

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

Thursday, October 17, 2024  
Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Joe Mansueto Gregg Berhalter Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thank you all for joining us on this very special day for the club. We'll begin the press conference shortly with an opening statement from Owner and Chairman Joe Mansueto followed by Director of Football and Head Coach Gregg Berhalter. We'll then open it up to questions. I'll turn it over to owner Joe Mansueto.

JOE MANSUETO: Good afternoon, everybody. It's great to see you all. Thank you for spending some time with us this afternoon. We're delighted to see a number of folks from the media, a lot of our sponsors, some fans. All of you dialing in via the livestream, welcome to you as well.

It's a super exciting day for the Chicago Fire, a historic day, as we introduce Gregg Berhalter as our new Director of Football and Head Coach. Gregg is the 10th coach in Chicago Fire history.

You all know Gregg. He's a very accomplished person in the world of soccer. I think he's one of the most talented sporting leaders, head coaches in North American soccer, and we're just honored and delighted to have Gregg join us.

I have no doubt that he will take our organization to the next level in terms of performance, and he's just been a pleasure to work with. I couldn't be more excited to have Gregg join us.

I thought I would do a couple of things in my few minutes before I turn it over to Gregg. I wanted to give you a little background on the search process, how we came to find Gregg.

So the way it began was in August Georg Heitz, now our former sporting head, came to me and said he wanted to head back to Europe at the end of the year. This was no surprise. Georg, as soon as he started five years ago, he said his eventual plan was to get back to Europe, so it was

kind of not a total surprise to me.

We immediately went to work, and we knew we didn't have much time. The preseason starts in January. We wanted to give whoever we brought in enough time to be able to work on the roster, look at the organization, make changes. So we wanted to get somebody in as quickly as possible.

Three of us, Georg Heitz, Eddie Rock, who is our head of Football Operations at the Fire, and myself, put together a list of candidates, and we came up with a list of 80 candidates who we thought would be good for the role. That's both inbound, people from -- we had just tremendous interest around the world for this role, so inbound from overseas, throughout MLS, and then we proactively identified a large number of candidates. So we had a pool of 80 candidates.

Then we narrowed that down pretty quickly to three. We didn't want to have a huge interviewing process. We wanted to aim really high, get our three best candidates. If that didn't work, we would go back to the well and start again, but let's start with three.

We set a goal to ideally get somebody in by October 1st. Again, give them plenty of time to work on the roster. Gregg was on that list. We brought him into the office and interviewed them. We spent three hours with Gregg. He just did a phenomenal job.

I think after the interview we all walked out of there and said, That's our guy. So very impressive in the interview. Subsequently we spent a couple of hours at my house. Gregg came over. I think he interviewed me as much as I interviewed him.

He said it was a no-brainer in the video to join the Fire, but believe me, he had a lot of questions. So we spent a lot of time. We made Gregg an offer. Fortunately, he accepted. That was on a Friday a couple of weeks ago. Saturday he came over to my house, spent a couple of hours working on the roster. So as soon as he signed, he was over at my house working on the roster. This guy is all-in. So I'm super excited to see the drive and the commitment.

So why did we choose Gregg? I've known Gregg for three to four years now. As soon as I bought into the Fire five years ago, Gregg was kind enough to reach out to me and

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suggest lunch. We got together for lunch, and even on that first lunch I was super impressed with his knowledge of the game.

I got to know Gregg over the subsequent few years. We would have lunch occasionally, get together. He's got just such a deep background in the sport. As you know, over 30 years of experience, both as a player and as a coach. So he's played in Europe, the Bundesliga, the Premier League. Ended his at the L.A. Galaxy. He has played in MLS. So a wide variety of experience as a player.

Then as a coach he coached in Sweden. He coached in MLS with the Columbus Crew for five years. Four out of the five years he got to the playoffs. One year was a runner-up in the playoffs for the MLS Cup.

Then he is best known for his work with the U.S. Men's National Team where I thought he did exemplary work getting the U.S. to qualify for the World Cup out of group stage. I thought he did a phenomenal job with the U.S. Men's National Team.

So super impressed with his background. All of that you can just see in terms of his knowledge of the game, his understanding of the game. He just operates at a different level. He is also super analytical, very process-oriented, very methodical. He doesn't shoot from the hip. He's very careful in his decision-making. He does his research and then is very decisive.

He also has a very large network. You know, having played the game and coached the game in Europe, in the U.S. he's seen the game from multiple perspectives and has built up a large number of contacts around the world, which I think will be beneficial for the Fire. He literally has a global brand, which is very impressive.

He is also a strong leader and communicator. He gives very clear instructions, and I like the way he leads. He did things at the U.S. Men's National Team where he took the team out to California and trained with the Navy SEALs. To do things like that is a sign of a great leader, trying to learn from other leaders and how you can always get better, and I think will help galvanize our team.

He also has deep ties to Chicago. He's raised his family here, so he's connected to the club more than a lot of other candidates. He knows the city. He loves the city. I think he will represent the city very well.

Then, finally, and hugely important to me was I wanted somebody who wanted this job as much as we wanted them. That they weren't doing it just for the money or for any vacation in the U.S. That they really wanted this

opportunity. That they saw the potential in the Fire. We're also called the sleeping giant in MLS. We're a top 3 market. We should be up at the top. We wanted somebody who had real heart for that, and Gregg really exemplified that.

So a couple of just quick things before I turn it over to Gregg. One, I want to thank Georg Heitz, who has been our Sporting Director for five years. I know we've had mixed results on the field, but Georg is leaving the organization much stronger than he found it five years ago.

He's built up our academy. We've added the reserve team. He has helped with the performance center, the Endeavor Health Performance Center, that we're about to bring online. A number of key signings: Hugo Cuypers, Carlos Terán, Jhon Durán, who is not with us. He is already one of the highest transfers ever in MLS, and if Aston Villa sells him, as they plan to soon at the number they want, he will be the highest transfer ever in MLS.

He's done a lot of good. He'll continue to be in the Fire family with Lugano on the Board of Directors of Lugano. A heart felt thank you to Georg for all that he has done for this organization.

I also want to thank Frank Klopas. Frank has been fantastic. If there's anyone who loves the Fire more than Frank, I have not met this person. Frank is just so enthusiastic about the club. Loves the club.

As soon as we mentioned to Frank the possibility of bringing Gregg on, he got behind it 100%, and he said, You got to get this guy, you got to get this guy. I'll step aside. I still want to be part of the organization, which he will, and he was very active and a key part in helping to recruit Gregg to the club. A huge thank you to Frank for all he has done.

He will remain Vice President of Football Operations and work developing talent across all of our teams, being a bridge to Lugano, helping to acquire new talent, developing talent. We didn't just want to ceremonial role for Frank. We wanted a very meaty, important role, and that's what we came up with.

Then just a couple of quick things. One is just reflections on the season. I feel I would be remiss if I didn't address that.

Obviously very disappointed in the outcome with the season. It did not at all meet our expectations, which was at a minimum is to make the playoffs and then to have a deep run and contend for championship. We did not make that goal.

Just a lot of disappointment, and it wasn't due to a lack of hard work. The guys worked very hard. Coaching staff worked very hard. But for whatever reason, things did not gel for us on the pitch. It's a collective responsibility. Me more than anyone. "The buck stops here," as Harry Truman said. It's all of us. It's not one person.

Just very disappointed with the outcome in the season, but at the same time I'm very excited for next season. It's not far away. Preseason is in January.

A lot of things to be excited about. We'll have Gregg on board to lead the sporting organization. We have the new Endeavor Health Performance Center coming online in December, which I think will be a game changer. Five and a half soccer fields in the heart of Chicago, Roosevelt and Ashland. You can imagine from a player perspective, it will feel like a new club.

Instead of going out to Bridgeview, SeatGeek, you go to our own performance center. The first time the club has owned its own performance center. Brand new. Skyline in the background. The heart of Chicago. New leadership. It's going to feel like a new club to players, which I think will give us a boost.

Our academies if you look at the talent we're developing, Gregg and I are both excited about developing talent. We're in a very rich market here in Chicago, but our academies are doing well. Our U15s won the national championship last year. We have four U15s on the national team. I think the next club has two. We've got a lot of young talent coming up through our academies. Gary Lewis does a terrific job there.

Chicago Fire II in the playoffs. Come out Sunday see them play Orlando in their first playoff game. So the reserve team is doing well. There's a lot of up-and-coming talent, and you've seen we want to promote talent. Chris Brady, Brian Gutierrez. We want to make sure that's a key part of our future.

Then, finally, finally, I'm confident we're on a path to have a team that represents the city of Chicago that reflects our values. We aspire to be a world-class soccer organization, and I think with all of these things, new leadership, we're definitely on a path to get there, and I have a high degree the confidence. You'll see a new re-energized Fire come 2025.

With that, let me turn it over to Gregg.

GREGG BERHALTER: Thanks, Joe. First of all, thank you, everyone, for attending, taking time out of your day to

come here and welcome me to the club and to the Chicago Fire. I want to, first, thank Joe Mansueto for giving me the opportunity and entrusting me with this massive responsibility.

There were really two main reasons that made this opportunity compelling. The first thing was alignment. Me and Joe are very aligned on where we want this club to go. It's really about creating an established, successful, top-performing club in Major League Soccer and having the consistency throughout the time that we're here.

The second thing is about potential. This market, this club, this team has a ton of potential, and that's what makes it exciting. When I think about the new training facility coming online, it's probably one of the top one or two or three in Major League Soccer comparable to top Europe even facilities and an amazing facility to welcome players into.

The market of Chicago, the fan base here. I really see this opportunity as a sleeping giant, and we're going to give everything we have to make this team, to return this team to the top of Major League Soccer.

Chicago is about community. It's also about sports, and that's what's exciting. It's a world-class city, a city that players will want to come to, and it's a soccer-rich city. I remember the days in '94 World Cup Soldier Field hosting a World Cup game or multiple World Cup games.

For me it's really about a commitment to the fans to give them a product that they can be proud of, that they can come to the stadium and it really resonates with them, that they're excited to watch this team play on the field. We want to be an exciting team in Major League Soccer. We want to be a dominant team in Major League Soccer, and it will take some time, but we will get there. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen. We'll start with the Q&A.

**Q. I'm curious, Joe, you mentioned three finalists including Gregg. Were all three people you were looking at for both the Director of Football and the Head Coaching role, and what made Gregg the candidate that you wanted to give both roles to?**

JOE MANSUETO: That's a good question. Initially we were looking to just fill Georg's spot, the sporting head spot. That's the path we went down.

As I mentioned, we had three candidates. One from abroad; two we invited from the U.S. But we were just thinking of the sporting role.



When we came across Gregg, he expressed a desire to do both, Sporting Head and Head Coach. Well, that was not initially our intention, because of who Gregg is and he had succeeded in this dual role before, we were confident that it would work under Gregg's leadership.

From my perspective, what I wanted to do, what I try to do is create an environment where people can do their best work. If he can do his best work as Director of Football and Head Coach so there's this seamless connection, I'm fine with it, and he will build underneath him an organization to offload the things -- obviously you can't do two full-time jobs, but he will build an organization around him, and I have every confidence he can do that.

**Q. About that dual role and building out the front office staff, you mentioned how soon preseason starts. January. There's not really a long offseason in MLS at this point. How quickly do you both expect the team to be moving on that front?**

GREGG BERHALTER: We expect to move quickly. Really quickly. The work has started. You know, if I can expand a little bit on the dual role, I think it's important to give visibility into that.

I had a learned a lot of lessons from the Columbus days working 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 at night every day for five years. It aged me. That's why I don't have as much hair as I used to have. You guys can go back and check the pictures out to prove it.

In all seriousness, I realized how I need help, and really part of the alignment part with Joe was saying, Okay, we want to create this executive leadership team that helps shoulder some of the responsibilities, whether it's player transfers, player negotiations, player recruitment, performance, strategy. So it's really about creating a team around us that we can all pull the same direction to try to be successful for the club.

JOE MANSUETO: As I mentioned, he came over the house the day after he signed to work on the roster. So he is at it right now. I know January 15th is not far away, but he has targets in mind. It's happening right now. So stay tuned. I think you'll hear more in the offseason. We want to be active in the transfer market. So more to come.

**Q. Part of staying on the topic of kind of doing both roles, obviously you had success with that in Columbus. The league has changed a lot since 2018. Not like you've gone anywhere. You've been here working in soccer, but how have you seen how the league changes, how does that change**

**roster-believing as you dig into it now, and what kind of team do you want to build in Chicago considering the different buckets, I guess, that now exist in MLS?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I think the major addition has been second teams and the growth of the academy system and how that whole entity has developed, but to me it's a lot more professional now. That's what I'm excited about.

It's really about the ability to recruit good people and sophisticated people to be able to be effective in the transfer market and bring in top talent and then be effective in development.

You know, we want to be player-first club. We want to be a club that puts the player in the center of everything, and each department works around the player to help maximize their potential.

In terms of recruitment, we think there's an opportunity this offseason to bring in some high-quality players, to bring in players that can perform in the top 5% of the league. Real game-changer type players, and we want to do that.

We have the ability to affect the roster in a positive way, and it starts with next season. We're not saying this is a five-year build. We want to be successful in year one.

**Q. Gregg, you mentioned and Joe has mentioned your experience back in Columbus. How would you say you're different as a coach now returning to Major League Soccer than you were when you left it before taking over the U.S. Men's National Team?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Great question. I think that I strive to be a better coach every day and be better than last week. So I think the experience, I think the performance under pressure, the ability to deal with pressure, to compete in high-level games, to adapt and thrive are all qualities that I've developed with the national team.

It's a job that you're expected to win each and every game you're in no matter what game it is and working under conditions that change rapidly. We always talk about and you named the roster the week before, and then on Sunday you're holding your breath because there's six players that can't come, and you have to adapt. It's about working with what you have there. So all that has made me a better coach and really prepared for this opportunity.

**Q. Gregg, my question is for you. How did you go about processing the emotions surrounding your departure from the national team, and how did that process help you land in Chicago and take this current**



**role?**

GREGG BERHALTER: So it's a really difficult moment when you get fired as a coach. I don't want to liken this to life and death at all because it's not. You're still alive, but it is like mourning a death.

You wake up the next day, and you feel really bad. Your confidence takes a hit, and it's a really difficult moment. For me it was really about being with my family in those moments and giving myself the time and the freedom and the space to feel sad and feel bad.

You know, we didn't perform well in Copa América, and when you don't perform well at a high level, there's consequences. I take full responsibility for that, but it still hurts.

When you get past that mourning period, you have support around you, now it's about reflecting. Okay, what could I have done better? We got some information out to the players. We were able to get a lot of feedback that came back to me, and I analyzed it and said, Okay, how can I improve, how can I get better for this next opportunity?

Then from there you become motivated. All right, now I want the next opportunity. You know, you get hungry again. During that period when I got hungry, there's a number of opportunities that I was looking at. I kept coming back to Chicago and the potential and the alignment.

It's not every day that you get to work for a man like Joe Mansueto who understands what a top level is and how to build something really good and sustainable. So I thought it was a great opportunity for myself and my family.

**Q. Gregg, I want to ask a question for you. You've been through several interview processes in your career through U.S. Soccer and other MLS teams. I'm curious, what was different about this process, and was there anything about it that impressed you about Joe and the Fire's vision?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think how clear he was on the vision. You know, we were going through the interview, and don't take this the wrong way. There wasn't much excitement from Joe. It was hard to get a read on him. So I'm presenting. I'm presenting for an hour, hour and a half finally I asked him about his vision for the club. That's where he came to life.

I get goosebumps telling the story because it was really about what he wants to do for the city of Chicago, and that's when his eyes lit up, and he was really passionate

about that. I think that's the first moment that I really connected with him in terms of this job and said, If a guy is this passionate about building something for the city, it says a lot about him. That's the story there.

JOE MANSUETO: Thank you.

**Q. This one is for Gregg. It was alluded to earlier, but a lot of us thought you would be looking abroad at this stage in your career. You were reported to be very close to the Cuba America. I just wondered if you looked at that at working overseas maybe when you were making your next move, and if you could speak a little bit in that sense on the Cuba America interaction and why you decided to stay in the city rather than maybe go and do something completely new at the end of the M&T period?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, you factor everything into it. This was a moment in time where I chose for my family. As a player, you're selfish. You always go to the best opportunity, and you're moving, and you're moving, and you're moving. Then you get a coaching job, and you're moving, and you're moving your family.

This was a moment where I said, you know, this opportunity is so good, there's so much potential in this club, and my family gets to be stable. They get to be in one place. My daughter gets to graduate from high school. She's a junior now.

That was a big part of the decision. Europe has always been an ambition of mine, and it's not binary. Just because I came here doesn't mean there's never going to be an opportunity in Europe, but right now this is the best opportunity for me and my family.

JOE MANSUETO: We're glad you live in Chicago.

**Q. Gregg, we didn't hear from you since obviously -- this is the first time really here. I wanted to get your thoughts on the Pochettino hire, and do you plan on reaching out to and maybe fostering a relationship especially since there are some young players on the Fire that might get opportunities now with the national team that they might be looking for new players too?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I already have a relationship with him. He's a great guy. I think he's a great hire for U.S. Soccer, top coach, coached at the top level, knows what pressure is like, knows how to perform in pressure situations. So I think it's a really good hire.

I can assure you that there will be a relationship, and we will be able to count on each other, both us supplying him

players and hopefully getting feedback from him also.

**Q. You talked about potential in the team. One of the players that most impressed me since I start covering the team three years ago here in Chicago is Carlos Terán from Colombia. I think he has huge potential. I was wondering what you think about him because he's for sure a great, great defender and he still has a lot to grow. Thank you.**

GREGG BERHALTER: You have a good eye because I see the same thing. I see a player with a ton of potential, and you don't often get that type of package in a center back, being that commanding physically, that adequate on the ball. I think he has the potential to be a top center back.

It hasn't gone exactly the way he would like it for his team in the Chicago Fire. It's just about having conversations with him and really trying to understand his point of view and where he is coming from, but I agree a player with high potential.

**Q. I would like to ask about do you have that feeling from the fans, that sense of urgency to have this team in the top 5 of the league and see, again, the Chicago Fire in the best places to see now? Do you feel that urgency? And if you can give us a preview, can we have any big-name player coming to Chicago?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Well, I hope there's a sense of urgency with the fan base, but I've got to say that it is a two-way street. We're going to do our best to put a product on the field that they can be proud of, but we also need them to come to the stadium and create this environment in the stadium that really intimidates the opponent.

I've played in Chicago before where the stadium was sold out, and it was a difficult game to play in. That's what I would ask the fans is have the urgency, have the demands on us, but also come out and support us and really get behind us and make the stadium a fortress that teams don't want to come play at.

In terms of the big name that you mentioned, you know, our focus is getting quality that's going to help the roster. If it's a big name, that's great. If it's not a big name, that's also great if there's quality enough to really help us be successful on the field.

**Q. This one is for Joe. You've owned the team now for five years. What have you learned about MLS during that period, and how did you apply that to this search?**

JOE MANSUETO: I've really enjoyed my five years in

MLS. The league has changed dramatically since I came in in 2019. It's grown like this. You can't see my hand maybe, but up and to the right. It's been strongly growing. The arrival of Messi, the Apple deal, Leagues Cup, a loosening of the roster rules to allow more spend.

I'm super excited about MLS. I've learned that success on the sporting side doesn't come overnight. It's a journey. I think we're laying the foundation. I wish it would come sooner. I hope it's in our near future, but building the performance center, getting the right leadership, all of these things take time, and there is no magic playbook. There's no book you follow these ten steps, and you're going to win the MLS Cup.

There's an art to all of this. You can look at a roster. Individually the players look terrific. When you put them together, there's an art to that, and does it gel, or does it not gel? Even when you evaluate acquisitions, you look back and a player may have performed in a certain way within a certain environment with other players around that player, your target, and that coach, that league is different and cultural change as you move people. It's a real art to identify talent, bring them here.

It takes really experienced people who can try and weigh all these things, and it's a batting average game. No one bats 100% on their acquisitions. So what you want is a high batting average. Every time you sign a player, you see the positive, and you don't know what really could go wrong.

So, again, I guess I've learned it's taken a little longer than I thought. I think we're on the right path. The business side is more in my wheelhouse. I think there we're doing a great job. Dave Baldwin, our president in the back there on his phone I can see doing deals, but the business side is humming under Dave's leadership.

Now I think we've got great sporting leadership. We've got the performance center coming online. I think we're getting there. I think I've learned it's a journey. It's nothing you can snap your fingers and you've got overnight success.

**Q. Gregg, have you had a chance to talk to some of the players, and what has the reception been like?**

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, there's always uncertainty when new leadership comes in and on the first day Frank invited me to training, and I was able to speak to the players, and the message to the players was, we'll get you information, we'll communicate with you as soon as possible.

I'm working through the entire roster. By tomorrow I'll have



the whole roster completed. Really just giving them direction, where they stand with the team moving forward, expectations for the future.

It's been great to hear from them, and it's really identifying areas to improve and buckets to improve in. I think the guys are trying hard. They're doing their best, but we need to be better. Part of that is really about raising the standards, holding them accountable to these high standards and then working together.

The conversations have been really good with the players, and I look forward to continue them and finishing them tomorrow.

**Q. Gregg, this is for you. You talked earlier about how you've changed as a coach and how that's always an evolution. I would like to drill into that specifically on the tactical side. After your style change from Columbus to the national team and then maybe certainly changed during your national team tenure to become more aggressive and direct, what is your stylistic vision for the Chicago Fire on the field?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Great question. Part of the national team shift and pivot was looking at our player pool. We had a very dynamic midfield, a very aggressive winger, so we wanted to take advantage of the speed and the pressing ability. We were able to make that change and be much more aggressive, much more proactive as a nation, which was I think a positive turn.

Looking forward to Chicago, we want to be a dominant team. We want to be a team that controls the ball. We want to be a team that's not afraid of any other team in the league. We want to be a team that can hurt other opponents and hurting them both offensively with the ball but also defensive compactness, being able to maintain our shape and structure, be difficult to penetrate. It's really when I look at the Columbus team and the national team, I really think it's in the middle of both of them.

In MLS there are more open spaces. You can take advantage of spaces that are between the lines in a stretched field, so we want to certainly be able to do that offensively. Then defensively, how are we able to control the opponent and really limit the danger that they're able to create against us.

**Q. This is a question that has parts for both of you. Gregg, I'm wondering how big a deal were facilities in your mind as you were evaluating the picture of why you wanted to be here? Not just the performance center, but the future of where The Fire will play games and long-term for you. Joe, perhaps maybe you could**

**give us a bit of an update on the stadium front, whether or not -- it's probably not by choice the Fire have found themselves in this broader stadium discussion that we're having in Chicago. I wonder if you've made any progress towards long-term stadium solution, whether or not it's at Soldier Field or somewhere else and if you are able to share on that front.**

JOE MANSUETO: On our stadium situation, as you know, we play in Soldier Field, an iconic stadium, wonderful stadium. I know there are some folks from Soldier Field here today.

At the same time it has limitations. We have to be honest. We share the stadium with the Bears, concerts, and so the summer -- the warm summer days and fall days are really precious, and we would love to have as many of those days as possible, but we often get conflicted out with the Bears and concerts.

So we prefer not to have to play on the bookends when it's cold in Chicago, in the winter, early spring, or late in the fall. So the scheduling is certainly an issue with Soldier Field.

Certain sponsorship categories are blocked out. Nongame day access to the pitch is sometimes an issue. So those are the limitations. We are active in looking for a stadium, a soccer-specific stadium for the Fire. We've been doing site tours. We're looking around.

To me it's the last piece of the puzzle with this club. I think when I came in five years ago, we moved first to Soldier Field, which was a good move. We've revamped the business side under Dave Baldwin. Now we have new sporting leadership. We have the Endeavor Health Performance Center coming online.

The last piece is the stadium, and we don't have the optimal solution there because of the limitations I referenced. Having our own soccer-specific stadium is what we would like to see, so we're actively pursuing that. If we can find the right parcel in Chicago, I think we'll move forward on it.

GREGG BERHALTER: From my standpoint it was really just about if we say we want to be this type of club, how do we back that up? You back it up with facilities.

When I saw the Endeavor Health Center, I was blown away. I toured it the other day, and again, it's one of the top training facilities in Major League Soccer. One of the top facilities in the world.

It's hard enough to sometimes in Major League Soccer to get the high-quality players, but this will certainly help attract the players. You have the city of Chicago. Soldier Field right now, the iconic Soldier Field that we're playing in, and then you add the performance center to it, and it's a really compelling situation for the players.

**Q. I suppose this is a question for both of you, but first Gregg. What would be considered a success in 2025?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think two things. First of all, a very clear identity on the field. When you look at our team, you should see something very similar game-over-game, and it should be very strong, very established.

The second thing would be making the playoffs. I think that is a minimum requirement in MLS, and that's what we're striving for next year. Really it's just about being a consistent top performer throughout the years, but it needs to start with an identity and then actually making that first step.

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