

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Minnesota 3, Chicago Fire 1

Q. Going down to ten men to early, how did that influence the game for you guys and how difficult was it as you get that goal but then an hour --

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, it hurt us. It put us in bunker mode and defend mode. But give the guys a ton of credit for fighting and hanging in there and working together and being a difficult team to play against.

You know, I think, really proud of the effort tonight. Really perplexed by the referee not calling D'Avilla on the field after the injury and letting play continue, and not even turning to the sideline to look, is surprising.

I think down to nine field players is tough, but now when you are at eight, it makes it even more complicated and I think an extremely difficult task there.

Q. In terms of when you guys were down to ten men offensively, there were chances. What do you think needed to happen to just execute those?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think it's difficult. We really focused on pressing them when we went down to 2-1 and we had a good effect. We created a number of chances. Up until then, it's let's hold on for a tie and penalties. We had a really long time to hold on for; it was 70 plus another 30. It made it challenging.

But again, I think the most important thing is that the guys displayed a big effort and hung together and moved together and did a great job.

Q. In extra time, the decisive goal, talk more about what you saw with the ref --

GREGG BERHALTER: That what I'm confused about. She's not looking over and she's not calling on the field, and I just don't understand. Like we asked, "Okay, we are going to continue with him? Let's get him on." They told

us there's not the two-minute rule like there is in MLS and he's allowed right back on. But they never acknowledged that he was there waiting to come on.

Q. So a lot of fight, big Open Cup game, amazing atmosphere. Overall, how do you feel emotions-wise after such an emotionally taxing game like that?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think I'm disappointed that it comes down to something like that, right, where you have eight men on the field. Like if they would have scored with nine field players, you know, you can live with it. I think that to even handicap yourself that much more is just disappointing.

It's disappointing that they let it get to that and you know, the guys did everything. They did everything they could, and when we went down, we pushed and we created a number of chances. We still had an XG of 1.4 or something. We did enough.

But unfortunately, on the day, it wasn't enough to go through.

Q. When you see a game sort of, I wouldn't say get out of hand but where there's a lot of yellow cards flying both ways, how do you adjust on a night like that where you see that's the theme of the night coaching-wise? Do you make any sort of adjustments knowing it's going to be potentially a game like that with a lot of cards going?

GREGG BERHALTER: One thing we talked about, the cards, yellows weren't too much of a concern in the Open Cup. It's not like the accumulation of MLS where you're worried a guy is going to miss the next game. So that wasn't much of a concern.

But it was about being smart because we weren't sure what decisions were going to come. It could be anything. It could be penalties. You know it would be red cards. It could be red cards, and we know they are good at set pieces. So we talked about being smart, not fouling them, and not giving the referee an opportunity.

Q. So obviously out of the Open Cup and now down to just one competition. Is that something you're going to try to use to focus the group and galvanize the

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group going forward, especially some of the younger players who had long minutes like Dje playing more than 90 minutes this game; guys like Sergio playing a long time through extra time in the second half?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I don't think it's binary. I think we could have done both of them at the same time. We could have had an Open Cup run and the League. For us, the focus is always on the next game, and regardless what it is, we're going to be ready and focused on.

It would have been nice to get to the semifinals and then -- but unfortunately, it didn't happen tonight.

Q. Obviously you've known Omar a very long time, and tonight, game 530-something of his career, his first-ever straight red. What was your reaction to that, moment and kind of what you do you think happened that saw what we saw play out?

GREGG BERHALTER: It's really surprising. Really out of character. Hard for me to understand knowing Omar so long. You know, he's not that type of player.

So I don't know what -- I don't know what happened. I didn't see the replay. I need to figure it out.

But I'm sure it wasn't intentional. But you know sometimes if it looks bad, you know, then the referee is forced to act.

Q. Just wanted to follow-up, obviously we'll see how Sam is doing after that cramp, but when you look at especially from your personal view and your experience, when you look at the center back pool right now and the guys playing a lot of minutes, guys dealing with injuries, what's kind of your outlook right now on the struggles that group has faced recently?

GREGG BERHALTER: You're just rubbing salt on the wound, buddy. I mean, I don't know. Listen, it's the reason why I have no hair is because I think about that all the time. You know, we need healthy bodies. We need -- our center back seems like it's a revolving door this season and it's frustrating for everyone.

But it's life, and we have to keep going and you know we're in a good position in the League. We want to keep going and keep rising because we know we're a good team.

Q. 120 minutes of emotional end-to-end energetic emotional soccer. For a team that's looking to make the postseason for the first time since 2017, is this an experience that can help the group as they work toward that?

GREGG BERHALTER: I mean, that's a good way to look at it. This could be just comfort in knowing we can do it, right. You get into overtime, you can stay calm and you can get through it. We didn't win the game, so it's not that much of a positive affirmation.

But what I'd say, the guys, again, it's what I started with. I'm really proud of the group, proud of the guys. I wish it didn't come down to a training referee decision that caused their second goal. I wish it was something else but it's not, and we have to keep going.

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