

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Ezra Hendrickson Press Conference

Philadelphia 1, Chicago Fire FC 0

Q. I don't know what you were asked in the live press conference, so I apologize if I'm repetitive. But just you guys have battled for so long with ten men, just how deflating is it to end up losing that way after battling so hard for so long in the second half?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, it was very deflating. The guys put in an effort tonight. We had a game plan. We came, I thought we executed well. We took some really early yellows in the first half that really changed the game. So I thought that was a big part of the game.

I think the second yellow for Fabi was probably deserving because he kind of lunged in a little bit there. The game was kind of decided in the first half as far as how we're able to play. We were not able to match their intensity and their grit. We know they are a team that they like to battle, so we wanted to come here and battle with them. We didn't want to just sit down and let them push us around, but when we pushed back, I thought the ref was very uneven with his calls tonight.

Take for example, Kacper betting elbowed like that, and then them not even getting a yellow card. And whenever we made a foul, it seemed like he was quick to pull a yellow. We talked about it at halftime. We told the guys, listen, this ref is looking for a reason to throw one of us off, so let's just be careful, and unfortunately Fabi goes in late and he gets the second yellow.

But you know, we fought. Even with nine men, it's a difficult place to play and even when we're a man down it becomes even more difficult. I thought the guys stuck to the game plan. We got into two blocks of four with Kai up top. It was just trying to, you know, weather the storm but for 30, 35 minutes, it becomes almost impossible to do.

Q. Is Xherdan all right? He seemed to signature until a couple minutes before he was coming off, grabbing his leg as we saw in the broadcast. What's the status



on him?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: I'm not sure yet but I think he was just starting to get a little tight in the hamstring. He put in the effort tonight. We dropped him back into midfield which is not a normal position for him, and with nine men, I think he just got a little fatigued there.

We just wanted to be cautious and make sure we get him off the pitch and get some fresh legs in. But hopefully he's all right. I don't think there's anything major, but just a little fatigue.

Q. Just to follow up on that point, is Gastón okay? Looked like he was going to be subbed off anyway but is he okay? Also officiating aside, something we talked about last year with you early was the discipline with the team. Is it concerning to you to see the discipline issues crop up early this season already?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Gastón is fine. He was scheduled to just play 60 minutes tonight because we wanted to make sure we bring him back slowly. As far as the discipline, you know, I have to look at that Kei Kamara's second yellow again before I even speak on that because I didn't really get a clear view of that.

But you know, the guys, they were getting pushed. Philly plays hard. They play rough, and the guys were asked to match that intensity, match that grit, and they did. So I don't think it was any discipline issues tonight. Unfortunately for us, we were the ones getting the yellow cards.

When you come into a place like this to play, you have to roll your sleeves up and you have to battle and I thought that's what the guys did tonight. Unfortunately took some yellows for that and one of them ended up getting a red card. So I don't see a discipline issue right now.

Q. To try to find a positive in this performance, Johnny Dean makes his first MLS appearance. How do you think he did, especially coming through a long three years for him to get to the MLS and get to this point?

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, I thought he did well. He came into the game in a difficult circumstance where he's



asked to play right mid. He's not a right mid. But I thought he did well. He's a guy, he has a big engine, so he was able to get up and down the field and really help us solidify the two blocks of four. He's a player that we're happy we have here. He's been doing really well.

So putting him in that situation was something we're shy about doing, it just was a tough situation we had to come into, being on the road, being a man down like that, but I thought he did well when he came in.

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