

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Chris Mueller

Press Conference



**Q. Curious, starting preseason, everything starts fresh here. What do you think, what do the Fire need to do here to maybe take that next step and get across the line and get into the playoffs?**

CHRIS MUELLER: I think we've been make something good steps in the right direction, since I at least arrived. I think it's just a continuation of a process, right. Get some stability here. I think we have got a good group of guys. We are obviously fresh and have a ton of positivity going in and around the locker room right now.

So I think it's about sticking to our principles, and obviously we need to execute when game days come, right. That's what it's all about. We are going to try to get a lot of work done down here we can take on the concepts that we are trying to learn. There's a lot of new faces here, and we are just trying to continue to improve on that so that we can reach our goals when the end of the season comes.

**Q. Curious where you're at in your rehab process. Obviously been a long year, and curious what you've taken from this last year, obviously tough on the injury front, but then on your personal front, a very exciting year. So curious where you're at and what you're looking to do over this next month as you get some competitive minutes?**

CHRIS MUELLER: No, I'm fully back. I was cleared a few months ago. Maybe a month or two ago, and have been training really hard in the off-season. Didn't really have much of an off-season to be honest. It was a lot of me just trying to get back into it top shape to get as much of my physique back as possible, right, before you obviously get in and get game minutes like you said.

I feel great, man, honestly. It's been really, really -- even for me, it was hard last year not being involved as much with the team and helping them when obviously we just needed a little bit more to reach our goals in the playoffs.

But yeah, that's always difficult for any player. I obviously

never faced anything like that in my career before, so to be out for so long was not obviously ideal. I don't think anybody enjoys those times.

But I definitely feel like I grew as a person, and I'm hoping to come back stronger, right, like everybody who goes through these types of injuries, which is right. So I know I put in the work, and I'm prepared for this season. And yeah, I feel really good, no pain like I had before. So that's where my mind is at.

**Q. Feels like it's been forever since we've seen you play, so looking forward to seeing you back on the field again. My question for you is what do you think it is that this team needs to get back to the playoffs, get back to the promised land, because it's been a rough couple of years there, and the transfer window is still open. Is something in particular that you think the team is missing right now?**

CHRIS MUELLER: I think we definitely struggled to get high numbers of goals last season, which I thought that was just a bit obvious in that sense.

But nonetheless, I think that a lot of our downfall came in our own hands. I don't think if you look back at any games; I watched obviously a lot last season. Had a ton of opportunities to observe but it was nothing necessarily that I feel like opponents had outplayed us or outdid us in any way, shape or form.

It was sometimes our lack of execution or just little bit I feel like maybe lapses of focus or some things like that.

But if you look back even when we played best teams in the League, I always felt like we were in games, we competed hard, and like I said it's just about taking those final details to the next level because I think that that will make all the difference for us.

**Q. Frank was saying that this preseason, it's going to be something where you can meet the new players obviously and also get physical -- prepare physically for all of you guys. You have kind of -- have not worked with Frank, but also you understand his way of playing. I want to know your thoughts about facing these teams like LAFC, Austin, Portland, Minnesota, before the season starts and what you think about**

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**Frank put in for this new year 2024?**

CHRIS MUELLER: Yeah, obviously the preseason is a good opportunity for us to just get together. Like you said, a lot of new faces, and it's about becoming familiar with each other and starting to build that chemistry and team bonding that goes into this period for all teams, right, and I think that's really important.

Like as well as you said, the physical component to it, we are going to be pushing ourselves and breaking down the muscles and really getting to that next level of fitness, as well, so that when the games come, we are prepared for those as well. I know Frank is a big believer that preparation is key for all success that's to come, right. It gives you the confidence that you need when you step onto the field, and that's been a principle that's been continually reiterated in and around here.

And with Frank, man, I played under him as the assistant obviously since I had come in, and I know he's known me for a long time. So I'm definitely looking forward to the opportunity to play for him as the head coach. That will be fun for me.

**Q. Reunited with your old college teammate, Tom Barlow. Curious how you're feeling about that. We talk about goal scoring. You're familiar with this player. What do you think he can bring to the squad?**

CHRIS MUELLER: It's funny, man, we are roommates here. So we were in the room a couple nights ago, and I was like, I feel like I am back in college. We had friends on the TV and it was literally like déjà vu. Brings me seven years back. Maybe I'll be seven years younger on the pitch, too. We'll see.

But I have a good connection with Tom. We obviously played four years together. I know him really well. He's someone who always at least what you know is that he's going to give a hundred percent for the team. He works tremendously hard. He has a lot of physical abilities where he's strong, he's really fast and he can get in behind, and that was one of the things I loved about what I was playing with him. I was playing a little bit underneath, but any time you got the ball, you knew he was going to make a good run and you could kind of slip him in. And obviously in front much goal he's a good finish as well. That's what you want in a No. 9.

I think he'll score some big goals for us this year. I have no doubt about that. And yeah, it's been fun so far and I'm definitely looking forward to continuing to build that relationship with him as well.

**Q. I'm going to need you to keep me updated on what shows you guys are bingeing.**

CHRIS MUELLER: I will.

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