

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Q. What are your expectations for your squad's availability this weekend with the guys coming back from International Break and Hugo back in training.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah unfortunately, Christopher Cups will not be available. He said he has a fracture in his in his leg, which is disappointing, but things happen. So he will not be available.

I think the other players are returning seem to be in good shape and available for the match.

Q. Saw that Vitaliy Hlyut is training with the first team, Jason, as well, made his debut last week. Do you have any thoughts on what you've seen from those two guys, and if there's a potential for them to be called up again this weekend.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah we were thin last week, so we needed some bodies. Vitaliy, I think, is a player that came to preseason with us, And since then has really skyrocketed with his development. Both physically, tactically, really smart player, and it was good to have him back with the team. Unfortunately, he didn't get to make his debut.

And with Jason, what we saw his immediate impact when he came into the game, And we liked his performances with the second team. He hasn't trained often with the first team, but I think his performances in the second group led him to get the invitation to train with the first team and then get an opportunity in the game and do well. So happy with both of them.

Q. Would you expect them to be with the first team again this weekend?

GREGG BERHALTER: We'll see. We have to see what type of availability we have tomorrow. I'll keep you posted.

Q. How important is this or Chicago and with a new stadium in the works? How realistic do you think for

both teams to share full time in the future?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, I don't know, I don't know much about that. I think the double header gives fans, both fans of both teams, the opportunity to see the other team. I think it gives soccer fans in general an opportunity to see both a women's professional game in a men's professional game. And it's exciting.

You know, I hope a lot of fans come out and see the games. It's certainly an interesting idea.

Q. This game closes out the first half of the season for the fire. You know, we've talked about the results along the way, the ups and downs, but can you just reflect on what you've seen from the group over the first, you, a few months on the pitch with you as coach?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah I think that, again, it's the boring line that I always say, right, is that we're a team that's a work in progress. I think there's been some good things, and there's been some not so good things.

It's really about continuing to build this group. You know, what I'd say about the guys in general is they're hardworking group. They put a lot into training, they put a lot of effort into the games, and that's a really positive attribute that the group has. But we'll see, I think, you know after this game, we'll be able to assess the first half of the season, and I think we really start plotting the course of how we're going to improve what areas we need to improve. And then and then, most importantly, how we're going to make that push to get in the playoffs.

Q. What do you think is the parallel between the game that you guys lost between Nashville 7-1 and the game that you won last week 7-1.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, so the national game, I think I was 7-2, so, a completely horrendous result, and not our night. And then, and then the win last week was one of those games where similar to the Nashville game, where everything went right for Nashville and give them credit.

You know, a lot of things went right for us in the game against D.C., and we punished them in important moments. I think that really, the telling factor was offensive

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transition, just being deadly and ruthless in transitions to scored two balls up their corner kicks, had some other opportunities, and really just looking to play forward quickly. And when we did that, we unbalanced them. So two interesting games.

Q. Leo's 20th birthday today. It's been up and down since he's come back from his injury. He looked like he was forcing it a little bit. It was a little panicked against NYC FC. What is your messaging been like to him the last couple weeks, And what have you seen from him over these last few months as he's in a completely different situation here, a different language, all the above?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I think as coaches and as staff members, I think we have a different tone than your question. We think really highly of him, And the rust that he displayed against NYC was, I think, was normal a player that hasn't played in six weeks, And then be thrust into that game at a difficult time.

So I think we could expect him to keep improving. Like I said, we think really highly of him very smart player, very technical player, tremendous speed, tremendous quickness. And just working the right time to get him back in the lineup. But we know he gives us a lot when he's on the field. So we're really happy with him.

Q. So earlier today, Napoli announced the signing of Kevin de Bruyne. With that pursuit in the rearview mirror, I'm curious, if you have any reflections on that, looking back? Now, that's over, and where the DP search goes from here. If you have any thoughts on that?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, it's one of those things where I think we put our best foot forward, I think we made it compelling, argument for him to join Chicago Fire, Major League Soccer. You know, we're involved at the commissioner level with courting him.

Unfortunately, or unfortunately for him, you, he wanted to continue to play Champions League. And he still has that burning desire, and we think that's great. You know, MLS would have offered him. I think, a different challenge, particularly with the World Cup being in the States in 2026, it's in a fantastic opportunity for guys like Kevin de Bruyne to come showcase their skills and really be a flag bearer for Major League soccer as we approached the World Cup year. But it wasn't to be, and we'll move on.

Our major intention is to improve the team. Make the team better. So when you talk about DP, it's someone that we feel is going to make the team materially better. And that's

what we're looking for, that boost as we approach the second half of the season.

Q. How motivated is the team to keep the momentum going back at home?

GREGG BERHALTER: For us, it's always the same, you. And again, all we want to do is perform well, we try to win every game, we understand that every game is difficult, that every game presents a different set of challenges. But the way we approach every home game, every away game is we think we can win, and we also understand and respect the opponent and understand that they probably think they can win also.

So something has to -- and then it's about the mentality, it's about what we're willing to put into those games and how well prepared we are. The last time the team faced Nashville, they had a lot of success, getting in behind, the flyers back line. They had success getting into a wide areas.

Q. So what's been the message to the group to keep that from happening this Saturday?

GREGG BERHALTER: We analyze those moments and had a good session, understanding, a video session, understanding about when we got hurt against them. But I think they've done some different things since then and we have to be prepared for a lot.

But a lot of it depends in those particular instances, a lot of it depended on, a, the pressure on the ball, b, the height of the back line. And the timing of when they're dropping. So that's something we just have to get right. If there's no pressure on the ball, we have to drop quicker, because we know they're going to make runs.

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