

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Q. Just wondering, how would you evaluate Xherdan Shaqiri's performance so far this season?

FRANK KLOPAS: It's four games in, Brian. How would I evaluate? I think it can always be better just like everyone else. It can always -- it can always be better.

So I think there are moments when he is in good spots in the final third and I think you can see, his ability, I think even in the Columbus match, his ability to provide that final pass that he can, I think that there are times where I think he can do a lot more on his own, whether attacking, finishing plays, and then I think just decision-making at times when he's further away from the field, I think can be better.

But we expect a lot more from him and from the rest of the guys, our expectations are high. They know that. So it's a bit early on in the season. It's hard. We can talk after ten games.

Q. Just wondering, though, just to follow up on that, why do you think that the attack seemed to click a little bit more when he left the field? Was it the formation change? Was it that other players fit together better? Why do you think that happened that the offense, I know there was a red card, but why the offense seemed --

FRANK KLOPAS: We were pushing -- we were pushing the game. I think even in the beginning as a whole, I think it's difficult when you go, you have a game plan and then you go, you start the first five minutes, you're losing 2-0, it becomes really difficult. The other team is sitting really back. They are very compact in their 5-4-1 formation. That's a team that's really good in transition moments.

And then we're pushing the game and you get more exposed and you're taking a lot more risk, and obviously there's a moment in the game where we have to push the game. We got the second goal a, and they get the red card and we are pushing the game. We played with three

strikers really narrow just to pin them in, and I think the ability that we have as a team to change the game in certain moments, it's been good.

But I think that game became difficult when we fell 2-0 really early on, and then we played a little bit more, not into their hands about we have to take a lot more risk as a team and then they are a team that's just going to sit and look to counter.

Q. Is there an update on Andrew Gutman and his return to the pitch?

FRANK KLOPAS: No. I don't -- sorry, guys. I don't have a date right now that I could tell you. He's still doing stuff on his own on the side.

I'm also waiting to get some positive news when he can join the team, but as of right now, I don't know the exact date. I mean, you've been out there and you've seen that he does a lot of stuff on his own as far as running, but he has still not been involved with the group.

So I'm waiting day-to-day to hear something from our medical staff and then he can start participating and doing certain things with the team. But as of right now, he has not.

Q. Without a doubt it was an exciting victory where the team's attitude stood out.

FRANK KLOPAS: Thank you.

Q. But what are the things that need to be improved to prevent the team from finding itself in a similar situation of having to fight to the end with a two-goal disadvantage?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I think the thing is, you look at our team in the first four games, we've scored eight goals. So we've created opportunities.

But on the other hand, you know, we've given up nine, and that becomes really difficult then for us to, you know, to get results. We are not going to be scoring four goals every game, that's for sure. I think that, you know, we need to become a team that if we get two goals, we should be able to get results from there.

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I think as a whole, just our ability and our focus and concentration, our mentality, our ability to win duels, without the ball that has to be improved. Our set pieces, set piece defending, you know, I think those are areas that we need to improve because we've given up way too many goals and we make it really difficult upon ourselves to get anything out of games, and that's been proven.

Because in the four games, you score two goals, you can easily say that we should have had more than four points. It's an area as a whole, as a group, as a team that, we need to improve. Without the ball, our mentality has to be, you know, getting behind the ball, working much harder, staying more compact and making it more difficult for teams to get opportunities.

Q. I want to ask about the goalkeeping situation because Chris Brady gets the opportunity to go to the open team, a chance for him. How do you feel going into this weekend with Spencer Richey likely getting his first start of the season?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, look, Spencer is an experienced guy, and you know, he always has to be ready because you just never know. I think there's an opportunity that you know with the Open Cup match today with our second team, that he's going to get 45 minutes to get some kind of rhythm in the match. But he's an experienced player and you know, I have confidence that he can step in and do a good job.

You know, it's not always easy for those positions. You know, and sometimes you know, they also need opportunities to play and get their rhythm and that's why I think our second team here becomes really handy in moments like this where we can -- whether it's Spencer, whether it's Jeff, that they are able throughout the season to get minutes and make sure that they are always ready to step in and perform.

Q. If the Chicho Fire II plays the U.S. Open Cup tonight and wins. It will be three wins for the Fire. I want to see your opinions about the players that are called to play in the U.S. Open Cup tonight. There are players that they didn't have any minutes on the team, but they are probably going to do an excellent, excellent job trying to show off what they have.

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, thank you, good question. Obviously we will send some players to get some minutes. Guys like, you know, Carlos Terán, Wyatt Omsberg and Javier Casas, and obviously with Spencer to get minutes. I think those games are valuable. I think practice is one thing but I think the opportunity to play in real matches, I

think better prepares those players to be ready for the first team.

So we are excited about the game to see our second team. We are trying to help them with some of our first team players and I think they will be ready and do a great job and be prepared for our game against New England come this weekend.

Q. Wanted to follow up on those last two questions because there's been some contemplation about this. So if somebody like Spencer Richey plays 45 tonight, or Carlos Terán goes out and gets minutes, as it's understood to this point, that does not preclude them from playing in Saturday's match against New England?

FRANK KLOPAS: No, there's not. They can play and also be available for Saturday.

Q. I know it's still early in the season but it's only been four games, but how would you evaluate the replacement referees, and how much do you talk about that with your team?

FRANK KLOPAS: I don't. Obviously I loved the referees the last game, so I leave it at that.

They are trying to do their job. I think they have been really good professionals and I think they have -- so far, they have done a good job, you know.

Q. Smart answer.

FRANK KLOPAS: I can argue, the last game against Columbus, we got 12 minutes extra time, but you know, it is what it is.

Q. All right. That sounds like a good answer. And what do you think of the Justin Fields trade?

FRANK KLOPAS: I don't know. You have to tell me. You're the foot -- I can talk about different kind of football but not that kind of football, the American football, you know.

Q. I thought you were a bears fan.

FRANK KLOPAS: I am. But I go watch. Listen, he's gone and I'm going to root for the next guy that comes in. Hopefully they bring someone good or someone that can get the I won't be done, I guess, I don't know. I wish him the best. I don't know too much about American football. I support all the Chicho teams. I'm a bears fan like everyone else here. Let's bring someone in that's good, I guess.

Q. All right. Sounds good. I'll ask you about the Cubs and Sox next week.

FRANK KLOPAS: Good to have you back, thank you.

Okay, guys, have a great day.

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