

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Chicago Fire FC 1, Cincinnati 0

Q. So one thing, a few changes in the last season up but given what ended happening, Brian Gutierrez didn't get the start. Can you walk us through the process of what you were thinking?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, it's a lot of games. Guti has logged a lot of minutes, and it's about getting him sharp, also, and finding ways where three games in a week, where he can freshen up a little bit; in the sense we can't continue to be playing him all the time because I think mentally and physically both that I could see that he wasn't as sharp. He was trying. I mean, even the last game, we got a lot of opportunities in the final third, and it's just decision-making is sometimes just mental fatigueness.

You know, it's all about the team. We made those changes knowing that we were going to bring him in at some point, whether at halftime, or give him 30 minutes in the game thinking also in this game but then also for Saturday. I think he came in, and for me, not only him, just the team performance was really good.

Q. Talk about this was one of Chris Brady's better performances, and to see him doing against it against a crowd going against him at the end and to see him grow.

FRANK KLOPAS: I think the second clean sheet in a row, and everything starts from that with us. I think our mentality and I told the guys before, I think it all starts from, the effort that we needed to put, continuous effort and mentality and commitment. Everything starts from there to unlock our potential and starts from clean sheets.

The guys worked extremely hard. They had chances. Chris came up with some big saves like you need to to get wins on the road against a really good team, and yeah it was a great performance. We needed it from him, and it's a really good feeling for the group.

But our mindset right now is recovery and really be focused on Saturday before that break. We're so close right now, and we've put ourselves in a difficult spot. It's climbing uphill all the time. Every point that we get is super, super important, and we have to do it on the road because we dropped so many points at home early on.

Q. We spoke yesterday about how wanted to be aggressive. What do you think happened today that made things so difficult for the best team in the Eastern Conference?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think it's just the way we came out and played. They played 5-2-3 and we wanted to match. You could see we played with a front three with Chris and Maren starting really narrow, pressing from inside out, and trying to create a strong side.

They tried different things, and at moments we had to step up and be aggressive between the pockets with the center backs. We had to be in 1v1 situations, and there are moments you have to be aggressive like that. We won our duels, and everything starts from there.

So hats off to the guys. I think they executed the game plan really well, and look, we had really good effort from everyone. I don't want to -- you guys saw the performance. I think when you come on the road and you get a result like this, it's a great team effort. Certain guys are playing really well at the moment. But I still feel that everyone can give more. There's a lot more potential with the group, and that's why game Saturday is so massive for us before this break. Because we are so close with getting guys back healthy with Gutman and Carlos and Fede; that we can have this break and with the Leagues Cup and get those guys minutes and get sharp, and hopefully we go very deep so they can get games and get ready for the final push in the League.

Q. I also wanted to ask about Gastón.

FRANK KLOPAS: Excellent.

Q. And he was wearing the armband, as he has the last couple of games. Why is it recently he's been able to take his game to another level?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think Gastón, when he doesn't play,

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for me, I've known Gastón for four and a half years. He's a great professional. He never once complains what he doesn't play. You can see it bothers him, of course, when he's not in the lineup. But he comes in every day, and he works extremely hard and he's always ready. You know, the opportunity was given for him. He's been around the team for a very long time. He's a leader. People look up to him and they listen. He's been around for a long time.

I just felt that I'd give him a little bit more responsibility. He's deserved it by his play and I think putting an armband, also, I think has elevated his game, also. He's playing excellent for us right now.

There's a lot of guys that I can point to but he's definitely one of the guys that have stepped up his game. It's not that he's playing above his means. I know I can play. He can always play. But you also need games and rhythm, and he's getting it and he's performing extremely well. He's hard to take out.

Q. Two other guys, one has been game in, game out starter but the play of Hugo Cuypers tonight.

FRANK KLOPAS: Excellent.

Q. And Souquet who has not always been in the starting 11.

FRANK KLOPAS: Excellent. With Souquet, I think for me, it's all about performance. I think when Souquet, he performs well, his mentality, he works hard. He prepares himself. He's an experienced player. Every game he's played, I think he's been a difference-maker for us. He's had excellent games.

He's taken advantage of this opportunity, and this is what I expected from him when we brought him into the team. It's not that he's doing something that I didn't know. It's all about consistency, though.

So he stepped in there. He's playing great. I'm really proud of just the way he's handled himself. He's an experienced player. Very good on the ball. Excellent decision-making. Knows when to get forward, and he brings such a different element, also, when he can also join. We can overload that side with him and Maren at times. Hats off to him. He's playing great, and now we have to continue as a team.

It's a really good feeling but you know, our mindset right now is just prepare and recover the guys for Saturday. We just have to understand the effort and the hard work that we put in and what we need even more to continue to pick up points.

Q. And just a little bit about Cuypers' performance, getting the assist, and being active not just in the box but throughout the pitch.

FRANK KLOPAS: He's worked extremely hard. It wasn't easy. I think there was a lot of physical play. He uses his body extremely well. He got fouled a lot but they never called which is fine. Hugo is not going to complain. But very few players could pick up his head after the way he scored that ball. He's always -- for me, of course, it's different. Any striker wants to score goals, but even when he doesn't you can see how he's able to help the team without the ball; the assists that he got tonight, really positive.

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