

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Mauricio Pineda

Press Conference



I think it just gives me much more motivation to work for the team and help the team in any way that I can and take the team back to, like you said, where it belongs.

**Q. Ezra what was talking about the way you continue to compete and plug along to get playing time. What's your mindset now as you head into your third year, and maybe even if you're not starting, how do you keep yourself engaged as you get ready to take the pitch here during the season?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: Yeah, it's difficult for every player. I think ideally, all 25 of us would love to be on the starting 11 every week, but I think the games have shown that there is so much importance in finishing off a game strong.

So if you are on the bench, I think what you really have to be ready for is to finish off a game and be able to help the team in that way in the best way possible, and I think that's something that I've been prepared for a lot this year.

It is sometimes unfortunate for every player to not be on the starting 11 but I think it is more important to build a team that is all together and has one job in common and wants to work for towards that goal, and that's winning a game, and I think it takes more than the starting 11 that's on the field to begin with. Everyone on the bench has to be ready to finish off the game strong, and I think we have all done a good job of that this year.

**Q. The other thing Ezra mentioned is the fact that you do have so much pride in playing for your hometown team. Can you describe what it means to you to build this franchise up to where you're hoping to get back toward the top of MLS?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: Yeah, I think since the start, it's been an honor to be a part of this club. I think ever since I started, I think the main goal has been to bring the club back to where it belongs, and yeah, it's exciting. It's exciting to start the year off and see that we are playing well; that we are getting along as a group, we're working for each other. And yeah, for me, it's an honor to play for this club, for my city. It means a lot every time I step on the field.

**Q. I guess in your time here in MLS, what are the ways maybe you feel like you've changed or adapted to the play since you made your debut a couple years ago?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: I think just obviously coming into the league, it's difficult to get used to the rhythm of the league, the tempo, the speed of the league, and playing multiple positions at the time was difficult.

So I think just learning from the older guys adjusting to the style of play and being ready to come on to the field at any moment, in not only starting games but center back or center mid, I think that's something that I've been able to grow in as a player.

So I'm grateful for the coaches and for the players that have been able to help me through that.

**Q. Just to kind of follow up on those points, you've been a Jack-of-All-Trades, so to speak, for four years since you've been with the club. How much do you think that has impacted your development as a player one way or another?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: Could you rephrase that a little bit?

**Q. Yeah. You've been a versatile player playing midfield, center back. So how do you think that has affected -- how do you think that has impacted your development one way or the other?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: Yeah, I think it helps me a lot. Just through the years, it's helped me make my way on the field in different games, different situations, different times that the team needs a different player or has different availability.

So I think being able to play both positions and even like different positions in the midfield I think helps me grow as a player and gives me different opportunities to be able to play on the field and ultimately that's my goal to be on the field.

So it helps a lot to be able to play two different positions



and learn from the different positions, and also, just getting different perspective. Obviously, if you're playing as a center back, you kind of start to know what you want from your midfielders, and as a midfielder, you start to get to know what you want from your centre-backs.

Playing in different parts of the field also helps just to give you perspective in that way. So yeah, I think that's something that has helped me out a lot.

**Q. Like to ask you two questions. The first one is: If you were ever to be called up by the Mexican Team or the U.S. National team, would you be more willing to go to any of those teams? And with the experience that you have, how is the integration with players like Jairo Torres coming from México?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: Yeah, for the first question, I think right now the only call-up I've received has been from the U.S. National Team through the youth national teams and a couple times in the first team. I think my main focus is with them right now if I were to get called up again. If something were to change, then I would have to re-evaluate the situation.

Yeah, it's great to have these players, like you said, coming from the Mexican league, and I grew up watching the Mexican league. So it's good to have these guys, and I get along with both of them pretty well. Still growing, everyone as a team, getting to know each other, and playing together.

But yeah, I think the good thing is not only them but players from all around the world are coming into this team, and I think we're all getting along really well and really becoming a family. I think that's the most important thing for a successful club.

**Q. Looking back at the past weekend, you came off the bench late against D.C. What instructions did you get from Coach Hendrickson before you were subbed in?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: Yeah, it was a difficult game, a complicated game, where the teams were going at it and battling back and forth.

I think the main thing was to keep the same intensity, the same rhythm that Gastón had been playing with for 80 minutes, and yeah, to see out the game, be smart and choose my moments to go forward but also help in the defensive part of the game. They were a really direct team, so just winning second balls and helping close out the game, whether that could be with an offensive play or a defensive play. Yeah, I think that was the most important

thing that he said before going in.

**Q. Earlier, your younger brother, Oscar started in the midfield for the Fire in the GA Cup, although they were eliminated. As someone who came you throughout academy, can you talk about what it's been like seeing him progress in the academy over the last few years?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: It's been great. I try to make it out to most of his games, and his team is actually pretty good. It's fun watching them. It's been fun watching him since he was young player at such a high level, at such a young age, and right now, he's doing really well. I was really excited for him and the whole academy that participated in that tournament just because it's a super exciting tournament, teams from all over, and of course, all the MLS teams are there.

So it's an amazing experience for them all and I hope they made it out. I'm happy they made it out of the group stage and unfortunately, like you said, they weren't able to win today but yeah, it's such a great experience for them. I hope they enjoyed it, and yeah, really happy for my brother as well.

**Q. The Minnesota game this weekend, they won away against St. Louis; what are your thoughts going into this game?**

MAURICIO PINEDA: Yeah, I think they will be on a high after that win. But I think the main focus has always been on us, and how we prepare for the game. Obviously we expect a really difficult game. But I think the most important thing is to prepare on our game.

I think we have been playing really well, performing pretty well throughout; the 90 minutes have become more consistent this year. Continuing to do that and continuing to work for each other, I think that's the minimum expectation for us this year now. Working for each other all gives us a chance, gives us a chance to win the game. Keeps us in the game.

So hopefully we'll continue with that, and then hopefully in the key moments of the game, we'll be able to finish off games and hopefully come out with the three points this weekend.

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