

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



goalkeeper over this first season you've gotten to work with him?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, he's definitely taken steps, and I think for him there's not too many goalies in the league that will play that many games, young goalies in the league that have played that many games. So he is doing well.

Now to be in a team that the expectations are to win, you know, it puts added pressure on the goalkeeper, but I think he's dealt with that fine. We've seen consistent improvement throughout the year.

Q. I was watching back Jonny Dean's goal where it really starts on the left. It seems like you guys were being very patient trying to work that left side, and then it gets shifted over through the midfield and then over to the right side. In looking at it, it seemed like that kind of classic building-out-the-back-type goal that this team, your system, has preached for this years. Is that one of the goals that you see when you look back at film review, and that's one of those, hey, if we can work our way up the field like this, we will be in positions to succeed?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think that Romi's goal I think more emphasized. I think we made 15 passes. Everyone on the field besides Hugo touched the ball, including Chris. I think that's more of a hallmark of what we can do.

But for me it's more about guys moving for each other, offering for each other, having the understanding of where the space is. In that example that you gave, that's a really good example of just finding where the space is.

Generally in soccer on the strong side of the field is there's going to be less space. So you have to look for spaces other places. That would be an example of that.

Q. Now that the squad has officially made the playoffs, I think that that had kind of been the goal all season, how important is it for the team to continue to get wins to push higher up the table or at least try to push higher up depending on the results around, and how do you motivate the group to keep on looking ahead of them rather than just sort of taking a step back at what could be a crucial time of year?

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started. Questions, please.

Q. To kick us off, it looked like some bad news for a Leo Barroso and Andre Franco in the last game. Is there any update on those two?

GREGG BERHALTER: Leo is working through a minor hamstring injury. We hope it will be sooner rather than later.

Andre has suffered a torn ACL. We kind of knew at the game it was bad news, but we got confirmation. We feel really bad, really bad for the athlete and the entire situation, for the team and everything, but it's something we're going to have to push through and keep going.

Q. How important is it to -- thinking about this last game, the team gave up two goals, comes back, and fights back at the end. How important is it to have that resilience in this group established as you try to now climb further up the table and out of the wildcard spots?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think that game when I look at it, it was just a game of changing momentum. Although we gave up two goals, it wasn't something where we felt like we can't get momentum back.

It was a game where we talked to the guys all the time about there's going to be times in the game where the opponent has the upper hand. We just have to deal with it. So for us in those situations you deal with it, and you keep going. You don't get flustered. You keep trying to score, and we were able to do that.

Q. Obviously a good news point we got this morning was Chris Brady being called into the U.S. Men's National Team. Looking over the course of the season, obviously a big focus early in the year was him getting more comfortable playing the ball with his feet, but over the course of the season beyond that, how have you seen him grow as a player, as a

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GREGG BERHALTER: Well, it's pretty easy, because it's the same we've been preaching all year long. Every press conference we talk about the same thing, right? The hardest game is our next game, and we put all our energy into the next game, and nothing changes. You know, it's about trying to win.

We have an opponent in front of us. The only opponent we're looking at is Toronto right now, and we're focused on how to prepare for that game. So I think when you work with a process, when you are very consistent, the guys get used to that.

I think there's a natural tendency when you reach a milestone or reach an objective is to breathe out a little bit and relax a little bit, but you know, this time of year you can't do that because it really is about building momentum as you go into the playoffs.

Q. Kind of building on the discussions that are post-game from the other night, we've asked about the resilience this team has shown and what they were able to do on Tuesday night. How big of a fun and just important symbolic event is it that the guys who end up scoring that goal are two homegrown guys, including Justin Reynolds, a guy from Chicago proper, and Guti, a guy who has been around this team a long time and scores just un-absolute-worldy. The synergy of all of that, how has that been a way to put an exclamation point on what these guys have achieved this season?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think to be a good team in Major League Soccer you need homegrowns contributing. There's no question about it. Just because of the salary cap, you need to get efficiencies with homegrowns. You need to get minutes, and it helps to connect with the city, and you become much more of a local team, which is important to us.

We've been really pleased with our homegrown performances this year, whether it's Chris, Guti, Sergio, Mauricio, Justin in this case, who chipped in. Andrew is a homegrown. A lot of those players have been contributing, and then you add really high-quality players like Zinckernagel, Bamba, and Hugo and D'Avilla and Andre Franco, and the other additions like Jack and Joel, and now you start to have something.

That's the important thing is that we're a group, and we're a team, and we work hard for each other on the field.

Q. Looking at Toronto as an opponent, they've been really not giving up a lot of goals since Djordje

Mihailovic, who is a guy that you know well, that I think Fire fans know well, from coming up through the academy playing here, joined the team. How important is it going to be for the Fire to keep on trying to break down a tough defense, maybe a tougher one even than Miami had, where they just aren't conceding goals?

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, they've been doing a great job lately, Toronto. Tied seven games in a row. Djordje has given them a boost offensively, and they have quality players. Cifuentes is a good player, Osorio, Laryea. They have a quality group.

So for us we're not taking anything for granted. We know that they're going to be motivated to come in here. Laryea is going to be very motivated to come in here. He probably has a couple of hundred people coming to the game.

So for us it's just focusing and being professional about what we do. Nothing changes. It's really about us trying to execute our own game plan.

Q. Looking back at the reverse fixture from March where it was 2-1, you had to deal with an injury early for Jonny Dean, but the team showed after giving up a goal that they could come back, and they continued to fight. What do you think the team can take from that performance and understanding that the both rosters look very different now?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think that's it. Both teams have changed a lot since that first game. We're really not referencing that game too much in terms of coming up with a game plan. Really trying to understand who they are now, what their quality pieces are now.

For us part of it is they have to deal with us, and they have to deal with what we do, and we do some things really well. We're a very dangerous attacking team, and we want to continue to be scoring goals.

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