

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Hugo Cuypers

Press Conference



**Q. Nine matches to go, you just had a little bit of a break yourself. I'm curious how that's helped you recharge. I know Frank talked about that being something that was discussed before you signed here. And how you think this team can improve in this final nine-game stretch as they want to make a playoff run.**

HUGO CUYPERS: Yeah, like you said, I needed this little time off, and a couple weeks that I approach as a small preseason because I think we cannot forget that I had been going since June '23, so it's been more than 14 months already.

No, I feel recharged. I feel good in training. I feel more energized, and I hope I can take that energy into the games coming up, and like you said, nine games to go. We approach them as nine finals. But there is no need to look too far ahead and just stay game by game and see where we're at after every game.

**Q. The team has come a little short of expectations throughout this season, but you've been on a really good reason, scoring goals and contributing assists. Where is your head for the last nine games?**

HUGO CUYPERS: My head is getting the team to the Playoffs. I think that's something that the club talks about for almost six years, I think, and it's time we reach them.

Like you said, we have been underperforming. We expected more of ourselves. But it's still in our hands. Everybody has their heads in the same direction, and we're going to give everything to reach it.

**Q. You've been here -- you mentioned you've been playing a long time now, going back to '23. Now with nine games left, what do you feel has been the biggest challenge so far this year, this season, being in a new league with a new team, and how have you overcome or adjusted to it to this point, from when the season started to where you're at now, whether mentality or just adjustment personally, to the country and city and**

**club?**

HUGO CUYPERS: Yeah, for the country and the city, they've been great. My family and I have settled in really well. It's a great city to live in.

On the field, like I said, I expected more from myself. The team expected more from us.

But again, like I said, we have been underperforming a little bit, but it's still in our hands. We were conscious of that. The work has been done the last couple weeks to start the best we can this weekend against New York.

**Q. I'm curious about the game against NYCFC this weekend. Obviously it's in a baseball stadium, historic Yankee Stadium. I'm curious what your expectations are for that, smaller field and playing in a new kind of environment there?**

HUGO CUYPERS: It's not going to be in Yankee Stadium, actually. It's in the other one I heard.

But yeah, everybody talks about playing in a baseball stadium, but in the end you cannot lose your energy and focus too much on that. The pitch is going to be the same, same rules, so it's up to us, and if it doesn't go our way, it won't be because of the stadium or the environment we're playing in.

**Q. You mentioned the importance of the break you've had with kind of giving yourself a mini preseason. Obviously as a striker, you want scoring goals to be a habit. How do you try to stay sharp and be able to pick up where you left off on the field despite having taken the time off to recharge and rest a bit? How do you pick the scoring mentality right back up?**

HUGO CUYPERS: I mean, the scoring mentality is not something that's going to leave me by taking a couple days off. It's been a month since I've played, but it's not one month off, it's one month training with the team, sharpening everything in training and getting the reps in.

It's a different kind of rest than when you're playing every three days or week in and week out. But I feel energized and ready to go Saturday.

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**Q. I saw you mentioned former scout striker Allan Russell is someone who you talk about referencing when you're practicing your striking. I'm curious where your relationship came from, if it's strictly something that's online, working that way, and what you've learned from him or hope to learn from him?**

HUGO CUYPERS: Yes, he is attached to the team, so it's extra training that I get here with him within the environment. He has experience with a lot of strikers that have played at a high level. He always has the right comments and the right feedback on my habits and adapting to my profile as a striker. It's always good to get that external view of things on my game.

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