

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Frank Klopas

Press Conference



**Q. Just wondering why Brian Gutierrez has not started the past two matches.**

FRANK KLOPAS: I think it's all about form. You know, we have to manage the whole team and I think it's a long season and I think players go in and out of form. I think with Guti as a young player, I think that's also the case, you know, and our ability to have much better depth this year in every position, I think that's -- you know, I think that's very important. It was very important going into the off-season to do that.

So I think it's just form with him. And you guys are not here every day in training to see how things are going and the preparation, but it's just normal. It's a long season and I think that also with him, a lot of minutes logged, it's obvious that there are moments that I think it's either fatigue, mental fatigue also at times, that we need to manage the young player in his minutes and moments when he needs, also, to recover.

**Q. What are some of the things that you feel like he's coming up a little short? Is it in games or is it in training? Just where do you think he needs to improve?**

FRANK KLOPAS: Just his sharpness. I think sometimes I think he wants to be more aggressive at times and I think just that hesitation. So it just seems to me that it not only maybe the physical part of it. Sometimes it's the mental. It's just things that you notice in games, I think, and also in training.

But he's looked sharper. I think the time that we've been able to just give him a little bit of rest and bring him off the bench where maybe it's late in games and the game opens up a little bit and there's less pressure on him, also, from the start of the game, I think that's been good. I think it's about confidence, also.

I think at times when you get moments like that, you overthink things instead of let it just come from an

instinctive standpoint of being more aggressive, which is his game. It's just little things. I think that, look, we have been able to manage that.

It's good that we have been able to give him some -- a little bit of a break with some of the games and come off where he can impact the game like he did in Houston at home late. And I think that's been really good for him, as a young player also to learn, not only on the field, but I think it's from watching outside, also.

**Q. Curious, looking ahead to this weekend, going against the side of Real Salt Lake, everyone will immediately say, Arango, Arango, Arango is the central thing to focus on. Curious what you've seen from the squad that you'll be facing off against that you don't necessarily play all the time.**

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, that's true. I think that's a team that we don't play. But look, just looking at it from the games that I've watched, I think it's a team that's very well organized. Obviously it's a really hard-working team. A team that's really good in transition, especially on the right side with Gomez and with Arango with his pace and his ability to really punish teams with the chances he gets. And you know, Luna, also a player on the other side that comes inside and can create certain overloads with his quality on the ball. It's a team that's coming in and playing really well with confidence that's going to work extremely hard.

You know, we don't face them; we do every couple years, so it's actually exciting for us to get an opponent that we haven't seen for a while. We know it's going to be a difficult match. We were preparing extremely well this week and really focused, especially, you know, one game at a time.

But it's a big opportunity now with this home stand to start climbing the ladder.

**Q. So the team has just one goal in open play from the past three matches. What do you think the team need to do to start getting more goals in open play during this next three-game home stand?**

FRANK KLOPAS: I think, look, I think the one thing is to be way more aggressive in the final third. I think that we

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

have a tendency once we are able to penetrate does break lines, our ability to accelerate the game, our ability to get service in the box, our ability to get more numbers in the box, it's been a big focus. You know, not only this week, but also for the past weeks.

When you look at the last game against the Red Bulls, especially the second half when they go down a man, at times, it becomes more difficult at times and challenging in a way, it's like, now, you're facing a team that's in a really low block and good at counterattacking.

Our ability to play at a high tempo and get a lot more crosses, that we didn't do the last game, especially the second half; a lot of our work this week has just been in the final third, in the final third and progress the game and get 25, 30 yards away from goal. You know, how can we get more numbers, how can we get more dangerous, our delivery and our final pass, and our numbers in the box have to increase.

**Q. Harold Osorio, he's part of the Chicago Fire II, scoring games for the Fire II or the U.S. Open Cup which they are going to play tonight. Have you ever thought about calling him to the first team or have you seen him?**

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I watched all their games. Yeah, thanks for the question. We bring Osorio every opportunity we get with the first team to train. So I think you know, not only with him, I think other players, also, with the second team. I think it's very important, the relationship that we have. We train almost at the same time.

So throughout the week, we have a number of players that we bring up to train with us, and I think get them up to speed. I think get them in that environment, that first-team environment and see how they handle that, and also, I think that's been important. We do that all the time with players.

So it's good that he's doing, you know, extremely well with the second team. He's got to continue to do that and grow as a player and it's only going to give him more opportunities to be with us and an opportunity down the road to be with the first team.

**Q. We've seen a consistent group of guys from the first team getting opportunities. Does the fact that the level of opponent, particularly starting in this game tonight, the USL Championship team does that raise the level, impact at all, the way you guys are making first-teamers are available to be in the squad for a game like tonight?**

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I think, look the second team we have a good spot of younger players, also, and the opportunity where we can give them first team players, I think that's always a case that we look into situations like that.

I mean, but the most important thing is also for us is also the first team and getting ready for this game Saturday. We've had some injuries and setbacks, and I think that also -- we have to look into that to see how that impacts our ability to know more players because we have to have everyone ready for our match Saturday. That's the first thing always, when we have an opportunity to do so, we do so.

I think there's going to be a couple players there tonight that I think our second team is really well positioned. They have a good coach and I think they are going to take that next step and advance tonight. That's my belief, or at least I'm very optimistic and positive.

**Q. So I guess any chance you're going to name the first-team players that are getting sent down for the Open Cup match tonight?**

FRANK KLOPAS: I think right now it's just Javi and Sergio that's there, and then we are just going to see right now what the situation is for any other players to go there. Like I said, right now for us, we're very thin. We're very thin, especially with Tobias with his concussion protocol. He's going to be out for this game, and Gutman has just been training for a couple of days.

So we have to take all that into consideration because we also want to help the second team but also the most important thing for us also is Saturday.

**Q. So it sounds like Gutman is actually back in full training with the team now?**

FRANK KLOPAS: He's been training on and -- not completely over 90 minutes with every exercise, but yes, he's integrating slowly. He's looking good which is really positive for us, and I think if this continues, he'll be available for Saturday.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...