

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA



Andrew Gutman Press Conference

Q. I just want to ask, first of all, because being there in Philadelphia in the first game of the season about 90 seconds in you got injured. I want to know after all the excitement about coming back to Chicago, what were your emotions in that moment, and what has the comeback been like for you?

ANDREW GUTMAN: I don't know if you were able to see my emotions on the field, but that kind of summed up that whole situation. I thought I had a really strong preseason being back with my hometown club. I felt like I was in a good spot to kick off the season. Then, unfortunately, I just made a sprint and popped my hamstring. That's just how it goes sometimes.

Then, yeah, the recovery process was a bit longer than I originally expected. I had some issues with it throughout the process, but the medical team here helped me through it all, and we pushed through it. Now I'm back healthy and ready to help the team kind of get results back going to the way we want them to be.

Q. Now, I guess for the first time in your career even though you've been with the Fire organization before, this is your first time as a Chicago Fire player in front of home fans. What's that excitement been like for you?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, it's going to be a moment that I'll remember for the rest of my life. I remember going to Fire games growing up and always wanting to put on that red jersey, and I haven't been able to do it yet. Hopefully this weekend it will be my first time, and hopefully it's the start of a long and successful Fire career for me.

Q. Curious, every time Frank references you, he always speaks about how important your role is going to be within this team. And seeing the results being as they've been, I'm just curious if you're ready for that type of high pressure, it's going to be about Andrew helping us take it to the next level? Are you ready for that at this point of the year?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, definitely. Not even at this point in the season; at this point in my career. I want to take the next step to be a key part of this team. Thankfully they brought me in with the belief that I'm able to do that.

So now it's just about showing my qualities that I was able to show during preseason and kind of just start -- I guess this is kind of my first game playing, so start the season well for me and start off strong and ride through the whole season and help us have a successful season.

Q. Leadership kind of has been a theme today. Frank mentioned it. We just talked to Zach Thornton a minute ago before he gets induced into the Ring of Fire. That was a theme with him as well. You've been asked to be a leader on the field. How hard is it for the team to kind of bounce back mentally after a tough loss? I know you weren't able to be a part of the team on the pitch last week, but just in terms of the leadership you provide and getting guys ready for this week after a tough loss like that.

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I think, first off, it was hard for me to kind of come in and give that leadership role when I got hurt so early on. Being new and then not being able to play, it's hard to do that.

Since I've been back in training, I've been trying to be more vocal, kind of take on that role of getting the team together and doing the things that we know we're able to do. I think with what happened last weekend, it's a game that should never happen again, especially at home. We know the level that this team can be at, and this weekend is a perfect opportunity to show not only the fans, but ourselves that we're able to do this. We're a team that has good quality in this league, and we just need to start showing it for 90 minutes every single game.

Q. Wanted to just kind of circle back. You talked about the emotions of that game in Philadelphia. I'm sure all the emotions that you go into that debut game with and then transitioning a few minutes later to the reality of the injury. What do you think Saturday will be like if you're able to get on the field? What do you kind of anticipate that moment, those emotions feeling like after the recovery and kind of getting a second chance to make this start as a member of the Fire?

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ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I think, first off, when you come back from injury, it's almost like Christmas morning. You go through something that no player in their career really wants to go through. No one likes being injured. It's tough mentally, tough physically.

So for me I kind of feel like it's another debut, like you said. I'm just super excited. I want to get out there. I want to kind of get the feeling back on the ball playing in a game, but then also I don't want to waste any time growing into the season. For me I want to hit the ground running. I want to show what I've been showing in my career, but I want to be able to do it in a Fire jersey.

So it's super important for me to get out there and start fast, start strong, and contribute to the team as much as I can and as fast as I can.

Q. Injury return aside, is there something special going against a former club? It's the first time you're going against Atlanta since they traded you last year.

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, it's always nice seeing old friends and old teammates. I had a lot of great relationships with that club. Personally I had a lot of success at that club as well, but it's always nice to go against your former team. Hopefully we can come out of there with three points.

I know they have a fantastic team and a bunch of fantastic players, but we also have great quality, and we're playing at home. Any time you're at home, you always want to push the game, you want to push the tempo, you want to be more energetic. So Saturday that's kind of all I'm focused on is just playing at home and kind of taking it to them.

Q. Just considering your first team debut at home, is anybody going to be in the stands cheering you on?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I'll have some friends and family. My brother and sister will be there. Some of their friends, my girlfriend, her family will be there. My parents, unfortunately, aren't going to be there, but they'll be there the game after. But hopefully throughout the season, especially when the weather changes, you'll see the Gutman section maybe 100 strong every game. That's the goal.

Throughout this whole injury process I've been getting a bunch of texts asking when I'm going to be back, they want to come out, they want to support me, they want to see me play. So it's kind of been a little frustrating coming home and not being able to play in front of my friends and family.

I don't know if my grandparents are going to see this, but I've been on my grandpa to come out to a game. Him and my grandma have never seen me play live professionally. So this is something this season that I'm going to be pushing them to get out there to Soldier Field.

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