

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA



Frank Klopas Press Conference

Q. Your initial thoughts before tomorrow's match knockout round?

FRANK KLOPAS: Obviously it's exciting. We're looking forward to the match. Again I think it's always exciting when we're able to play a different opponent. I think the players are looking forward to the match. Puebla being here, I expect a great crowd tomorrow. I know we'll have our supporters but Club America, it's an opportunity to face a really good team so the players are looking forward to it.

Q. Do you have any unfinished business with Club America?

FRANK KLOPAS: No, I don't look at it that way. I just think that was great opportunity back then that we were in the final for a club like Montréal and we had -- in the second half in Montréal, we got opened up a little bit. America had a lot of quality in that match.

We did miss some key guys but it was a great match. Just looking forward to playing. They are probably one of the best teams and a team that has a great following and that's had some success, and I feel that in a short time with our team here, we have had some great players around the world that have been able to wear this jersey. In a short time, I think we have written many history of our own here. We played America in the past. It's always exciting to play them because the atmosphere here is going to be great. I know the players are looking forward to the match, and I just want a good match.

Q. You've had a couple days to scout out this Club America team, what are some of your initial thoughts on what the team will have to do to be successful?

FRANK KLOPAS: Our we have to stay patient and really compact and organize defensively, I think that's the key. Knowing there will be stretches where they have a lot of the ball because they try to pull out of certain areas and then really hit you if you get stretched, you know, their ability to play between the lines and vertically is there.

So we cover a lot of those scenarios, and you know, I think it's also important for us that with the ball, we need to be patient and also be good with the ball whether it's at transition moments, have good spells in possession where we can move them and create opportunities where we can also play through their lines.

We just focused a lot more on the strengths of the team, trying to give the team confidence, trying to give them really good instruction, organization defensively. And then obviously with the ball just some clear ideas.

I think also you can get there from A to B and B to C and quality needs to take over at certain moments where you have players who make some special plays. It's just giving the guys more confidence and when you do get results, I think the confidence grows, and then things just happen to go your way.

I think there's an appetite also when things go well to push things. You need to keep working and believing and stay grounded. I think that's been the focus. The response has been great from the group. Getting guys healthy, I think that's also part of it. And competition in every spot, I think that's also important, competition keeps everyone on their toes. I think we have always believed we have the quality here that this group can make the playoffs and that's very important and that's been the focus. And even with the win, it's important not to get away that the end goal.

Q. How do your guys feed off the intensity of the crowd tomorrow night?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, it's always great to play in full stadiums. This one will be packed, 21,000 here, but you have some players, big time players that have played in always 80,000 in every game. You know, guys like Shaqiri. When I tell him it's going to be a big crowd, he said to me, "Come on, Frank, 20,000, is that big?"

It's great when you come in here, I mean, you see the stadium, the fans right on top of you. There is, the energy, it's great. Just same as Soldier Field. That's a great stadium for us. You know, if you ask me, I mean, that's an incredible place because if you get 21,000 and, there it seems like it's 400. And it's both sides, and I think it's exciting. No one wants to come and play in front of empty



seats. We've been through the COVID era and it was a disaster for everyone around. It's great knowing that tomorrow will be a great atmosphere, even though it might seem like we are playing an away match, I think it's great because I think those fans that do come out, I think when they don't represent their team, it's an opportunity to win them over and showcase the growth of our league.

Q. It's been a very exciting week, a lot of the team was out at the match last night at Soldier Field. How are you feeling about the growth of this game from all around the world, really, and within our city?

FRANK KLOPAS: I mean, yeah, it's incredible. We can just talk about the growth of the league, you know, when I came into the league in 1996, it was disappointing for me because we didn't have a team here in Chicago and I played in Kansas City, which I loved, for two years but it was great to come back and finish my career here in Chicago where it started back with the Sting. If you look at where the league was then and where it is now, it's been incredible, the growth. I can't believe it. You see the stadiums, you see the training facilities, but also when you look around, the quality of players that are here, the international players and how much better and how much this league has helped the growth of the quality of players and their development. You know, you don't have to look that far. You look within our team. You look at guys, home grown guys like Pineda and Gutiérrez, he needs to continue to grow but he's a guy that I feel can go and compete in the European leagues and then also the ability when you look, you know, even in Miami and then you look at the guys that they have and you talk about one of -- the greatest ever players to play is a guy that played in our league and had options. That's been amazing. I know that all around the world, everyone is looking at our league. I think it's going to continue to grow. You have All-Stars from the owners and investors. Look at our owner and the commitment he's made and you see the same with other owners. I think it's on an upward climb. We need to be patient. Sometimes we are not. I know I'm not always patient. Our owner is. It's just incredible to see where we have come in a really short time. The future is ours, we just need to be patient.

Q. In 2013 there was a friendly game between Club America and Chicago Fire. Most of the kids were teenagers?

FRANK KLOPAS: If I ask Gutiérrez, he probably doesn't even know, or some of the younger guys.

Q. How is the injury report for tomorrow?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think, also, when you're playing a

tournament format, you need to always adjust a couple situations depending how guys have recovered. The good thing for us is everybody, most of the guys, I would say, are healthy. There's a couple question marks from the last game with Gutiérrez. I think Jairo Torres should be okay, Federico, I didn't want to risk him the last game so he should be able.

I think we need to make some changes to freshen up the team, and also, like I said, I think if we don't advance, and this is the last game before we play the next competitive match against Orlando, I'm also looking at match up, the last game I played Carlos with Mauri, I want to give them some games together, you know, leading up to that Orlando match. I think that's important because Rafa chooses his cards and he won't be able to play.

I think the good news is this time we have everyone healthy and I hope we come out of the game tomorrow with no setbacks. I think that will be very important. But everyone right now other than Chris Mueller, I would say, is -- I'm not missing anyone -- is ready to -- should be ready to go.

I know Kei Kamara had texted us and he had some issues that he wasn't feel great, so he's been away, and he might be the other guy that is not available.

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