

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Wednesday, August 28, 2024

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Q. With this Miami team, they love to get out early and try to get an early lead or try to get the match in their favor early on. I'm curious kind of what the mentality is this week when you're going against a team that wants to do that, especially after the NYC game where it was early issues and then coming back in the end?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I just think we have to be ready for a fast start. I think that's it.

I think the game at NYC FC, I thought that you also saw a team that was not sharp. I think that's a big factor in that had to do with us not having played a competitive match almost in 3 1/2 weeks. I think that played a little bit into that.

Yeah, we know they want to fast start. We have to be ready, knowing that they want to come out and try to take an early lead. Then we just have to be ready for that. We have to match the intensity, be focused, come with good energy and intensity.

Then the most important thing is that as a team, there's got to be a commitment when we do things we have to do all together, move together as a group. There's no difference than, I think, than the game that we lost down there. They came out fast. I think that the game settled down and we got more on the ball and had opportunities. We scored a nice goal, and then obviously that late goal that we gave up.

So we just need to make sure that we're mentally focused and prepared for a fast start from them, but also for us to come out with energy. We're playing at home, great atmosphere. It's going to be a fantastic crowd. These are the games that we need to come out and take advantage of the home field that we have.

Q. I spoke with Dave Baldwin a little bit yesterday about the efforts to kind of get set for a fresh start. I know there's going to be some gear changes ahead, and I know there have already been changes in the

summer window. I'm wondering to get your insight, especially with this game this weekend being such a big chance to make a statement, introduce yourself to the community, or maybe fans that aren't coming out week to week, how do you see things in the big picture and try to kind of keep moving forward after the difficulties of the season?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think it's moments like this that you have to take advantage of these opportunities. We were in the same kind of situation last year where we had played Miami, sold-out crowd. We came.

These are the moments where you got to grab these opportunities. Like you said, you've got a lot of people that maybe don't come out to games. Maybe they want to come and experience soccer for the first time. I always feel that I think you have to -- winning is always the most important thing, but it's also, make it exciting for the fans that come out to the game.

I felt last year's game here was very entertaining. It was exciting, five goals scored. So the fans, it's still about coming out and enjoying the performance that the players put on the field. That can only happen if both teams come out and play attacking soccer. I expect that to happen again this year.

But you're right. Moments like this, you have to grab these opportunities and make the best of it and make sure that, if it's people coming out for the first time, that they get excited about the team, and then they come back and support us next year, either in certain games or buy season tickets.

Q. Along those lines, what is the vibe in the locker room? How has your sort of message been to the team? Because that I know there's still plenty to play for here.

FRANK KLOPAS: Look, I think obviously we can look what we've done from the past up to this point. I think that's always important because you look to always improve as a team.

But right now I think the most important thing is what I told the team, it's crucial how we finish the game. You can change the narrative. You can change perspective.

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

I think people can always remember the last games you played or how you finished the season. Sometimes they don't always remember the first game or the middle part of the season. There's been ups and downs, but at the end of the day, we're sitting ourselves and five, six other teams. That's how it is with MLS. It comes down to the wire every year, and we're fighting for spots.

So the games really mean something now, but it's in our hands. This is a big game obviously, but the next three games are home for us. So it's a huge opportunity against really good teams that we've played well. Now to play well consistently.

I think the mentality of the team has been one for me that has never, ever given up. Even through our ups and downs, I think we've dealt, like most teams, with injuries throughout the season. Maybe us a little bit more than other teams, but now we're healthy, and we have a golden opportunity in front of us to finish really strong. There's a lot on the line for the players, for all of us.

We want to finish strong. Like I said, you can change the narrative. You can change perspective. You can change the way people perceive you just by the way you finish the season.

I'm excited because I think this game really means something. There's something on the line. There's more pressure, and I feel that always brings the best out of players.

Q. Obviously this is really the second half of the season, but does the locker room just in general think it's maybe calmed down a bit? It just seems like on the field guys like Hugo seem to be more slowed down, in a sense. Even the goal he scored, I don't know if that would have happened earlier in the season. Maybe with the distraction, sort of who's on the roster, who's not. There's now clarity with sort of where the season's going to and kind of what happens after, even with the management part. Did you sense a sort of shift in the locker room just with players and even within the coaching staff that there's clarity sort of thing where you sort of know what to expect going through the end of the season?

FRANK KLOPAS: I just feel -- I think that, if you take -- I think the player situation is a little bit different. You bring a new player in. He wants to do well. So I think maybe -- early on, I mean the guy came in with, Hugo, great mentality, and I think maybe he's pushing things too much and not letting things come to him or the game come to him at times. But that's just the mentality because I think

he really wanted to prove himself and give back to the team that rewarded him with bringing him here.

He scored ten goals. He always creates opportunities and chances in goal. I think more calm -- yeah, I think more calm. I think, look, when you score goals, maybe the pressure is a little bit up, but as a striker, I know that for him it's always, when he's on the field, he wants to score.

He's helped the team. Whether he's scoring or not, he's always a guy that always finds ways to be positive for the group and does the little things right.

I think with the rest of the team, look, there's nine games left. I think everybody is in a different situation. I think there's guys that right now there's a lot riding for them and for all of us. I think there's guys that are coming to the end of their contracts. There are guys that are on option years. It all depends. It's still about performance and being successful on the field.

I think when there's changes, there's a change on the top. There's a change that's going to be made. Sometimes there's for sure uncertainty, but I think sometimes being on the edge a little bit and not knowing what the future might bring might bring the best out of situations, the best out of players.

I think for me it's also been good that we've gotten guys healthy right now and everybody's pushing. They're competing hard for a roster spot, and it's not going to be easy now to finalize the 18, 20-man roster because it's getting really competitive, which is good. That's what you want.

So I think every situation is different, and I think with Hugo, I think he's settled in. He's adjusted to his teammates, with the league, and he's playing with a lot of confidence. Obviously scoring and playing well has helped play a big factor into that.

Q. Quick follow-up. Do you expect for the remaining nine games to maybe bring up some of the young guys from the Fire II potentially? Is that still an option?

FRANK KLOPAS: To bring up? No, to get on the field, you have to earn that right. That's the thing. I watched the second team play. We bring guys in training.

For us, we've got to put the best team to win games, man. This is not about -- the opportunities, you have to earn that. For us, the first team, we need to get results, and we need to win.

Thanks guys. See you Saturday.



