

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Ezra Hendrickson

Press Conference



Q. I'd like to ask you about Jairo Torres and Shaqiri.

EZRA HENDRICKSON: We think they will both be fine for this weekend. There's no worries this. It just a matter of waiting and seeing how that turns out as far as Shaq's recent -- it was just a slight hip thing but nothing major so we expect Shaq to be fully in on Saturday as well as Jairo Torres, we are able to get him some quality minutes on Sunday, and so we'll see how much he's able to play this weekend, hopefully from the start. But we'll see how the next couple of days goes.

Q. Is there any other injury player?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Besides Wyatt, the two guys who are in health and protocol, Navarro and Pineda, they will be back, also.

So as of now, that's the only major injury that we have is Wyatt.

Q. You guys had quite a week with the high, the win over Philadelphia and the low with the loss to San Jose. How do you handle that especially in a year where a lot of players are getting used to each other?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: It's not easy. It's a difficult task because there are some emotions that go along with those situation, that's scenarios that you speak of. We just have to keep calm and confident and continue to believe in what it is that we're doing.

It's something that we know that wasn't going to happen overnight but as long as we're seeing progress we have to continue to remain confident in that. The players are confident. We know that some of these games that we're losing, we're right there.

If you take the last game, for instance on the road created so many chances to put that game out of the reach and we didn't. If we weren't creating chances and keeping ourselves in games, it would be a more difficult situation.

But because we know that we are so close and we know that it's just that lack of quality in the final third that's really, really killing us, I think the guys are remaining confident, which is good. Because it not easy to be on such a high against Philly and then lose a game like that on Sunday.

Q. I wanted to ask you, what are the emotions heading into this game facing your former team?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: It's not about me, it's about the team and it's about us getting maximum point, especially at home. We know the situation we are in, we have to get all, if not most of the points in the remaining home games, and then see what we can pick up on the road.

There's no emotions there. I know a lot of the guys, obviously I worked with Caleb the last couple years, two and a half players, I know a lot of the players, assistant coaches, I've become good friends. It will be hi, hello, how are you doing but once the whistle blows, it's all business.

This is the position we're in. We want to make the playoffs and to do that we have to win these games especially at home and so that will be the focus, not so much any emotions. I'm not a very emotional guy to begin with. I have a certain calmness about me so I don't really get up too high or too low. I do have, you know, some friends remaining on that organization.

Q. These three games you're playing in less than a week, Saturday, Wednesday, Saturday, what are your expectations in terms of the turnaround of the players and how many points you will try to get?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: We are going to try to get all nine points. It's almost a must for us now. I hate to use that word; when you talk like that and you don't get it, what do you say.

But it's three games that we need to get maximum points. And we're at home. When you're at home, you win your games. If you look throughout the season, you have 17 home games. If you win all your home games, which is not easy to do but if you do you get 51 points; that more than likely will always put you into the playoffs.

We've dropped two games at home now to Cincinnati and

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to the Red Bulls, so we have to make that up on the road. That means we have to win the rest of our home games. So what better way to start than these next three games back-to-back at home like this. It's not easy to play three-in-seven. We will have to do some rotation because we are just coming off four in about 15 or 16. So taxing on the players because of the heat and stuff like that. We'll have to monitor that.

These three games, we need points and we need nine points and we are going to go out and get all nine points. But the first and most important is this first one against Columbus. We want to get three points and we'll just take it a game at a time and make sure that what we do in between games as far as training is not too physical and that the physical loading we get the next eight days or so are from the game.

We have a good, high-performance staff and we'll make sure as technical staff we work alongside them to make sure guys are fresh and we put the right guys, the most ready guys on the pitch that we think can do the job.

Q. You've mentioned finishing chances, but what are some simple things the players can do to help increase that where you're getting goals and you're making those chances work? Where do you start with that?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, the big part in finishing chances, it's confidence, guys. You gain confidence by repetition. It's a lot of putting them in a lot of situations that they face in the games in training.

Obviously when you have three games in eight days, there's not much shooting you can do but as much as we can do with the guidelines of the high-performance staff we are going to be focusing a lot on not just straight-up shooting but build-up into the shooting. Putting guys in 1v1s situations. On Sunday guys missed a couple of 1v1s with their keeper.

Just different situations like that, taking into account we do have three games in eight days but as much of that we do of that, we are going to be doing because we need to get guys more comfortable once we are in the box to put chances away. Because nothing is better, nothing is more important for a team than after a good buildup or a route, one ball over the top, to have that finishing touch, that ball in the back of the net. That's what people pay to come see is they come to see goals and that these things can save a game, save a season.

These are things we are stressing to the players and making sure they remain confident and know that we are

very, very close and the last part of our game is the final third, finishing chances we're creating. If we are sitting here game after game not creating chances, then we'd have a different story. But we are creating chances and putting guys in good positions. It's just a matter of us now finishing those chances.

Q. What strengths do you think the team has over Columbus Crew and what do you think of their signing Hernandez who make his debut this weekend?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: I think it will be an evenly matched team. They have some quality players and so do we. We have Shaqiri to their Zelarayan, or Gaston, these guys, to Nagbe. Rafa to a Jon Mensah. So in every position, there he is on the wing to some of their guys on the wing.

So in every position, I think we match up really well with them. There is going to be that, you know, situation of me having been there for the past two and a half years that, you know, I'm going to have to make sure I calm my players down because they are going to want to win this game for me.

But it's just a matter of, you know, letting them know it can't be about emotions and it can't be about me. It's about us needing three points. I think it's a really good matchup. I am the fans will be in for a very, very good game because we are familiar with how they play and they are familiar how we play because I was there.

I'm looking forward to a good match up, and like I said, the main focus is getting these three points.

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