

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Q. Can you just maybe talk about the excitement I'm sure every team at this point in the year is excited about preseason obviously but what are your thoughts kind of as this group gets together?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, thanks, happy new year to you and to everyone that's on this call.

Obviously, yeah, you're absolutely right. I mean, it's a new beginning for us and for every other MLS team, it's a new year, a new beginning. Obviously a lot of excitement to finally be back together after a long time for us, over 64 days.

So it's always great to finally get back together with the group, to see everyone, and obviously to start the preparations for the new year. Full of optimism and then just really focus on the preparation in this first phase of preseason for us. A lot of guys in camp, obviously. But it's a lot of excitement from all of us and from the guys and we are super optimistic to start and super optimistic for the season.

Q. Curious, very jealous of you in Florida. How are you feeling about where the team is at in terms of roster building? We are in the midst of the January window in terms of additions or people going out, what you see over the next few weeks for your team as you try to finish off what this roster looks like.

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, obviously we're excited to get going again. We have made two key additions off the bat Tobias Salquist and Alan Arigoni, two players that are very good players, experienced players that, can come in and I believe have helped the team right away. We are waiting for their visas, obviously, to get finalized and hopefully they will be with us either at the end of this first phase or back once we turn to Chicago and be ready to travel with the team when we go to the second phase of preseason.

The team, look, we are trying really hard. We all know, we always talked about the DP No. 9, that signing. We have

targeted a couple players, and I can't say more than that but we are very close to getting -- finalizing something, but I can't talk into details and to names right now because nothing is over the line at this point.

And look, I mean, we are always looking to improve the team. There's no question about that. I think we have a good nucleus. But the important thing is three or four key spots, I feel that we have talked about it before the season ended with our sporting director Georg Heitz and our technical director, Sebastian Pelzer. They have been working really hard to get that done and enforce the team and improve the team, and that's always been our goal.

Sometimes it takes a little bit longer than we all expect but sometimes it these deals are never easy. The minute you think you are close to getting it done, something always changes. I'm not saying anything until it gets over this line because I've been in this game too long, and I know how sometimes things work, and I don't want to jinx anything.

So I'm optimistic. I know we are all working hard to improve the team. We had a couple good additions but now we need to add a couple more pieces.

Q. Last season when we spoke, you said taking over the head coaching job had not been something we wanted but now we are talking to you here today. When did that change for you, and what excites you about the task of bringing the team back to where it belongs?

FRANK KLOPAS: I've always said that I would do anything for the club. That's always been my role. When I came back from Montréal, I got back involved with the team. For me, the coaching days, I felt at that point were over because I wasn't ever planning on leaving Chicago. And when you're coaching, the clock is always ticking, and you've got to be prepared at some point to pack your bags and go somewhere else. For me, Chicago is home. The Fire is the team that I've always loved, even though when I went to Montréal, that's never been a secret.

So when the opportunity came and it was presented to me, you know, I felt that this is where I could best help the club now and in the future, I wasn't going to say no. It's a big honor for me to be in this position, to be the head coach again for this club. It's one of the big markets in this



league, and I believe for me -- and the world, it's a city and a club that I think if you open it up and say, okay, who wants to coach this team, I'm telling you, you would get thousands and thousands of requests.

So I don't take this opportunity in any light way. I'm really honored to be in this position and I will do whatever it takes to help this club become successful, and that's how it all kind of came down. It was like, you know, this opportunity was there, and I felt that sometimes it's always hard to say no because there might be days where, you know, when you get older, and I'm going to get older even though sometimes I feel like I'm the oldest guy in the room, I never wanted to have this regret that I didn't take this opportunity and try to help the club, and this is best way to help it right now and in the future, like I said.

Q. I know that you are a pioneer in this league. You have big miles, you have too many miles in this MLS and this is like a new opportunity for you. Tell me how satisfied are you with this team, and if this team is ready to compete and fight to be again in playoffs? I think that the fans want to see again the Chicago Fire in the top five of this league. What will you say to the fans that some of them, they say, oh, my God, it's been another season and we don't see the Chicago Fire in playoffs and in the top five list as they want. What would you say to them?

FRANK KLOPAS: Well, obviously they are right. I think we all share in the disappointment. We care about the team and we all love the team. I think when we don't reach our goals, I think there's always a situation where we have to reflect, look back and see how we can improve and become better. I think that's been the goal.

The only thing that I can say is that in the past four years, I think there's been really big changes to the club in a positive way. And for me, that really has taken place since our new owner, Joe Mansueto took over the team. The team was lacking and far behind in many aspects from other teams in the League, and you know, sometimes we all want that success to happen overnight but it doesn't happen in that way. I think last year, we were very close, but you know, my mentality and me coming in, you know, I've always said that I don't want to be a team -- and I know that this club doesn't want to be a team that was sneaking into the playoffs. We want to build something and we want to build a team that every year, we are competing to win trophies. I know that's what the fans want and that's what they expect, and that's what we all expect.

I know that's what the owner expects, our owner. He's committed. He's put a lot of resource into it, and the final part is now looking at how best we can improve the team to

give us the best options and opportunities on the field to be successful. The only thing I can tell the fans is that I know myself and the people that are with me, and I know the players, we are going to do whatever it takes for this club to at the end of the season to be in the playoffs and be competing and trying to win a trophy where we can make them all proud. That would be my goal. That would be really an incredible honor for me to have won something as a player, lifted that trophy, and to be able to do it now as a coach and to give something to the fans and to the team that has meant so much and given so much to me.

Q. I've seen the matches you have ahead for the preseason, you are facing five teams in the MLS in the preseason. What are your thoughts about this? Because I know you are trying to get a new team back together with these reinforcement, but also the other teams are trying to do the preseason. What are your thoughts about facing all these teams in January and February?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I think the first phase with anything when you've been away for 64 days, our main focus in the beginning is the fitness standpoint, but also getting across our principles of play and our game model and we do have two games here.

But we wanted to get some really good competition with MLS teams before the season started. And I think this is a tournament in Coachella provides us the opportunity to do so. Really good teams, MLS teams, and which will best prepare us for that first game in the opening season.

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