

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Q. So a little bit of a different question to kick things off. B.J. Callaghan is a coach you gave his previous job as an assistant when you were with the National Team. Can you describe about who he is as a coach and how you saw him grow in the time he was your assistant?

GREGG BERHALTER: Sure. Always happy to talk about B.J.. good guy. You know, he came in initially with the National Team as analyst, and I'll never forget that first camp. We wanted all this stuff and he was getting up to speed with it, and you know, we're working, you know, 24 hours a day, basically. That was in January of 2019. And you know, nothing was too much for him. He took everything in stride and he learned very quickly.

What I saw from him is a tremendous work rate. Very good tactical understanding of the game. Willing to do anything to help out the team. And he eventually grew from an analyst to an assistant coach and eventually became head of the technical department. He was giving press conferences at the end, and just showed a tremendous potential for growth.

And that's why it's not a surprise he's a head coach in the League right now because he's a very good man manager and has very good understanding of the game and is one of the hardest workers I know. Really excited for B.J. for his opportunity. But we still want to beat them.

Q. Amidst a four-match winless run, where is the sense of urgency in terms of yes, you want to get the wins and the results are positive, but also a clean game. Where does the messaging come from, from a sense of you want to win but also playing the Fire brand of soccer?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think when you can play mistake-free, when you are not hurting yourself, you give yourself a lot better opportunity to win the game, right. It's a pretty basic idea.

For us, it's really about building on performances. It is early. You know, we have a decent amount of points. We want more points based on some of the performances. Some of the performances we weren't so happy with.

For us it's continuing to build for the group to get confidence in who they are, how they can play, how we can hurt teams. I know this is a team that can hurt other opponents. We see it every week. For us, it is about getting some continuity, playing together and then continuing to build.

Q. I'm sure that we've seen that Leo and Rominigue have come in and continued to struggle with the minor injury setbacks. Does it make it difficult for your staff when guys you had a vision for are not able to be on the field, and how have those guys handled it, wanting to be out on the field as much as possible?

GREGG BERHALTER: Sure. They want to be out there, and it would help us tremendously.

But it's next-man-up mentality. It's been that all year and we'll continue do so. Both Leo and Romi are working hard and are going to get back one day. This weekend won't be that day, unfortunately. But we know they can both help the team and they are itching to get back on the field.

Q. Carlos had six minutes on the field. How healthy is the defense heading into this weekend?

GREGG BERHALTER: Carlos has got a pretty serious injury in the game, upper leg injury. He's going to be out for the considerable future, and we're going to have to deal without him, and it is a big loss. We know how good Carlos is.

But on the same side, we have Sam, Jack, Omar, Chris Cupps who can fill in, and we are confident in those guys. Sam has played in all of our wins so far on the year, and he's shown to be able to adapt and improve and we think that pairing will be fine.

Q. Last night the trade deadline closed, or passed. Looking back at your first full transfer window, what are your reflections in your first year with the Chicago Fire, and was it exactly how you expected it to go?



GREGG BERHALTER: We brought in a number of players. I don't know how many --

Q. 15.

GREGG BERHALTER: 15 players?

Q. Including homegrowns and stuff, yeah.

GREGG BERHALTER: Oh, my goodness. 15 players, that's more than I thought. I was going to say like eight.

We're not done, either. We want to keep working. We didn't want to necessarily force anything before the trade deadline just due to guys potentially coming back from injury and getting guys healthy again.

We still think there's a couple positions we can reinforce and look to do in the summer and we think that's the squad for the year. We hope we will make some good signings that will help us for the end of the year.

But I think this group, in particular, is more than capable of getting results and putting ourselves in the playoff picture.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the situation about Kellyn Accosta coming off the bench the last two games.

GREGG BERHALTER: We have competition in the midfield spots. That's one of the positions that we've had guys healthy and available, and you know, there's a tremendous amount of competition right now. And you know, I think it's healthy for the group.

We expect Kellyn to be playing more often than not but right now, he wasn't chosen. He still plays an important role for this group as being a leader of the team, and he understands that. I think this is, you know, it's about moment to moment and you're looking to get the most out of each and every game.

So Kellyn has done his role over the last two games and whether his role expand or not in the future, you know, just depends on the level of competition within the squad.

Q. Wanted to ask a follow-up about the first off-season and going through transfers. What was it like working with Gregg Broughton?

GREGG BERHALTER: It was great. There was times when I couldn't be in Portugal and he's picking up the slack and he's there getting deals done, and that's why we have a sporting director role. The whole leadership team is basically an extension of the club, and he was instrumental

in a number of deals that have really helped us so far.

Q. Some of the younger players in the club, the academy guys, there's a group of guys in Italy right now, a bunch of U15 guys including guys who often play with the 17s and 18s. What do you hope players get out of an experience like that and why does the club want to have that, a team playing in Italy like that?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think the best way for players to improve is to play against the best competition, and it's not always easy to find the strongest competition locally, and you have to travel.

I think personally, the experience that I gained going abroad and playing in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay when I was 13 years old really opened my eyes to what the level is around the world and how much desperation and competition these young players play with.

We don't always have that here in the States and when you get to go abroad and see firsthand what it's really like, it really shapes your experiences and really informs you as a player.

We really want to give our academy kids experiences like this to grow and supplement their development.

Q. Saturday against Nashville, they are a team that's similar to the Fire in terms of the number of chances they are creating but different in the style they do it, and also aggressive in the attack, and more of a defensive consistency early in the season because of returning layers and other stuff. Can you describe what you expect from Nashville and how the Fire are going to try to get their first ever win in Nashville?

GREGG BERHALTER: What's our record?

Q. Four losses and one draw.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I like what they have been doing. I don't know what the cadence is like but it seems like they have been playing all the teams they have been playing. They played Red Bull, Cincinnati and Montréal. We play the week after, and so I call B.J., and find out about the teams we are going to play.

I watch them. They have been able to hurt a number of opponents and create chances. They have been over leading the midfield with four players in the midfield, keeping two players high, creating a box in the midfield. But they have been very good on set pieces. Haven't been great on penalty kicks. Missed a number of penalty kicks. Overall it's a competitive team and I know they will be



disciplined and they will be defending well in the penalty box and it will be a difficult team to score on.

Q. Brian just mentioned that there's been a couple mistakes recently that's been costing the team some extra points, the draws and everything. What are the mistakes that you need to focus so the team can move forward and how are you working for it?

GREGG BERHALTER: There are going to be a couple mistakes next game, as well. Every game is about mistakes and that's what soccer is. For us, it's about trying to eliminate mistakes that can potentially cost you goals because we know how valuable goals are.

But mistakes are part of the process. And this group, part of this group growing up and learning and maturing together and making mistakes and feeling safe enough that you can make mistakes. We want to avoid them, and know you're not always going to be able to. And we know it's about how we are able to, I think, be resilient when mistakes happen and understand that this is all part of the game and we are mentally strong enough to continue on.

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