

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Ezra Hendrickson

Press Conference



Q. What's the status of Federico Navarro, Chris Mueller, Jairo and what's their current timeline for return?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Chris will be back this weekend. Unfortunately we will be without Jairo and Fede this weekend. As far as the timeline, not sure yet but it's going to be at least a couple weeks.

Q. What exactly was the issue with both Fede and Jairo Torres?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Hamstring.

Q. Those are soft tissue injuries in week one. Is that a concern guys are already suffering those this early in the season?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, but it's injuries. They happen. Unfortunately it's part of the game. We just have to deal with it.

The key is return to play, how short that time is, is very important. We just have to be able to deal with those injuries and I think we have the correct -- the right high-performance department to make sure that these guys get back in a timely fashion and not be out for too long.

Q. Looking at the midfield, both starters from week one out for the next game, Gastón Giménez not 100 percent fit. Would you have any hesitation to put in a younger player like Sergio who has not played a lot or would you lean on experience for a road game like this?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: We maintain that it's going to be a competitive situation at all positions this year, so we have a short time, two or three days, to determine who is going to step in and play and it's just going to be based on how guys have been trying and how they do the next couple days.

We are going to have to tweak these things. But the difference between this team and the team last year is that we have a lot of different options that we can do.

Last year we were lacking that at times. Once we took injuries, it was really difficult to shift in any way, shape or form. I think we have enough depth now and some guys that have gotten experience over the past year that can step in and play.

As far as who that's going to be, that's still yet to be determined.

Q. Given that Philadelphia played, and played out of the country last night, does that change anything in the approach knowing they have a short week and you have an extra week to review?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Not at all, if you looked at the game last night, they rested a lot of people, from the people who started the week before in Miami. They are going to be relatively fresh.

Yes, they had some travel to go to but they are at home and they have done really well at home the last few years, so we expect nothing less than what they have been about these past few years under Jim, so we are not going to go in there taking it lightly.

Assuming they are fatigued by any means. No, we are going to go out there with our strongest squad and try to bring home some points, hopefully all three.

Q. The atmosphere in the home opener, were you expecting these kind of people to show up and what can you say about the next game, also, with Philadelphia, a team that you really probably encountered last year and you know how they play and how they attack?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yes, Philly they are a very good team. A lot of the experts are picking them to be MLS Cup champions this year if not up there. It's not a team to be taken lightly. As I said they have been very good at home over the past few years so it's going to be a big task for us. We are prepared and we are going to be ready. We are a little deflated having lost Fede and Jairo, but we have the

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depth to fill in at those positions.

As far as last weekend and our past, we expect that from our fans. We have really, really good fans. Sometimes we have let them down. But having them there on Saturday, and listen to the crowd, even though it wasn't 30,000 people, it felt like it was because the crowd was so loud and was really into it. The game was back and forth, end-to-end, so I'm sure that got the fans energized also. We, the players, they feed off that.

So it's always good to play at home because our fans are always there to support us, so that was great to see.

Q. The sequence in the 23rd minute where Przybylko picked up the ball and shooting wide, you can see Mueller running hard on the left to support him, Guttierrez running hard on the right to support him but Shaqiri walking, what was your reaction to seeing Shaqiri walking and not supporting on that play?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, I think, you know, it's not walking while we're defending. There's a difference between what transpired then. You know, Kacper is going to go, and I imagine Shaq thinks he's going in on the goal and he's got two guys supporting him already.

Maybe he thought, you know, he's going to put it in the back of the net. I can't really speak for Shaq on that. Had that been a situation where we lost the ball and they were counter-attacking us and he was walking, I would see people having gripes about that. But everyone can relax -- maybe except for Chris and Guti thinking, here is our first goal of the match.

So I didn't read much into that as some people do.

Q. Would you like to see him running on that play and providing extra support?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, but Kacper is ten or 15 yards ahead of him. I don't know how much support he can provide there and also we don't want Kacper to be looking backwards. We want him going towards the goal, and the wingers, Guti and Chris, following up.

I'm not going to really dwell too much on that. I think if you look at the physical loading from our GPS and stuff, you'll see that Shaq put in a good effort on Saturday night.

So I can't just take one isolated incident and, you know, really be mad about that. You know, that was just one isolated incident. If you look at the rest of the game, you'll see he did a lot of tracking back. He did a lot of pressing and he was up for it on Saturday night. So you know,

that's not something I want to really dwell on or read into at all.

Q. After the last game in the post-match press conference, you said Chris Brady was ahead of the competition as far as being the starter. Obviously wasn't able to play due to that thigh tweak. Would you say that he's still a favorite given that he's back in training to start this weekend or is that a decision yet to be made?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Chris will be the goal this weekend barring any setbacks the next couple days, Chris will be the goal. I don't want to give away too many secrets to Philly but I do want to answer your questions that you guys have as honestly as I can answer it.

Yes, we expect Chris to be in the goal this weekend.

Q. For the couple of months, looking for a forward and there were some rumors that you were close to signing some good players, and it didn't come through. Is the club waiting or still scouting, they are waiting to summer to get a big name, the forward position, or are they taking the time and considering a few options?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, you know, it's an ongoing process for us. We had a couple guys that were really, really close, almost over the line, but it felt -- which happens in this business, but we are trying to still add. We have -- I'm going to mess his name again, but Georgios coming in over the next week to ten days here.

But we are still trying to add someone else, but that someone we want to add before the summer break. Actually, the MLS window is still open for a little bit longer. So we still have to sometime to add someone and that's ongoing stuff. We are still working on trying to make the team better and get more competition in here at several different positions.

Q. I was going to call him George.

EZRA HENDRICKSON: George is right.

Q. A couple weeks ago, we asked you about the playoff format and what you wanted to see from it everything and but now that it out, it was announced a while ago. What do you think of the new format with nine teams and the play-in and the best of three in the first round?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: It's a game that's going and the fans want to see a lot of games. I think this gives them the opportunity to see a couple more games. It also gives the

team a lot of times, when you take just seven teams, you have a team that may miss the playoff by one point or two points. I think it gives room for a couple more teams to play themselves into the playoffs.

So I don't mind it at all. You know, with the Open Cup and League Cup and all that stuff, could add some games. Could get leggy for some players. But.

I think for the fans' standpoint, they are going to love it. I think it's going to be really great to see a ninth-place team to play a seventh-place team to see how it works to get into the playoffs, and then they get into it, say, a three-game series with the No. 1 seed, it's very exciting.

When you have just one game, it doesn't give the bottom team a chance because in MLS, I'm not sure about the actual stats but I'm sure most teams win their home games than lose. This way it gives both teams an opportunity to get a win and then if it comes to a third game, yeah, then it could be decided on the higher seed's home court, home field. But it's for the fans. That's why the MLS is doing it. The fans want to see more soccer and it gives them an opportunity to see more soccer.

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