

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Ezra Hendrickson Press Conference

Q. Wondering if there's any updates on injuries to Brian Gutierrez and Jairo Torres, Shaqiri, Czichos and even Wyatt Omsberg, how those guys are doing?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: So Wyatt is still out. He's out of the boot and everything now. But he's still out.

Guti and Shaq and Czichos, everyone is back in training right now. Torres is not. He's still nursing that injury. Most of the guys are back and ready for Saturday.

Q. You guys are still mathematically, it's possible you could make the playoffs but we are nearing the point where maybe that doesn't happen. If that doesn't happen and you are eliminated, does anything change? Do you change your lineups with looking for a more forward approach for 2023 or will you keep things largely the same?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: I think right now, like you said, we are mathematically still in it so we are trying to push. We went on a five-game unbeaten streak already this year and it would take that to get into the playoffs. We are well aware of that and right now that's our focus is to make that push it get to the playoffs.

But with an expansion team coming in next year, the possibility of losing a player there, and every year, you know, you try to make a team better than what it was the year before. So I imagine will be many changes there. But for right now, the focus is on maximizing the points in these five games, and I think that's our focus.

Q. You guys haven't scored, if my math is right, in 4000 minutes exactly. What is missing from the attack right now and what can you do to change that to start getting some goals?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: I think we are missing some key personnel and Shaq has not started the past two games, which that hurts us because of what he brings to the team. But it's just a matter of us, we looked at a reflection video

today of the includes game and a lot of times it's our transition and our ability to go from defend to attack. We defend well. We have had 12 shutouts this year, but when we win the ball a lot of times we are just giving back to the opponent so we have to improve that.

So our ability to get from defending to attack, transitioning from mid=block to the front half has to improve so that can create more chances. I think the situation right now, we are not creating enough chances and that's largely because of our inability to keep the ball once we have recovered it and once we've won it from an opponent. That's something we have been working on and we are trying to get better at so that when we do win the ball, it's not just for five seconds and have the depending end because that hurts and you that's a reason why we haven't scored in a bit.

Normal situation, having tied those two games on the road, it's not so bad but because of the situation we find ourselves in, especially that New England match, we thought we put ourselves in a good position to steal three points there and we just didn't. The situation for us is we have to create more chances to get out of this non-scoring brought that we are in.

Q. To go back to that point, how much of that is down to not having Gastón Giménez?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, he's a big part. He's a big part of us winning the ball, and also that transition; that first pass, that first outlet that we need to find, so that's a big part of what's gone on there with that. But we have people that can do the job, we just as a team on the whole, have to be better in transitioning moments, especially from defense to attack. A lot of times even from the Columbus games, first half, especially, we're defending, won the ball, get ourselves in good position and we just miss that pass, and then we have to defend again. So that's hurting us right now.

Q. Last time you guys played at SeatGeek, you were pretty disappointed after the game talking about how you guys came out flat with no energy. I don't know if SeatGeek had anything to do with that or if it was just a one-off game but you're back there again this Saturday, how can you work to make things different for this one?

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EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, we hope that was just a one-off. Like I said, usually every year your team has a game like that and normally it's not at home, though. We know we can't repeat a performance like that again at home at Solder Field or at SeatGeek.

We'll be better this time around and we know the consequences of coming out and not pushing the game. We lose points, and we can't afford to lose points in these home games. We have three left, and we've got to do really well with these three, and then get as many points as we can on the road. We have shown that we can go out on the road and do it. It's five points, 15 points and we have to get maximum amount of points in these five games, and again, it becomes very, very difficult for us. We're aware of that and the players are aware of that, and I think you'll see a better showing on Saturday.

Q. I wonder, have you taken any precautions for Pozuelo on Saturday?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, well, the way we defend as a team will cover a lot of that. But we will have Fede back on the pitch this weekend, and he's a guy that, you know, normally he takes the opposing team's No. 10 or opposing team's most attacking midfielder. That's going to help from an individual standpoint.

But as a team, the way we defend, if we stay in our block, if we stay compacted, being able to close up some of that; he's a very good player. We played him once this year when he was at Toronto, so we know what he can do. We are aware of what he can do but for the majority of that game we were able to control him but a couple poor turnovers, we were able to give him and he got a PK if that game. We have to make sure as a team we stay compacted and know where he's at at all times and having Fede on the pitch is going to help in that regard.

Q. To go back to the first question, has there been any discussion with Sebastian Pelzer, Georg Heitz or Joe Mansueto about what the teams needs to upgrade for next season, and looking ahead, the things that need to be addressed this off-season?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, like I said, we are in constant communication with Pelly and Georg and as a staff we meet with them and talk about what we see as a that's needed as far as improving the team going forward.

Yes, we do have an idea of we need to get better at next year and Joe is very -- he's very supportive of what it's going to take to get the team better because at the end of the day, we all want success for this team but we know we

have to continue to get better because everyone around us is getting better. We have to make sure that we identify the issues and work to rectify them and be better going forward. So there's a lot of communication about what needs to happen going forward.

Q. Where do you think this team needs to improve over the off-season?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, I think our ability to put the ball in the back of the net is a big concern. Right now with 12 shutouts you'd expect a team to be above the playoff line but it's a team that's not scoring, with 27 goals on the year, that's just not good enough.

So we have to make sure that we get better in that area and that we have players who can put the ball in the back of the net when called upon and when the opportunities are there. Too many times this year we have lost games that it's because of missed opportunities.

A lot of these 0-0 games, if we just score one goal, we win those games and it turns your whole season around. There's a lot of times this year we have kept teams to zero but just couldn't find a way to score just one goal, sometimes on the road, which is -- it's not conducive to a winning season. So we definitely have to get better in the final three. FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...