

Chicago Fire Media Conference

Thursday, August 21, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions for Gregg Berhalter, please.

Q. Thank you so much for the time. With three potential incomings that all have the ability to be here in the long-term, how would you assess this window for improving the team over this final stretch of 2025 and the long-term?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think we're pleased. I think that we added three pieces that can help us immediately, and that's important. Then, also, pieces that could potentially help us in the long-term.

As you mentioned, I think that's the key. The important thing is that we see all three of these players fitting into the culture of the team, and I think all hard-working players. To me they fit the mold perfectly.

Q. The two signings this week with Carlos going out and Waterman and Ottovic (phonetic) coming in, which should be confirmed shortly, what specifically do those two guys contribute in terms of your game model and what part they'll play on the field that appealed to those guys?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think for Rodo it was pretty easy because of his experience for his age is very good. But not only that, Andrew has been going to the limit this year, and he's been playing almost every game, doing a great job, but it comes to a point where we may need to rest him at times, and to not have options it's difficult at times.

We know Chase is working hard to get back, but he's been out for a while. I think to bring in an option is going to help this group.

Then with Joel, you know, it was no secret that our back line has struggled throughout the year with consistency, and we want to try to improve that. So we bring in a left back and a center.

I think Carlos is a fantastic guy, fantastic player. I think one of the issues was just his injury record and not being able to play enough. If he is healthy and on the field, he's a great player. Just didn't happen enough throughout his time here.

For him a new start, a fresh start, I think is going to be helpful to clear his mind and really start attacking his career, because he's a great player.

Q. In Montreal Waterman had a lot of responsibility to be one of the leaders of the team. He was the Vice Captain there. Do you think that having less of that responsibility where he can focus more on his game is going to help him here and getting the best out of himself?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think every player has a responsibility to lead in some aspect, right? So it will be no different here. Any time you're on the field, you know, you have an opportunity to help others, communicate, the basics. We'll expect that from him, as well.

I think when you have a Canadian National Team player, somebody who has prospects of playing in the next World Cup, I think that's important. It's important for the club. I think also important for him to focus on this next 12 months.

Q. So it's almost a meme in MLS that you can never have too much center back depth. You added a center back, but with the sale of Carlos Teran removed, is that a concern going forward? The other question is, Waterman's role with Montreal, he was playing sometimes as a fullback, sometimes in the midfield. Is it fair to expect him to be pretty locked in as a center back and that being his role with the Fire?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yes, I would say that. With having now Jack, Joel, Cupps, Rogers, Gonzalez, you know, I think we have some depth there. If you think about throughout this year, we were having to use all of it, and guys were having to play.

Omar was starting games. Cupps was starting games. Sam started, played in 16 games already. We were stretched thin. I think this will help and give some stability.



Q. Building on that, do you have any concern that there's maybe less of a pathway for minutes for Christopher Cupps going forward in terms of his development, knowing you've signed a center back now, when this could have been an opportunity for him to come in and be a starter?

GREGG BERHALTER: I don't think so. You know, I don't think the idea is that we count on Chris playing 34 games in a season for the next season or even this season. You know, for him, we want to get him opportunities. We will give him opportunities. He's earned opportunities.

But I think to rely on a 17-year-old to carry the bulk of the weight in Major League Soccer is difficult. So we don't want for him to have to have that burden, and I think for us, it's about him earning opportunities, him performing and performing well, and then trying to get on the field more often.

Q. Is there any consideration that you have given to letting Christopher go to the 17 World Cup if he is called up do that, and also Sergio Oregel to the U20 World Cup if he is selected to that?

GREGG BERHALTER: We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. It's way too early to see. What I do know is last time set him back. It set him back months, you know, going to play a friendly game. We'll have to consider it.

Q. Gregg, just curious about your thoughts on the impact of next week's game being moved to September now. It will provide you guys some time off I assume next week, but just creating more congestion for you guys even though it's not really a congested time of the year for you guys at the end of September.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, it will give us one week where we'll have three games in a week, right? The team has shown that we can navigate through those weeks, so it won't be a problem.

You know, we were made aware of it last week of the possibility. It's things you have to deal with. Hopefully it will be a couple of degrees cooler in Miami a month later, but you never know.

Q. Switching topics to the game that's being played this Saturday.

GREGG BERHALTER: Thank you.

Q. Somebody had to do it. Philadelphia, Chester is never a pleasant place to play. They do their best to make sure of that. The team has been playing with a

lot of intensity this year under Bradley Carnell. The Fire had a 1-0 loss to them off a penalty in a closely-fought game. What are you expecting from Philadelphia? Could we see the debut of Franco and Waterman?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think they're a very good team. I've always loved playing in Chester. I love the fans. I love how they get after it. They get after you. They get after the team. They make it a hostile environment. I think that's great.

But the reality is we're playing one of the top teams in our conference, and we're playing them away, and we want to go and show that we can compete with these teams. We were really disappointed with the result when we played them the first time. I don't think we played up to our ability.

Give them credit for making it difficult for us, but we're excited about this possibility in Philly. We know it's a good team, but we're relishing it.

Q. Going into this transfer market, was the defense the big part for you to get accomplished to revamp it? Now do you feel it could be the strength of the team moving forward with having guys that are Captains like Elliott and Waterman and just sort of giving you an exhale that that back line is now, you know, with veterans and guys that also have youth, and it's something that could be a strength of the team going forward?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, the goal was just to try to make the team incrementally better, and we think we did that with Andre Franco, Rodo, and Joel. For us if we had the right profile in any position, we were willing to move on it, but I think the back line was an area of focus just based on experience the first 25 games of the season. We did look to address some of the open spots on the back line, and we'll go from there.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports