

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference

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Q. A lot of adversity coming into this game, a lot of your roster isn't here, expenses, injuries. To come out and have this type of performance, what does it say?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think they really outplayed us in the first game at home, and we wanted revenge from that game. And I think the guys did a great job.

We talked last week with a number of the guys that haven't been getting a lot of playing time. We talked about it, we need them and we need them desperately and there's going to be times throughout the year where they are going to get an opportunity. And today was one of those days.

You know, for them to step up like they did and for Tom Barlow to get a hat trick, he's the hardest working guy in training every day, and it's nice to get rewarded with an opportunity and then the goals.

Q. In terms of the way you guys were able to play from the start, curious how happy were you with the midfield's performance and then especially after Romi's injury, Sam comes in.

GREGG BERHALTER: I think the key for us was quick transitions. We identified that before the game. Tom's main instruction was run behind the back line, and he did that extremely well. You could see from the beginning we were really dangerous when we won the ball. So I think it was a really good execution.

Q. Not quite the midway point, but as you assess the big picture where you were and what you thought of this squad and what the needs were when you first came to the job versus now, what do you see as the progress report over the long term?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think a better way for us to look at this is we just want to keep getting better, and we know we're not there yet. We know we need to still improve but



we need to keep working.

I think that the group has really not surprised me, but I think it's a really good group to work with because of how hard they work in training and the intensity they put into training, and that's the fundamental for everything. We know we need to keep getting better. We know we need to add some more quality to the roster.

But with that work ethic as the foundation, it's a real positive.

Q. Tom Barlow, first Chicago Fire hat trick since October 15, 2017, Nemanja Nikolic against Philadelphia.

GREGG BERHALTER: I mentioned it briefly before, but when you have a guy that works that hard -- you should have seen the excitement of his teammates after the game when he got the game ball. Everybody was cheering. Because every day he comes with the same mindset is to work hard and wait for his opportunity. And it's really difficult when your No. 1 striker is a designated player and also one of the top scorers in the League. It's hard to get opportunities.

But he stays patient, and in a game like today, he got his opportunity and he did a great job. So the whole club, the whole staff, all the players are really happy for him.

Q. Wanted to ask what it says about the team that the identity still is identifiable. What does it say that that team was able to take this on board in less than half a season?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I think what I see is the guys are really tuned in to what we're doing. They believe in the identity of the group.

At times when we started to stray, we were getting away from our identity and really honed in on that. And you know, the guys just keep working, and I think they have the same mindset that the staff does that we have to keep getting better.

So you know, it's great when guys like Sam come in, when Jason Shokaloov was able to get his debut for the team, when guys like Tommy and Jeff who haven't played that

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much to contribute like they did, the foundation is getting stronger.

Q. So as you mentioned, Jason Shokalook had his MLS debut today. Can you talk about what you saw from him and to see a guy like that have a selfless assist when he's probably thinking goal, in a lot of situations just being a striker in that situation to set up Guti?

GREGG BERHALTER: One thing we talked about before I came in is we need to bring the same intensity that Tommy is bringing. We asked him to get his first goal, and he didn't do that but he got an assist which is nice.

But we've seen him with a second team for a number of years, and the staff has always spoke really highly of him for his work rate, for his pace. For us, as a team, as a group, it's nice when we bring players on the second team and they make an impact like that.

Q. Awesome job on the national reverse tonight, getting the point result this time. You've always said consistently, your message has been that basically anyone can earn a job on this team and anyone can earn a starting job for guys who are on a bench to always work for that. I want to speak on it in reverse, also. Guti has had an up and down season. He came off bench today. Do you foresee this being maybe a refresh or reset for him and being back in the starting lineup next week, or maybe do you want him to sort of earn his way back into a starting role especially with other guys being hungry and trying to push for those rolls, too?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think in Guti's case, we know his talent level. It's off the charts. He's one of the most talented players we have in the squad.

You know, for him, we're searching for that consistency, you know, the mindset, and he's a young player. We can't forget that. Sometimes it's just better to take a step back to take two steps forward. With Guti, I wouldn't read into anything. We know he can help this group and we know he's a key player on this team.

Q. If you could give a couple words about Maren Haile-Selassie, a goal and an assist, and what you saw from him getting the opportunity to get the start and go 90.

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, Maren looked really lively in training this week and basically earned his way on to the field. When you have really good training weeks like that, you could see his confidence was high, and he carried

that into the game.

I think what I was most pleased with was his work rate in the game. He didn't stop all game and kept getting back into position which is really key. The goals, assists, all that stuff is important but it really starts with the mindset to want to win the game, and he certainly had that today.

Q. I wanted to do about Gutman, the assist on Tom's first goal, one of the best we'll see all year, and seems like he was on a different level throughout the match. Were you expecting him to be that guy today?

GREGG BERHALTER: He did that in training this week, also. He had a number of those passes that really put the back line in trouble, and we told him, be aggressive with your passing today. Really think about verticality quickly in the game, and he did that.

But Andrew is a guy there's had a solid season so far. We want to continue to grow and push him to new heights.
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