

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

Thursday, August 11, 2022

Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Ezra Hendrickson

Press Conference



### **Q. How is training ahead of a tough stretch for you guys?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: The guys are in good spirits with good reason. Had a good run of games here. Everybody is good spirits and everybody is happy and we are looking forward to the next match. We try to take one game at a time, so yes, there's three tough games but right now, Philly is our main focus.

### **Q. You've already played Philadelphia this season and won at home what do you expect from that at-home victory and do you think they are going to rebound in this next game?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, they are the top of the East for a reason. They are a very good team. Yes, we did beat them at home earlier this year, which you know, gives us some confidence there. The way we've been playing lately also gives us some confidence.

But know that historically they are a hard team to play against at home at their place. We expect a very difficult match but we are in good form right now and we feel like we can step on the pitch with any team. So you know, we're looking forward to this match. You know, from about five, six weeks ago, we already knew that we would have to go on the road and win some games and this is no different. Yes, it's a very tough opponent, but every opponent from here on forward is going to be hard. It's going to be difficult because everybody is fighting to get in the playoffs. They are obviously fighting to be first in the east to get that bye and also may push for the Supporter Shield. I think it's going to be a competitive match and I think it's going to be one that both teams are going to be up for.

### **Q. One guy that people are asking about with this shortage in center backs is Kendall Burks. How close is he to being ready for an MLS game and when he is, do you expect to ease him in with a few minutes many one game or throw him out there and see how he**

does?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, it depends. If he has to step in there and play from the start, then so be it, because he's been training with us all year now. He has six, seven months under his belt. C.J. Brown works with him specifically individually. He's ready to go when called upon. He's just, in order of our center backs right now, he's not the next guy up but if we have to put him in the match, we'll do so.

There may be times where we might have to put him in at the end of a game to close out a game but as of now, he's the next guy up if something happens to another center back. We hope that doesn't happen just because we want to keep our starters on the pitch, but you know, things happen. So we're prepared in case things happen and Kendall will be ready to play if called upon.

### **Q. The international frenzy playing Leon, can you talk about how important will be this game and the preparation in the end of September?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, whenever we step on the pitch, we take every game serious. We want to win every game. So yes, it's an exhibition, but you know, this is an opportunity for us to show to a larger base of fans who we and he can will come to watch them, as well as to show our fans how we match up against international teams.

It's a time of the season where it's going to be critical because we'll still be in a playoff battle with other teams, so we'll be careful as far as how long we play our guys. But it's an opportunity for us as an organization, as a club, to showcase our team fence an opponent which is a very good team from the Mexican league. It's a game that we are going to take very seriously.

### **Q. Kacper gave you one of those good problems as a coach last week with his good performance. What do you think of the nine ahead of this week with Kacper or with Jhon Duran?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, we've got a good battle going. As a coach, you know, it's good to have that kind of problem where you know, both players in that position are playing really well right now. So it's still a matter of, you know, finishing out tomorrow and see -- making a decision



with that. It's going to be a decision based on who we think would best fit for that game.

Like I said, they are both in good form right now, so either one that we decide to choose, we'll be happy with. It's a good problem to have but we are not ready to disclose who we are leaning towards at this moment for obvious reasons.

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