

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Ezra Hendrickson

### Press Conference

New York Red Bulls 3, Chicago Fire FC 3

**Q. Ezra, that game was bonkers on TV and probably crazier in person. Is it three points gained or two points dropped?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Definitely two points dropped. It's a tie but feels like a loss. You're on the road at a tough place to play against a very good team, and you put yourself in position to walk off with three points and in the blink of an eye, you let it slip away.

We've just got to learn to manage games better, you know, in situations like this because we don't want to find ourselves come August, September, looking back thinking, man, we should have got three there, we should have got three there. These points are valuable points that we need to come away with, especially the ones we put ourselves in position to get them.

It's just mistakes and you know lack of concentration that once again has -- you know, two games now has put us into this position.

But we have to remain confident. It's a quick turnaround. We have a game against a very good -- probably the best team in the League on Sunday at their place, so we have to find a way to, you know, regroup and you know, be ready again on Sunday.

**Q. Gabriel Slonina has had a couple rough games back-to-back. How much do you think the outside stuff is starting to affect him, whether it's the call-up to Poland or the impending opening of the European transfer window, how much is that stuff affecting him, and what are you guys doing as a team to support him as he goes through this, knowing that he's still just 18 years old?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, and that's the thing, you know, he's an 18-year-old kid. He's a bit inexperienced. But you know, he's a mentally tough kid, and he's made a



couple mistakes now in the past couple games but he's still our No. 1.

As far as what we need to do, we just need to put our arms around him, let him know we're still confident in him because he's our goalkeeper and he's a very good goalkeeper at that. It's just sometimes, you know, players go through situations like this and he's just got to find his way out of it and especially in that position, you've got to be able to forget the last game plan and move on, and we need him to do that and we'll help him as a group to get past this game and to get past these couple, you know, blunders. But he's our goalkeeper, he's our No. 1. There's no doubt about that.

**Q. Do you think some of that outside stuff is affecting his concentration?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Maybe outside of the game but in the game I don't think he's thinking about all that stuff. He's just happened to make some mistakes.

You know, we all make mistakes as soccer players and it just happened to be that in that position of his, your mistakes are more dangerous, are more costly than someone missing a goal or something like that.

But he'll get out of it and we'll make sure that he stays positive and stays confident.

**Q. First start for Chris Mueller tonight, first goal, wonder your thoughts on his performance and look like he was very lively tonight in the final third, able to score a great goal after teaming up with Brian Gutiérrez. Wondering your thoughts on just his inclusion in the team over the last few weeks.**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Chris is a very about player and that's why we knew we had to get a player like him and he's lifted us a little bit. Tonight he played really well. Even beyond the goal, I thought his ability to combine with other players in the attack is very good and we need that. We needed more of that and we are starting to see us playing better, more cohesive once we get into the final third into the front half of the pitch, and he's helping with that.

So we're very happy to have him and I thought he played

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really well tonight and it was good to see him get a goal and I thought it was a really very good goal for him.

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**Q. Another player who had an excellent game today was Guti, so what are your thoughts on his performance, and what he brings to this Fire team right now and the potentially Under 20 international team in the near future?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, Guti, we have several young players with very high ceiling and Guti is one of them and he's showing it. He's learning on the job so to speak but he's a very good player and he has some really, really good quality, individual quality, and just his work rate is pretty good. I thought he worked really, really hard tonight on both ends, offensively and defensively.

We are happy to see how he's developing and how he's gelling with the rest of the players. He'll be a big part of the team going forward and with the Under 20 team likewise.

**Q. I think one of the best performances playing outside Soldier Field tonight even with the results. What did you think with all the players coming in and the bench? Are we going to see more of this rotation in the next two games?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Whenever we have a 3-8, 3-7 like that, we have to kind of rotate a little bit. We are much deeper now, so we are able to do that, and I thought the guys who, you know, started did well and I thought the guys who came on really gave us a lift. Torres came on was excellent for us and he did really, really well.

When you have games in succession like these, yes, you do have to rotate and it's good to have the ability to do that. And so we don't, you know, run guys into the ground because it's a long season, and it's something that's necessary from the physical standpoint and it's good to see that guys were ready to step up and do the job.

So going forward, you know, whenever we have situations like this, yes, we will continue to rotate, and everyone on this team has to be able to step up when their name gets called, and that's the kind of team we're trying to build where there's not a big drop off from one player to the next.

We are getting there. It's going to take some time but we are working, we are building and I like the progress that we are making. I was very proud of them today except for that finish in the game. I thought we played, like I said, at a really, really tough place against a very good team. I thought we played really well. That improvement, I'm liking that, what I'm seeing from the guys, from everyone.