

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas

Press Conference



New York City FC 2, Chicago Fire FC 2

Q. You had some changes in the second half that seemed to work. You had a transformation and you scored the two goals. What are your thoughts on those changes and ultimately getting that result?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I think the mentality of the group, has been one that we never ever give up from day one. You could tell the first half that we were a team that you -- that has not played, you can tell in, three and a half weeks. Rhythm wasn't there. Inability to win duels.

And then I just felt with the way we started, we weren't getting much with our wingbacks at certain moments. So we came in at halftime. I still feel the goals we came up again, I think it's preventable goals, that's for sure but we came in and we needed to look forward in how we can correct certain things. We made two subs. We changed formation, and I think then we started getting more into the game, definitely.

We're starting to find a rhythm. You know, I think the guys really push hard. All the subs that came in, I think really helped, and the mentality of the group was such that, like I said, it's never, ever give up, and we didn't. We found a way to come back.

It's a massive point. We need to get points. It would have been extremely difficult now to walk away with nothing from here where we are. We need to continue to pick up points in every game.

So it's a great, tremendous effort from the group, and hopefully this game now, I think it's going to help us a lot just to have a competitive match. Because we had not had one in a month. It's not easy.

Q. Guti, now with Shaqiri gone, he has a chance to step up and be the guy for this team. What did you think of his performance?

FRANK KLOPAS: He got more into the game the first half, obviously was difficult -- he was playing out wide. Difficult matchup with Grey. He's extremely fast and a really good defender. He picked moments to get forward. Guti tried and he got more into the game. He got more confidence in the second half. He started finding his rhythm, and it was great to see.

We need to drop him and get the ball, turning and facing defenders, he's extremely difficult to mark. But then huge confidence to pick up the ball there on the spot in a difficult moment and get the tying goal. I wasn't able to look. You know, I didn't even want to look.

But yeah, I think Guti, for me, he can do and improve and have a -- be a bigger factor over 90 minutes for sure. But it was great to see him get the goal and the way he came more into the game the second half.

Q. Carlos went out at halftime. I know he was grabbing his hip.

FRANK KLOPAS: I don't know if it was an elbow to the hip but I think he came in early. You know, we had the meeting with the coaches just to be crystal clear on the changes and how we were going to defend in a different way. And then with the ball, how we were going to build our play. And then I came out, asked the trainers and I asked him, and he couldn't go.

So at that point, you know, I brought Tobi in, and I felt Tobi came in and had a really good 45 minutes. But I couldn't tell you what this means. Assess the next couple days. Personally to me, I don't think it's anything serious.

Q. And then I'm curious, after the two goals that were given up, curious if you saw those as preventable or something that came down to -- it just seemed like there was a lot of space on both of the goals from New York in the first half.

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah. I mean, I'm going to have to look at them again. I know the second, that's stuff that we work on constantly, and I think it's just -- again, I just felt the impact of us not having played a really competitive match in an extremely long time. You can do all the training. We can play inner squad scrimmages, but it will never be the same like this when something is on the line. I think that



played a factor on both goals.

Q. Just having someone now in the roster who, like Hugo, who can hit a shot like that and turn a game around, what's it like having that?

FRANK KLOPAS: I mean, that's why he's a DP. Great goal, in a moment where we needed it the most and just a superb finish. You know, it's great to see him get the goal because he works extremely hard. More difficult the first half because a lot of times he was alone there and we couldn't build pressure the right way. We dropped way too deep, and that's why also we made the tactical change and formation change. But yeah, I mean, he's a DP for a reason and it showed with that goal tonight, incredible.

Q. I thought Justin Reynolds had a solid performance. Can you talk about his play?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, he's a young player, but I think it all goes back to us. He earned that confidence the way he's been training. We played him in Leagues Cup against Toluca, and he had an excellent performance.

For me, and that continued in training. So you have to reward players. Players have to understand that games become important. Performances in games matter, and so does training.

So I mean, for me, I had no hesitation, even in a big game like this with a lot on the line for a young player how he was going to deal in that situation, but he has earned the respect of all our staff and me. I tell you, no hesitation to throw him in there and he did a great job.

Q. Do you feel like playing against a solid Liga MX, getting him experience in a pressurized atmosphere like that and coming in and playing like this, do you think that translated and carried over?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, a hundred percent. I know there were moments that that game, because he has to the played in a long time, he got hit a couple times and was looking at me to take him out, and no, no, you're staying in. There are moments when he played well, and in difficult moments, I think that's where you give trust to players and they can build character in there.

But he's earned -- again, I think playing games like that, you're absolutely right. I think that has given him confidence and you can see stepping on the field tonight, and in a difficult moment where he came in. Not easy. Out wide to the players at NYC FC, they are fast and crafty players, and I thought he handled it extremely well. I think it's good when you have competition like that because it

just raises the level of everyone else.

Q. When we look back at last season, the year before, as well, there were a lot of games where the Fire conceded those late two goals maybe to blow that lead and this is the third or fourth time this season where you've come back.

FRANK KLOPAS: Come back.

Q. Now it keeps happening, it seems like. Is there a trend you've noticed this season?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think it's just the mentality. I've been telling the guys, I think the one thing for me is that this team has not given up. Some games have gotten out of control a little bit where you're pushing the game and down in a 2-0 lead, you have to take risks. You open up at certain times.

In moments like that when we create chances and we don't get that goal, then you know, I think sometimes that confidence, because then if you get -- create four or five chances, you don't put the ball in the net and then you give up the third goal and sometimes that, what has happened before in the past.

But with this one, I felt that the changes were positive. The guys came in. We got that first goal and then you know, I think the energy level just went to a different level and there was a belief within the group.

Yes, of course we opened up a little bit because we wanted to get that tying goal and you take some risk. But we got rewarded with that risk and the guys, it was a huge belief and they fought extremely hard and big confidence in the room.

And now this has to continue. Because like I told the guys, it's important how we end. It's not how we started. We have to put that behind. But how we can finish these last nine games and it's a great start for us tonight to pick up points and it's important to control what we can control. We talked to the guys.

And go play the game. Let's not forget, it's a game. We need to go play it and enjoy it.

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