

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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## Xherdan Shaqiri

Press Conference



**Q. I wanted to ask you, how different does to prepare knowing that Lionel Messi would be on the field and not knowing if he's going to be on the field because it's still in question whether he'll be able to play or not. How does that affect you as a team and personally when you're preparing either you're going to be playing perhaps the best player in the world, or not, how does that affect your preparation?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Yeah, first of all, hello, everybody. The preparation is not going to change to be honest. We are going to prepare as normal as always.

Yeah, everybody is excited to play against Inter Miami. If Messi is injured or not, me personally, I'm not thinking too much about this because, yeah, at the end of the day, as a game, we try to beat Miami at home with a big crowd, and yeah, at the end of the day, we have to perform well and we need three points, and yeah, of course, the Inter Miami is a different team when Messi play and when he's not playing, so you saw that in the last few games. And when Messi plays, everybody on the team is better, and that's why he's the best in the world at the moment.

But we prepare as normal like every game and we try to win this game with or without Messi.

**Q. You've had the opportunity with some of your younger teammates to grow. Watching these young guys, Koutsias, Brian, grow into these roles, what have you seen from them and what it looks like in the future for them?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: They are good players, good, talented players. Yeah, if they work hard every day, if they are consistent in training, in games, then they have, yeah, good career ahead. But they are still young. They can improve, and if they are consistent bringing good performances, then I'm sure they can have a good career, not only MLS but maybe to make a move to Europe to a good team, and yeah, to get better.

But of course, they are important players for us, and I hope they can make steps forward and can help more everybody in this club and then to be successful, I think this is a goal of what we should have and we need. That we are successful as a team and as a club. Yeah, they are very good players, important players for us as a club, as a team. I hope they get better every year, every game, every training. Yeah, they are exciting players.

**Q. As a professional, you're looking at ways you can improve and raise your game. What are you focused on in terms of your own game? Where are you seeing improvement? And specifically, how do you want to influence this game on Wednesday night?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Always improvement, of course, but I don't think it's only one person. We have a whole team who everybody needs to perform, and of course, I'm also one of the leaders who goes in front and tries to perform as best as possible. I try this every day. Sometimes it goes well, sometimes not. This was the whole season a bit our season.

But we have a chance now, and we have three more games to play, and everything is in our hands, too, so we can make the playoffs this season. But we need the points. But of course, everyone can improve, me included. I try to help my team as best as possible with my skills with, my tools, what I have, and what I'm very good at, so I try to help the team every time.

**Q. You've been known as a big-game player in your career. Even though it's been a difficult season, are you excited for these last three games to potentially make the playoffs and fight to get in that last spot?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Yeah, very, I think these are the best games to play all the time. As a player you want these kind of final games and to play for something. We put ourselves in this position, and we have a chance to do it, so now we have to perform, and yeah, I think it was a good step against Red Bull to win this game. It was important. Now three games are our final games and the guys -- I told the guys before the game that they are -- that there is no tomorrow, no yesterday, so we have to perform well and to win these games. If you want to achieve something, so every game is going to be a final.

Yeah, we start with Red Bull, it was a good win and I hope this gives us positive vibes and positive for the whole team that we can go in the next games; and we are going to take it game by game, and the next one is Inter Miami, and we know, also, Inter Miami didn't win like the last few games. So it's going to be a good game I think. We need a good performance from every to try to achieve our goals, and try to take these three points and that the three points stays in Chicago.

**Q. Beyond the playoffs, what does it match mean to the Fire as a franchise as a whole? You're going to have so many people in the stands who might be seeing the club for the first time.**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: Yeah, it's going to be exciting for them, too. That's why it's more important that we perform well and put a good performance, not only for the club, for ourselves, but also for the fans who maybe come for the first time in the stadium to watch soccer. We want to play offensive and we want to score a lot of goals. This is what I like to play, too.

I hope we can give them a good game, first of all, and, well, the most important thing is that we win the game; and that yeah, the people go back home happy and that next time they are going to come again and cheer us more. I think this is everywhere the game in sport. If you are more successful, more people are going to come watch you. This is what we want here. We want success, and for this, if you want a lot of people in the stadium, you need to be successful, and that's what we try to do every day, yeah, I hope not only for this game but in the near future more people are going to come watch us and cheer us. But it needs, also, from our side good performances and success.

**Q. Last time I wrote an article in the U.K., Messi was a key player, but right now, who would you compare is the best player?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: In the world?

**Q. For the club and country?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: For me it's clear Ronaldo and Messi are the best players in the world at the moment, and it's not only for here. These guys, they are along the best athletes in history of sport among the other athletes like Michael Jordan or Tom Brady and these kind of athletes because what they did for football the last decade is unbelievable. It's difficult to achieve. We should be happy to enjoy them every day because one day, they are not any more here.

So I think we have to enjoy these guys seeing every day

on TV or live in the stadium because one day they are not going to be here any more, and I don't know when the next Messi or Ronaldo comes. It's difficult.

**Q. You can't pick within the two?**

XHERDAN SHAQIRI: It's difficult to compare but for me, of course, I'm a big Messi, always admire, and of course for me, Messi, if I have to choose now at the moment, Messi won just the World Cup, so I think that's the only thing he (Ronaldo) missed. So I will choose moment for sure Lionel Messi.

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