

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Friday, August 5, 2022
Chicago, Illinois, USA

Gabriel Slonina Press Conference



Q. How do you put in perspective everything that's happened to you in almost exactly the last year?

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, it's been a journey for sure, and I'm super excited that I feel like I can use it on my platforms and everything to show and inspire people that, you know, a lot can change in a year. You dream your whole life of being successful and trying to better yourself every day. Yeah, it's been a hectic year but that's the sport I play, and I'm super grateful that it's happened. Hopefully we can keep on going in the right direction.

Q. Was there anything in particular about Chelsea that made it a favorable destination for you and throughout the transfer process have you spoken to any former or current players like Christian Pulisic?

GABRIEL SLONINA: I think obviously Chelsea is one of the biggest clubs in the world and they play in the Premier League, so it was a no-brainer for me to want to join that team, such a massive club with so much history and the things they have done in the past years has truly been amazing. So it's an incredible honor to be joining the club and everything, and when I landed in London, I actually spoke with Christian and just told him that I would be joining the club hopefully. He told me that he's super happy I'm going to be joining the club.

Yeah it was a no-brainer to join Chelsea because of the development I'll be able to get there and to be with this club is truly an honor.

Q. It's been almost a calendar year since you made your debut with the Chicago Fire. In what ways have you grown as a soccer player and a person in that time?

GABRIEL SLONINA: As a person, I've matured a lot. You have to do things differently and take your of your body in ways that you weren't as a starter because you obviously want to be ready on the day of the game. I think as a person, I grew up to be more mature and obviously deal

with the struggles in my career because career is going to be going up and down and everything and.

I think it's all about how you can bounce back from those mistakes and use it to better yourself and deal with the struggles in my career. Because a career is going to be going up and down and everything, and I think it's all about how you can bounce back from those mistakes and use it to better yourself, and as a player, you know, it's a lot of experience that I've gained on the field. It's different training in training and games are completely different. You can train as much as you want but having that game experience I think is most important. So as a player, I gained a lot of experience to manage games and what position to put myself to make a good save and how to read players. I think as a person and a player, I've matured and grown a lot in the past year.

Q. Could you share a little bit of what Chelsea officials have told you, the general expectations, I know a lot can change in the next few months. Do you know what your first few months in the club will be like? Are you preparing for a loan stint? That sort of thing.

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, a lot can change but obviously right now I'm back on loan with the Chicago Fire and so my focus is bringing us to the playoffs and lifting that MLS Cup at the end of the day. Hopefully joining them January 1st, so it's going to be a journey from here until then. I think the most important is just finishing the year with the Chicago Fire strong and hopefully bringing the cup back to the beautiful city.

Q. What do you see as the next step you want to take in your career in terms of your individual skills? Seems like you're a goal-oriented guy who is analytical in that way?

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, I think I need to work on everything, jumping to the Premier League is a huge step so I think I'm going to be focusing on every little part of my game, analyzing every game, every training session to make sure I'm improving as much as possible, as quick as possible because obviously I want to show that I'm ready once I get there so I think that focusing on the video sessions after games, after trainings, make sure I'm improving in every single aspect because I think that I have lots of thing to work on. I think I'll always have things to



work on but yeah, just preparing myself the best I can when the time comes.

Q. It's really interesting in the sense that going to a foreign team that has an American owner, and also maybe the most currently most recognizable player on the American national team is also there, so what advantage does that give you to go to a club with such a strong American presence?

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, it's great to have an American owner, and Christian, I was at World Cup qualifying with him. It's great. It makes it a little bit easier that I'll have like a person that I can go to and ask him about how things work in London and everything, and you know, how the club works and yeah I think it's going to be great once I get over there and meet all the guys. So yeah, obviously having Christian on the team as well, I think he's a great character. He's a great person and super approachable so I think that's going to help me out a lot once I get there.

Q. Have you had a conversation or met the owner yet?

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, we were always talking with my agent and everything, so he's a great guy as well, so I think that going forward, it's going to be great to join the club.

Q. There was a lot of rumors regarding your future for quite some time, and as Brian mentioned, playing for different national teams or switching clubs. You at the time gave us all the right answers, saying that you were focused on playing for the Fire. When it eventually struck you that this was happening and it was real, was it difficult to mentally go through that process?

GABRIEL SLONINA: To be honest it still doesn't really feel real. It's unbelievable, joining a big club like that.

But yeah, obviously it's real now. So I'm a Chelsea player on loan with the Chicago Fire, so yeah, I have big expectations now. I need to sharpen the things I do every single day and make sure that I'm really pushing myself to be the best professional I can be because obviously playing for Chelsea, you have to perform, you have to be professional.

So I think that I'm going to try and show that every single day and make sure that my mentality can stay focused on being the best version of myself every single day and showing that with the Chicago Fire.

Q. We got the idea that Chelsea were kind of chasing you for a little while and then had that kind of chaotic

period. What was it like for you during that, and then when you've been in London, have you had much chance to speak to the coaching staff and how have the people around the club welcomed you so far?

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, I mean, it's all about, there's going to be lots of moments, it won't be the last time where I have moments like that in my career.

So I've gone through it now, so I know how to handle it and how to bounce back from it because obviously that's the most important. You have to keep playing and stay confident with yourself and your ability and know that it's just a little bump in the road.

Yeah, I'm super happy that that happened to be honest because I used it to learn from it, to make myself better, and yeah, I mean, I was talking with the coaching staff there. They are super excited to have me. I'm super excited to have them be a part of my team and help me learn and grow as much as possible. Obviously they work with the most, like, elite players in the world. So obviously if I can join that and learn from every single person there, use everyone as a teacher, I think that it's only going to make me better as a person and as a footballer.

Q. And is there anybody in particular you're looking forward to working with?

GABRIEL SLONINA: It's going to be amazing working with every single one of those guys, but working with Édouard Mendy, it's going to be unreal just to see how he goes about in training and how he handles the ball and what he's doing before the play gets to him. It's just going to be analyzing him before he works, it's going to be incredible. I'm super excited.

Q. Since the first minutes that you played with the Fire, we asked you, and we want to ask you again, what's your message for young kids that play not only in Chicago but in Illinois, now that they have the first goalkeeper, 18 years old installed to the English premiere club league, and having so many players coming from the suburbs of Chicago.

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, I remember the first time you asked me that after my debut and I think my answer is probably going to be quite similar. You know, I think it's all about just focusing on the path you're on. You know, don't -- I don't think you have to compare yourself to others at all because everyone's journey to success is different. You know, a lot of people have it much earlier and a lot of people have it much later. I think if you focus on getting better every single day and perfecting your craft, you'll go in the right direction and make the right steps.

I think it's all about believing in yourself, always having the confidence no matter what happens to keep going because those struggles will only make you stronger. So I think that if you stay focused and positive, you know, some days are going to be better than others and many days are going to be worse than others, and I think that you just have to stay dialed in, trust the path that you're on and trust that life will take you in the right direction.

Q. As you go forward in your career and you continue advancing in the sport, what will it mean to you to kind of carry the flag for Chicago soccer, for the Fire, and to be an ambassador for the Fire and soccer in this area?

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, you know, I'm obviously, what I'm trying to grow is I'm trying to grow and be an inspiration for all the kids in Chicago and the suburbs, because I'm just a boy from Addison. I didn't really have anything -- if I had not put in the work, no way that any of this would have been possible. Being an inspiration, going overseas and making a super successful career there, obviously I have super high goals and I want to become one of the best goalkeepers in the world.

So I think that, you know, if they always know that I'm from Addison. I'm from the suburbs of Illinois, that you can do anything you set your mind to.

Yeah, I think always carrying that Chicago Fire blood in me is going to be super big because I want to inspire kids and I want to make sure that they know that if you put the work in, that you can achieve really big things.

Q. What's it been like for your family and what's your parents reaction? Will you move over sew low or will you bring family with you?

GABRIEL SLONINA: Obviously they are super excited, so I wouldn't say that we are all super excited and basically on the same level because they have also put in so many sacrifices and struggled so much with me and my life to get me to where I am today because without my family none of this would have been possible driving me to training super late, coming back with me super late from trainings, making sure that I was always doing extra and getting private trainings and I owe this to them as well.

I think that, you know, we're still working out logistics of everything so the closer the time gets, I'm sure we'll figure everything out.

Q. Anything excited about in particular moving to London, England?

GABRIEL SLONINA: Yeah, I'm just super excited to get to Europe. It's always been a dream of mine to get to Europe and obviously playing in one of the best leagues in the world. I think it's just going to be super exciting to finally be on my own and finally living a professional career that I've always wanted because it's going to be a journey. It's going to be difficult for sure. There's going to be super hard moments and there's going to be super amazing moments, and I'm super excited for the journey ahead.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...