

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Q. Hugo just talked to us about the stadium deal that came out this week, being something that talked about, you, being a fulfilled promise from when he was pitched the idea of coming to Chicago, and I'm curious how that played into your pitch in coming to Chicago as well and your thoughts about everything this week that's come out.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I mean, at first of all, I think it's, you, amazing news for the club, a really big step forward, and I think it shows the commitment of Joe Mansuelo, both for the club and the City of Chicago. And when, when I met with Joe originally about the job, you know, it was never really about, you know, the promise of a stadium.

It was more about his commitment to build something impactful for the city, and that's what really connected me to the project, and it wasn't specifically about a stadium, but it was about he wants to build something that the City of Chicago can be proud of and has a lasting impact on the City.

And so now you see it with the training ground with the stadium and hopefully building a team that can win and can compete here after year. This is an important step towards that.

Q. Expanding on that a little bit, you're not just the head coach, you're also the director of football. You are responsible for talent coming to the team. How much does having this performance center now open, a building you can show potential recruits, as well as renderings of the stadium and that? How does that help selling people potential signings of a project that you're trying to sell?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, I think it's big. I think it'll make a big impact. You know, the National Team is training here now. When you talk to the players about the facility they're blown away, and they get to see all of the training facilities in Major League soccer, and this is

making a huge impression on them.

When you're talking to potential recruits, when you're talking to staff members, you know, and you show them the plans and you show them it is being built. They're excited about it.

Our job is to perform on the field and to keep trying to win games. That will get more fans in the stands and then you eventually the stadium, which is going to be also make a big impact.

Q. Obviously we have talked about it, new facilities, new stadium. Some say the title, the championship is the only thing missing. As a sporting director and coach, what do you see the team in three to five years, both as a club, and especially in terms of results.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I think there's a number of different layers to that question. So the first thing is, you know, from a facility standpoint in three to five years will be one of the top teams in the league with the combined training ground and stadium.

On the field, you know, it's about winning, and we have to position ourselves in that time frame to win championships.

And then finally, I think the third layer, which is really important to myself, and I know it to a lot of people, here's the Academy. We want part of that lasting impact of Chicago is really helping to develop the talent here into players that will eventually get onto that stadium field and still be able to win.

You know, that's really the sweet spot, in my opinion, is our homegrown talent, you know, producing talent that can play and the team can be successful.

Q. Just kind of to continue on the stadium discussion. How hard of a secret has this been to keep for you, and what's the favorite piece of feedback you've gotten in the last 48 hours? Who have you heard from, whether or outside the league? What's the favorite piece of reaction you've gotten, as this news has become public?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think it's more of, you know, the widespread attention it's got. You know, people from all

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over the globe have texted me about, you, the Chicago Stadium, Chicago Fire Stadium.

So I think that's what I've been impressed with, is that the news has spread really quickly and really widely.

And then, you know, I think that -- what was the first part of the question? Oh, how hard was it?

I mean, it was it was somewhat difficult, and at some point, you're afraid, like, Oh, I hope I'm not the leak, you know, what I'm telling a neighbor of ours or something. You know, I hope that doesn't get out.

But especially as it became closer, as it became closer to the announcement, we told the team. And then you have to be -- we wanted them to hear it from us. And then you're super cautious and hoping that it doesn't get out. But thankfully, it didn't.

Q. How satisfied are you with this numbers so far? I mean, the road trip games are been amazing. But how important is it to win at home?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, well, it's a great question. We're going to have to check the math a little bit on that, because we're only 15 games into the season and having two games in hand on most of the teams.

So we want to win those games and we want to climb in the table. That's important to the group. We know this is going to be a challenging stretch.

Q. The News today came out that Chris Brady will be the U S team for the entire Gold Cup.

GREGG BERHALTER: We expect the U.S. to have a deep run, which means he's going to miss probably five games. And we see that as an opportunity for Jeff to come in and play and perform well like he always has. You know, this week, in particular, missing a number of players through the international call-ups, and it's just something and suspensions. It's just something we have to deal with.

But we know a lot of teams in the league are a similar boat, so we'll deal with it. Overall, what I'd say is, you know, the important thing for us, and I say this every single week to Joe, is it's about improvement. It's about making progress. It's about continuing to build as we go throughout the year. And if we do that, we'll be in a good position.

Q. This week we've seen a lot of second team guys training for the first team. I'm curious as any possibility that any of those guys are going to be called up for the first team this weekend, given the

international absences.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yes, there's a very good possibility.

Q. Do you know who would be yet, or still figuring that out?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, Vita's (ph) a good candidate. Jason's a good candidate.

Q. D.C. this weekend. Different team than what it was for the 2/22 draw. How, uh what are your expectations for this match, and how hungry is this team to get a proper result after, what was a heartbreaking result?

GREGG BERHALTER: I mean, both teams will be hungry to get a result. They just had a great result against Cincinnati. There'll be flying. You know, I wasn't happy at all of how we played in that D.C game. We talk about a heartbreak, but in reality, we didn't deserve to win that game. You know, a point might have been even generous.

So, you know, for us, it's about playing better. We weren't happy with that game, and something we talked about, and we want to have a better performance. You know, we know this is, you know, we have two games before short break, and for us, it's about consolidating and going for it.

Q. We talked about the absences. One guy you'll be getting back is Brian Gutierrez, who obviously, you know, may have cost the team points with the way that he exited the last time he played. So what are those discussions been like with him over, like, the past week and a half or so, and what kind of performance do you expect from him?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think, you know, Guti there's no question about his talent. He's a top talented player. You know, want a more talented players I've seen around, you know, to be fair.

But there's been some issues with consistency, and then there's been some, you know, emotional control issues and decisions on the field that you know, hurt the team. And we talked about that. He apologized to the group, which I think was big of him, and we're ready to move forward.

And for him, when he gets the opportunity, it's about performing. There's tasks that you need to do in each position, roles and responsibilities, and he needs to fill those tasks.

Q. Gregg, we haven't really talked yet about the Chris Brady getting his confirmed call up to the U.S. Men's

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National Team. Have his Fire teammates had an opportunity to react to or congratulate him at all on that news? And, you know, for him, you know, you talk about the Academy producing players who can play on the new stadium field? How big a moment do you feel this should be for a guy like Chris to get his first full call up to the National Team?

GREGG BERHALTER: It's an amazing opportunity. You know, a couple weeks ago, it didn't look like he was going to have that opportunity. And then things happened. And that's why as a player, you need to be consistent. You need to be always trying to perform at the highest level because you never know when your number is going to get called.

You know, there's countless examples of that throughout the league and throughout history of the National Team. So for Chris, we're all really proud of him and that he's made the team. And I think now what's the next step for him? How does he get on the field? And if he does get on the field, how does he perform well? And these are things that all that really start to define the player's career and in his progress.

Q. Defender questions for you. Just curious about Sam Rogers's availability and any reactions to Chase Gasper finally getting back on the pitch for Fire II last weekend.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I mean, it's good news for the club to have him back in position. I still think he has little ways to go, but it's step-by-step and he's been working extremely hard and putting in the work to get to this point. So it's really great to see that.

Sam is recovering. You know, he had a small, a procedure, but I don't know, a small some work done on his back. And, you know, that's loosened up, and he's been able to move, so he has been training the last couple days.

Q. So, with U.S. Men's National Team here, have to ask, so you've been on both sides of this conversation now several times. How what are the unique challenges to dealing with the fact that the, you know, continents, like domestic regional competition is happening at the same time that MLS is in season? And so there's games being played that affect, you know, domestic players and regional players more than, you know, international players coming abroad.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, it's not it's less than ideal. Plain and simple. You know, we shouldn't be playing during this major tournament.

You know, think about next year. So things need to be done, you, during World Cups, during regional tournaments, and it's more ideal to be aligned from a calendar standpoint. In my opinion, from a technical standpoint, it makes a lot of sense to align, so you're not missing some of your top players.

Q. Sebastian gets his first full US MNC call up as well for the Gold Cup, just how is that as a parent and a coach around the league?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, you know, just similar to Chris, obviously, a lot closer with Sebastian, but, you know, it's a player that, you know, you never know, and all you do is just keep working hard and keep making your personal progress. And when you do, good things come.

And instead of having, you know, that being your motivator, your motivators, just to get better and just to keep, you know, keep playing and get on the field and keep chipping away.

You know, it's such a difficult -- soccer careers are so difficult. There's so many things to navigate through your planet, you're competing against a whirlpool, you know, for a position. And it's always challenging.

And then when you see, you know, you know, personally, when I see Sebastian get this opportunity, it means a lot because of how hard he's worked. Thank you very much. I have to go.

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