

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Q. Frank, just looking at the last week and the result against Atlanta previously, what does this team need to improve on in the immediate future to get to where at least they're coming back and winning games? Obviously four points from the previous matches, but the result on Saturday was a bit disheartening.

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, but that's one game. We had four points going into that match, so you have to look at that. I thought that some individual mistakes, the game got out of us at 3-0. Then it becomes a more difficult game to come back.

Other than that, for me it's also the injuries that we got into that match. I think consistency is one thing. Then, without the ball, I think we have to find a way where we can limit some of those mistakes because obviously the amount of goals. I know in two games you take the seven goals. Three in one and four in the other, it's seven goals, but I think to find that consistency.

I thought that game early on, if you look at the game again, really look at it, in the first 25 minutes we have really two big chances to get on track and score the first goal. So we had two to three really good chances. Two in transition. Once we picked the ball in front as they tried to play out of the back.

Then the goals we give up. I just think we need to be better in moments like that. We have 11 guys even on the first goal behind the ball, and we give up a goal. I think the second and third goal put it out.

So I think just the consistency and the mentality really too, I think, as a group. It's not just one or two players. As a group in moments like that just to make it really hard without the ball for teams to break us down and stay more compact and then grind out results. When we get the chances, we to put the chances away because I think that also gives a team confidence.

Q. First question, the team, again, gave up a goal off

of set pieces, and that's kind of been a trend over the past several seasons. The team brought in a set piece coach this year to try to improve, I'm assuming, the set pieces on both sides of the ball. What do you think the team needs to work on to get things to work better?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think we're doing the work in training. It's about doing it and being focused and executing on the pitch during the game. The stuff -- even this year we brought a set piece guy and did stuff also the previous years. It's just a matter of -- you know, defending is about mentality and being really focused and concentrated in moments like that. I think there's nothing more to it.

You can play man-to-man. You can play zone. It really doesn't matter. You can always find ways where you can try to create opportunities depending how a team plays. We do the same thing.

So I think without the ball, it's about mentality and being really focused and everybody really making sure that they do their jobs. We're there to help out. It's not just about one guy. It's a whole team effort and mentality in moments like that and just the mindset that we're not going to give anything away.

Then on the other end it's stuff that we -- we do a lot of stuff. We do a lot of focus during the week on both phases and defending and attacking. When the moments come, then it's execution, it's quality of delivery, it's attacking the box with a mindset that I'm going to -- when we have the ball, to score, and the other not giving anything away.

So it's stuff that we do and we work on. There's nothing else I can tell you but just get back on the training pitch and keep doing it and working and giving the guys confidence. Then it's that mindset and the leadership on the field to lift everybody up and make sure that everybody is focused.

Q. Kind of quick follow-up. One other issue that came up in that game was the number of injuries to players, including several leaders on the team. I just wanted to check to see how everyone was doing and who looks like they would be available?

FRANK KLOPAS: It's a good question. I think that's the one -- I think more than anything you lose that game, it kind of gets out of control at the 3-0. Then we were forced

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to make moves and push the game.

Certainly being at home and hopefully looking to get that one goal back and climb somehow and turn it into a positive result. I think that at 2-0 -- giving up the third goal was difficult, but then you walk away with those injuries.

The only thing I can tell you right now is I think Gutman has been training. I told you last week that he was in and out in different exercises. This week he has been full-out training, so that's a positive.

The guys that had the injuries in the game with Guti and Shaq, they're doing stuff on their own on the side. They haven't integrated at all with the team. We'll see tomorrow, but that's definitely a question mark on both those guys because of just soft tissue injuries.

Then Federico Navarro is more longer-term. There's nothing structurally, which is good news, to his knee. Didn't happen, but I think he'll be out a little bit. Maybe two to three weeks. Then Gaston with the hamstring, you are looking at anywhere from two to three weeks.

The only question mark right now is just with Guti and Shaq and see if they're doing individual work on the side and see how they are tomorrow and see how we can push them and see if they're available to be on the roster for the weekend.

A little bit difficult for us right now, you know?

Q. That many losses with an MLS size rosters is rough, yeah.

FRANK KLOPAS: It's not an excuse. I think the guys have worked really hard, the other guys. We just have to find a way now to approach this game and definitely come out with a much stronger mentality. We have to have a lot of pride on from the last game like that. We have to come on the field with a lot of energy and commitment. I will do whatever it takes to get a result.

The guys have trained hard, and I think we have to just manage with the guys that are available and hopefully we still -- I'm still counting every day there's still time for Saturday for Guti and for Shaq at least to be available for some time. That would be a huge help for us.

Q. This weekend is Zach Thornton going into the Ring of Fire. I, first of all, wanted to ask your thoughts. We know how important the Ring of Fire is to this club. What were your thoughts when you found out this was going to be happening, and how much Zach deserved it?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, obviously I think it's a great honor for Zach. I think to honor someone for what he's done on the playing level. Obviously if you look at his career, it speaks volumes for itself. There's no need for me to say anything. I think the guy has been -- he is a legend here in the club. I think he's been involved in every championship that the club has been a part of.

That's one thing, what he has done on the field. Off the field I think for me the values that he has as a person, a human being are the values that reflect this organization. He's a first-class individual.

His career, like I said, I think he should be in the Ring of Fire for that, but I think just as a human being and as a person and the values he has, he is just a great human being.

For me I think you build a lot of relationships. You play with a lot of people. You know a lot of people, but he's someone that for me that I consider a friend, and you don't say that for -- you know a lot of people, and you are friendly, but he's someone that I consider a close friend.

I'm extremely happy. Well-deserved honor for him. He should feel proud for this recognition. I think I'm glad that he is here now working with us, and we can honor him that night. It would be great if the team comes out and gets also three points for him.

Q. He's the first person to go into the Ring of Fire in nine years. Do you think that there should be more players in the next couple of years that should go in, and are there any that come to mind?

FRANK KLOPAS: There's a lot of them that come to mind. It's something that internally that the club has to discuss and see how -- is it every two years? I think there's a lot of great players that have left their mark that have represented the club on and off the field in a tremendous way.

There's a lot more from the '98 team for me that should go in, and obviously other players that have put the jersey on that have had great careers. Some great players. Hopefully we can discuss that internally and find a way that we can honor some of those guys more often.

Q. One last one on Zach. Frank, one of the things that I think is crazy that he's able to pull off is talking to the teenagers he works with and the grown men he's working with in the same way and still seem to get the best out of all of them. What have you learned from working alongside Zach and the way he just

approaches the day-to-day bringing energy to the training pitch?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, the energy, but also his work rate. He's always prepared. I know when we're on the road and we're playing games and normally we get in really late at night, he's right away breaking down the tape because he has meetings with the goalkeepers the next day, and he is always prepared.

He is always pushing his guys to improve, but he has a way about him. Obviously he's got tremendous respect from the goalkeepers because of his playing career. That's the one thing, but then also, his knowledge and how he is able to make players better and goalkeepers better, and I think that's the most important thing of all.

You have respect as a player, what you've done, but then you can't improve players, if you don't know what -- how you can make in this case the goalkeepers better, analyze their mistakes, help them in certain ways. You can lose that credibility, but he brings both. His knowledge of the game, his ability to make them better, but also for me it's just his work rate, the way he works, and his commitment is first class.

He's always positive, and it's great to have because I'm also a positive guy no matter what happens. We all put a lot into the club, and we have people here that really care that put the jersey on, and we love the club.

We really hurt when the club has setbacks like last week. I don't sleep well. Zach doesn't either. There's a lot more former players that are involved here now. We take it to heart, but we come the next day and try to find solutions in a positive way.

He is always a very positive guy. Always smiling. Always smiling, always positive energy. That's also great to see.

On the field he's 100 percent professional. He comes in every day to make these guys better, and he has really high standards, which is great. He fits in exactly with what we want to do.

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