

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



**Q. Philadelphia, now under Bradley Carnell, one of the top teams in the league, what have you seen them under a new coach that's made them so successful so far?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think he's done a great job. A very clear identity of what they want to do and they just execute. You see top of the league in crosses into the penalty box. A lot of chances created through crosses.

So I think that the biggest thing that I see is a very clear identity and good execution of that identity.

**Q. Obviously they are going to be missing a lot of guys: Baribo, Sullivan, Harriel, Westfield, Uhre, Blake, I think one or two others. Curious how you think that might impact the game?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Who did you just name? Say the guys you named again.

**Q. Baribo.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Okay.

**Q. Sullivan.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah.

**Q. Harriel.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah.

**Q. Westfield.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Where's Westfield?

**Q. Injured.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Is he?

**Q. I saw the press conference.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Today?

**Q. Yeah.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Okay. Keep going. This is new information.

**Q. Andre Blake, as well.**

GREGG BERHALTER: I'm just trying to gather it. Who else?

**Q. Andre Blake.**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah.

**Q. Any thought how that might impact the game and your preparations for it?**

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, for us that's been the story of the year, right, missing players. I don't feel bad for them at all. That's how it goes. We're still missing players, as well. It is what it is.

For us, I still think the identity is going to be similar, and we have to play our game and we have to try to win the game.

**Q. So about trying to win that game, the Fire have sometimes struggled more on the defensive side of the ball, offensively both teams are near the top of the table in terms of XG and everything like that in the League. So what do you think the keys are so kind of like locking down the defense against a Philly attack that's still going to be dangerous even missing players?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Something I'm looking into, obviously frustrated with the home results. I'm not sure the XG really tells -- or sorry, I'm not sure the results really tell the whole story because the XG is there, you know.

I think by XG goal difference, we would be four in the League at home. So some of it is hopefully time, right, and things will regress back to how they should be and we'll start getting those wins.

But apart from that, apart from the data and stuff like that,

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it's really about competing and it's really about, you know, us, I think, making the plays and putting ourselves in positions and really competing in important moments.

When I look at the two goals that we conceded against Nashville, they are bad moments and it's collective moments of not competing the way we should be. So that's really what we addressed with the group this week.

Apart from those two moments, I think we did a good job and I thought we created enough chances to score goals in the game and we didn't do it. The goals we conceded, those moments were bad and you don't deserve to win games if you're competing like that.

**Q. I think the result, seven goals against Nashville, you were missing kind of six players, five players that were on the team the whole year. Now this coming Wednesday, you will have all the squad, probably, that you should put on the field healthy. Want to know your opinion about how important, you don't rotate too many players but how important is it to have your quad in the two games?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think throughout the year we have played a number of players and we have been switching players out and a lot of guys have gotten opportunities.

In this game, obviously Chris Brady is still out. Carlos Terán is still out. Kouamé is still out. We've still got an extensive list of guys that are not able to perform.

But it's really about who is here and who is ready to perform. That's what we've done all year, whether that's Sam Williams stepping up and playing minutes or Kouamé at times stepping in or Omar or Christopher Rogers or Christopher Cupps.

It's about the next man stepping up, and in this game going into a two-game home series, it's going to be to be about how do we put a team on the field to compete on Wednesday and then do the same thing on Saturday. And we're going to need the whole squad to be able to do that.

**Q. As someone who has coached and played for the national team. How does it feel to watch Sebastian be a contributor on the National Team?**

GREGG BERHALTER: It's funny because Sebastian has been around the National Team since he was born and he's got a lot of experience of watching games and being around the team and traveling. I think the game in Scotland, the whole family went and U.S. games and World Cups. But the experience of playing for it is

completely different and I'm glad we get to share that together because it is a special moment when you're lined up on the field and you're about to represent your country. It's hard to put into words and unless you actually do it go through it, you don't understand it.

So you know, it's amazing that Sebastian and I get to share those memories of competing and representing your country.

**Q. I know Sebastian spoke about intense work outs with you during pandemic years and how that helped improve him as a professional. What are your memories about those sessions?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think the funny thing is I worked with the performance directors from the National Team, and I said, give me a hard workout to do. I told you this story. He gave me a workout, and it didn't even bother him at all.

I go, Okay, guys, I need a harder work out. The next day we do the workout and he breezes through it. I'm like, Come on, guys, we need to really push him here.

We spent basically two months trying to grind him down and we couldn't do it. He was resilient and he kept going, and you know, it was a special time.

But I think that -- I just, to me, it's more about, you know, the cumulative time, whether that's the games in the backyard that we played together, whether that's him in the basement kicking the ball against the wall for hours after he got back from training already with the Crew academy or whether it's the -- his first team that he's played on in the United States, I was the coach of, I think it was a U9 team in San Clemente or something, United FC or something in California when I was playing for the Galaxy.

It's that journey that we have all been on as a family to see him grow and progress as a player, and now to get this opportunity to represent your country is a special moment.

**Q. At the halfway point, Joe Bamba has ten goal contributions but still seems like he can provide more for this team. What is the message for him in the second half of the season, understanding we are also at the point where maybe his minutes are maybe going to be reduced or monitored since he has not played through a summer recently. What are the expectations for him to get to the next level?**

GREGG BERHALTER: We are really happy with Joe and his performances. I actually pulled him aside after last game and talked to him about keeping his head held high



because he's such a key contributor to our group, and even if he misses changes, don't worry because you'll get another chance, it's really about what's next rather than what just happened.

We couldn't be happier with him and his work rate and his ability to create chances and I think just has that cumulative effect on the opposing defenses where he just wears them down. He's able to put his teammates in good positions. He's a selfless player.

So really happy with him and what he's done. And for us, it's being somewhat mindful of his minutes, but also, the D.C. game, we took him out. So we'll find moments to get him some rest but he's a key piece to what we're doing.

**Q. Carlos Terán, obviously not out there today training. Curious if there's an update on him coming back and also Chris Mueller who we haven't seen yet this year coming back potentially?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, Chris, it's going to be tough. I'm not sure he will be back this year. It's something we are working through and trying to finalize right now. Carlos should be back in a couple weeks. He's not ready to train. He was getting treatment elsewhere. We'll have him back in and really trying to get him prepared as we enter the second half of the season.

**Q. The academy season is now done and the playoffs didn't really go how you guys would have hoped but given you are overseeing all the soccer operations in this club, do you have any reflections on the first six months in what you've seen from the academy since you've been here?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think it was a good opportunity to assess the coaches, assess the level of play, and then plan the future. We have conducted thorough coaching searches. We're going to be replacing some of the coaches. And working with some others and continue to develop the group.

But for us, it's really important, this vertical integration; that the players have the game understanding needed for the first team, and we start teaching it at a young age.

But we have a great player pool, and we are excited about that and we are excited to see how we can continue to develop these players.

**Q. We're in the middle of an extreme hot spell; it's been a topic of discussion. Can you talk about the challenges of training, it looks like it's going to cool down for the match on Wednesday but the challenges**

**of training and preparing athletes when it's this hot outside?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think you have to be mindful. But I remember talking to the guys in Austin, and they went 60 days over a hundred degrees. We're complaining about a little heat spell for three or four days.

We pushed them yesterday, and one thing we noticed is the perceived rate of exertion is a lot higher than the actual exertion, which I think is interesting. Guys were gassed yesterday after training. And we looked at the numbers and it was about 20 percent lower than a normal Wednesday training.

So the heat does have an effect on what you think you're actually doing and you need hydration to recover. You need good fuel to recover. You need good rest. So we are mindful of that. Today we backed off and it was a really light session.

But for us, it's understanding mentally what we need to do and how we need to get through that and talking to the players about that mental resilience.

**Q. Talking about the games, my question is if you are looking to the teams that are coming to play either the National Team level or the club to see if any player impresses or could be in the eyes of the Chicago Fire?**

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, we have scouts at the games and we have scouts at the game tonight in Miami. So we're watching, watching all the games.

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