

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Hello, Coach. How are you?

FRANK KLOPAS: Well, thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. We really appreciate it. We'll start with questions.

Q. The guys coming back from international break, is there a general timeline for those four, Miguel, Georgios, Xherdan and Jairo?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, they're coming back today at some point, different times. I think Jairo came in really early morning. That's the only one that got in here early. Everyone else, I think today, and tomorrow a couple guys.

Pending on any injuries, I didn't hear anything from our staff regarding any injuries from those players. Miguel played 89 minutes the other day, full games, scored the PK goal. Koutsias, I saw his game. Came out, played 65, close to 70 minutes.

The only one is Jairo was hard to get info and be able to watch him. I didn't hear any setbacks from anyone, so I think that's good news. We're just waiting for them to travel safe and be with the team here tomorrow at some point.

Q. An update on Navarro after having to leave early from the last one?

FRANK KLOPAS: No, he's still out. He's still out. He's not going to be available for this game. We'll go from game to game. I think he's going to be out for a while, unfortunately.

Q. Coach, before the break in August, the league had six wins out of seven matches. Since then it's been four losses. You're sitting outside of a Playoff place. What happened and what have you sought to fix that during the international break?

FRANK KLOPAS: I thought we talked about this.

I felt like that break, I mean, you looked at it, I think people asked, You guys are playing so well, this break is coming at this point. I just felt like it's an opportunity to get everyone healthy and continue to play in Leagues Cup some high-quality matches, which we did.

Then unfortunately the preparation, I'll tell you, the preparation leading up to the first game against Orlando was great. I felt really, really positive. I got sick a couple days before. I had to watch the game from home.

I thought that game was just in the details. We had some big opportunities early on. We should have scored. We got the first goal in the second half. At that point it should have been easy at least 2-0. I didn't feel Orlando, really in the run of play, they had one shot that I think Richey made a great save. Going back it was just set piece goals that did us in in that match.

Obviously going to L.A., different game. I really felt, again, positive going into that game. We had opportunities early on. The game changed obviously with the ref calling the second yellow, giving up the fast goal. Obviously tough giving up that one goal against Vancouver.

D.C. I think was one of those matches you want to put behind us, but also to learn from. When you give up four goals, 11 goals in four matches, the focus really has been in just getting really a defensive organization, just being really disciplined, staying compact. I think we lost a little bit of our structure, not in all those matches, in some of those matches where we got really stretched as a team. I think we're at best when we really stay compact and stay focused.

I think pushing the game at times, when you go behind, we got really stretched and we got punished for it. On the other hand, our inability to finish the chances, because we had quality chances, and didn't put them away. The main focus has just been on that we are tying up things defensively.

Q. Obviously you saw the winning streaks before the Leagues Cup, now a little struggle here. How have you seen the team's mentality be during that stretch? How do you try to approach it as a manager, trying to deal with the ups and downs that you'll face in a season?

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FRANK KLOPAS: I think from day one the important thing is the importance of celebrating victories but not going over the top - also with the losses that you have.

I think we've always rebounded and showed a lot of character as a team when we've had setbacks. Now it's been four games. I think the thing is I think the confidence also builds when you get results.

I think with us, it's just the importance of really getting organized and being clear about the game plan, giving the players good training sessions where they get the confidence. Just making sure that we really enforce that positive energy and that belief within the group on having the kind of mentality that it's on to the next one. Let's prepare really well and make sure we leave everything on the field, have that kind of a mentality.

It's not always easy when you lose games. Coming in the next day and making sure that myself as a coach and the staff, we're super positive and we're trying to give the guys all the confidence in the world but also making sure that we prepare really well on the training pitch, that we push 'em in the right way.

When you're down a little bit, it's more the arms around the shoulders and making sure that, Look, we're a good team, we're in a little bit of a downslide. We have to find our way and show a little bit of character to get out of this.

We're still in it. I know it's going to be a battle in the end. That's how it always is with MLS and the parity in the league. It's getting tight right now. Every game we play is a Playoff game. We can't hide from that. You can't sugarcoat that. The players see the standings. They know where we are.

It's important for us just to make sure that we have a really good game plan, we prepare really well, give the players as much confidence as we can in front of the goal but also our ability to defend well as a unit.

Q. Trying to see how are you planning to prepare this coming game, three main things that you like to focus? This is like a crucial moment in the season. A victory on this weekend will be great and put you on that fight for the Playoffs that is the main thing and goal for this season. Tell us about how you recover your players that are coming back, and what will be the two main things you will focus for this weekend to fight for that victory?

FRANK KLOPAS: Well, thank you for the question.

Obviously with the players, when they leave you, you always have your fingers crossed, making sure that also they travel, they have safe travel, they get there, then obviously that they have importance of good games, then that they come back safe, without any injuries.

I still have my fingers crossed because the players are not here yet, all of them. They will be here tomorrow. I watched their games, and they seemed to be okay after the game. So I think it's important to get those players back because those are quality players that they add a lot to the team. That's the important thing.

I think the other thing is, as we look with Montreal, you're absolutely right, this is a massive game. The implications are really huge for us because we're 32 points or 35. It's one of the teams that we have to surpass in order to get to the Playoffs.

It's a team for us that when we played them here last time, we won 3-0. We were really organized defensively and we were excellent on the break, in transition moments. I feel that at home there, we have to be ready for a fast start. They're going to press us.

Our ability to also be good with the ball, to be really organized defensively and be ready for a second start, winning our duel. Second balls are the key.

Then again, moments in transition where we can be really good and finish our chances. Even in these losses in the last matches, we've created a lot of opportunities, and we were not able to score. It puts added pressure on the team.

Defensively we got to tighten things up. If we give up two or three goals a game, I don't think we're going to get a lot of Ws with that. I think that's been the main focus.

Q. Because this is your first time back in Montreal as a head coach since you were there about 10 years ago, how did your time there impact you as a coach and as a person?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, no, I think from a confidence standpoint as a coach, maturity standpoint, I think for me that's when I really grew as a coach. I think when I stepped here with the Fire, I came in, my role was different. I was a technical director, then an interim coach. My main focus at that time, I wasn't thinking of coaching. I was focusing on being a technical director and I was trying to learn that part of the job with the league and the salary cap. Then I stepped in and I coached the team for two more years.

There's always a comfort level when you're home here. The media, you feel very comfortable in your own surroundings as home. You feel people are always there to protect you.

This was a big move going to Montreal. I think I grew a lot as a coach, but also I had a lot of confidence. In the two years that I was there, we were in three finals. We won the Canadian Cup, we lost in the final in the Canadian Cup, then we lost in the Concacaf final. I had an opportunity to coach some really big personalities and big players, out of my comfort level. I think that was a big step in my career.

Then when I left from there, I was done from coaching. I felt I was coming back to Chicago in a different role, to do whatever I can to help this team.

Life changes. Now I'm in this role again. It will be exciting to go back. I had great memories in Montreal. The city was great. The people were great. It's always good to go back, but it will be better going back and coming home with three points, I'll tell you that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time, Coach.

FRANK KLOPAS: Thank you, guys. Take care.

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