

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Hugo Cuypers

Press Conference



Q. What has been so different and what has that done for you on and off the pitch in terms of enjoying soccer and enjoying being a part of a team when you're actually getting those opportunities pretty much game-in and game-out?

HUGO CUYPERS: No, I agree. I think the coach created the whole new environment that allowed everybody to try and then one of them for the moment.

But like you said, it's an overall feeling about the club and you see the system that he has put into place with all the players knowing their rules, and it fluctuates in the games.

Q. One of the challenges the team to face this year has been just like a rotating cast in the midfield with injuries and things that's happening again. With your role of striker, especially with the work that you've been doing, kind of like off the ball, not just, you know, connecting at the end of things, how much has that does that affect your job role and affect the way that you go into games?

HUGO CUYPERS: You're right, that that I think if there's one thing we missed this year, is it's consistency; and then injuries have been part of that. Missing players.

But that's not the only thing, and I don't want to find excuses, but it doesn't make it easier, but I think, I hope, now, that we are further down the road in a season and that we have had much more trainings and games.

We have had the Cup games where players have played less, could play more, and probably, hopefully, that has allowed them to understand maybe the way we press better and keep that consistency, even when we miss players.

Q. How do you feel about the recent changes at the club, new facility, the new stadium coming up? How does that motivate you on your teammates?

HUGO CUYPERS: First of all, it's a confirmation of everything that's been said to me when I signed over a year ago.

So I think that's the first thing that people in this club are true to the word and investment and the fact that they really believe and invest time and money in the club, in the city.

And it shows ambition. I think that resonates with me and it's part of the reason why, why I chose Chicago Fire and the facility is a good example. The stadium is a great example about the ambition the club has, and hopefully it helps us.

Q. I know we've asked about it before, but I'm curious, how has this front three of you, Joe and Philip developed? What do you think will be required for you guys to even take that next step as it seems like there is still room for growth for all three of you, especially in MLS.

HUGO CUYPERS: I guess that consistency doing it week-in, week-out, I think that's what we have missed. We, I think, a pretty good run now, last couple of weeks.

But it's up to us, and it's not because of the injuries or players being called up, because that, again, is a consequence of the team doing well. And then when guys are not there, other guys need to step up and it's up to us, I think, to lead that front line and it starts off the ball, scoring the opportunities we get and which can give the team the confidence during a game to put it overline. Changing topics completely, the MLS All-Star Game voting is open. You are one of several Fire players that are probably getting votes from not just fans around here, but also meeting people around the league.

Q. So it's your second year in the league. Can you just talk about sort of like you're impressions of learning about the All-Star Game, what you thought about when you first heard about it, if you were familiar with the concept, and sort of like, how you feel about it now after spending a year in the league and seeing one happening while you're here?

HUGO CUYPERS: Honestly, I didn't know too much about it. I think last year, it wasn't mentioned at all in the

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dressings room, mainly because of ourselves, because of the way we were performing, and no one was really considered to be a part of it. I've heard now, left and right, that my name is in the conversation.

But it's not up to me. That's the first thing. I can just do my best on the field. And for the rest, I think I would be excited to know more about it, but as of right now, I know the main concepts, I would say, but not the specifics.

Q. Gregg mentioned last week that we're getting into that part of the year, and you experienced this last season, where guys who came over from Europe in the winter would be used to getting a break. He mentioned that somebody like Jonathan Bomba might get some built in time off. As we get to that part of the calendar, what's your advice to Joe and any of the other new guys who are now, for the first time, coming up on this period where they'd be used to having some time off, but might still be playing games as the MLS season goes on.

HUGO CUYPERS: You're right. I already talked to Joe about it. I realized last year how hard it was, and he's in a sad situation where he played a bunch of games before arriving to the Fire.

But I think the schedule is different this year, whereas last year we didn't really stop until we were, unfortunately eliminated from the league scale where we had our first break.

As of right now, we have next two games, and we have five days off, and we have not a little break. And the end of July, so hopefully, that's the difference with what I experienced last year, and it helps him keep the freshness to finish the season as strong as he can.

Q. In MLS, people love to complain about midweek schedules, creating, you, congestion, but it doesn't really compare to the leagues in Europe. As the team is now progressing in the open Cup and it might create more schedule fixture congestion, and you've been someone who's been playing through it. So what are your thoughts on just, you know, when these teams get additional matches? Gregg's talked about it, doesn't really, you know, that's what you want, right? That's what you want to be playing at. So I'm curious how you feel about that.

HUGO CUYPERS: I couldn't agree more. I actually complained in the dressing room the last week when I didn't know why we were the only team in the last not playing midweek or one of the only teams. And so now we are two games behind everybody else.

So it's a strange thing for me, I'm sure that there are some reasons I'm unaware of, but I couldn't be more in favor of it.

Q. One guy I know you worked out with was Hany Mukhtar in the off-season. I'm curious just he's a guy who's had so much success in MLS. So what did you take from that and what do you maybe share with him as well? You're not really the same profile as strikers, so I'm very curious about how you can process something different like that.

HUGO CUYPERS: It's not really what I took from it. It's more -- when you change guys, you push each other to the best of your abilities, and that's what we did in the off-season.

I played against him last year. I didn't know him personally, which I do a little bit more right now, and he's a great guy. He's a great guy, and I wish him all the success possible in his career in MLS, which I think he has been doing more than well enough.

But that's it, I think we push each other and both works pretty well for us for the moment.

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