

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Hugo Cuypers

Press Conference



Q. Curious, you come here a year and a half ago, almost two years ago at this point. Your big goal was postseason soccer. You've accomplished that. Obviously still one very important game to go. How are you feeling about just the move you made and now being in the position where you wanted to be to be playing postseason soccer in 2025?

HUGO CUYPERS: I've never regretted the move. I think it was the right time in my career to accept Chicago's offer. Last year was really challenging as a team and as a whole club I think, more than I expected.

But in a way looking back at it now I also see the benefits of having such a challenging season to start with and all the positive that came from it. Also doesn't mean this season has been all ups. It wasn't, but the main target has been achieved.

Now, am I satisfied by this target? No. The goals I set out when I signed almost two years ago weren't just making the playoffs, so let's see where we can take it.

Q. With this one game coming up on Saturday before the playoffs, you know you're already in. Does the fact that knowing that a win can guarantee a home game and maybe an easier path through, will that be a motivator for on Saturday for what otherwise would be a game that, again, if the main objective has been achieved, might be a little harder to get motivated for?

HUGO CUYPERS: I hope some guys don't get like a lack of motivation. I would be surprised by that. On my side you want to win games. Do we have it in hand? No. We have to see what our team is going to do. The only thing we can focus on is play. Even if we don't get the result or the end ranking we would like, this game comes right before a playoff run, so it's not a game that you can take easily, and so absolutely not what we're going to do.

Q. As a matter of preparation, you guys have had the experience this season of sometimes having

multiple-game weeks. Even though there is one game to play, how do you prepare yourself for the unknown of what comes after this? Could be another week off; could be you got to play three more games in the next nine days. So just both personally and as a team, how do you prepare for not knowing what comes next after Saturday?

HUGO CUYPERS: We don't. Honestly, we don't. There is no need to prepare for a potential mid-week game if the results go our way Saturday after a potential win.

So we'll see how the ranking looks like after Saturday's game and we will go from there. If we have to play a two-game week, we'll do it.

Q. Fans have been incredible this year. What message do you give your fans and in general the club fans about right before the playoffs? What message would you give the fans?

HUGO CUYPERS: The first one is to thank them because they have played a role in our good run over the whole season. We felt the support and we know it has been challenging the last couple years.

Going forward we will need them. If we want to go as far as possible, home or away, we will have to feel that support and gives us an extra boost.

Q. So as of a couple games ago, fun fact, you played more games for the Fire than any other club in your career, at least in terms of league games. Is there something feels different or special here given that you moved around so much in your career?

HUGO CUYPERS: It doesn't feel that way. (Smiling.) Funny you bringing that up. It's completely different in the way that the league is structured and the traveling every two weeks.

But I'm surprised by the fact that it's my most league games because of the amount of time. It's almost been two years, which also says that games are pretty spread out throughout the season.

So, no, I wouldn't say there is anything special about it.

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Q. Obviously had really good year this year and the team has been winning, so that's probably priority for you. How do you feel when you kind of look back and assess this regular season for you? Did you sort of live up to your own personal expectations? Feel like you left goals on the field you wish you could have back, some shots, or are you very satisfied with how your personal season turned out so far?

HUGO CUYPERS: I think in general I will never be fully satisfied, so there are always things I need to work on, I feel I have to do better. Chances are there to be missed; otherwise it wouldn't be fun.

No, I always reflect with I'll say a positive mindset of how could I have done it better or how can I improve the relationships with my teammates.

I think throughout the season that has been going upward and hopefully can keep to going during the playoffs.

Q. You mentioned in the beginning when you decided to come here you were promised lot of things. You've been through most of the changes of the Chicago Fire, new training facility, plus you have a new teammates coming in, new coach of course. What's the most thing that have impressed you in this year, the whole change of the Chicago Fire?

HUGO CUYPERS: I would say that when I arrived there were -- everybody wasn't aligned where the club or how the club needed to go forward. I think that has been the biggest change with the coach being able to also take decisions on how to structure the team from couple months before the season started and having a clear way of playing right from the start. Even if sometimes now we change systems, the basics stay the same.

Q. It's the third time the team will go against New England this year: Open Cup and the earlier in Bridgeview. Just curious what do you think of this New England team and how dangerous they can be? Obviously they don't have anything to play for; interim coach. They scored two goals late against you guys last time, so just curious, any thoughts on New England?

HUGO CUYPERS: I think the most important thing is to focus on ourselves, of course. But I have been -- I have played in games where the opponents had nothing to play for and I lost them, so I'm in a pretty aware position I would say to know these are dangerous games, especially away for us.

Even if they don't play for anything anymore, you don't

want to go into the offseason with a bad feeling. They will go from the mindset of building for next season. So I think it's dangerous or tricky, but, again, if we do our thing well, it will end well.

Q. You're coming back from a three-game week and then a two-week international break, and then this game, potentially short rest until the playoffs. How useful has the two-week break been for you and the squad both from a recovery point of view and also just being able to prepare for like a possible long postseason trying out new things and stuff like that?

HUGO CUYPERS: First of all, for me personally it's really strange to have an international break before the last game of the season. That's a whole other discussion. No, international breaks are always useful. You can mix rest periods with intention trainings where you can work for or longer couple days on really how you prepare for upcoming games, so it's always a time being used well.

Q. Last week I talked to do Jason Shokalook after he won MLS NEXT Pro Golden Boot. He referenced you as somebody who has been a really helpful mentor to him. Curious what have you seen from him as a striker in the organization you trained with a lot, and if you see him as an MLS player in the future?

HUGO CUYPERS: He definitely has potential to become an MLS player. Actually he has in a way. But I mean, consistently being part the squad. Shok and I talk a lot about -- he asks me a lot of questions about goals or chances that I may have in games or training when he trains with us.

I think when I was his age I didn't have someone to give me that sort of the advice, and I just try to be as helpful as I can because I know how helpful it can be.

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