

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Chicago 3, Vancouver 1

Q. How did it feel to get that fast start on the road and to see a victory after getting that punch back early on?

GREGG BERHALTER: We thought they are an aggressive, attacking team, and they put a lot of pressure on your penalty box and we knew we could expect that. But we also knew that their midfield really has to shift to cover the wide spaces. So the idea was to get it from one side to another. We did that on the first goal, and it was a really good play, really good understanding from the players.

Q. Wanted to ask about Kouamé, his first appearance of the season and getting that goal.

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, he was excited. He's waited a long time to make his debut. You could see how much the team was pulling for him in the locker room just now, celebrating with him and really excited for him. He's had a long road to get to this point, and he certainly made an impact in the game today.

Q. You guys, Vancouver had more possession and more shots, but you guys had more shots on target. And the quality of shots, and I wanted to ask you about the last few weeks, the quality of shots the guys are getting on the goal, they are putting up really good shots. What can you attest that to?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think if we're patient enough to find the right spaces and to get the ball into areas that will hurt the opponent. We have some good players that know how to make the difference in the final third, and you can see with the type of shots that we're getting.

Q. Philip Zinckernagel started with a slower start and goal and assist in this match. What did you make of his performance?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, he was the Coach's

Man of the Match for his contribution. We know what Philip can do. He's an outstanding player, and you know, as he gets into form, I think you're going to see him score some goals.

Q. Wanted to ask you about Barroso, a guy who was very involved in the two big chances early in this game, and also had a pretty big challenge against Nelson in that first half. Wonder how you evaluate his first start.

GREGG BERHALTER: His defending is exceptional, his 1v1 defending. We did a preseason against LAFC and he was going against Bouanga one-against-one, and he holds his own. Really pleased for him in that area.

Offensively, really smart ball behind their back line which led to an opportunity, or led to the first goal, and we wanted to switch field, which means the fullbacks were going to have a lot of touches. We still want to continue to develop him in that area because we think he can make a major impact.

Q. That Berhalter kid on Vancouver was pretty involved. I'm curious how you processed that whole event for you and your family this evening.

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, every time there's a set piece, I held my breath because it was such good balls. It's kind of annoying. I was hoping he was going to mis-hit a couple of them, but unfortunately it didn't happen. You know, we got everything here. We got aunts, uncle, grandparents, siblings. Everyone is here for the game, and you know thankfully we won, and so I don't have to buy dinner.

Q. With Kouamé coming in today, Borso back on the bench but the guys who have been those replacements have taken their opportunities, Sergio, Sam, others. Is this a good problem to have now when guys like Guti and Acosta come back, as well, and you have to pick who is going to start?

GREGG BERHALTER: Definitely. To win in this league, you need a deep squad. You need quality. For these guys to get the opportunity and take advantage of it, guys like Sam Williams, Justin Reynolds today, it means a real lot. They get the confidence to help the team.

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Q. On that goal for Vancouver what did you see? Seemed like a miscommunication that he got sort of in front of the ball and everyone was sort of searching for the ball. Was that players losing their positioning or the ball sort of side of it? What did you sort of see on what happened there?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think that we wanted to avoid the middle. We want to draw them into the middle and avoid the middle and go wide and we didn't do that. On this play, we went central where they had their numbers and they won the ball, and you know, the boy makes a nice finish. You've got to give him a lot of credit for the finish but it was really a silly mistake from us.

Q. One thing we saw today, there were a lot of sort of -- it was a very physical game at different points. I wanted to know kind of your opinion about some of the plays that we saw, especially there was in the first half stoppage time a play where Bamba went down for a couple of minutes because a goalie way off his line doing a tackle, and I wanted your read on that play and what you thought of Vancouver's physicality.

GREGG BERHALTER: Well, it's a physical game, and that was my message to the team at halftime. We have to embrace this physicality. We have to be better in duels. I think we did improve in the second half.

But you can see how committed they are and how much aggression they play with, and you have to match that, you know, if you want to get something out of the game.

So I have nothing wrong with a physical game, as long as it's well-fought and honest in the challenges.

Q. I can't believe we have gotten to this point in the press conference without talking about Hugo Cuypers, a guy we know is a good goal scorer and a guy who gets in the box. We see it on that first goal. But tonight in familiar and throughout the start of the season, it seems like he's been a really complete striker. What are your thoughts on what we're seeing from him? And what's curious on the menu post-game given you've won the family bet?

GREGG BERHALTER: Vancouver has some wonderful restaurants, and we are certainly going to take advantage of that. But there's a place called the Beijing Duck House and it's fantastic. I think it has one MICHELIN Star, and that's a good place and that's what I'm going to choose.

In terms of Hugo, he's the man on the spot. We provide balls for him, service for him and he finishes them up really

calmly and collected. And not only that, he works really hard.

We still want to work with him on when he's coming down, how he's makes a play and how he's able to bring plays into the game. But really happy with Hugo and his attitude and effort and his mindset. I think this is the first time in 16 years that the club has won three games on the road, and it says a lot about this group and their mindset.

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