

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Coach Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Q. Looking ahead to DC United this weekend, of course they've got Christian Benteke in their attack that's been prolific this year so far. What do you think they present that's going to be tough for you guys to deal with?

FRANK KLOPAS: Obviously he's a big key to everything they do. A very direct team. A lot of crossers in the box. And obviously he's a target player. I think it's not a team that looks to progress a lot through possession, especially from the back.

I think the two players that they play a key part in that in their back five, they've got forward, it's Herrera on the right side and Pedro Santos, if he plays, on the left side. They help. But once -- they're pretty direct and then I think a lot has to do with if they can win second balls.

And Herrera does a really good job getting forward and creating overloads on the right side. Comes inside, gets a lot of crossers and Benteke is a big target for them.

So I think it's still a team that I think they press at certain moments, good in transition because the front three with Stroud, DiPietro, Benteke.

They don't recover as much defensively, and once they win the ball there's always that threat where their ability to find Benteke and (indiscernible) play with those guys, it's another area of concern for us in transition moments.

Q. My question is about the European Championship because the Swiss national team camp is scheduled to begin on Monday. Do you know what the availability of Xherdan Shaqiri is going to be the next couple of weeks?

FRANK KLOPAS: I'm going to speak with our sporting director right after this call, and I will get an update. They have sent requests for him to report. I just have to make sure I'm clear on the date. I don't know if it's after this game, probably Monday or a week later. But I'll get an

update after this call. I can give you more (indiscernible) Elizabeth tomorrow or later.

Q. Also looking forward a little bit, I know he was benched in the last game. Can you imagine a scenario in which after the European championships he's no longer a Fire player?

FRANK KLOPAS: His contract is up. So I think with every player -- and then the club has to make certain decisions moving forward. So, yeah, I think everything is up in the air.

And I think the last game, I think -- I don't want to use the term "benched" because I think we played three games in a week and I would say more rotation because it happened with some other players, too.

But I think with every player, I think coming into, going back to the first one, going into the last year of their contract, I think the European, the summer window is the one that's, I think, really more and bigger opportunities. But I think as a team it has to make sense also for the team.

But I'm sure that's in his mind and the other players that contracts are up this year because the summer window is the one that I think there's more flexibility and with teams look to make a lot of moves.

Q. I start a new job. I think you can relate.

FRANK KLOPAS: This is what I love. Like you, I put everything I can in, but there are things you can't control. The process what we do, me, the organization, for me, there's no doubt in my mind that we're doing everything possible. For that I feel good. It's always a bad feeling. Obviously when you don't get the results but for me the process and how we prepared and the work that we've done, I feel very good about that.

Q. How has practice been this week? Have you tried new things, focus on specific areas, you feel like maybe over the last few games you haven't been -- are you changing things up in practice, basically is what I'm asking?

FRANK KLOPAS: The thing is trying to simplify things in practice, and I think that's the most important thing, with

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teams going from a difficult moment.

The mental state of the team is obviously down. I think that's expected when you don't get results, performances are not going your way for me.

Like I said, I felt that the attitude of the players and what they put in the last game was very good. And we created our chances again.

But I've looked at this week, and I think going forward what I told the players is we've tried to simplify things and be clear with one or two, three points. I think focusing on the next game, both with and without the ball.

And I think our mentality at that point, every game, we have to try something different. We've tried some different ways of playing 4-4-2, 4-2-3-1, 3-4-3. But we have to at this point.

And even though there's no relegation battle in this league, we have to approach every game right now like it's a relegation fight until we can get out of this situation we're in, and have the mentality that we're going to go in and leave everything on the field and have that kind of commitment by everyone.

But that's our approach and our mentality. And to this game and the next game going forward that's our mindset. We have to go and understand that every game is, we're playing like it's a relegation battle.

Q. Of course, the Europa League final today. Who you got, Leverkusen or Atalanta?

FRANK KLOPAS: I gotta go Leverkusen. They've just been incredible the whole all year. It's hard not to take them because of just the year they've had, and they just always find a way. They're just a really exciting team to watch. And that's my pick today.

Q. Talking about the participation of Terán and the minutes you've given to Navarro, I want to talk about your impressions about those two players on the field and how you feel they're holding that part and the defense.

FRANK KLOPAS: I think first I'll go with Navarro with Fede -- he had some injuries, I think, early on into the season. It was difficult then for him to regain his form and training and get him rhythm in the game. He's an important player of the team.

I think for Fede for me, he's the player that you always know what you're going to get on the field from him. For

me, I put my hand -- I count -- he's one of those guys you know what you're going to get from him. He brings a lot of energy, commitment to the team, energy, enthusiasm and passion with everything he does and every play and every tackle, he leaves everything on the field.

It's good to have him because he just does so many little things for the team that sometimes get unnoticed. But for me and the staff, they don't. And it's great to have him back.

Carlos, when you look at him, so much upside and potential and ability. With him, it's just controlling his emotions better. I think that's a big part with Carlos, because in any play, you can see everything, happy, sad, upset, angry, and in one moment you can see all that frustration and he needs to control that and stay focused. We've been working on him. He's got a lot of potential. I think it's important that he stays healthy and consistently playing because that's also going to help him improve and get into rhythm and be better and also his ability to the more games he plays, his ability to read the game more and not rely always on his physicality and athletic ability. I think that's the next step in progression for him for me.

But both players can bring so much to the team.

Q. With the team having -- they've got three games in the next ten days, away in D.C. and three at home. The one thing the team has had going for it this year so far has been the fans have stuck with the team on track to break the all-time attendance record last year. With the results being the way they've been, what's the message to the fans and how important is it to get a result in D.C. to give the fans something with two home games next week?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I think the fans play a big part. There's been big frustration. I see it. I know when I go there, I think a big part of the frustration is obviously, you know, towards me as a coach. And that's fine. I understand that.

It's important in difficult moments for everyone to stick together and support the players on the field. And that's the thing. If you really look at the game, I think that the players are trying. I think we're creating opportunities. They're not going our way.

It's not because of lack of attitude and effort or commitment from the team. So I understand the frustrations, but the only thing I can say is that myself, the staff and everyone is, we give it everything we have to try and find the answers and turn this thing around, and it could start from this week in D.C. But it's important that in those home

matches that, for me, they play a big role. I think it's important when our players come out that they see them there, that they have their support and in difficult moments, that's the key.

And I've always said that I've been in this club for a very long time, not always as a coach, I've done different things, but every time I've traveled there isn't a place where I've seen Fire fans there, and that's great.

I can't say more than that. It's just to say that we need them. I think they're important, and I think in difficult moments, I think this is where we have to stick together and provide that support for the players.

It would be a different story for me if I am telling you that the effort or the attitude, mentality wasn't there from the players.

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