

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Maren Haile-Selassie

Press Conference

Q. So obviously you've been here on loan this season, so there's always a chance this your last game for the Fire. So how would you reflect on this season and the experience for you, and is coming back next season something that interests you?

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Yeah, so first of all, I hope it's not my last game this season. That would mean we wouldn't make it to the playoffs.

Yeah, other than that, it's been a good season for me. It's been, like you said, first season in MLS. It was very exciting, a lot of new things. But I think I dealt with most things pretty well.

Yeah, I enjoyed it with the teammates, with the club, with the staff, with the workers, and it's been a year for me.

Yeah, about next season, yeah, we will see. Like, you know, I have an option on my contract but yeah, there are some aspects that will play a role in those decisions. So we will see. But I can imagine myself being here next season, yeah.

Q. First year in MLS, these playoffs are obviously a bit unique to the American soccer system. I'm curious how you feel about that, if you needed an extra explanation on what needs to happen on Saturday, and just your expectations for playing in a baseball stadium.

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Yeah, so the playoffs, obviously there's no one who can really explain all the possibilities that could play a role. But we just know that if we win, if we get three points, we've done our job, and then we have to see the other games. But I feel pretty confident that if we get a win, that we can make it to the playoffs.

Yeah, it would be my first time in a baseball stadium. They told me that it's a pretty narrow pitch, and yeah, it's for both teams the same pitch. So we have to deal with that and try to make the best out of it.

Q. I wonder, when you look at the last game in particular, I'm looking at your game and New York City's last game, both were so important for both teams, yet they didn't quite reach the level that you would have liked, and you were coming off that really huge match at Soldier Field with the great attendance. So what do you think happened in that game, and how could that impact what happens in this next one?

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Yeah, so obviously we missed a huge opportunity last game, especially after a game, like you said, against Miami where with the crowd and with the performance was really good. But yeah, I think the first sub was really not good. We didn't start the game really well. We weren't on our front foot. I'd say they were more aggressive. Yeah, more quicker to the ball. More aggressive, more active, and second half was better.

Obviously after the penalty given against us, it was very difficult. But yeah, we tried to move on from that and obviously now we have like a final for us, a final game who it's do-or-die basically, so we prepare as well as possible for this game, and yeah, we are looking forward to it.

Q. Curious in your time with the club, maybe what you've seen this team improve on, where you've seen this team maybe grow a little bit, and what you might take away from this season, make the playoffs or not?

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Yeah, so obviously the start of the season was, I'd say we had good performances but the results weren't, like, pretty -- what we expected, because we had good games, and then late equalizers or late losses. So it was up and down.

In the middle of the season, we had a pretty good phase where we were winning and full of confidence.

Like everything can happen in a season. You have these ups and downs, but we know that the most important thing in the season is obviously to finish it good. So we have a chance now on Saturday to make a good ending.

So it was a good season, I would say, with ups and downs, and a lot of things to learn from for sure for the future?

Q. What has it been like having these two weeks after

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the Charlotte loss to compare and think about it, but also understanding the consequences of the matches that you'll play this weekend?

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: I don't know if we needed these two weeks to understand the importance of the game to the next game.

It was good, we had some days off to turn off and forget the game and just get the mind free again to look for the next game, as well. So I think we prepared good, and now two more days and then we are ready.

Q. So when you're in a situation like this where your playoff hopes basically come down to this one game, what's your mentality and approach as a player, and how do you strike the balance of knowing what's on the line and playing up to that moment versus kind of trying to maintain your normal game?

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Yes, I think I can just speak for myself but I think it's important to try not do crazy things. Just try to keep your rituals. Even though it's an important game, if you overdo a lot of things, it can go bad as well.

We know of the importance, but it's important to stay cool, stay relaxed, and yeah, it's a football game, 90 minutes. So yeah, try to do your things. You know what's expected from you, and yeah, just stay cool, just stay relaxed, even though we know the importance like I said.

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