

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas

Press Conference



FRANK KLOPAS: I know.

Q. Do you like this new setup for the Champions League?

FRANK KLOPAS: I don't. And I just think at some point, I always, for me, it's just so many games, high-level games for these players. It's amazing what they expect out of the players, you know, especially the guys that are playing at the highest levels with league play and then Champions League, and then guys have national team duty. It's just so much, so many games. It's just amazing for me.

That's the thing, when you look at the top players, their ability to perform at the highest level, every game, it's just amazing. But you have to think about recovery. You have to think about injuries. You have to think about how that impacts the quality of the game. I think that's the most important thing. We should never forget that. I think it's getting a little bit out of hand.

Q. Going against Toronto this weekend, the team had a lot of success in that first matchup, but they are a team that struggles at times, but still finds a way to get quality. What do you think is going to be tough about dealing with Toronto on Saturday?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, right off the bat, they have Bernardeschi in transition. When you can isolate him in 1v1 situations, it can be extremely difficult to contain. He's an inverted swinger. He likes to come in on his left foot.

Obviously they have the national team players back with Osorio. So they are a good team. They want to move the ball around. They are a possession team.

And obviously in transition moments, where they can isolate Bernardeschi, they have some quality players in moments where they can have an impact in 1v1 situations and players that can impact the game in moments where you don't expect them to. They have that kind of quality.

We played them the first game. Obviously the first half was a little bit slow for us, and then, you know, I think that we had some goals in key moments, and I think that's the key thing, I think, in that matchup. We were able to control the game and were in good possession and we picked our moments and had chances.

Q. Three games left. What's the goal for the next three games for you and the team? What would you like to see from the team? You obviously have two more home games left. Is there any sort of goals?

FRANK KLOPAS: To finish strong, man. We fight and we compete and we play all the way to the end. You know, as long as we have games from us, we need to play and we're professionals and we need to did our job. We have two home games, regardless of what's happened.

I think it's super important, and I've stressed this to the team is to finish strong at home to. Leave whatever it is, the last game, the last two games, just a good picture at the end of the season. I know it hasn't been, you know, a season with a lot of great moments. There's been a lot of close games. A lot of games that, you know, are just disappointing for all of us and for the fans.

I think it's important to do whatever we can to finish on a positive note, to leave a good picture, especially we are playing at home, to compete hard and to leave everything on the field and to bring that intensity, energy and commitment. That's nonnegotiable. That, for me, I shouldn't even be having to tell you guys this or to the players, and to finish as strong as we possibly can. I think that's the most important thing. There's nothing else.

As long as we have games, we're professionals and we need to never forget how fortunate and lucky we are to be doing what we love doing, and we have to show that when we step on the field competing, especially here at home.

Q. Who do you got today, Europa League?

FRANK KLOPAS: I don't know. You tell me. You throw it out there and I'll tell you.

Q. I think -- I'm throwing out, first of all, that Europa Cup is on a Wednesday, not on a Thursday. I'm so used to the old schedule.



They play tonight against Vancouver, the Cup final. We'll be watching that. We are prepared. I think the good thing for us, slowly now, it's getting Hugo back in training this week. That's been a big plus for us the last couple days. It's great to have him in training.

Rafa has been training. He trained today. Hopefully no setbacks. Still a couple guys that are out but at least you get some of those veteran guys, the leadership of Rafa, and then a guy with Hugo that he's such a potent striker and a threat. It's good to have him with us.

Q. Your point about managing games and minutes is really well taken. One of the things, Toronto has the Canadian Championship match tonight. Obviously some big names that sort of change the way the team plays on that squad, with the CONCACAF squad on the line, I wonder if your approach to the game changes based on who it looks like plays and who goes 90 tonight and who may be able to rotate in on Saturday?

FRANK KLOPAS: I think the first game that we are missing also a couple players, but they rested Bernardeschi, and he didn't start the last game. I assume they will put their best foot forward tonight, that's for sure. It's a final. So unless there's injuries, I don't foresee anything different.

For us, I think the most important thing is to assess and see how guys are, and the healthy guys that we have. I think that's still a little bit of a question mark. Gutman is still running on his own, so there's a question mark with him. Carlos Terán is still not involved with us. That's a question mark with him.

I think Rafa trained today, so with him, his ankle that he had issues, it's also how he's able to recover tomorrow and how he feels tomorrow.

It's good having Hugo back. I talked about that. So that's a big plus for us. He's a guy that's such a threat with his movement. Also, just being on the field, I think his ability to attract defenders frees up space for other guys and he's such a threat for us in the final third.

We are going to watch the game tomorrow, but I think the most important thing is assessing how our guys are and putting guys that are in form for this game. We are playing at home and we need to come out with intensity and energy, and commitment in these last home matches that I think the players that have to step on, they have to do whatever it takes to get the result.

For me, it's just assessing and putting the guys that are

healthy and the guys that are in most form right now on to the pitch and the guys that you know what you're going to get from 90 minutes.

Q. One other thing about championships. The U.S. Open Cup final is also tonight. I asked you before the season started when it wasn't clear whether the Fire first team would be able to participate and what your perspective was. I just wanted you to reflect a little bit, obviously Kansas City going for their possible fifth. It's a team that you once played for. So history with you personally there, and what it means to you to be the team not having been able to participate and what you're watching tonight.

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, you look at the history of the club, you know, we were at one time King of the Cups early on. It's a tournament. It's a final. I've always enjoyed that tournament. I think it's a special tournament in the history of the club.

I think this year, our MLS NEXT team participated. We put guys, I think, to help early on into the games, and I think most MLS teams approached, it obviously, different. In early rounds, they used a lot of MLS NEXT players to participate in that.

So I love the tournament, and then obviously it's huge in the history of the club. And you know, for Kansas City, I think it's a big moment for them. I think their season, they are out of the playoffs. So you have this one special moment that you can put everything into it and possibly can change the season for them with a victory.

You know, they could be the first team, I think, MLS team to five, I think, if I'm right, I think with them, Seattle, Kansas City, us, we are at four.

So it's a special night for them, and like I said, it can change a whole season around for them. So I'm sure that in a difficult place, they will put everything into it. It's a final and anything can happen. But it's a special tournament, and one that's dear to my heart and special to the club.

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