

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Thursday, August 14, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Q. Coach, new signing finally officially now, Andre Franco. I know I had some familiarity with Felipe. Tell me about the process of finding him and settling on him.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, it's interesting because this is a player that contacted us, and through a connection with Felipe, reached out to him and said, hey, I would love to come to MLS. I would love to come to Chicago. I see what you guys are doing, the direction the club is headed, and I would love to be part of it.

For us it's not easy to get a player from Porto, especially under the conditions we did, so we're excited about it. We have a long period for the rest of the season and good opportunity for him to get acclimated and see what he can do in Major League Soccer. He is a very technical player, smart soccer player and we think he can help this group.

Q. So he's coming in here without a preseason with the team. He is only going to have eight or nine games in the regular season to maybe prove why you should make this permanent. What are your expectations for him and what role he'll play with the team down the stretch?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I think we have to take it one day at a time. We know that he did miss preseason. Good thing is there is the Club World Cup, couple weeks off after that, and then ramped up after that. So it will take him a while.

For us it's an option, and it's always good to have options, especially in midfield, playing with three midfielders, so we'll see how it goes.

Q. Curious, this now the third signing from Portugal. How has it been having someone in your staff like Felipe to rely on when it comes to not only evaluating this talent but helping on-board them when they get here?

GREGG BERHALTER: That's important. The most important thing is having worked with a player, because you can watch them on video, but when you work with them you really understand how they take information in, how they learn, are able to apply information they are given. How they train, training habits; lifestyle off the field.

So all these things are really important. Sometimes they can make or break whether a player is successful or not. To have this inside information is critical.

Q. With Franco now official, there is one week left in the transfer window. I asked last week about the thought process of going to a third DP model or sticking with two U22s. You mentioned the GAM that the team gets if they stick with the two U22s, but that expires at the end of the year. Are you still trying to make additional moves and are you concerned that that GAM will be left on the table if you stick on the current path?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, it won't be left on the table. We'll have ways to use it. So we're not so concerned with that. We do expect there to be other moves that will be upcoming. Obviously we have a time frame on it, right? So we know that -- you'll know in due time.

Q. I'm curious to know, when you prepare to play at SeatGeek Stadium is it different than Soldier Field by any chance?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, there are some slight differences. Obviously the dimensions are different so that's something you have to come to grips with. For us, we just prepare like we do every game. It's the same way. We don't want to ever use the atmosphere the venue as an excuse.

For us we're happy to play there when we need to. We're excited to be playing on Saturday against St. Louis.

Q. Obviously mentioned Franco wanting to come here. At this point, when you came into this team, obviously you wanted to change the on-field product but also the perception of the Fire. What has been the response and feedback you got from not only opposing coaches and players but other technical directors around the league? Anything they told you they noticed that this

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

team is now under your leadership?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, I think that's kind of an awkward question to try to answer. What I would say is that all we're doing is we're driven by our values and our vision of what we're trying to accomplish. I think the team has been hard working, you know, going after our goals for the season. We're good people, we behave in appropriate ways, and that's all you can really do. The rest comes along with it.

Hopefully we are getting good feedback. The most important thing is we keep trying to improve and get better as a team.

Q. I wanted to ask you one last question about Andre Franco. Obviously in your system with the three-man midfield he slots well into that setup. Also good in positions higher up the pitch throughout his career. What from I've seen also been deployed as a ten or even as a winger at times. Did his versatility and ability to play in multiple roles play a role in the decision to sign him?

GREGG BERHALTER: It did, because what we want is adaptability. We want players that can play multiple positions that understand the game well, understand the game from different perspectives. We know he can be low and build up. He can be high between the lines. That game understanding is crucial for us, so that was definitely part of it.

Q. Wanted to ask you about Saturday's game against St. Louis. They're are a team that likes to attack, especially through Joa Klauss in the striker's spot. What are your expectations for what they'll bring Saturday?

GREGG BERHALTER: The most important thing is how we approach the game. It is a good team, St. Louis. They have some very good pieces. You mentioned the striker who has done a great job. The wingers, some of the central midfielders. I know Alfredo Morales from the national team. Good young defenders.

One of the best goalies, if not the best goalie in the league. It's a strong team. I think it's been a disjointed season for them so far. I think they're definitely better than their table place indicates.

Q. So one of the advantages of this time of year is that you typically have a lot of game tape on the way a team is playing. There is stat structure and stuff like that. St. Louis has continued to add pieces. Like Fallou Fall came in last match, I think second most

expensive signing in their team's history, and Edward Lowen, who is a really important piece has been out for long stretches for personal reasons. Does that make it more challenging when breaking down assignments with a team playing different ways based on who is available?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yes and no. I mean, it would be great if they played the same lineup for the last 15 games and you could get an understanding. I think there is enough there. Like I said to me it's more about the pieces that they have and how they can hurt you.

Klauss is very good in and around the penalty box. As you mentioned, top player; Lowen, also excellent player. So they have pieces. The new boy on the right, Sang-Bin is an outstanding player. So they have quality.

For us it's respecting that quality and being really focused on or game. We're going to have to be to win it.

Q. As you know growing up in the United States Chicago and St. Louis are two cities that don't like each other. For the fans pretty important game. They see St. Louis as one of the main rivals. Is that something you thought about at all?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think what we think about is the atmosphere that we had in the stadium last week, right? How do we get that type of crowd week in and week out? It really creates an advantage for us.

So when we have our fans behind us and they're loud and cheering and putting pressure on the opponent, really hems the team. Hopefully on Saturday we'll have the same.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

