

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Ezra Hendrickson

Press Conference



Q. What's the latest situation with Shaqiri, are you expecting him to play this weekend and what kind of, I guess what kind of treatment has he been getting from the Fire staff since the injury?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, so Shaq all week's been working with our return-to-play guy, Ruben. He had a slight, you know, hamstring pull in his last National Leagues game for his national team but yes, he will be available on Saturday to play.

Q. While we're on the injury subject, how is Wyatt Omsberg's foot injury?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: He's going to be injured for an extended period of time. I can't give you a timeline right now but he's going into surgery tomorrow. It will be some time before he returns to play.

Q. What's the latest on Jairo Torres?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: He's still nursing his injury. He's probably a week away, I would say, if I was to guess. But he has a tricky injury, so I would leave it at probably about a week or so before he's back and hopefully I'm right. Hopefully he's back Wednesday for the Philly game.

Q. What are you expecting from the Houston Dynamo and how does their stadium being the hottest stadium in MLS and extremely high temperatures expected for this weekend, how does that affect your game plan, if at all?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: They are a good team, a team with a first-year coach and a team trying to rebuild as we are. We are expecting them to come out at home, and teams, no matter where you are play in this league, when teams are at home, they come out and try to protect their turf so to speak. So we expect a good game from them.

Far as the temperature, it's been a good thing it's been warm this past week in Chicago so we have kind of been

getting prepared for that. We just have to be smart when we go there. They are in that type of humid weather for quite some time now. So obviously they are going to be more conditioned to it than us, more used to it.

But at the end of the day, you roll the ball out and we have a game plan that will maximize our ability to finish that game strongly.

Q. Going back to Omsberg, just what kind of a blow is this for the team, but also for him personally, considering he's had to wait his turn, he's had to scrap and claw and when he got the chance, finally took it and ran with it but now is out for as you said a pretty considerable amount of time.

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, you know, injuries are always something we deal with in our sport. It's unfortunate for Wyatt. He as you said picked up the mantle and ran with it. He's been really, really good for us. He's been one of our most consistent players so far this year. And you know, having worked so hard to get where he finally got to and then to have such a setback, I'm sure mentally it's going to weigh on him a little bit but he's a strong guy mentally and physically and I think he will do the best he can to physically get back and then mentally stay strong and just know that, you know, it's part of the game. It's unfortunate but it happens. I think he'll be mentally strong and return even better.

Q. Do you expect him -- the season is about half-done almost. Do you expect him back this season?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: It's hard to say. Hopefully towards the end of the year into the playoffs we'd be able to get him back but I'm not sure yet. I can't really guess on that, but I know he'll be out for than three months.

Q. Looking back at the first part of the season, what do you think is the best team performance you've had, and how much better do you think it can get going into the second half of the season?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: I think the best team performance, I would say, probably the Toronto. But the best result, I would say this D.C. game last week.

As far as, you know, not having a win in ten games and

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having to come out after that break and really get three points, you know, rarely do we say games are must-wins but if we are honest, we say that D.C. game is probably a must-win for us just so that we keep guys motivated, keep guys confident. Because you know, if you comeback after the break, they worked so hard for those two weeks, and then we don't get a result there at home against a team that we had beaten before, then mentally that could be draining.

So I think that was probably the best result we've had so far. But we're still not consistent for the entire 90 minutes like we would like. But you know, we're working on that. We're getting better. We're showing progress. But if you look at the D.C. game overall, a good game but if you look at the first half, that's the type of football that we want to play here with the Fire. The second half, we kind of let the foot off the pedal, so to speak a little bit, let them back in the game.

But that first half is the type of soccer we want to play. We want to be dominant and we want play in the front of opponents and we want to create chances, but now we need to just finish those chances.

But when we play within our game plan, within our model, our style of play, it's been good, it's been really, really good. The guys have stepped up and we find ourselves in a position where we have to just now be doing that on a more consistent basis, and not just for 45 minutes, not for 20 minutes but for the full 90, and I think we'll surprise a lot of teams, a lot of people, as far as the results.

Q. This past Saturday, you wore the black Fire scarf as the team honor Juneteenth throughout all the games on the weekend. What does that mean, wearing that scarf, and for the message the league wants to share, too?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, it's a very important date. It's a very important occasion. I thought wearing that, the symbol alone symbolizes basically freedom for African Americans which was essentially the date that slavery was abolished. Obviously happened a couple years before, but the last couple cities in Texas finally got the note that slavery was abolished.

I just wanted to do that as a representation. This club, we like to embrace everyone, and I think me as a forefront, the head coach of the team, also being African American descent, I thought it would be a good gesture and along with the policy of the league and what they were trying to do last weekend with all the games and the numbers having the Juneteenth showcased, I thought it would be a good thing to do and I thought people accepted it and

received it well. It was a good thing, for the club, for the league and for the City of Chicago.

Q. Will you be wearing it again this weekend?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Probably not. Probably just go back to the fire scarf, if I do wear a scarf because it's going to be supposedly a hundred degrees there in Houston, so there might not be a need for a scarf, and I usually do it on home games, too. Maybe the next game at home.

Q. Going back to Wyatt Omsberg, you probably have trained already with the person that has been taking his place but do you have in mind somebody that will fill the space?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, certainly, certainly. I think we've been building a team in a way that, you know, when things like this happen, that we have someone to step in and then do the job. So it's basically the next man up. I don't really want to reveal that right now, just in case Houston is listening, but we do have someone to step in and replace Wyatt.

Q. Just going back to Shaqiri a little bit, considering his -- to be honest, his injury history and then the weather Saturday night, is there any consideration to giving him a few more days or are you just going to play him and see where he's at?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: I think we're just going to play him. We'll see where he's at. We still have, you know, a couple more days, we have a training session tomorrow and then some treatment and stuff on Friday night, early Saturday morning. So we'll see where he's at but he'll definitely play.

How much he'll play, I'm not sure yet but we'll definitely -- he'll definitely get minutes on Saturday.

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