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Ezra Hendrickson

Press Conference



year, things could have ended differently for us but it is what it is. It's in the past.

Just glad to have these guys in training and we are very careful with these guys because some of them have been out for six months. So we have to be very careful that when the season starts, we go in with a full complement of players without injuries or minimal injuries as much as possible.

As far as Shaq, this is a situation where Shaq basically played a season and a half coming from Leon and playing a full season with us and then going to the World Cup which is physically and mentally demanding. We want to make sure we give him a couple of days to regroup and take a break so he doesn't get burned out because we all know how long and grueling the MLS season can be with the traveling and stuff like that.

So we want to make sure that we give him a couple extra days to rest but he will head to Cancún with us on Friday and we are looking forward to decompress it, because he's such an integral part of what we do and how we play as a team, we want to make sure that piece of it is hitting the ground running so to speak when the season starts, so we just wanted to give him a couple extra days off.

Q. Just back to Jhon Durán. Obviously you guys have made one priority of selling players to Europe, whether it's Slonina or Duran or whoever before you got here. How do you balance that with winning and how difficult is it to balance the idea of selling players and moving them on while winning?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, ideally for us, it would like to be both, a team that is able to develop players and move them on, as well as remain competitive. You know, you have to find a balance within those.

But I think it speaks volumes for us as an organization that within the past few months, we were able to move on two teenage promising players on to the EPL. That speaks volumes to what it is that we are trying to do here as a club and as an organization.

But like I said, we have to balance that with making sure that we remain competitive and we're making sure that we are replacing those players that if they do move on with

Q. Just wondering, first of all, what your reaction is to the Jhon Durán transfer yesterday and then second, how do you go about replacing him? Do you think you have options in-house to replace him or where you need to hit the transfer market to get another striker?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, first of all, I just want to say I'm happy for Jhon. You know, I mentioned last day how high of a ceiling this guy had and how special of a player he was. And to see, you know, after just one year in the League, you know, a team from the EPL show an interest in purchasing him, that speaks volumes for the talent that kid possesses.

So we're all happy for him. Obviously he has a coach. You want to keep players who are producing for as long as you can but you know within this business that things like this happen.

As far as replacing him, you know, we determined in the off-season that there's a possibility that this would happen, so it's been ongoing as far as us trying to find suitable replacement but the key is, you know, it's not to rush into anything. We do have players there who have proven that they can score in this league.

But we know that we need to add some additional players, and that's one position that we always thought we would have to add, and so we have ongoing talks with a couple players but nothing is finalized yet but we hope to within the next coming weeks before the season starts.

Q. What is the latest report in camp? Do you have any injuries? Is Shaqiri part of it, and if not, when is he going to be part of the entire team heading to México?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: We have everyone in camp except for Shaq. All the injured players from last year, Kacper, Gastón, Torres, Herbers, Wyatt Omsberg, everyone is in camp and has been training the past few days. So that's always a plus for us because we know that if we had these players in the latter part of the season last

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either players from in-house or players that we have scouted, that we've recruited to come in just as we did with Duran. It's a tricky situation but it's not a bad situation to be in. It means that people are looking at your players and it means that your recruiting department is doing a good job of finding players, whether it be from abroad or within home grown as we saw with the past two players as in Gaga and Duran.

But the key is to be able to replace those players. So Brady comes in when Gaga leaves and now we have to find the next person to come in and replace Jhon Durán and be as productive as he was if not more. So it's a tricky situation but it's not a bad situation to be in. We've just got to make sure that we remain competitive and we still are able to, you know, operate as a business, a profiting business.

Q. Traction like with Gaga and the transfer fees so large, how much does that help your flexibility and your ability to strengthen the roster with the increased resources that you have from that, and then kind of going off that, do you have any preliminary thoughts on how you would like to see those resources used as you guys evaluate how you're going to try and strengthen the team going forward?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Again, that's an ongoing process. We are aware that we do get to use a portion of that transfer fee as GAM so that we can use those resources in that aspect.

But for us, the key is just making sure that we are replacing the players as they leave and that's something that we have been doing and something that we have a couple players that would he have been looking at, not just since this happened but before, and hopefully, you know, these things sometimes take time but hopefully we can get this across the line before March 4th, our first game, or even before that so we can actually have the player ready for March 4th.

But it's an ongoing process. As an organization, we will determine with the resources how is best to use it and come up with the best solution for us as a club to remain competitive and attain our goals which is making the playoffs this year. That's our No. 1 goal is to get into the playoffs.

We felt like we were close enough last year, barring injuries and barring some letdowns in a up canal games, we were right there. We just want to continue in that vein and make sure that we replace the players that we've lost since October, November.

Q. The last time I spoke to Shaq: Jhon Durán will have to take his time, he's a very good player, EPL is a very difficult league and he has to take a stand. Personally do you think he will be able to succeed in the EPL, a very different league, different players, different fans. It's not like the MLS. Personally, do you foresee him succeeding?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yes, definitely, and I spoke about this last year when I speak of his potential and his ceiling, how high that was and how far I thought he could reach as a professional. I think he's going into an environment where he can develop and because he's still just 19 years old. He just turned 19 recently.

So he still has a ways to go but I think he has the innate qualities and abilities to really be a very successful player in the EPL. He's going to an organization that I think he can succeed and hopefully he gets to play right away but that's always going to be determined based on how he does in training and stuff like that. I think as we saw last year after, you know, five or six months or, so the kid was ready to step on the pitch and produce, and yes, it's a different league and yes they are a more established league than us because we have just been around over 25 years now.

I think he has the qualities and the abilities to really be successful in the top leagues in this -- in this world, and most recently and currently the EPL. The kid has a lot of talent. But you know it might take some time going again to a different environment, a different country. There will be some cultural differences that he's going to have to overcome and he's going to have to adapt to but he showed last year that he can do that.

Q. Having the first week off, do you think this is an advantage for the team having that extra week of training before the whole season starts or might be a disadvantage because you might need that bye week that, off time maybe halfway through the season or almost at the end of the season, how do you see this scheduling for the team?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, there's some pros and cons to decompress it. It would be ideal to have this, maybe a week before the League Cup starts in the midsummer. But it is what it is.

The positives, we have five or six guys who we expect to contribute this year who are coming back from injury, so that gives us an extra week to get them back into the fold of things.

So it has its positives, it has its negatives, but it is what it

is. The decision has been made and we have to make the most of it, and I think if we just think about the positives, just that ability to have guys get an extra week, Omsberg, Gastón, Giménez, Herbers, Torres, these guys getting back in the fold of things give us that extra week with them to train.

We are still a team that's gelling. Still a team that we are trying to mold, and that extra week helps and also it gives us a week to watch our opponent, NYC FC, so we can see what team they put out and know what to expect because just from preseason sometimes it's hard to gauge what a team's lineup is going to be and how a team is going to be. Sometimes teams change from year-to-year. We just want to look at the positives and make the most of it. I think having that extra week helps us being that we have so many injured guys coming back.

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