

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Saturday, February 22, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Columbus 4, Chicago 2

Q. Just the result is what it is. Did you think those goals that were conceded late maybe were something that could be prevented with more time in the system for your guys?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, we'll get there. I mean, it's frustrating. Disappointing. You can't win a game if you give up four goals. I mean, you can, but it's very difficult, especially on the road.

The message to the group was, you know, bitterly disappointed with the result but proud of the effort. When you see Columbus is a team that moves you around and makes you run, and the guys didn't buckle and they kept going, and that was nice to see. You know, I think the goals, basically we gave them three goals, right. That's tough. That's tough.

But the positives of it are, we created a number of chances. If we limit that, you know, we're right in this game potentially winning the game. Overall, again, bitterly disappointed with the result but proud of the effort.

Q. I want to ask about the tactical decision with the midfield. I think the personnel kicked themselves after the preseason, but it was clear there wasn't a defined structure. So I wanted to ask about the decision with the flat three in the middle.

GREGG BERHALTER: Just spaces. We are trying to hurt Columbus in certain spaces, and we use a variety of guys to do that.

Basically with our three, we have them interchanging and coming low and staying between the pockets and going wide, overloading with sides, really to give us numerical advantages, and really trying to, I think, attract the opponent to one side and then get to the other side of the field.

Q. What would be your message to a player like Sergio after a difficult first game?

GREGG BERHALTER: It was tough, and better players than him have had worse debuts. That's the message, right. That's the nature of this game, and we still support him. I think he's a fantastic player, and it's just getting used to games like this.

Q. Just my question, what do you think could be improved for the next game, the home opener next Saturday?

GREGG BERHALTER: A lot can be improved. But I think, again, the effort, the mindset of the guys was good but we have to threaten the back line more. I want to see some of that.

I want to see defensively, you know, the chances we gave up, you know, we need to take a look at, the on-goal wasn't a great positioning by our defense on that goal.

But we'll keep working. The goal was to keep making progress, and you know, I think the team has made progress throughout this preseason and we'll continue to build.

Q. After coming back to Columbus (your former team), what is the feeling?

GREGG BERHALTER: It's great, seeing so many people that you had such close relationships with, and you know, giving them hugs. You know, across the whole stadium: The security guards, the match officials, all the people working, the grounds crew, you know, everyone, it's really a special feeling to come back to a club and feel welcome.

Q. On the other side, it's going to be your first match on Soldier Field as a Chicago Fire coach. What's the feeling?

GREGG BERHALTER: I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to building the same type of bond with the supporters that you see here.

The supporters of the Chicago Fire are passionate, and they want to see entertaining soccer. And our job on Saturday is to play good soccer and win a game.

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. So Brian Gutiérrez is being asked to take a big step forward with what he does for the team this year. Had the brace but then also a yellow card. What's the message to a player like that to help him sort of settle and keep the positive, but also keep his head in the game as it wears on?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, it's emotional group. Guti cares a lot, and he wants to win soccer games.

You know, sometimes young players lose emotional control, and you know, all players lose emotional control. For him, it's about really understanding how good he can be and what's going to fuel him.

You know, I think you see the goals that he scored, and how he can play, how he can work. He's a tremendous player.

Q. Bamba's first game with the team, how do you think he fit in and changed things for you guys, particularly on the counterattack?

GREGG BERHALTER: He definitely threatened, threatened behind. For him, it's can we get him with more final product, right. I think he was in position to wake 1v1s and get shots off, make assists, and he was close. Close to a lot of plays. Really, I think, impressive performance.

But I think in the end, we want to see him with goals and assists for sure. FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...