

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



**Q. So your last couple of trips to Toronto and to Southern Ontario with the Crew, some of them were pretty difficult. What do you think about the prospect to going to this game, and what are your expectations from them?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I couldn't correlate the National Team to Chicago Fire and results, personal results.

So we're just focused on our team and focused on what we can do. We know it's going to be a tough opponent, and we know it's their home opener and they are looking to get points.

We see a physical team, a team that likes to create off the dribble about Bernardeschi, some really good occupation at crosses in the penalty boxes. So there's going to be some challenges that we have to rise to to get a result in this game.

**Q. So for the injuries list, there's a lot of names we've been talking about the last couple weeks. I want to ask about a couple guys availability this weekend, Haile-Selassie, Kouamé and Borso, and then if you have any timelines for Kellyn and Terán.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Carlos is doing well. He should be back to training shortly. So we'll see there.

Kellyn, I think, is a different case. That's going to be, I think, a couple weeks.

In terms of Phillip and Maren, they will be back with the squad, which I think is great news.

And then Dylan and Kouamé, Romi, are still -- still out.

**Q. Curious after the Dallas match, you said your level of concern was a 9.5 out of 10 with regards to the midfield. I'm curious where that's at right now and kind of your thoughts on the midfield entering the weekend.**

GREGG BERHALTER: It's something that it is what it is, right. We don't have much control of it. We know Romi is making progress. He should be back pretty soon. We are going to have to figure something out with Sam Williams and Harold, right. Their call-ups are coming to an end.

And then everyone else is around. We are thin, but that's part of it, and we're going to have to get through it.

**Q. Following up on the injuries, you're still early in this process of installing the system, getting guys comfortable with the tactics and the instructions of it all. How do you balance continuing to build that at a time where because of injuries, you maybe don't have your preferred 11 out there, or you might have to be a bit more practical in some senses with limited options, particularly in midfield?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think that's part of it.

But we also, we need the guys to be able to adapt, and that's something where you know we want to play with this intensity.

We want to play with this certain workload on and off the ball. And it costs energy, and it's a lot of distance for the guys and they need to adapt to it.

You know, so you see the guys that are -- some guys that are handling it well and some guys that are having difficulty with it. But we hope over time, everyone is going to be handling it well and the team is going to be much better off.

**Q. With Kellyn Acosta, maybe, out this Saturday, which would be the player who will have the armband captain?**

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, we haven't thought about that yet. We do have a leadership group within the team.

The captain will come from one of the leadership group, and we'll make that decision probably in the next day.

**Q. For somebody north of the border, can you give me an assessment of the early days of your team so far, 1-1-1, you've scored seven goals. What would be your**



## **assessment of the team's performance to date?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think it's mixed. I think there's times when we're doing really well and times when we are not going so can well.

We did score seven goals, which is positive, and we've also given up seven goals which is negative. We were talking to the team the other day, and you know, not too happy with, I think, six of those seven goals are really avoidable goals, and something where we made mistakes on, and we can do better.

But you know, the way we look at it is, you know, it's still a team effort and we're still trying to get better.

So you know, we've had mixed results. Mixed performances. And we're just trying to improve and keep moving forward.

**Q. I asked Jonathan about this just a minute ago, but it's the first MLS game in Canada played between an American team and a Canadian team. We've seen in other sports a strong reaction to the National Anthems in recent matches between cross-border teams. Is that something that you've thought about and thought about talking to your squad about how to prepare them for it? There's a lot of young guys in the group, not so much the politics of it, but just the strength of that kind of a reaction that strong before the game even starts, and how to sort of stay in the right head space?**

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, we'll be prepared to play, to compete in a soccer game. That reaction doesn't have anything to do with the soccer game. It has to do with things outside of soccer that we can't control.

So for us, it really is just focusing on things that we can control. You know, we'll be ready to play. We'll be prepared. We'll know the opponent. And we'll go out and give our best.

**Q. One other thing about being prepared. This is the first matinee of the season for the Fire, and a week later you have a game that is like two hours later based on time here with time change in Vancouver. I know that athletes will perform whenever they are asked, but how do you prepare the squad for that kind of time difference playing five hours earlier one week, and then two hours later the next week and make sure that everyone is kind of at the right point to sort of perform at their peak?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, you know, it's obviously going to be a shorter day, and something we prepare for in

preseason. All of our games were around that time.

So we'll be ready for it that way. But it's also nice, I think in the winter, especially the colder months, to be playing in the afternoon.

You know, reminds me of days in Germany or in England where you have the afternoon kickoffs.

So I think it will be a great atmosphere in the stadium. Get fans in the stadium, and we're looking forward to it.

**Q. You mentioned the leadership council before. I know you did the same thing with the National Team. Curious how you think that model of the captaincy has helped you so far this season, how it helped you before and how you think it will help you going forward?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, we did it in Columbus, right. For us it's a way to give players ownership in the process. It's a way to get them organized amongst themselves. It's a way to get a nice cross-representation of athletes with a voice. You know, it was all voted on by the team.

And I think empowering the athletes; they are not just on the journey. They are driving this, and, you know, for us it's really important.

So the coaching staff interacts with the leadership council a lot. We lean on them for the decision-making process, and you know, it's nice to see them stepping up. An example today would be we gave them a choice of what they wanted to do in training, the first exercise, and they got to choose that.

So again, empowering the athletes, giving them ownership of our environment, and we've seen a lot of benefits with that.

**Q. You're going against Robin Fraser. I guess you guys were center back pairings in the '99 Goal Cup. Curious of what your expectations are, and what you see from him as a coach across the coaching box?**

GREGG BERHALTER: '99 Goal Cup?

**Q. Brazil and México.**

GREGG BERHALTER: I don't remember. We were center back partners. He was a great player to play with, actually.

I have a lot of respect for Robin, and for what he's done and him as a coach, and how he organizes his team, how he leads his team. I hear nothing but good things from the



players that he's coached.

So you know, I'm looking forward to the game. I know he always thinks about the game in a tactical way. So I'm sure there will be some wrinkles that we have to prepare for. Overall, just we're ready. We have this road stretch right now, two of the next opponents are going to be Canadian opponents.

So we are going to be north of the border. For us, it's about continuing to try to get results on the road and building the confidence of this group.

**Q. As somebody who has been around a long time, I'm sure you're no stranger to this but fans, especially, will look at the standings and will see two of the next three teams are teams that have really struggled this season in Toronto and Montréal, and then Vancouver, they have arguably a worse injury situation than you guys are currently facing right now. How do you balance wanting your guys to be confident and getting results on the road, and how do you have form of the other team not be part of the confidence equation and thinking about guys always trying to grind out the results?**

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, the sample size isn't large enough. We are only three games into the season.

So I think it's really determined where the teams are in the order. You know, it's an order of the day, not necessarily the quality of teams.

For us, and I've said this, and you're going to hear me say this another hundred times, is any game in MLS you can win, and any game in MLS you can lose. The level is very equal and you have to prepare hard and it doesn't matter who is available, who is not available. You just have to step up and compete. That's going to be the message to the guys.

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