

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Philip Zinckernagel

Press Conference



**Q. Curious, you've been able to hit the ground running in terms of your time in Chicago. Been able to contribute from early on in the season to this point in the season. Being someone who had to move around a lot of your career, how has that helped you be so efficient early on in your time here in Chicago?**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: It's a good question, but I think that like you said, moving around and learning to be able to perform straightaway and adapting quickly has obviously helped me.

And, yeah, it's not always the best to move around a lot but in my case I learned a lot and I've been learning to adapt quickly to new systems. I think it's been easy for me to adapt to Gregg's system, so that's probably the answer.

**Q. On that note, the Fire just signed a new player, Andre Franco. Spent his career so far in Portugal. You came into the league and adapted really well, so when he comes in, what would be your message to him to help him hit the ground running?**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: I mean, I did have a little bit of a preseason, so that probably is not exactly the same as for him.

But luckily we only have one game in a week so we have more training time, and that will probably help him adapt and get used to the team.

I mean, I would just say -- I don't know how well English he speaks. Obviously coming to a team in a country where English is the main language it's always easier because there is no language barrier.

So hopefully if he can speak English he should adapt quickly. I don't know. I mean, just enjoy yourself, I guess.

**Q. I think you've exceeded many people's expectations, especially in terms of goals and assists. Any aspect of the way the team plays that helped you**

**adapt to quickly on the field?**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: You mean Gregg? I mean, obviously MLS is a very offensive league and it's usually a league that has a lot of chances and there is a lot of goals, which is obviously good for offensive players.

I think that a lot of the game we have is built around finding the wingers and the tens and going from there, which is something that benefits me.

And then, yeah, he's usually defending in a way that we can still attack. And the main purpose with defending is for us to win the ball on attack; whereas I have been to other clubs where defending has been the main target and you can get really low, and then it's difficult to score goals.

But, I mean, just the offensive mind that he has in his 4-3-3 system fits me well. Yeah, I'm just enjoying it.

**Q. Kind of following up a little bit on that question, before coming to the MLS you probably had some expectations or ideas of it. Now that you've almost had a full season, did it sort of live up to the imagination that you had for it? Anything that surprised you about the league? Curious as you're coming towards the end of the first season your impressions now.**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: Yeah, definitely, like I said, the league is very offensive, and that was one of the things I heard about before coming to MLS. I mean, for an offensive player that's just if you know. Surprise? I mean I've been surprised about the level of stadiums over all the teams. I mean, seems like there is just good organization around every team.

It's just very smooth when you go to games. Even though it's a big country and you travel a lot, it's been really positive. That probably has surprised me the most in a positive way.

And, yeah, just the level of -- it's a competitive league, especially in our conference. I think it's higher level than I expected I think.

**Q. Going into this weekend's game you're playing a team that you just touched upon the fact that you**

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perceive your conference to be very strong this year. Facing a team near the bottom of the western conferences, which maybe not be as high of a level as the east this particular season. And then after that it's back to back away games against two of the best teams in the league in Philadelphia and Miami. In the dressing room is there a sense as the playoff heats up and those two difficult games coming up that this one is an absolute must-win?

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: We haven't really focused much about Miami and Philadelphia yet. I guess like you said this game is really important and that's where all the focus is right now.

Even though they are in the bottom of the conference, MLS is competitive and you see almost every week that everyone can beat everyone.

The way they play, they leave a lot of attackers and they don't defend with all their players, which means they are dangerous and have good offensive players, so definitely have to take it serious.

Even though it maybe looks like a must-win, I think it will be a tough game. If we can perform on a similar level we did against LA I think we have a good chance to win.

**Q. Previous meetings between Chicago and St. Louis have been very intense matches. I think a lot of the fans for historical reasons view it as a primary rival. I know more than 50 percent of the team is new this year, but is that something you guys have spoken about or thought about, that it's an important game to the fans?**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: Obviously a bit, yeah, but not that much. I mean, it's a game like any other game even though it's always if you know to play rivalries for the atmosphere and for the just the meaning for the fans.

But we haven't focused a lot about the meaning of the game, but more how can we perform and be the best version of ourself. Yeah, there is definitely some opportunities for us in this game. And, yeah, rivalry is always if you know but haven't spoken about it much to be fair.

**Q. What personal goals have you set yourself for the final stretch of the season?**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: What do you mean? Like -- what do you mean? For what?

**Q. On the game. Currently you've had -- you've been**

connecting a lot more than throughout the season more connection with the forwards. Congratulations on that. We in Spanish been having a lot of fans speak about you're on fire kind of thing. You've been standing out; been an All-Star. So what personal goals, how do you push yourself towards the he said of the season? What did you expect of yourself even more? What do you have in mind?

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: That's a good question. The main target is to get into the playoffs, and I think the good part about that is we have everything in our hands. If we win our games we'll be there.

Yeah, I want to contribute with more goals and assists, but in the end of the day it's more important we make it into the playoffs. I don't really set like a number for myself because I don't want to reach it and then feel satisfied. I'm always trying to push it.

I mean, I'm just trying to get as many as possible. Main target is definitely the playoffs right now.

**Q. I want to ask you about two Fire 2 wingers that have been training with the first team throughout the season, Vitaliy Hlyut and Claudio Cassano. What have you seen from those guys, obviously looking up to you as someone able to do it in MLS and Europe?**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: Both very talented players. I think they both have a good career in front of them. It's tough because of the way the squads are built up in MLS with the numbers of players you can have around and the whole roster thing.

Doesn't always make sense and it's not fair for young players I guess. But they definitely have a lot of quality and if they keep working and performing with the second team they'll have a good future in the club.

**Q. This is the second game in a row at SeatGeek Stadium. After the last match Ryan Hollingshead from LAFC was complaining about the pitch quality. He said it played super thick, really heavy. Felt like each step had an extra 20 pounds on your feet. Is that something you noticed last week, and is that a concern for the match this Saturday?**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: I did, but obviously I cramped in the last ten minutes or five minutes. But I think the pitch was decent. It was a bit long which made it a bit thick and heavy. Overall it was pretty good. I think it's better right now than Soldier Field. It's probably like more hard and firm. It's more bumpy for sure.



So if you play there they probably would've just complained about that. It is what it is.

**Q. Just to follow up on the question that was asked about the field conditions, this was your debut this past Saturday. What was your experience like? What was the environment like? Obviously going back there on Saturday night. How do you feel the vibe from the fans? Already talked about the conditions. What was it like to be there again and do you think it plays any part in supporting you guys to get the three points?**

PHILIP ZINCKERNAGEL: Good question. I think the environment and the atmosphere around the game was really good. I think playing in SeatGeek is more compact and we fill up the stadium which is something that we like. It creates a very good atmosphere around the game.

Obviously the pitch weren't perfect, but it wasn't that bad either. So hopefully we can sell out this week too. I know a lot of fans also came to see Son last week. We've also talked about it's rivalry, so they'll probably bring some fans.

And, yeah, I don't mind playing at SeatGeek. I think it's a good stadium. It's not in the best location for the fans. They have to travel all the way out there. It really means a lot for us. So, yeah, I just hope they come and support us because it's actually a decent stadium when it's full.

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