

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Andrew Gutman

Press Conference



Q. Curious, after the Philadelphia game you've had two weeks now or a week and a half to reflect, train. How has the response been from the locker room? As a veteran in this group, do you think it's appropriate as you guys have this final seven-match stretch?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I think the last two weeks we been training hard, improving on things that happened in the Philly game that we don't want to happen again.

And then for us, it's just kind of moving on from it. We're still in a good position to make the playoffs, so it's a seven-game sprint for us. We just got to get it done.

Q. So this game against the Revolution, the Fire's final game scheduled at SeatGeek this year. Can you talk about what you've seen from the previous two matches at SeatGeek in terms of the crowd, the atmosphere, what it feels like playing there knowing that's a place you were familiar with from time in the academy onward?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, for me, I knew it as Toyota Park, so long time ago. I love it there. It's a soccer-specific stadium, so the fans are a little bit more on top of you. It creates a better environment for us being the home team, so always nice to go there and play there.

I also think you get some different fans as well. Maybe more if the suburbs that get to see us play. It's good for us as a team to showcase against different types of fans and show what we're all about.

Q. You've been the only natural left back I guess on the team this season. Seen Johnny play there. Seen Leo get some time there. Team makes a signing in the transfer window with Radojevic coming in. How do you look forward to the dual role of being a mentor to a young player and having somebody coming in who is direct positional competition?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I think this year was a little bit

unusual, right? Normally throughout the season there is always two people in that position so you're always competing with someone.

For me, it's something that I always want to be out on the field. I always want to help contribute to the team. But at the same time, I believe that the staff makes good signings to make the team better. So when he comes in with us, we'll see how he is and everything. If I can help him improve then I definitely will.

Q. I wanted to ask about the goals conceded. Looked through the last few matches. At least two goals in the last three, at least two goals conceded in each the last three, at least two goals conceded in this eight of the last ten. I'm wondering if there are some specific things you're trying to correct in that area or it is simply about taking risks going forward and that's the result of it? What do you think?

ANDREW GUTMAN: No, I think it's just something we need to get better at. You know, every team takes risks going forward, and then it's just about how you're able to defend when you're going forward or even when we don't have the ball, our defensive shape and our mid or low block.

I think it's just a combination of everything that we just have to focus in more on it and defend better as a team. You know, there are some games where we defend really well and some games where we don't defend well. I think we just need to get to a point where we are consistently doing well defensively throughout 90 minutes.

Q. So I wanted to ask you about the back line. I think and you Elliott have been probably the two most consistent starters throughout the year with a lot of movements and injuries. Now that you're getting Waterman in here and losing Carlos and stuff, do you feel the line will be stabilized and have maybe the four same starters for the rest of the year? How do you think that might help you in the final stretch sort of having a veteran with Waterman and someone with experience in the back line? Is that something you're envisioning happening?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I think with injuries and different people playing throughout the year, especially on

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the right side, it is tough to kind of get a consistency with the back line and have the kind of the same group of players playing week in and week out.

With Joel coming in he's been with us for a bit and you can tell he has real quality. Obviously played against him a lot and I think he's a really good player, and I think he'll help us. But at the end of the day it just doesn't matter who is back there. We all just have to do our job. Some games we do it well and some games we don't.

For us, if we want to be a top team in the league we need to do it well every single week and show it every single week.

Q. So this has been touched on a couple of different ways. You're within two matches of potentially exceeding your career high for minutes. I wanted to talk to you about how you're holding up this season, how you feel physically going down to the last stretch of seven matches in the regular season, and if you feel like there has been different challenges on your body now with the role you're playing? Like more than half of your assist total in your career have been in this year. You've been getting up a lot; you've also had to track back a lot as well.

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I think last year I didn't really play a lot, and then to come in this year and play as much as I did it definitely is a challenge. I think I've said this before: I have a very good recovery program that I worked with the staff and other people that has put me in a position to be where I'm at now.

So for me, I feel good. I feel strong. I feel fit. Then the coach been really good on making sure that I'm fresh week in and week out.

Yeah, so I don't really look at it as like oh, I'm about to hit my most minutes played ever. I'm looking at it as I'm healthy and contributing week in and week out. That's what I wanted to do since I came here, and I'm able to do it.

Q. Curious about expectations against New England. Got to play them New England twice in the next month and a half or so. What do you think about that squad? They have the opportunities where they can really score in droves and they have their times where they're not playing as well.

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, they're a good team. You know, they have a really good No. 10 obviously. You know, every team you play in this league, they're always good.

For us it's about how we're able to neutralize them and how we're able to do what we do best, especially at home. When we play at home we expect to win games. And at this point in the season it's very important that we especially win at home to put us in a good position for the playoffs.

Q. You're one the standout products from the Fire Academy. Unique news came out earlier this week where the Fire announces that players entering that part of the pipeline will have a three-year guarantee. Where if they keep on trying and stick with the team for three years, the team will commit to them for those three years. Looking back at when you were that age, can you reflect a little bit on how that kind of a promise could maybe have changed your perspective, made life easier, or just changed things for you, and on your family?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, I mean, when I was in -- I think most of these kids go to online school. When I was in the academy I went to normal school and then 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. I would come and train. So it's a lot different.

But if I was that age now, as a kid obviously you want to be a part of a professional club, so being part of the Fire is amazing. More so I think it's helpful for the parents. You know you're kid is getting a commitment, he is getting three-year develop plan.

It's not like if he doesn't do well in one year you're out. Especially for my journey with the Fire, my first year and a half I barely played in the academy, but they stuck with me. I kept growing and growing and I got better and better and earned more playing time.

It's great for the kid and the family that they know they're getting a three-year development plan, and hopefully each kid makes the most of it and they can do something with it.

Q. Caleb Porter is an IU guy. You're an IU guy. Do you hear about that behind the scenes from your people? Does that bring out a little extra just knowing he's from a different generation at the school but you both accomplished a lot for them?

ANDREW GUTMAN: Yeah, you know, any time you play someone within the league that went to Indiana there is always a special bond there. Not only him, there is a lot guys around the league. I always look forward to seeing a former Hoosier, so it will be nice to see him this weekend.

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