

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Ezra Hendrickson

Press Conference



**Q. Just your thoughts on the overall start to the continue, last few games have been better than the first few. Tough place to play in Atlanta. Do you expect at Almada to be on the field, and can you stop him? And is Shaqiri fit enough to start this weekend, do you think?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: So the season has started really well for us. We are at a point where we feel like we're playing well but we can do better. Better in the sense of finishing out games a little stronger, and that has to do a little bit with the mentality side of things.

Just being, you know, tough, for once. We get up on a two-goal lead with teams. I think a couple of times, especially at home, we've let teams come back into games. We haven't lost at home but we feel like a couple of those ties should definitely be -- should have been wins for us.

Shaq is eligible for selection. He's in training full, so there's a possibility he'll be on the pitch on Saturday.

As far as Almada, he's a good player. It's about always knowing where he is on the pitch. He has that freedom to pop up wherever he sees fit, so we have to make sure as a team the communication is there and that we know where he's at at all times because he makes the game for them and I expect that he will be on the pitch this weekend, so if he is, we'll be prepared.

**Q. My usual question, other than Shaqiri, what is the injury situation with Terán, Giménez, Herbers, too, and Federico Navarro and Jairo Torres?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: So Fede is also in training. Terán, also is in training. Giménez didn't train today but we expect him to be back by this weekend.

And Jairo Torres, he's probably the one that's a little bit still behind. We are hoping if the next couple days he can, you know, get through training, then he'll be available for Sunday but the guys are on their way back.

All but Torres probably will be featured this weekend.

**Q. I guess moving on to another topic, the transfer window closes Monday. Are you expecting any further additions coming in before the window closes?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: No, I don't think so. I think at this point it will probably be the summer window before we get some reinforcements.

But as is, we don't really want to rush. We've tried to make some moves. A couple things fell through, so at this late hour, unless something changes drastically, it will probably be the summer window before we get -- revisit the transfers.

**Q. I didn't see Kei in training today. Is everything all right with him?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yeah, so he is going through protocol right now, concussion protocol. I don't know if you remember in the game, he kind of hit the back of, I think it was Bedoya possibly.

But we expect him to be back in training in a couple days. We just have to make sure that, you know, everything is okay there with him. He doesn't have any symptoms or anything like that, so he's expected to be back probably by Friday, training.

**Q. If I may ask, if he hypothetically wouldn't be able to, would that be a way for Przybylko to find his way back in or even Koutsias?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: With Kei in training, it's an open situation there. We have three guys we think can compete on a week-to-week basis until eventually one of them grabs ahold of that spot.

It's a good situation to have. It's something that we didn't quite have. Last year either we had Przybylko or Duran. We didn't have much more after that. We had some young guys who had never really played in the League or started in the League.

It's good to have that situation where you have three guys who are all capable at any given day to step on the pitch

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and be effective.

**Q. Heading into the U.S. Open Cup match next week, can you talk through the tournament and what it means for the club to be a part of the competition and how important it is for us to get a victory under our belts?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Any competition we enter as an organization, as a club, we want to do well and we want to win. This is no different.

But at the moment, our focus at least for the next four or five days is Atlanta, and how we can fare in league play. This is a very important game for us on Sunday. It's a very good opponent at a very difficult place to play, and it's one of those games that can really propel your season forward. So we're focused on Atlanta right now.

However, we do know that the House is a team we can't take lightly. We will enter the match with a strong team because we want to advance in that tournament, also.

We are in a situation where we can't really start focusing on them quite as yet but as soon as the game is finished on Sunday, trust me, the focus will shift towards them and how we can best put the strongest team out there to make sure that we get a victory and we move on in the tournament.

**Q. What is the benefit you think Kei brings so some of the younger players or even the club in general with all the experience that he has here in MLS?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, we've seen what he can do on the field, and it's something that's shown all his years in the League.

So we know about that. But off the field, he's a leader for us. He is a leader in the locker room. Like you said, we have a lot of young players that he's always talking to; he's always encouraging.

And he's just a good guy. He's a good person to have, especially whenever you have young players such as like the Guti's and Javier and Casas and guys like that, Rodríguez, Víctor Bezerra, he's the guy that really puts his arm around those guys and you see him talking to them. Guti calls him 'Grandpa'; it's a sign of respect. You know, that's someone that's kind of been there, done that.

So off the field, he's an extension to the coaching staff as far as what he does in the locker room and helping on the field with the players, especially the young ones.

**Q. Just wondering, when Terán went down Saturday, why you went to Kendall Burks instead of Wyatt Omsberg?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Well, I think we discussed it on the bench, and we thought Kendall, probably a little more pacy-ier, would be a better fit for us in that position.

I think Carlos fits Rafa really well because he has some pace. He adds about a pace to the back line when he's on there. We thought if we add Kendall, there we'll get some of that. And we tried Wyatt the weekend before, and before that in Miami, it was Kendall.

So we've kind of rotated who we have called upon in those two as far as to enter the match to kind of close a game down or injury.

So it's been kind of a rotating as far as they -- those two goes. But the thought was, you know, to get a more pacy guy out there, because we knew Philly would start coming under attack more frequently. So that was the reason behind that.

**Q. And is Wyatt completely healthy right now, coming off the foot surgery last year?**

EZRA HENDRICKSON: Yes, he's -- he had a bit of a tightness, upper leg tightness, but he's doing well. He's playable. There's no issues with him as far as healthy-wise not playing.

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