

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

Wednesday, November 2, 2022  
Chicago, Illinois, USA



## Xherdan Shaqiri

Press Conference

**Q. Just wondering, I know we're here to talk about the World Cup, but also first season with the Fire, how would you evaluate your first season with the Fire?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Hello, first of all. No, I think the first season of course I arrived with a lot of ambition, and I wanted to go to the playoffs and we didn't achieve our goal what we wanted or what I wanted to. Yeah, it was not the season what we wanted, but yeah, we need to get better and to try to achieve our goals for sure next season.

We have to make sure everything is right what we have to do, and yeah, I'm sure we're going to do it next year. The most important thing is to be more constant and to make better performances, and yeah, I'm sure we will achieve the goals.

**Q. Heading into a World Cup that's in the winter is a little bit unusual for most European teams and actually it's the first World Cup in the winter in general. Schedule-wise for you, how are you feeling heading into the World Cup, having played a little bit in France and then coming to the United States for MLS and now going straight to a World Cup?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Oh, of course it was something different. Yeah, no, for me it was important to make the move, and I'm very happy in America. Yeah, I played the whole season there, so it was a long season for me, too. I haven't had any holidays, too. So it was for me good also to relax a bit after the season of the MLS, and now I'm since one week training with FC Lugano, and I'm training well, I'm training good, and I'm trying to be as fit as possible to go to the World Cup and to try to help my nation and to make good performances to achieve our goals.

**Q. I just wondered, obviously you're in the same group as Brazil. How much are you looking forward to being reunited with some old friends? And also whether you've been watching Liverpool closely this season and what you make of the really difficult start**

**they've had in the Premier League and maybe what you think the reasons for that are.**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Oh, I'm always happy to see my old teammates because I didn't play only in Liverpool, I played in Bayern Munich, too, and other teams in Italy and France, so I have many, many friends, so it's always good to see old teammates.

Yeah, especially Liverpool now, there's a few Brazilians, and I had always good relations with those guys, so I'm really always happy to see them, not only on the pitch but off the pitch, too.

But now we're going to be opponents, and both teams are going to try to win games. Yeah, going to be always good to see my old teammates.

Yeah, of course I'm always watching the Premier League, especially Liverpool, and I follow always my old teams. Yeah, it was difficult start for them, but I'm sure they're going to come back and they have the quality, but this is football sometimes; you cannot be always on the top, and the last few years Liverpool were always on the top and everything went good and well, but of course now maybe the other teams know a bit how to play against Liverpool.

But I'm sure Liverpool have the quality, and they're going to come out of this kind of not best situation. For me this is pretty normal this kind of situation because it cannot be always top-top, you know.

Yeah, this is normal in football. You cannot be always in the best shape, and probably Liverpool has not had the best start. But there are still many games to play, and I'm sure they're going to come back, especially in the league but in the Champions League everything fine, but they're going to push and they're going to try, and I hope and I'm sure they're going to try Champions League next season, which is very important for the club.

**Q. You're going into your fourth World Cup. Not a lot of players have had the opportunity to go to four World Cups. How much has this tournament in November and playing with your national team been on your mind over the last couple of months and throughout the season with the Chicago Fire?**

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Look, during the season I don't think too much about the World Cup because I'm really focusing on my team, for Chicago Fire. It was really very far from when it begins, so I really was focusing on my performances and to give everything for the team.

Of course now slowly, slowly it's coming on my mind because I know in probably one and a half months going to start the World Cup, and yeah, I'm preparing myself for this, so of course I have it in my mind already, but it's still one month far away, and I'm not focusing really too much now at the moment because I'm also -- I don't want to think about too much now about this because, yeah, I want to focus when it's the time.

Now I have time also to see a bit of my family who I haven't seen for a long time, and yeah, and in the right time I'm going to focus and really looking forward to this World Cup. How you said, this is my fourth World Cup, and it's always something special. Not everyone can say that you've played in four World Cups.

I know what I'm expecting, but of course it's in the winter; it's something new for me, too, and in Qatar, also, something new. Yeah, I'm looking forward to this biggest event in football, and yeah, to try also to help my nation and to try to achieve something.

**Q. You have a career relationship with Brazil in World Cups. You've played a World Cup here in Brazil, then you played against the Brazilian team in the last World Cup, and now in Qatar you will face the Brazilian team again. Talk about your expectations for this match and about the relationship between you, Switzerland and Brazilian team.**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Ooh, yeah, pretty much like you said, a lot of times I've played against Brazil. I played in Brazil. For me Brazil 2014 was also the best World Cup so far for me. I enjoyed so much. I scored my hat trick in Brazil, too, so yeah, I have always good relation. I have a lot of Brazilian friends, and of course my big idol Ronaldo Nazário was always my big idol, so I have always big relation with them.

Yeah, I'm looking forward also to see my old teammates, like I said before, and we try also to make a good performance and to make a good game because we know the quality of Brazil. They are for me one of the biggest favorites to win the World Cup this year, and yeah, the people are waiting a long time for this, and I think they're going to try everything to win it this year.

But we know it's not easy because we have other teams, the smaller teams now also are better, and yeah, they

make good progress. Yeah, it's going to be not simple for them, too, but of course they have more pressure for sure than us. But we know our qualities, too, and we try to make it as difficult as possible for them to take some points, of course.

**Q. I've got two questions. The first one is on Jean Durand; he's been linked to Liverpool, your former team, and Manchester United. Any advice for this young kid who is 18 years old, scored eight goals with three assists? Any advice in case he moves on or he still has to prepare very well in the MLS, get a few games before he crosses over to Liverpool?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Oh, Jean Durand is a very good player. He's still young. He needs to learn still a lot of things. He's still young, and he can improve himself every day. But he has very good qualities to be for sure one day in Europe in any good clubs.

My advice is just to also -- everyone has his own decisions, and he needs to make it, but we know in Europe it's another level, and it's more difficult, also. There are many, many also like issues who you have to deal with it. But for me now, the young players, some young players can also go to Europe, and Jean Durand is a talent who for sure have the quality one day to play in Europe.

But when, he has to know it. But for sure he needs a lot of play time. That is what is important for a young player, and to get better, because if you go to Europe and you don't play any minutes, it's also difficult. You have to deal with these kind of things who are also difficult because we know he's from Colombia, and in Europe everything is different.

But for sure, and I hope one day he can make the step and go to Europe and to show himself.

**Q. My question is in regards to the MLS Cup, if you're planning to watch the MLS Cup and you may have any prediction, LAFC or Philly?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Yes, of course I'm checking every day. Also in Instagram I see the MLS and am following, so I'm a bit updated, of course, but the time difference is a bit of a problem with Europe all the time.

Yeah, I'm trying to watch, of course, the final, and for me, it doesn't matter who's going to win it, but the better team should win it. Of course I think LAFC is the favorite because they have very good players, and yeah, experienced players inside. They played also a good season, and we know they won it before already.

Philly is also a very good team, and they showed this year

that they can win it. It's 90 minutes; everything can happen. Yeah, let's see. But for sure I'm going to watch it and follow it.

**Q. Two questions: You mentioned that on top of Liverpool, you played in Bayern and Italy and France, and on Bayern your paths crossed with Robert Lewandowski, so I wanted to see, what can you tell about him as a player and as a person, and second question if I may, you were part of that Swiss team that met with Poland at Europe 2006. How do you remember that game, and if that goal you scored, that amazing bicycle kick goal that you scored, was the best of your career?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Well, we know Robert is one of the best strikers in the world. I remember him always as a nice human being, a nice guy and hard worker, too. Yeah, the statistics speaks for himself. He's one of the best strikers in the world.

He's still doing it at Barcelona, so yeah, sad they are out of Champions League, but I'm really happy that he's happy in Barcelona, and this is also very important. He's enjoying the life there, too. Yeah, I hope he can win also some titles there, and we know he's also -- I don't know how old he is now, but he's still performing very well.

Yeah, Poland we had always good memories. Of course I scored this bicycle kick 2016 but we lost the game. Was also not so nice in penalties. Yeah, it's just life.

But for sure is one of the best goals I ever scored.

**Q. There's reports in Europe that Lionel Messi might be coming to the MLS. What would that signing mean to the league, and what sort of impact could that have?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: You know, you can see now the MLS is growing more and more, and more and more good players coming from Europe to the MLS, and the league is getting better with this kind of players. The teams are investing in younger players now. It's not like before, okay, 35, 36, the old players coming now and to make holidays in America. Now it's changed so the good players are coming now, and they are coming in their prime and trying to achieve something there, too.

This is a good step also for the league and for the country, and yeah, I'm really looking forward to more and more players coming to the league and to make teams better, the league better. It's also more interesting competition for everybody.

**Q. This is likely to be the last World Cup for both**

**Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. The GOAT debate goes back and forth, but who is the best of all time for you, Messi or Ronaldo?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: This is always a good question for everybody. I think these two guys, what they did for football in the last 20 years is unbelievable. I don't know if somebody going to come again like this like these two. This is something extraordinary and who you maybe never see. Let's see, but it's difficult.

Yeah, it's always they are big idols for a lot of young players. Yeah, for me they are both very good and the best with of course Maradona and Pele, I think the same level like them.

**Q. My question kind of relates to I know you're really focused on your team and what Switzerland is going to do, but you mentioned Brazil is one of the favorites before. What are some of the other countries you think could be in the mix? And the second part of my question, when the favorite doesn't win, whoever that is, what are some of the things that can happen in a single elimination tournament that could lead to an underdog winning it all?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Well, I hope of course Switzerland is the underdog and try to do something special. This is for sure our goal and dream. But we know how difficult it is.

But there are so many good teams because if you qualify for a World Cup, then you must be good. Every team is good there, and every game is difficult to play.

Like our group, it's very difficult, too, so we need really, really good performances to win games and to try to go to the next round. This is our first goal. Then we will see.

But of course we have many teams who are favorites. For sure Brazil, but France also is always a big favorite. Germany is a tournament team, Spain also. But there are always underdogs who maybe surprise, so we will see which team this is going to be.

But yeah, I hope Switzerland is one of them.

**Q. I want to take you back to one day that I'm sure is very special in your career. It's 2014, June 25. You scored three goals in a World Cup. It's a dream to play in a World Cup. I cannot even imagine what it feels like to score three goals. If you can take me through that day. Do you remember who you played, and do you think is that one of the top moments in your career?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Yeah, for sure one of the best moments in my career, and yeah, I think I'm the only player with a left foot who scored a hat trick in a World Cup, I think. I'm not sure, but I heard about this. This is also something very special.

Yeah, we played in Amazonia, so it was very hot, very special game, and I scored a hat trick. Yeah, it was an amazing day which I will never forget. Yeah, especially when you score a hat trick in the biggest event in football for your nation, it's something special.

Yeah, I hope I can score again at least one goal. That will be very good. But a hat trick, this ball from 2014 I have still at home, and yeah, it's amazing memories who I never forget.

**Q. My question is the World Cup is in Qatar in a different season, in November. What do you think about that change? And the change that this World Cup may have for the VAR and the Eagle eye probably helping the referees in some games? The second question is you mentioned Brazil was one of the favorites, but also what do you think will be the team that will win the World Cup in Qatar? What is your top list, the favorite teams that you think will win? Thank you.**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Yes, about the favorite, I told before, I told you guys before that for sure Brazil is one of the favorites, and Germany, the big nations like Spain, Germany is always a tournament team. Yeah, I hope that some underdogs also can surprise. I hope Switzerland will be one of them.

But in every tournament you have some teams who surprise sometimes and can go maybe until semifinal. So let's see. Let's see.

And yeah, the tournament in November is always something different now and something new for everybody. We need to make this experience, and yeah.

About the referees, I didn't understand very well the question, the Eagle something? I don't know what you were talking about.

**Q. Someone acknowledged Wednesday that the VAR would be something that we probably didn't see in the last World Cup that will probably take minutes to see if a play was offsides or the goal was inside. What do you think about that technology helping to correct the mistakes that the referee does?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Yeah, look, the referees also make

mistakes. This will be always like this, even in 100 years. But you know, the VAR is just to help. Just sometimes I don't understand. Like the other night, I watched Bayern-Inter and there was a clear penalty and the referee go watch and he didn't give the penalty. This was for me strange, these kind of situations.

I think some people have to help them, too, and to tell them, look, there's a penalty, and they have to listen and to decide.

But we see that VAR also helped a lot of times to see the mistakes from the referees, and yeah, I hope that technology is going forward and helping the referees what is also important and what is not simple for them every day, yeah, to be a referee in a top game because also they have pressure and we have to protect them, too.

I hope the technology is going to help them to make the right decision and to help football and the teams to make it as right as possible for every team and to make the right decisions.

**Q. The tournament is being held in Qatar and there's been a lot of reporting and concern about the oppression from that government and some of the totalitarian repressive regime hosting this World Cup. There's been use of maybe not -- if not slave labor but almost indentured servants building these stadiums. What are your thoughts on playing the World Cup in Qatar considering everything around that country and how it built their stadiums?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Look, we are Switzerland; we stand for human rights and that everything goes right for humans. But we are really focusing on the performing, and I think this is a political questions who I don't want to answer because I'm really focusing only on my performance and from the team who is the most important, because when the World Cup starts, every player, every team wants to perform and to make their nation proud.

For me, I'm really focusing only on the performance and not on the political stuff on the side.

**Q. Obviously was it 14, 15 months now since you left Liverpool. How do you look back on your three years at the club and what was it that made you decide you needed to go and pursue another challenge?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Yeah, I had a very beautiful time, three years in Liverpool. We won many titles. But yeah, I just decided it was the right time for me to go to have a new challenge, and yes, for me still the right time.

Yeah, I had a very good time. I have still my house in Manchester. When I go, I try to watch some games when I have time.

Yeah, it was a wonderful time. I have still contact with some people. Yeah, going to stay always in my heart because we won the Champions League, we won the Premier League, we won many titles more, and yeah, I will always have this in my memories and I will always follow them. Yeah, I had also a very good time with the fans. They supported me always a lot and are very special there. I will always have a very, very warm relationship with the club.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.