

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Q. Curious, another week, another need to jostle the midfield up a little bit. Curious the status of Brian Gutiérrez and how you're expecting the midfield to look on Saturday?

GREGG BERHALTER: Brian is out. He picked up an injury on National Team duty. It is what it is. These things happen, and for us, again, you've heard me say this every week. It's next man up, and that's what we'll do this week.

Q. Montréal became the first team in the season to Fire their head coach and an interim, who has never been a first team head coach. Does that change the game plan?

GREGG BERHALTER: Well, he has coached in Series C in Italy, so he has head coaching experience. And you know, it's one of those things, it's somewhat difficult to understand after five games. The team made the playoffs last year. The team has a very clear identity. They are playing with some very young players. I think at times they play really well, and they have phases of the game that they execute really well.

So again, to me, it was a little bit puzzling, the decision that was made, to let Laurent go, but that is what it is.

And you know, Marco has this opportunity. I remember him as a player. He scored a great goal against us when we were in Columbus. I still have nightmares of that goal.

But you know, I think first and foremost, he's going to set the team up to compete. He was a competitive player. You know, they have a clear identity. We guess they are going to continue on with what's been the foundation that's been laid.

But in terms of scouting and planning, it's very difficult to plan, obviously, what we think they are going to do because it is new and we expect there to be some changes. Long-winded answer. Sorry about that.

Q. After three straight wins on the road, how to maintain the momentum the team is experiencing without falling into over confidence?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, I don't think over confidence is an issue. I think complacency is an issue. We want to have confidence in our group. We work very hard to build the confidence of the team. And you know, it's something we talk about all the time, really giving the players confidence. You know, really relying on each other. Relying on the qualities that they have to bring out the best of the team. And so we want the group to be confident. But we also don't want them to be complacent. We know it's a very difficult game against Montréal. We're not taking anything for granted. The first team talk of the week was about that, about, you know, we can't -- we can't be complacent. This is a team that is good. And you know, even though the record doesn't show it or their place in the standings doesn't show it, they are a very dangerous team, and so we have to be aware and we have to come into the game trying to get our first home win of the season.

So we have a milestone, also, that we are trying to achieve.

Q. We see through the games that you don't change too much your players; that you continue with the same. But now with the injuries and new players coming in, are we going to be seeing Kellyn or Maren on Saturday?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, Kellyn is still not back from injury. My guess is he's also close to being out. That one's tentative but he's right on the border of out and questionable, right on that border. I don't know if there's a classification for that but he would be right there.

For us, we want competition in spots. It's really important. We haven't had that. We haven't had the luxury of it because of injuries. But there's nothing better than having, you know, people having to fight out for spots every week. You know, so we'll see as the season goes on.

Q. Speaking of kids who are playing in college, I want to ask about Dylan Borso, he was on the bench for the first time last week. Wondering what you're seeing from him and how close you think he is to being ready

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for minutes?

GREGG BERHALTER: He's been working his way back. Give a lot of credit to Dylan for working hard and getting back up to speed. I still think he's a little bit away from making his first-team debut. We want to get him some second-team minutes and game rhythm. Last week was out of necessity, and hopefully we can start building his minutes up and get him ready.

Q. You talked about competition throughout the squad. Curious about the center back room, now that Carlos Terán is healthier, you've established Jack and Sam as starters, and Omar and Christ. What would it take for some of those guys to elevate to the starting lineup, as well as what you want to see from the five guys competing at the spot you know very well?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, you know, I think they all bring something did I know in terms of how they are helping the team in terms of their profiles. With Christopher, he's a very young, high-potential player. There's an extreme amount of risk of putting him in right now. And right now, we are not too comfortable with that risk. We think he has a bright future and we'd love to get him some games this year. And we just have to see how that whole thing plays out.

Omar is the opposite end of the spectrum, where he's a guy with a ton of experience and has actually already done a huge job for this team in every day being prepared for training and showing the guys what it takes to recover and stay fit.

So Omar, the opposite end of the spectrum. Has already done a great job for the group in terms of showing his leadership, his professionalism and his attitude and mindset in training every day.

With Carlos and Sam and Jack, you know, those are guys that are fighting for starting positions, and again, we talked about competition in spots, and this is definitely, you know, a spot that's contested.

. And we'll have to evaluate it and see what the decision is for the game on Saturday.

Q. Wanted to touch on Brian Gutiérrez, he gets the exciting call up to National Team camp and end up not playing and picks up an injury and now comes back and is going to miss at least one more game for the Fire. How do you help him bounce back mentally after what imagine is a pretty frustrating week for a young player like him.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I could imagine it being a frustrating week because I know he wanted to come back and help the team.

From what I gathered from my conversation with him, I think it was a good week for him in believing and understanding that he can be at that level. You know, he joins the National Team, and from all accounts, he fit right in, and it well in training; and that's an important step for guys trying to make that jump to get on the National Team.

And so, you know, we'll be patient and we're going to try to get him back and healthy and fit as soon as possible.

Q. Montréal, two goals on the season so far, but they look dangerous, a lot more than that and they have looked dangerous off set pieces and in the box a few teams. Your team conceded four goals in the first match and then just two, down to one. The progress has been there. But they have still looked -- there have been some nervy moments in and around the box. What do you think about the team's defensive ability so far, and what are you still working on with that?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think it's an area we can still improve. We've made a lot of strides since the beginning of the season. You know, Vancouver's X-G, Toronto's X-G were below a goal. And Vancouver has been the best team in the penalty box, and we saw the graphic with all those passes they posted.

So we did a good job there away from home. We need to continue to improve on the principles, defending in the penalty box, improve on the team effort. And it starts with trying to block service in the penalty box.

And the second part of it is good positioning in the penalty box, nice and compact, not a lot of space between our teammates. If we can do those things, we'll be difficult to breakdown.

But as you highlighted, Montréal is very good on offensive set pieces and crosses in the penalty box. They have some big attackers that can finish crosses and even though they only scored two goals, we consider them an offensive threat.

Q. Obviously you weren't here last year. The winning mentality, it's still early in the season but a lot of the younger players are sort of used to losing with this squad. What do you tell them now that they are tasting this winning culture and getting victories they wouldn't get in past years?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, I think as you started

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out with your question, I wasn't here last year, and that part really doesn't concern me.

What I'm concerned about is the guys competing and trying to win in each and every training session, and it's not -- you know, it's not a magic bullet; it really is every day, you compete to win.

And if you do that over and over again, it becomes part of who you are. That's what we are focused on this year is really taking accountability for what we put into matches, what we are willing to invest in matches to get wins, and understanding that if we don't invest enough, it's going to be very hard to get those wins.

So far us, it's focus on each and every day of training, try to get better and it's focus on each and every match that's ahead of us and not really focusing too much on what's behind us or what's in the future.

Q. Kind of similar to that question but different. What has the learning curve and development been like for the guys who were recruited to this roster to play different tactics or a different system? What has it been like for them generally in terms of learning your tactics and your system so far?

GREGG BERHALTER: They have been great. They have been really open. Open to learning. Embraced every moment. Embraced the competition. Embraced the hard work. You know, what I told them last season was, you know, be prepared for the toughest preseason of your life, you know, because you're going to work hard, and they did work hard. And that was all part of it.

But the guys, you know, have been adapting well, and I think there's a good mood within the team. You know, it's always nice to see them interacting off the field, as well. But overall, the spirit is good on the team and we want to just keep building and improving.

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