

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Chris Mueller

Press Conference



**Q. Why did you decide that the Fire were a good next step in your career?**

CHRIS MUELLER: To be fair, everything kind of transpired pretty quickly with me coming back home from Scotland. But I felt obviously with the familiarity that I have with the city -- being closer to my family would be easier on myself, and my wife just in terms of life outside of the pitch.

Obviously being familiar with the league and knowing that I can do well last year and obviously that I have produced good results in the past, I just had felt like at this point in my career where kind of how things were going in Scotland that it was best for me to get back home not only for my own career but for my family as well. All in all, it just made sense for me.

**Q. Have you heard from any of your old Sockers coaches since coming to the Chicago Fire and coming back home?**

CHRIS MUELLER: No, to be fair, I haven't heard from any of them. I would expect to be seeing them at some point in the near future but we'll see. No, I haven't heard anybody.

I also got a new number, though, so that always helps, I guess. But yeah, maybe some of them have been trying to get ahold of me, I'm not sure.

**Q. What are your first impressions of Ezra and the Fire and your first couple of training sessions and first match?**

CHRIS MUELLER: Yeah, I think that the first match was obviously get to get in and get some minutes under my belt after having traveled last week. But not -- my first impression of Ezra and the guys in the locker room is really a good one. I'm really happy to be here.

I feel like it's a group I can easily integrate with, and I like the style of play he's got going and the identity he's trying to form within the group. So I hope that I can help as much

as I can, and yeah, I think that I'll be able to help in a good way.

**Q. Curious when you join a team, what are the keys for you to fitting in, yet at the same time kind of adding your own thing to the club as you move forward?**

CHRIS MUELLER: Yeah, you want to come in obviously and get integrated within the locker room. I think that's the most important thing with the guys that you're going onto the pitch with.

I feel like I'm someone who naturally does that well where, I can kind of relate to a lot of the guys where, no matter where, you have a lot of Spanish speakers in the MLS, both in my last club in Orlando and here obviously in Chicago as well. Speaking Spanish for me, being a native speaker has been, you know, a really beneficial key for me. Stepping into the locker rooms, getting to know one side of the culture, and then you can also relate to the older guys who have been through the league and obviously speak English as well.

But then I can relate to the young lads as well here who are Chicago-based. The locker room is full of homegrown players and just being able to relate in the sense of growing up and playing in all the same indoor arenas and in the same just settings same clubs against the same teams.

I like to try and bounce around as much as I can when I'm in a new team. So yeah, I think that obviously here having all of that stuff and relation definitely helps.

**Q. Wonder if you can clear something up or clarify why you were never a part of the Fire Youth Academy or anything like that when you were growing up?**

CHRIS MUELLER: Yeah, I had always just grown up with the Sockers. I went there when I was nine years old. Then as I continued to grow up, I just kind of stayed, stuck oil with them through the whole time. They gave my mom a job at a difficult time for my family, and I just always wanted to stay loyal to them and just stick with them throughout the whole process.

I didn't really have much of an option to come to the Fire. It wasn't like I was getting heavily recruited by them and they



wanted me to come and be a part of their academy or anything like that. I just stayed at the Sockers throughout. I had good interest from colleges, and I had a good platform for playing, anyway. So I just stuck with the academy there.

**Q. And that sort of leads me into my next question. I know this is previous administrations and whatever, but when the Fire passed on you in your draft year and you were taken literally the next pick, what was your reaction to that?**

CHRIS MUELLER: Honestly I didn't have any hard feelings. I was really open to wherever I was going to go. I also kind of wanted to venture out and go somewhere else just to see another part of the world in terms of just experiencing something new. I had obviously grown up in Chicago and staying here, it would have been a different path obviously, and I think that it all happened for a reason.

I definitely didn't have any thoughts in my mind at the time like, oh, man, I can't believe they passed me. I was more so just open to the whole thing. I had no idea when I was going to get picked, where I was going to get picked. I just kind of went with the flow, so it was no sweat off my back.

**Q. I want to ask you your opinions about Shaqiri and how easy is it to play with him, and you know, the culture, like you are good company for him? And also Mauricio Pineda mentioned you, that you were playing with him since you were seven years old. So can you talk about coming back to play with him?**

CHRIS MUELLER: Yeah, so to start with, Shaqiri is obviously a really, really good player who has played at the top level all across Europe ever and whatnot. When you have someone like that who has such good vision and who is so good on the ball, he helps in the pockets.

But in terms of, I feel like off the ball, I can make some pretty decent runs behind for him to pick out and obviously with a player of his quality, he's got it in his locker to put a ball over the top or slip a ball through. So as long as I'm making good runs and getting into combine with him, I think that we can definitely work well together in that sense.

Then with Mauricio, we have grown up playing against each other since we have been really young, which is crazy. But yeah, Sockers and Fire rivalry growing up was always heated with us. But I'm not sure if he'll tell you this, but I don't think I ever lost to him growing up. We always had a good little go at it on the field, but for some reason we would always come out on top. You know how those games go.

THE MODERATOR: Mauricio remembers those fondly, I'm sure.

**Q. I wanted to ask about your experience in Scotland, I know it was a relatively short stay over there in the grand scheme of it. But what do you think you gained or learned from that experience overseas?**

CHRIS MUELLER: I can't even pick out one thing. It was definitely a tough time just in terms of my expectation going to the club, when I had signed my precontract and six months later just having sacked the manager who signed me, a lot had changed just in terms of the role that I was going to play in the club. And I wasn't playing as much, and you know it was really hard for me.

But you know, nonetheless, I think that I went there for a reason. I learned a lot about the experience in terms of just being in another country, being in another culture, seeing how different people from different parts of the world function in their day-to-day lives. I think I tried to go through the whole thing with an open mind and trying to learn from the experience as it was, not even just on the football pitch. Although I learned a ton on the football pitch about myself as well a player.

It was more about the mental grind that I was going through in terms of not getting the minutes that I wanted. You know, the team wasn't doing particularly well, either. We were losing a ton of games.

And you know, when you're over there in Scotland, football is No. 1 for all the people, and if you are not doing well on the football pitch, it's hard to have an outlet in any other way or shape. It seems like all eyes are on you guys, and when things aren't going well, people let you know about it. It's a much higher pressure situations and all that.

So just completely different, different style of play. It's much more direct, just faster in terms of the pressing that is constant over there, and the commitment to defend; I can go on and on about the differences and the things that I learned.

Like I said it was a positive experience because of how I came out on this side now.

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