

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas Press Conference

Q. Last three games, the Fire have not been able to score multiple goals against the Red Bulls. What about their system has made it difficult over the last two years for you guys to score against them?

FRANK KLOPAS: We've had our chances. I don't think it's anything with their system. It's a team that we know they are aggressive. They press. They have trigger points and you know, I mean, that's the one thing that's a team that recovers pretty quick.

So I don't think it has anything to do. I think every team has a different approach to the game. They are a team that's very aggressive. They press and are good in transition moments and counterattacking so we know that. It's just about us really being understanding and then where that pressure is coming from and making good decisions, we have had chances against them. Don't forget last year we beat them there with Koutsias's goal.

So it really doesn't matter. It's just about scoring and winning games. But we've had opportunities. It's a team that recovers extremely well so when you do get those chances, I think you have to attack and attack quickly and make good decisions. I think this is the one area that we have been focusing on and we need to improve and get better in the final third.

Q. So talking about the way the Red Bulls approach the game versus the way the Fire approach the game, you mentioned the importance of not making individual mistakes. But does the fact that the games have been low scoring put more pressure on defensive players to join the offense and get ahead or is it trying to make sure that's individual mistakes don't happen?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think it starts from clean sheets. I think when individual mistakes -- I think mistakes will be made in games, but our reactions have to improve and get better. You look at the last game against D.C. here, I mean, maybe the first half, it wasn't the 45 minutes with the intensity, it wasn't bad but it's a situation from two set

pieces, two throw ins, we had numbers behind the ball and we give up goals and you're chasing the game. We had them pinned in. They are in a low block. For me it's coming out with a good mentality, and understanding, like I said, every team is going to approach the game in a different way. I mean, their d and a how they want to press an opponent, how you try to build that play, and you know, what are the trigger points that we know and it's just about not playing to their strengths and that's the thing. I think we do get chances. You've got to put them away. It's a good mentality to come up in the game with intensity, with energy, really being proactive and anticipating the next play and obviously when we get chances we need to be more brave, more confident and put those chance as way. A big part of it is that. You score the first goal, you know, confidence builds and momentum, belief, all that, the crowd gets behind the team. You know, all those little things do help. When you give up two goals or you fall behind and you're chasing a game, you know, and it makes it a little bit more difficult. But the mentality and with the team, it's like I said, I think this team has never given up. I think we fought all the way to the end and it's just sometimes it gets difficult to dig yourself out of holes that we create for ourselves.

Q. Do you as a coach try to balance if the guys are a little bit tight or feeling a little bit of the pressure to get results and give them a looser mentality of, hey, let's go out and have fun, or is the emphasis sort of like with less games remaining and results needing, the urgency, how do you balance the urgency with letting the guys go out and have fun or play looser? Obviously the pressure can get to some people sometimes.

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, it's a good point. I think at the end of the day, and I talked to group when we were talking about the last nine games, last ten games, my message was I think it's important to try to finish strong and when they finish strong -- I'm not saying that we are going to win 11 games or the last ten games or nine or the seven, but control our controlables when we go on the field, the mentality, the energy, the commitment, when we are pressing, we are all in. We are all in this together. We support each other on the field. We give each other confidence and we come out with everything, and we leave everything on the field for 90 minutes.

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At end, the pressure, the expectations you talk about, you have to throw that out. At the end it's about going out and playing the game. Really, what is the pressure here? We have pressure because we care about the club and I think there's a responsibility on the players to put on the jersey and represent the club and the city and to leave everything on the field. But it's not like the team is getting relegated. There is pressure for the players to perform. You can't take that away from the players. At the end of the day it's still about preparing well and trying to do as much as possible as a player. Put that behind you and go out and play the game.

We do things on the field sometimes that the players remember one third of what we say, that's great but in the end you still have to go out and play the game and enjoy the game and show that by the way you play and complete and bring that passion and love, with the game that you love playing. And if you care about the game and if you care about the team and the club and the city and our fans, you're going to come out and play with passion, and that's all we ask for. At the end of the day you have to go out and play the game and enjoy the game.

Q. You mentioned Koutsias scoring the winner the last time the Fire beat the Red Bulls. He played yesterday. Is there any word on whether he and Lassiter will be back in time for this one?

FRANK KLOPAS: They will be back. Ariel was in today. Koutsias will arrive today so he'll be at training tomorrow.

We'll assess. He also scored with the national team that scored 4-0, which is good for him and his confidence. For sure he'll be back and he'll be available. We just have to assess how he is the next couple days with his recovery and flight and everything, but he'll be available. Both players will.

Q. Just seeing him score that kind of goal yesterday, back to the goal, initially hold-up play and sliding in corner, seems like he's had a good month, just seeing him grow?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, I think the Leagues Cup has helped him with training and covered. When you see him, he's a number nine; that he's a guy that's always around the goal. He gets opportunities. Believe me, there's no pressure on him. When he misses one, he's back at it. He wants the next one. He's got that kind of mentality, which is important for a striker.

So it's good that he's scoring, and I think it's important. We missed him these couple games. He's been playing well. But I think it's also important with the national team that he

continues to play well and score, and he's going to come back with a lot of confidence.

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