

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Andrew Gutman Press Conference



my head was thinking I want to eventually come back to Chicago. I want to be able to play for this club.

Thankfully guys within the organization kept good relationships with me. Every time we played in Chicago, I would still say hello and have some chats with some of the guys throughout the club.

I never felt like it wasn't my club. I always felt like the Fire was a part of me. Like I said, this off-season everything kind of came together where there was a great opportunity for me to come back. I was in a position where I wanted to come back. I wanted the prime of my career to be with Chicago. I feel like these upcoming years are going to be probably the best level I'm going to be able to play at, and I wanted to be able to play for Chicago while doing that.

Like I said, nothing is ever guaranteed in this business. I'm happy eventually this got done and I was able to return to Chicago.

THE MODERATOR: Andrew, how are you?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Good.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with all of us today. We really appreciate it.

We'll start with questions.

**Q. Andrew, first few weeks with the squad. First impressions? How has this all been going? The desire to return to Chicago, some people don't want to come home, it can be terrifying, but to get that three-year commitment, how has that been?**

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, it's been amazing to come back to the club that I grew up playing for. It's something that I always envisioned happening. Thankfully this last off-season, was able to come to fruition. For me, it's always where I wanted to be, where I've always wanted to play. I'm thankful for the club bringing me back.

Hopefully I'm here for the rest of my career. That's my goal. It's been great so far. Meeting the guys, meeting the coaching staff, everyone involved with the club, super welcoming. Helping me out when I need it.

I think every day the team's working to get better and better, get the club back to where it's been in the past. That's our goal. Hopefully we can achieve that in the future.

**Q. Obviously you've got a long history with the organization. Looking back, what were the discussions like? How did it feel different this time around? What made you want to come full circle back to Chicago?**

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I think in this profession, nothing's ever guaranteed. When I was growing up and coming up through the academy, there were discussions to stay. Things happened. It didn't work out. But I always in

**Q. Andrew, aside from the soccer stuff, being excited to rejoin your boyhood club, what are the non-soccer factors? What are you most excited about looking forward to being back?**

ANDREW GUTMAN: Just being around my family. My girlfriend's family is here, as well. Hopefully I'll have 50-plus people at every game cheering me on and getting to experience what I do live.

I was talking to my family this off-season. We were kind of counting the games they've actually seen me play live. It's at most maybe one-third of what I've played. Now for my friends and family to be able to watch me play live almost every single game, that's something that I've dreamed of.

Just the familiarity of being at home, being at a club that I've known for so long, it just feels better to me. I have a new drive and a new passion with this club to get it back to where it was. I'm just looking forward to all the success hopefully we have on the field, but also the great memories I'm going to be able to experience with my friends and family being back home in Chicago.

**Q. There's so much different at the club, so many different faces, even the crest. How does it feel? Do you perceive a lot of that change? How have you**



## processed that?

ANDREW GUTMAN: I think the club has changed, just like the league's changed from when I was growing up, even my first few years in the league.

I think Chicago is a club that's kind of like a sleeping giant almost. It has such a big market, so much potential. We have a great owner that is willing to do everything to get this club to the top.

Yes, things have changed, but there's also guys within the club that are still here that when I was in the academy, getting opportunities to train with the first team. It's nice to see those familiar faces still with the club. They know what this club is all about. The new guys they've brought in, their main goal is to take it back to the top.

Everything I've experienced so far, I've seen nothing but positive impacts within the club. Coming back home and seeing all this, it makes me very excited for the future of this club.

**Q. It seems like you've always had value, but maybe you're in this weird class of players whose value makes you more tradeable. That must have been infuriating for you on some level, especially when you had to leave your hometown to get started.**

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I mean, my dad always tells me every time I've been traded or something happens, he's like, it's not a bad thing to be wanted. I always look at it as a positive. Teams are willing to give up assets to bring you in. That's something to me that gives me a lot of pride, that I'm good enough that teams want to do that.

I'm grateful that Chicago was able to complete a trade to get me home. This is where I've always wanted to be, so hopefully this is the last club I play for in MLS.

**Q. Without harkening too much on the beginnings and stuff, but what is the message you'd like to give to the fans now that you're here? What's it like playing with Tom Barlow again? Is it nice to see a familiar face?**

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I've known Tom for a long time. I played against him when I was at Indiana and he was at Wisconsin. Same with Chris. Known him for a long time. Obviously Tom and I played together in New York. It's great to be back teammates with him, such a good guy. I'm looking forward to playing together again and hopefully helping him score a few goals this year.

Yeah, then to answer your other question, one of the I think misconceptions of what happened years ago, I had no

intention of playing for the Fire, that was never the case. I've always wanted to play for the Fire. I never wanted to play for any other club.

Like I said before, in this profession nothing is guaranteed. Unfortunately years ago it didn't work out and it was something I was very, very sad about. Every game I could watch of the Fire, I'd always watch them, keep tabs on them.

For me, I just want the fans to know that I've always felt this was my club. I've never wanted to leave. I'm so happy that I'm back here. I hope that I can repay the club for bringing me back with my performances on the field.

**Q. I feel like we owe Andrew an on-pitch question. How do you feel about the role Frank has been explaining to you, pitching to you for the upcoming season? How do you feel working with that new back line teammates?**

ANDREW GUTMAN: I don't know if Frank will want me to give too much information on what my role is throughout the season. But I've had a few talks with him. I can say that I'm super excited about the role that he wants me to play within the club both on the field and off the field. I think it's something that really fits who I am as a player. Hopefully I can show that this year on the field.

The back line, it's obviously a new back line to me. I'm still trying to get to know a lot of the players. What I've seen so far is really good. I'm super excited to play with Rafa, to play with Wyatt, to play with (indiscernible), who I grew up playing with in the academy. Haven't had the chance yet to play with Carlos. I played against him multiple times. He's just a beast of a center back.

I think we have a really good back line going into the season. Hopefully we can be rock solid back there.

THE MODERATOR: Andrew, thank you so much for taking the time today. We appreciate it.

ANDREW GUTMAN: Thank you.

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