through the system and be a champion?

JAIRO TORRES: I'm very happy with my club. Very happy to have been able to be a champion. It's something that you always dream of as you're going through the academy, to be a champion with your club. And also because it's able to open doors for other players for my teammates to come to this league and maybe to potentially other leagues.

But now I'm focused on here, concentrated on here, and focused on bringing titles and championships to Chicago.

Q. Ezra, with Jairo joining the attack, how does this change the dynamic, change the complexion of this attack? And how do his qualities align with Xherdan Shaqiri and Kacper Przybylko and the high-level and the rest of the high-level attackers on this team?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: One of the issues we're having right now in the attacking end of things is, one, getting into the final third; and, two, once we're there, we're right now the quality hasn't been there.

So with Jairo and his abilities, I think he will complement Shaq really well because one of two ways getting behind defenses. You either do it with a knife-in-through ball that we know Shaqiri is capable of doing, and we have someone else who can be on the end of those passes.

And also on one-v.-one, taking defenders on one-v.-one, which Jairo is very capable of doing.

He adds that dimension for us with the guys we currently have to be able to get behind defenses, which is what

we're having little issues with right now. I think we defend really well but transition from defense to offense, we're not getting from the mid third to the final third as efficiently as we need to. And once we get there, the quality hasn't really been there.

So he helps us in that aspect. So we're looking forward to great things and a bit more balanced team.

Q. Jairo, what are your expectations comparing Liga MX with MLS? Have you watched the league, have you seen video? What are you expecting?

JAIRO TORRES: I've been following this league for a while now. I know it's becoming very, very competitive. You see it there in the CONCACAF Champions League, with the final against Pumas. It's a very attractive, very strong league, just like Liga MX.

And what made me want to come here is because it's a big step, a big jump in my career. And from here maybe someone can see me and I can go elsewhere, somewhere else. But in order for me to move on and go anywhere else, I have to do my best and have really good development and play a really good role in Chicago.

Q. Ezra, I know you have an important game this Saturday. Is there a chance that Jairo gets some minutes in there, or are we going to have to wait until the 14th to see him with the jersey on versus FC Cincinnati?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: And before I answer mine, is there anyone from Atlanta listening to this? No, seriously, he's here to play. And we'll see how he's come off. He just played on the weekend. He's traveled, went through his medicals and all that stuff. We'll see how that goes but the plan is to give him some minutes on Saturday. So be ready.

Q. I wanted to ask you about your number. You have to change numbers from Atlas. Now you'll have No. 7. Does that mean anything for you, or what's it like to change?

JAIRO TORRES: Truth is I wanted No. 20, but I also like No. 7 because that's the number I had during my whole youth national team career. So I also like No. 7.

Q. Jairo, have you been watching the Fire play? Have you had a chance between Atlas games to watch the team? And what do you think, is there any player that stands out to you, what do you think about the team in general?

JAIRO TORRES: Ever since I signed I've been watching the team, following along, watching games, checking scores. A player that stands out is, I guess, Xherdan. He's an exceptional player, World Cup player, world-class. And really all of my teammates have great quality of they're great players. And recently in the games there have been ejections and things that maybe haven't favored the team very well.

But I think it's going to be a great team, and a very competitive team. And I'm here to compete for my spot as well.

Q. You've made your objective really clear, to come to this team and play really well and hopefully you make a jump somewhere else. But with that in mind and it being a World Cup year, are you hoping to make the World Cup this year with the national team, or do you think you'll play it very well and look forward to 2026?

JAIRO TORRES: My goals are, well, never say never. I'm here. I keep preparing myself to hopefully be called up to the national team once again. For me it's very important. It's a big step in my career. And I haven't given up on the possibility of going to the World Cup with Mexico in 2022.

So I'm going to be here and keep getting ready. And I'm going to give everything I have here in Chicago so that people can turn and look to me and hopefully I can tag along on that World Cup team.

But if not I'll stay concentrated, stay focused and hopefully catch the eye of the Mexican National Team once again and keep an eye on 2026.

Q. Sebastian and Ezra, eight years ago maybe I would ask this question if the Fire was looking for players with another jersey, another nationality. How important is it to bring this Mexican young player? And are you guys looking for more, scouting in Mexico for more players like this kind? And, Ezra, how was the reaction of the teammates when Jairo had his first practice today?

SEBASTIAN PELZER: Of course it is important. We know the importance of Mexican players in Chicago. I think it was always questions everybody was asking when is the first Mexican player coming.

You have a massive Mexican community here. We'd like to serve this community as well. And it was hard work to bring Jairo here to Chicago, but finally we made it. That was the start.

We also have a lot of American Mexican boys within our

crew, with Mauricio Pineda and Brian Gutiérrez and youngsters as well. And I think it's also a good combination. It's not just looking for different countries, it's also finding a good combination how he can contribute to the community of Chicago.

EZRA HENDRICKSON: We have a very good group of guys, very tight knit unit. So it was easy for him to fit in. And you can see from the first day laughing and joking with some of his teammates. That was good to see. A lot of them are his age or even younger.

So with his experience and stuff he'll help a lot, but as far as getting along with the teammates, it went really, really well today. And when you have that kind of quality, players kind of gravitate toward you. So it was good, first day.

Q. Jairo, you talk about wanting to go on to Europe eventually. Why do you think that coming to the Fire, a team that frankly has struggled most of the last 13 years, is a better place for you to use a platform than Atlas, one of the best teams in Mexico? And then for Sebastian, what did you -- what was the selling point to Jairo that this was indeed a better career move for him than Atlas or some other team elsewhere?

JAIRO TORRES: This league is very well watched. They watch it a lot in Europe. I know because they've told me. And also here, because even in Atlas, we go through -- we've gone through some very bad times. Right now we're going through a really good time. And it's going through one of its best moments.

And so I put it upon myself as one of my goals to come here and do good things here and basically do the things here that I did over there.

SEBASTIAN PELZER: It was more about how we would integrate him into our team and how our coaches would love to have him on their team.

Of course, it's about having Chicago is Chicago. And that's not to underestimate. We have all the Mexicans over here. It's also one point. But more or less it was also a sport of decision. The league is getting better and better. And we feel it ourselves, is that every year you get more competitive.

And also the Europeans, they see it now as a better league. It's growing and you see also the number of transfers being made in the past. They speak for themselves. And that's why it is an attractive league to come maybe before a step going to Europe.

Q. Jairo, the fan base in Chicago has been growing

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

and every year they're demanding more and more from the club. And even despite having great players, even World Cup players, they haven't had the greatest results. With this in mind and the growing desperation of the fan base, what can they expect from you here?

JAIRO TORRES: I speak only for myself. I know I'm going to give the best of myself, all my dedication, all of my professionalism to come to this team and be able to look forward and move ahead. And also as a Mexican I know how it feels for a Mexican when your team is doing poorly.

So I think my team, with me and all of my teammates, we're going to work hard to change that, because we have really good players. We have a really good, quality team here. And I'm just here to add to it and to work with everyone to get better.

Q. Sebastian, what aspects of Jairo's game in particular stood out to you and made him someone you wanted to bring on the club?

SEBASTIAN PELZER: Ezra pointed out before, the technical ability. When I saw him live, it was even better than on the screen. And I was very impressed with his skills offensively.

And also the commitment that he has for his team, working hard defensively as well, as a group.

And, look, we're ambitious. We want to be successful and to have a player with a full commitment for the team effort that is what you need. And Jairo stood out with many things, and that was one of them.

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