

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Frank Klopas Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are here ahead of your first Leagues Cup match against Sporting Kansas City.

Q. Quick question to quick us off about player availability. Are any of the players, have Federico Navarro and Gutman looked like they were training with the team, according to reports yesterday. Are they expected to be available tomorrow, and is Shaqiri is expected to get back in time for this match?

FRANK KLOPAS: As far as Gutman and Fede, both players will be available for tomorrow's match.

No, Shaqiri is not here. He will be in on Monday. So he's not available for this match.

Q. I like the new look, the facial hair.

FRANK KLOPAS: It's coming off tomorrow, don't worry. I don't like it. Just get tired of shaving all the time, you know.

Q. Well, for a little bit, it's good to change up.

FRANK KLOPAS: A little bit, you've got to let it go, I know. So I apologize if you guys are scared by the beard.

Q. Speaking of changes, how do you view this tournament? Obviously it's a clean slate and everyone starts at square one. Are you going to treat this like a playoff push in the regular season, or are you going to try to use this opportunity to not only just to win but also incorporate some players maybe that haven't gotten some time or different lineups you haven't used this season? How is sort of your approach? Is there going to be a balance in this tournament for you?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I just think it's important for us to continue to play high-quality games. That's the most important thing because that's the only way that we can improve as a team, and obviously you know, you've known a little bit of our situation with injuries. We have certain guys that are back, slowly.

So I think it's an opportunity for us to integrate them in this tournament but still put the strongest team possible to try to advance and win. I think we are all in this tournament, we all look forward to the competition. The competition is really good. That's the only way you get better.

But I think we are all in, at least for us. We are here. We want to advance. We take the tournament very serious. We want to progress and move on and put our best foot forward in every match.

Q. Being a knockout tournament, there's obviously a short turnaround between games. Just two games in the group stage for the Fire. How do you approach Sporting Kansas City versus the need to rotate given that there's a game midweek following?

FRANK KLOPAS: The game is Thursday. Really I think our focus is on Kansas City right now and try to put the best -- have a good start in the tournament, and I think that's important to put the strongest team that we can out there.

And then the second game is Thursday. That's plenty of time for guys to be able to recover. For me I'm not even thinking about did he Luka right now. Our focus is on KC, and then we can move forward.

I think in any tournament, it's really important to get off to a good start, and I think that's what we are aiming to do; and our mentality, our focus has been on that.

Q. So given that there's three teams into the group, two stages does that put added pressure on getting a win instead of just a result in the first game?

FRANK KLOPAS: Just got to get a result. I think that's important, whether it's a win, whether -- I mean, you go straight to PK without getting a result in the end if it's a tie game.

So I think it's important with any tournament to have a good start. I think for us, I think we play the two games, we play Sunday, and then Thursday.

And so I think it's important to put pressure on Toluca. They pretty much will know what they have to do after our



match, and that would be their first game.

So I think it's important for us. We're just focused on ourselves and getting off to a good start. That's going into Kansas City that mentality and getting a result.

Q. Kansas City is an opponent that you guys don't get to play that much. I believe it's the first game you get to face them. What about them and their style might be problematic for you guys that you noticed or things that you're focusing on playing against them?

FRANK KLOPAS: We played them last year in the League. We were there. We don't play them this year but it's a team that they are pretty direct in their play.

Their formation, they play built with 4 plus 1 or 2 plus 1 in a 4-3-3. Combine really well on their left side with Leibold and Sallói and Thommy getting forward.

Obviously Russell is also a very good player that can come inside. He's inverted on that right-hand side but really good left-footed player and can take players on.

Agada is a guy that has pace. He's a threat, obviously, if they play with him or Pulido whose tendencies are a little bit different, his characteristics.

It's a good team, a very good team. They are organized. Peter is a very good coach, and it's always difficult to go on the road, and the atmosphere is great there. You know, not an easy team to break down. So we just have to be at our best.

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