

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Sam Rogers

Press Conference



Q. Sam, curious if you could just tell us why this was the right move for you at this time and what your expectations are coming back to Major League Soccer and American soccer in 2025.

SAM ROGERS: Yeah, I think there were a few things that were important when I was considering coming back to the U.S., and one was picking a club that has a good foundation and a good coaching staff in the way they run things, and obviously with Greg and all the success he's had and being with the national team, as well, to be able to play for a coach with that kind of pedigree and all the things he's accomplished is, like, very enticing, something I was very interested in, as well as the situation with the way the club was moving forward with all the new staff they've brought in. Yeah, just the direction the club wants to head in was also very enticing for me, as well.

I wanted to be in that kind of environment with good players and the players they've brought in, as well. It's really high level here, and the opportunity -- there were a lot of attractive things about the opportunity that made it very good for me to come here.

Q. I know you've played for multiple clubs in Norway at the first-team level, but you came up through the Sounders academy. I think you made a couple Open Cup appearances. But you're set to make your first MLS league debut coming up. With the Sounders academy it's what you were hoping for and dreaming of. What's that like now that it looks like it's about to happen and becoming real?

SAM ROGERS: Yeah, obviously before when I was younger there, obviously that was my goal, to play at that level at that time, and it didn't work out at that time. So it delayed it.

But I'm super excited to be in the MLS now, and I have a lot I want to show and prove along with the team.

For me, I guess the opportunity was just delayed a bit. But

now that it's here, I'm excited for it and ready. I can't wait for when that time comes to make that debut.

Q. A lot of new pieces on the back line here for the Fire. How have you guys been gelling so far, just the chemistry on the pitch and even off the pitch? A lot of new faces adjusting to the city, too, but what has the adjustment been and the gelling process with the guys?

SAM ROGERS: Yeah, this is a great group. I'd say this is one of -- maybe the best group I've been a part of, teammate-wise, locker room-wise, not just the defenders but the whole team. They're all great. You can have a conversation with anyone in the team about anything. Everyone is super friendly, helpful. Especially, like you said, there's a lot of new guys, so the guys that have been here has been very helpful about when we're looking for places to live. They're having a lot of suggestions based off what we like, and if we need something, they say, reach out, they'll be there.

It's the same with the other defenders. It's a lot of new guys, but on the field, the instructions and the way we want to do things is very clear. It's all about just getting everyone on the same page, which has been pretty good so far, and also off the field, it's nice when we go away to preseason for a couple trips because when we're outside the training we're still all together.

There's times we get together after training and we do things together, whether that's going to the pool or going out walking around, seeing some different places, restaurants, stores. It's a good cohesion opportunity, and I think everyone gets along really well, so that makes being on the pitch all together, that makes it more seamless, and it makes it more enjoyable for all of us, I think.

I think there's a lot of positivity, and, like, very optimistic going forward it.

Q. Who is the player that has most impressed you and the team this season, and which player do you think has the arm of captain during the games for the preseason? Which is the leader on the team?

SAM ROGERS: I think there's been a couple guys, I guess. There's been a few. But I guess just off the bat, I

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would say Christopher Cupps because he's so young that he came in and he actually played a lot of minutes when we were in Florida and got a lot of opportunity and showed a lot of, like, really good things, and for him only being 16, the potential there is crazy. I was definitely impressed with him.

I've been impressed with Hugo, as well. Obviously I wasn't here last year, so I hadn't seen him play so much, but, like, seeing him in person -- he's been injured, but when he's been on the pitch, seeing the way he moves, the way he analyzes what's happening, he's very clever. I think he's going to be a problem for sure.

What was the second part?

Q. Who do you think is the leader of the team or the captain that you think is more to give orders on the field during preseason?

SAM ROGERS: Yeah, like I said before, there's so many good guys on the team. I think in this locker room, I think, like, Kellyn, he's been the captain so far, wearing the armband the most, and he's a very good leader because he's very good at bringing the guys together. He has a very calming tone. He doesn't often lose his head, and he keeps very controlled. I think it's a good calming presence for the guys on the field as well as everyone else to know if something is going wrong they can look to him to settle the mood down and keep things, like, controlled.

But there's other guys that can also fill that role if Kellyn wasn't available or if he needed help, as well, with being a captain.

I think it's a good situation to have when you can have other guys, as well, on top of the captain. Yeah, it's a good environment.

Q. You mentioned Cupps before. He's obviously 16. Like yourself, a lot of the center backs are on the younger guys, as well. What's it like having Omar González in the locker room and on the training pitch?

SAM ROGERS: Yeah, he's a great guy. He obviously has a lot of experience in the league. He's accomplished a lot. I think it's a good presence to have in the locker room because there's not a lot of -- it's a very young team, like you said. There's not a lot of older players, so it's important -- I think it's good to have players with more experience in the locker room, as well, to help with mentoring or even just advising other guys.

Even for me, I'm not, like, young, but I'm 25 still, so to be able to play beside someone like Omar, to get advice from

him and perspective, because he's seen it all, done it all, it just helps the team because he's able to help on the field, like, with playing side by side. Then obviously with the coaches, as well.

But it makes a big difference when you have some of the veteran leadership there. It makes a huge difference in the long run.

Q. You were talking about younger players. You're 25 years old, but you have a lot of experience in Europe. How do you see your role this season using your experience to impact the younger players?

SAM ROGERS: Yeah, I think anytime you can help give perspective or advice on even anyone, doesn't even have to be young, but especially for the younger guys because we've been in their position coming up in the same club or different club, we've been in their shoes. I think it also comes along with the camaraderie in the locker room with everyone being positive and helpful towards each other with good vibes.

I think for me, it always helped me when older players when I was younger would give advice and perspective on a play that happened or how to do something better in a certain situation. For me, all I try to do is reciprocate that, as well, because the better my teammates play, the better it is for me, the easier it is for me, the better I play, the easier it is for my teammates. It's kind of like a revolving situation where the better everyone does, the better the team does and the better everyone looks.

I will try to help everyone as much as I can younger, even older if they want to listen. If they don't want to listen, that's their choice. But I think it's just part of being a good teammate. Everyone should do that.

Q. There is a game on Saturday; what's stood out to you in your prep about Columbus, and what do you think this team has to do to be successful on the road in the season opener?

SAM ROGERS: Yeah, obviously it's a good team, Columbus. They've had success the last few years, and they're definitely one of the better teams in the east.

I think for us, we continue to build on how we've ended the preseason. There's been a lot of good progress and a lot of the things that Greg has wanted us to work on and improve, we've shown improvement in those areas.

I think being back here, especially back in Chicago right before we head out, gives everyone a little bit more energy, being back in our facility and on the training pitch here



instead of being away for a couple weeks. It kind of rejuvenates the group.

But I feel like we just keep doing what we've been doing, what we've been working on in training and the last friendlies in the preseason, everyone is really in good spirits, everyone is excited to get going and play a competitive game.

I think we're just optimistic, very optimistic.

Q. I've got to ask a question about the weather because that kind of came up with some of the matches this week. You played in Norway which has a sort of spring to fall schedule. How difficult is it to adapt to colder temperatures below freezing at kickoff that gets colder from there, and is there anything that you learned from your time in Norway that you think is going to be useful in these earlier weeks?

SAM ROGERS: Yeah, definitely. I think a lot of it is mental. Obviously it's more difficult for guys that come from warmer climates and aren't used to it.

But I think it's very mental, and being here especially training before we are heading there where it's also going to be cold, I think it helps us get reacclimated to it after being in California.

But I think it's mental. If we go into it wanting to be in the cold and expecting it, I think it's much easier to just kind of go seamless into it than it is when you head out and you're like, worrying about how cold it is and shivering up and just wanting to get it done.

I think if we just go with the mindset of enjoying it and taking it for what it's worth, I think that's the best we can do, and also there's a lot of guys here that play here that are used to it, have been playing it most of their lives. Hopefully those guys can help bring up the guys that are maybe not used to it so much and get them mentally ready.

But it's a team effort, so we'll all help each other out. I know the trainers and everyone will also help get us prepared.

I think we've just got to be excited for it. It's a fun opportunity to play in the cold.

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