

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Q. To start off, I'm curious with Fede and Mauricio coming back from injury, as well as the guys from international break, what the availability for the squad on Saturday will look like.

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I mean, Fede will be good to go. He's been training with the team since last week.

Mauri took part in training today for the most part. So I think he should be available, unless something, you know, any setbacks. But he took, I would say, more than three quarters of the training he was involved, and we were a little bit careful in the end with him. So he missed, you know, one exercise in the end.

So the rest of the guys are all in today. They will be doing some stuff inside in the gym and we should have everyone ready to go tomorrow. So I mean, I think for me other than Chris Mueller who is out, and Gastón with cards at the moment, I feel that everyone at the moment should be available for selection and would be available for the game.

Q. Calling in from the great State of New York. When you took over the team in May, honestly it felt like the playoffs were quite far away, and now even though you need help from other teams, it's still a possibility going into the last game. Do you think this season would be a failure if you don't make the playoffs?

FRANK KLOPAS: That word, a "failure," is not a great word that I would use.

Look, I think teams that don't make the playoffs, you can look at it that it has not been a successful season. There's no other way of sugarcoating it or putting it. I wouldn't use that word, but there's eight, nine teams that get in and there's an opportunity for postseason and the rest of the teams are not there.

Any way you look at it, for me would be you know a situation where we are not able to accomplish the goals that we set forth. You know, we wanted to give ourselves

an opportunity, and we have. So you know, anything can happen.

I think the important thing is just to focus on what we have to do, and we know it's going to be a difficult match, especially a team that's still there's a possibility or an option defending what happens tonight. But I'm sure every team wants to finish strong, even if it's their last game of the season.

For us, we just have to go and try to take care of business and then we'll see what happens with the rest. But we have to kind of control our situation first and then hopefully some things go our way.

Q. Curious over the last few months, have you seen some growth if this club, the way they play, individually, players, and I guess maybe what will you take away from these last few months, whether you make the postseason or not?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I mean, I think what I look at the club and as a whole, I think there's been tremendous growth. I'm not talking specifically about just the team on the field but I think all around.

I think when Joe Mansueto took over the team, we were lagging in so many areas, front office and the business side and the soccer side, which is the most important thing for us; and I think in his time that he's been here, I think he's, you know, put his hand in the pocket and really has put the resources that we have needed and we lacked before, I think for me in the past, to bring the club up to par and try to become one of the elite clubs, not only in MLS but in the world. The last part is just the on-field stuff.

Again, for us, I think there has been growth. We are very close. I think the mission and the goal for the team is to be winning trophies and championships. I think getting in the playoffs is the first step, and it's a club and a team that we haven't been there in a long time.

So that's the last part, getting the on-field stuff right and bringing in players with quality, but also that have the culture and are committed to do whatever it takes for the success of the club.

I think we are close. But if we don't do it, then we have to

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take a hard look and see the steps that we have to take, and they are not going to be easy steps in order to get there and be a club that's consistently there every year.

Q. So you've got a bit of a unique situation with this game, fighting for a playoff spot on decision day when you need a result. In terms of your messaging and mentality to the players for a game like this, you know, how much of it is trying to get them to treat it like a normal game and not make too much of it versus also making sure that they understand the stakes and play up to the moment?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, no, good question. I think the focus for us, you can look at it as another game. I think it's important -- I think for us, the preparation, the daily preparation, and I think, you know, when we put forth every day and how we try to prepare the guys, and from the head of performance guys and the coaching staff and this or that, I think it doesn't change.

It's not that we are going to do something crazy where they feel, even though they know that it's a big game and an opportunity, but I think it's business as usual for us.

I think one thing late in the season, we've been focused with off-season stuff is just really reducing the volume and just increasing the intensity so it's nice, short and sharp just to make sure we are a hundred percent fresh and ready to go with energy come Saturday.

I think the other part is that we are missing a lot of games away with international duty, and your fingers are always crossed that they come back and are healthy. I think everyone is back today, and hopefully we don't get any bad news tomorrow but I watched all their games. They seemed to have been okay after their matches.

Look, it's one game right now. You have to put guys at the end of the day that you know you can count on. It's not going to be an easy game. Guys that you know are going to leave everything on the field for you and that's going to be the most important thing, to be really organized, have a very crystal clear game plan and put guys that you know are going to leave everything on the field.

And that's the most important thing. That's the message for me is just this game and in every game, it's just making sure that, you know, there's no regrets after the match that say, I could have done this, I could have done that.

We go with that mindset: Prepare well, take care of ourselves and then go and leave everything on the field, and then there's no regrets regardless of what happens. We know it's a game, anything can happen, and we are

playing against a good team.

We have confidence in ourselves. We believe a hundred percent that we are a good team and we should be in the playoffs and we need to take the field with that kind of confidence and belief.

Q. Maren is coming up next. Just curious what you've seen from him this year with the buy option from the team. He's provided some versatility, both winger positions. Curious what you've seen from him?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think for me it's all about consistency. We need winners that, look, his characteristics is a guy that has pace and he can get behind. The thing always, I want two-way players. I think not only getting forward but also his ability now without the ball to help the team.

I think consistency is another thing. I think any new player coming into the league, it does take time to adjust to the League. I think he came in very strong, and then, you know, there's a period where I think normal with the amount of games he's played, our league a little bit different. He needs to adjust.

Look, I think he has qualities to have impact in the final third. I think for me, it's always about consistency, you know, and I need wingers and we need wingers on the team that are going to be constantly a threat; and we need guys that are going to get on the scoreboard, whether it's assists and goals. He has the ability. It's just about now realizing to be able to do it consistently.

Q. Playing in a baseball stadium presents its own set of challenges, but New York City are a good team, as well, with a lot of good players. What kind of game are you expecting on Saturday?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think it's exciting to play. I remember back in the old days, the Sting used to play at Wrigley Field and they used to get 33,000.

Yeah, New York, look, they are a very good team. I think we have been focusing today a lot and the last couple days and just the way they try to build pressure on us and the different ways that they look to press and to have solutions.

Available. They definitely have players, quality players like every team. But it's just making sure that we are very well prepared, what to expect from them and obviously going in with confidence and make sure the areas that we have been focused on with the ball, we attack them and we consistently do that.

But it's about confidence, knowing that it's going to be a

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difficult game. You're going to be in difficult moments and we have got to stay strong in those moments and find ways where we keep it really tight defensively and we giving nothing away. I know we are going to get some opportunities with the ball to get chances.

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