

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Hugo Cuypers

Press Conference



Q. Hugo, what do you think has been really powering you to the great start so far this season?

HUGO CUYPERS: I think, first of all, I had a challenging preseason. So it was more about putting the work in to get healthy again and being prepared mentally to go on the first game, and I think the group did a good job by making the principles pretty clear, and it helped me a lot getting ready right away.

Q. You touched on the implementation of the new tactics, new system. As a striker, how would you say the way Gregg wants the team to play and the system he's trying to implement benefits you and puts you in good positions to score?

HUGO CUYPERS: I think his whole vision is about creating a lot of chances, being an offensive team, and I think it's what every striker wants. Creating not only as many chances as possible but the best quality of chances, as well, and I think we have done a pretty good job so far already.

Q. How difficult or how pleasant is it to have players coming in and stepping in for the ones that are injured, and also making a good roll in the games and winning?

HUGO CUYPERS: I think also, what I already touched on, is having clear principles and trying to make it as easy as possible for the players that come back from injuries, and so it's up to us, the guys that play more games, to try to make it as easy as possible for them.

Q. So you've been talking about the principles that Gregg's system has had in place. It looks like you're also showing different parts of your game under the new system with the principles that he's got. We've seen you sometimes working almost like a winger, putting cross the into the box. Can you describe how your role has changed in that part of your game this year under the new system?

HUGO CUYPERS: I don't think it has changed that much. Every once in a while, I might drop low or be on the size. But I think the biggest difference is that we operate more in our positions than last year, and we are less of a contacting team than we were last year. Overall, I have qualities that can fit a little bit every system, and that I can adapt quite easily.

Q. Speaking of adapting, with the new additions to the team this year, you've had a month of games working with new guys. What is your role in trying to build relationships and how do you go about, besides getting the reps in games, how do you go about building relationships with guys you're going to be in close proximity to and combining in the attack?

HUGO CUYPERS: The tricky part was missing preseason, and so I didn't get to know them on the field and their specific qualities. We try and do best with the four games that we had. We had a little bit of discomfort through those last game, and hopefully we can now all of us stay healthy and build from there.

But for the rest, it's something that comes naturally by training and playing games. The more you win, the easier it gets, too.

Q. Last year, Sergio was not starting on the team. I want to know how you like the assistance between Sergio, Guti and you at the top, and how it is playing with them?

HUGO CUYPERS: I think Sergio has integrated really well. You see all the goalies coming out and the way the coach wants him to play in the midfield. And for me, it makes my job easier when I have guys like that behind me that see my runs and that understand my movements. Hopefully we can continue to improve on that.

Q. A lot of the international guys who came in this off-season have talked about how you were one of the first people to reach out and try to help them adjust to being in Chicago. Curious how your first year of being the new guy helped shape bringing in newer people from Europe and how you're helping them adjust to MLS and living in Chicago?

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HUGO CUYPERS: One of my biggest challenges last year was all the adaptations coming in and from Europe, and the U.S. There was a lot of admin that has to be done. A lot of planning into finding a new home and moving.

So I knew how challenging it would be for them, and just me telling them that if there was anything they needed, or just telling them that a couple things were coming their way, that maybe they didn't expect, I think for them made it a little bit easier. But there are still obviously things I can't do for them, but I think being a support is a big help for them.

Q. Obviously the hot start has been fantastic but you've been scoring so many goals from the back post. That's been even said on the broadcast last week. Do you expect to continue being dominant in the back post? Are guys starting to mark you differently to sort of get you away from that area? How do you foresee adjustments you might need to make since you've been such a threat in the back post?

HUGO CUYPERS: I think it's more about highlighting the weaknesses that the opponents might have. But again, a weakness doesn't mean they will always be vulnerable, and same for qualities. It's up to me to try and adjust in real time, and depending on the areas where the balls come from, it's up to me, like I said, to finding the right spaces. It ended up being twice at the far post so far. So good for us, but we are only four games in.

So the season is still very long, I think. When you look back overall on the season, this may be close to a 50/50 front post, second post. So we will see how the season gets.

Q. This is a game that's going to be played, basically, indoors on artificial turf, and I wanted to know how that affects sort of the way that you prepare for the game, and what you think about playing on artificial surface, especially indoors?

HUGO CUYPERS: Personally I'm not a big fan of it. But I guess there's not much I can do about it. It's more preparing mentally, I think. It's knowing the conditions we will be in, and obviously not taking them for excuses. It's still up to us to play our game to go there and have a good result.

Q. Vancouver, they have not lost one game yet. They are at the top of the league and it's a good team. How is going to be this match for you guys coming into Vancouver and trying to make a statement?

HUGO CUYPERS: It's not so much about making a

statement. I think since the beginning of the season, we have been trying to build game after game, which I think we have done pretty well so far.

We still have a long way to go, and going to Vancouver is knowing we will face a good opponent that, like you said, haven't lost yet. And hopefully by playing our game and staying true to our identity, we can continue to progress.

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