

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Frank Klopas

Press Conference



Q. Just curious, last week with this role, what do you want to see not only for your team but for the franchise really as this is the last week and you can kind of say goodbye to this role before embarking on a new journey?

FRANK KLOPAS: Yeah, no, I think it's just important to finish on a positive note if we can, whatever that means. Obviously winning would be the best thing possible. It's the last game of the season. It's the last home game, and it's great to have it at home.

I think, listen, we're professionals. We have to work extremely hard and prepare just as we did from -- if it's day one or if it's the last day. It's the same mentality and attitude.

Just one last time for this group because I'm sure a lot of things will change. It's inevitable, that we try to put everything we can into the last home game and do whatever we can to finish on a positive note. That's the most important thing.

I think that we owe that to -- we're professionals. We owe that to ourselves, to our fans, to the organization, and I think that's been my message all along. I think for me, it's just every game, have that mentality to try to do whatever it takes to win.

That's no different for this game.

Q. I know it's been a busy last eight, nine days with the announcement and everything. What response have you seen from the players in light of this news and going into this last game?

FRANK KLOPAS: I mean, it's different how everybody, I think, handles every situation. I think that every player obviously is in a different position. Some guys' contracts are up. Some guys are on option years. How they process everything, I really haven't seen anything different. I think the trainings have been good. The trainings have

been sharp. I think that's the important thing.

For me to tell you that I've seen something like the players are down, the players are this, no, I think they understand. They're professionals. I know that some of them have some questions that need to be answered. We all know that. But I think we have to be professionals, and we have a commitment to the club and to ourselves to make sure that we do whatever we can every step we step on the field to present ourselves in the right way and do whatever we can to get the three points for the club.

I really haven't seen anything different. I've been in it for a long time. I think people understand that -- in every season that changes will be made, and I think for me, changes are always good. Whether how you make those changes -- I think we finish the season, we reflect, and we all look to get better, and I think that's part of change.

Q. Looking toward next season now obviously Gregg is someone you've known for a really long time and you're pretty close with, as well --

FRANK KLOPAS: I'm excited. I'm excited.

Q. You're going to be the vice president of football. I'm curious based on your discussions with Gregg, with Joe, what do you think that role is going to involve on a daily basis?

FRANK KLOPAS: Look, I do a lot of stuff for the club as it is, and just to backtrack a little bit, a couple months ago when I went to dinner with Georg Heitz, the sporting director, I knew there was something different about it when he told me that he was stepping away and moving on, and then at that time we were -- he's someone that's done a lot of great work for the club and cares for the club, and we were talking about what possibly could be some really good people that can step in.

When he said Gregg, for me, it was like a no-brainer. I said, let's go forward and do whatever we can. So I did whatever I could in the background, knowing that I've been trying to transition to a different role for years with the club, but every time I've been asked to step in in situations it's been an honor for me to do so, but I think with this opportunity we couldn't pass up, and I'm glad that -- I knew one thing. I could tell him as much as I could, but the

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minute he had the opportunity to meet our owner, I knew that he would understand why this was such a great opportunity for him and for the club.

For me, I think in my role, I'm going to do a lot of things. First of all, obviously I will be there to help Gregg with the first team, whether it's scouting, when we need to go see players, I will be there. Obviously a big part of my work will also focus on the academy and identifying the talented players working under IDPs, making sure we bring players up when we need to to the second team, who can potentially be the new home-grown players, how are we challenging these younger players to improve, working with the academy director, also.

My affiliation and connection with Lugano, I have the contacts there, so I have point of reference and the key contact there with the people at Lugano, but also do a lot of work with the front office with Dave, whether it's going to speak to potential sponsors and our partners and stuff. I'm always available to do that.

It's not just one thing. I'll have a little bit of hand everywhere, but my main focus will be there whatever Greg needs to support him because I think our most important priority is getting the first time right, and I said it before, that this would be probably the most crucial offseason in the club's history, and I think we've started in a really positive way, but there's a lot, a lot of work left to be done, and I'm there to support Greg, to support the club, to support Joe, and I want nothing more but for us now.

There's a lot of good groundwork that's been laid there. I think a big move also going into the new performance center, there's so much positive. There's so much potential for the club, and I think the last piece is just making the right decisions with the first time, and I think there's a huge opportunity to do so in this offseason.

Q. You mentioned reflecting. 57 games in charge over this part of your tenure, 58 coming up on Saturday. I know the results haven't been what I think anyone hoped they might be on the pitch, but what are some things that you're proud of from this experience with the club?

FRANK KLOPAS: I mean, I think if you look back, I've stepped in as an interim coach more than once, and I've always felt like in the most difficult moments I've turned the club around and gave the fans hope and everyone hope. I did it last year and also last time when Rafa was here.

At that moment, even when I was stepping in, my role was different, but I always seemed to be attached with the first team, to be there, to help in any way I can. That's not at

times where I felt always most difficult.

But look, it's been an honor. When I was asked again to step in as a coach, there was no chance I would have said no because I didn't want to be in a position to have regretted something and an opportunity not to do so. It's an honor for me.

I think just my commitment, myself, the staff I've brought in and everyone, I think we've worked extremely hard. That's the one thing for me, we're here extremely early in the morning. The hours we put in -- it's just not me, it's just the people that I've been able to bring on board, too. The most important thing for me is to try to bring the right people, good people on board and confident people.

I think for me it's just a commitment, and I feel really -- regardless of the results, I think we've been really close, really close, but we need to take the next step.

I think for me I have no regrets because I feel like we've done everything that we possibly could, the way we work, the way we try to prepare, and from that standpoint for me, it's been -- hopefully we finish on a positive note. I want nothing more than that for our fans to at least the last game of this season to finish on a positive note.

But I'm proud of the work that we've put forth with the group here. We've worked extremely hard. I know it's not evident with the results, but that's just one part of it.

Now there's another chapter, so I have to make sure that I'm as committed, which I am, and I want nothing more than to see this club lift a trophy. I've always been a team player. I want nothing more than to bring the best people here and support the club in any way, and it would be great -- for me I've always said it would be great that one day we could lift the trophy with 70, 80 percent of the guys on the field being home-grown players.

Q. Switching topics a little bit, you mentioned being a team player. We're meeting Gregg Berhalter tomorrow in the introductory press conference in his new dual role with the Fire. I think it was over the summer you said that basically it would be difficult to imagine somebody filling that dual role these days just given how much work there is.

You obviously were part of the process that brought him in here. What convinced you that Gregg was the kind of guy that could basically do two more than full-time jobs

FRANK KLOPAS: Well, I think, look, the league is different now. I think he did that role when he was in Columbus years ago. I think he's also matured also as a coach. His

ability to handle different roles, that's been asked of him, I think being in the national team and having the responsibility of developing a game model for the whole organization to make sure that everything runs properly not only with the first team but all the way down, whether it's the U-20s, the Olympic team. So he's been involved with that, but also he understands that you need to bring good people with you along the way, and not one person can -- he also understands that. He's a smart person.

I'm sure he has a lot of excellent people that want to be -- that want to join him and be a part of this great club because I believe that this club is right here, is ready to take off. There's so much potential here.

I think those are reasons. I could go through many more. I know Gregg as a person, as a human being. He's a great family person. He's a great person inside. But he's an extremely hardworking guy, demands -- sets really high demands of himself and others, and there's a purpose to everything we do, and we all have to go out and reach those goals and their purpose, and in the end it's trying to build this club to be the premier club in North America.

Q. I'm going to miss that, Coach, but you're always going to be Coach to me --

FRANK KLOPAS: I'll see you guys, man. It's been an honor working with you guys, and hopefully I'll see you Saturday on a positive note to finish the season, but on a personal note I want to thank all you guys because you've been extremely hardworking dedicated professionals, and I have the utmost respect for all you guys, and I know you care about the club, also. I want to thank you all, and I'll do it again Saturday.

But I'll see you around.

Q. I know you're such a face of the Fire. Was there any sort of thought that maybe you wanted to take a look at other opportunities outside, or did you always want to remain with the organization? Was that kind of your goal here?

FRANK KLOPAS: Always when I came back from Montreal, I knew that my coaching days were over. I never wanted to leave Chicago, first of all. It was extremely tough from a family standpoint. I knew, look, I had really good moments in Montreal, but there was nothing -- even the worst moments here could not reach the good moments there, if I could just say. So there was no place for me. I never wanted to be a coach of any other team.

When I came back in, I started with the TV stuff, and then obviously when Joe bought the team and brought Georg

Heitz in and brought Rafa -- I knew Rafa, and when they asked me to step in, my goal was never from that position to be a head coach. I've stepped in a couple times. I was asked to a couple times.

I had a different role than I had agreed with Georg, Georg Heitz, our sporting director at that time, but that was still with the first team. I was always looking to transition into a different role with all my experiences in the sport. I knew that I could help, and my goal was never to leave. If I didn't work here as a coach, I wasn't going to leave the city and go somewhere else. It's been really an honor for me. It's also a great opportunity and an honor for me to step into this new role, and I'm looking forward to it, and there will be no better place for me to do it than in the city I love and with the team that for me that I finished my career with. I love this team, and I want to do whatever I possibly can to make it successful. We're very close.

I think a big move was bringing Gregg here. I did whatever I could to convince him, but in the end it was Joe that had the final say, and I knew once he met Joe, I knew that he was going to agree to come.

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