

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Q. So third road game in a row but it seems like one particular issue the team has had is as soon as somebody comes into the midfield, somebody else goes out. How are you dealing with those challenges, and how are you looking at the lack of consistency in the midfield and trying to solve that?

GREGG BERHALTER: At this stage, it kind of is what it is, and that's our attitude and mindset. Johnny Dean has a punctured lung. Andrew Gutman has been sick for the last three days, so we don't know about him. Guti has got a call-up.

So we are just rolling with it. That's all we can do at this stage. It's really next-man-up mentality, and that's what the team has been living by so far this season, and that's what we'll continue to do.

Q. What have you seen in the last two games that's similar but particularly in how you've seen the team respond and be able to finish off those games?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, I think we talked a little bit about this after the game in Toronto. You know, it was actually three games in a row that we've come-from-behind, right. D.C. we were trailing early, also, and I think it shows the mindset of this group, not to get rattled. When I think about the Columbus performance, it was probably our best performance in the first half of the year.

But we definitely got rattled after they tied the score. Now we have seen a completely different attitude from the group, and really able to deal with those moments. I think that's what we are excited about. We are continue to go build, continue to go try to get better.

But the resiliency in the group, the belief it strong, and that's important. Because we know we are not going to be dominating every game. There's going to be times we have to suffer a little bit, and for the guys to be able to deal with that is important.

Q. Knowing the rival in Vancouver, they are undefeated, and nobody has beat them yet, and the call ups with the forwards, will it be a statement if the Fire go and beat them?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think Vancouver has been doing a great job this year, and you see even when they rotate players, like they have in the Champions League, they have still been able to play a good game.

Against Monterrey, they played a different goalkeeper, different forward most of the game. They rotated some players through. But the collective is very strong. A lot of those players have been playing together for many years, so they know each other really well. And even though they are missing players, it's the same with all these teams. You've got to continue to go, and I'm sure they are going to want to get a home win, and we are going to have to do something about it.

Q. Curious, expectations regarding the possibility of Romin Kouamé or even Dylan Borso making their debuts this weekend and just expectations for them going forward.

GREGG BERHALTER: They will be with the squad. We know that now. You know, they are both still limited with minutes, but I think it's a positive that we'll be able to get them back into the group.

Q. Obviously big news for Brian to be called up and get to play for the National Team and the Nation's League. But I wanted to know, for the club, how important is it to have players represent the national team, and who do you foresee being the next player in line from this club that could make that call-up for the national team, or should, in that sense?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, we're proud of Guti to put himself in position to get called in. We know it's an important window for the National Team, defending the Nation's League title, and we wish them all the best tonight against Panama and hopefully in the final on Sunday. But we are still going to be cheering Guti on.

We have a number of good, young players that could work their way into a position. When I think about Chris Brady,

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he's one that comes top of mind because he's so young and he's played that many games, and we think he's got still a ton of potential and a ton of room to grow. So we are excited, definitely, about him.

I think Sergio has had a very good start to the season. It will be interesting to see how he continues to develop. We have a number of players within the club that are in the youth National Team program and hope that they keep progressing and eventually can make it to the senior team.

Q. We were talking with Sebastian yesterday at training, and wondering how special is this match for you on a personal level to have a lot of family coming in, and it's the first opportunity for you to coach with Sebastian playing for the opposition team?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think it's a fun moment. I'm definitely proud of him and how he's progressed in his career. You know, being able to watch closely, obviously, in the last five years and to see what type of player he's become is really nice. I know it's down to his hard work and his mindset.

You know, it's kind of funny when you're scouting the opponent, and you're watching the games, you're like, oh, that's a nice little midfielder, and it happens to be your son. It's kind of funny.

You know, sometimes you watch it from the wide angle and you're seeing all this movement, but then the familiarity of his movement and watching him for so many years stands out.

It will be a nice moment. It's still a moment where we want to win, and I know he wants to win. So something's got to give. But we'll be doing everything we can to get the win.

Q. Do you have any fond memories that stand out from Sebastian's youth career?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, there's a lot of fun memories. I coached him; my first coaching job I think was actually a U10 club team in California when I was playing for the Galaxy. I ended up coaching him in his first experience in club soccer.

I remember when he was disobeying, I would make him run laps around the field. He would get so mad at me; we didn't have a lot of words on the way home from training.

A really fun memory was at Hammarby. His coach got sick for Hammarby, and I ended up coaching his team in this mini-tournament over a weekend, and we actually won the tournament. It was a great moment for the team and him

personally. So it was a fun moment.

Q. So you talked about some of the call-ups, and on one hand it's good to see, but on the other hand you're one of the few that has experienced both sides of call-ups from both the club perspective, as well as the National Team perspective. Can you talk about the challenges of having to sort of coordinate that at the last minute, both as a club coach, as well as a National Team coach, trying to make sure the guys stay in the club situations that work for them?

GREGG BERHALTER: To be honest, there should be no challenges because we shouldn't be playing in the FIFA window, right. If you think about Vancouver us and, like Vancouver is missing three or four players. We're missing some players. Ideally you would want that game to be played, they are undefeated.

It would be nice if they had their whole group there and same thing for us. I don't agree with playing in the FIFA window. That's why they have FIFA windows, right, so teams don't play. Given some of the stadium challenges we have with dates, we have to do it. I'm not a big fan of it. I think it dilutes the talent on the field.

Q. Obviously we have not seen him play yet but you got a chance to see him in training. How would you describe Rominique as a player, and what do you like about his game?

GREGG BERHALTER: He's a very elegant player, I think very smooth dribbler. I think he's able to dribble through lines. Good first touch. Good combination play. Is able to defend 1v1.

So he's a very interesting midfielder, and hopefully all the fans and you get to see him soon.

Q. If I may, another one about the international window. So Guti is going in last minute as we know. Did you have any conversations with poach tine know about that and him going into camp at the last minute?

GREGG BERHALTER: No, I did not. We got the notification that he could potentially be called in beforehand, so we knew that something may be coming and then we got confirmation on Sunday.

Q. And then one more, if I may, about Sebastian. I know this is your first time going up against him as a head coach. Have you had any conversations with him this week building up to the game, or have you just focused on your own team?

GREGG BERHALTER: No, I talk to him every day, so of course we have conversations. I think we are both professional enough that there's not too much talk about the game. It's more about the restaurant we are going to go to after the game.

It's good. We will have family out there, and it will be nice for them to see, and I think a nice moment for the family to show that when you work hard, you put yourself in position for things like this. We are all proud of him and what he's been able to do.

Q. Speaking about hard work paying off, we've seen a number of academy players work their way into the first squad. We had five starting last game. You talked about the next-man-up mentality. Can you talk about sort of, like, what the growth that you've seen from already the squad players coming up and what you're seeing from the group of people that a lot of them are here before but some whom you've added and signed in the last couple months?

GREGG BERHALTER: We still have a lot of work to do throughout the organization to continue to develop high-level players. You know, Chicago is a fantastic area of talent. There's a ton of players throughout MLS, through the history of MLS from the Chicagoland area. It's our job to develop them into top players and players that can perform on the field for Chicago Fire and hopefully at the international level.

So you know, I think this is the beginning stages of it. I think there's been good work in the academy. We want to continue and amplify that even more and have individual development programs for all these players, and have a clear pathway for all these players, and really show them that it's possible.

Sergio Oregel, he's a smart soccer player, technical soccer player and has been developed well, and now he gets the opportunity to show what he can do. And that's what you want to show these kids; that if you put in the work and develop, there is a pathway for you.

Q. Just with Johnny Dean suffering that punctured lung, I assume Leo Barroso will slide into that role. What's your challenge to him now that he's had a short run off the bench with success, a longer run off the bench with some success and now a potential start?

GREGG BERHALTER: I mean, I think it's ideal the way the last couple games worked out, knowing that Johnny went down; that he got some game time in Dallas and scored a goal. Had an assist against Vancouver and played the majority of the game, and now he'll get another

opportunity in Vancouver.

He's been doing well. He's been doing well all of preseason. Very dynamic player. Very good 1v1 defender. We have Justin Reynolds, as well, who can slot in.

We have two players in the fullback position right now, and hopefully that will increase as we move towards Saturday.

Q. One more relating to the academy. We've seen a more aggressive approach with the second team and signing players to the second team. Williams just signed. Do you have anything to say about him coming on to a second team contract?

GREGG BERHALTER: That's the type of profiles we want on our second team. I think I've said it before to you is that we want guys that can make it to the first team, and that have big potential, and Brody I think is an example of that. Just turned 15 years old. A ton of potential. Is going to continue to work through the academy. Played sometimes with second team throughout the next years and hopefully in a short time we see him in the first team. A lot of potential, and it's up to us to help develop him.

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