

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



New England 2, Chicago FC 2

Q. Thanks as always for the time. Just with the implications of this match, knowing how intense it was going to be, how frustrated were you by conceding that way and that early?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, I think it's a great learning experience for the group, honestly. You can see that we're shellshocked after giving up the goal in the first minute, and we had to find a way to claw back, and that's the most important thing. At halftime, I asked the guys, "Do you have more in you?"

And they all said, "Yes."

And that's really what it was about for us, understanding that in the playoffs, if you gift a goal like that, it's going to be tough sailing.

So for us, good learning experience. Really proud of the guys, their effort and their fight in the second half, especially, and now we have a home game, home playoff game against Orlando.

Q. Knowing that Orlando were throttled in their game and you had the opportunity to go to seven, is there frustration that you have to settle for a wildcard game even if it's at home?

GREGG BERHALTER: That's looking backwards. I could point to the Toronto game and say we should have gotten three points out of that game; you can go back to the D.C. game. We can look back all we want, right, but there's no use in that. It's really about what's ahead of us and really getting the guys recovered and getting them prepared for Orlando.

Q. So the last two games defensively, you've started with a back five, and at around half, you switched to four. Is there one you might lean towards now going into the postseason?

GREGG BERHALTER: The thing; we got behind in the game, and if you want to be very preventative shape and you're behind, it doesn't help you that much. So we needed to be more aggressive in the second half; therefore, we had to change formation.

What I think is that we have options now, and that's the good thing. The whole idea of the end of the season was to give ourselves formation options in our formation, and we have that.

Q. Justin comes off the bench, and it leads to two more goals, and there is the conceding goal. His progress over the last couple weeks as he's contributing?

GREGG BERHALTER: He's an attacking fullback. At the time, we needed to be aggressive and we needed to put him in and he did a good job. We talked to him about getting forward and he did that.

Overall, he just competed. He has the ability, he really does, and it's just about how does he put it all together.

Q. How important was it to get a victory like this in a playoff-like fashion?

GREGG BERHALTER: We didn't get a victory.

Q. Sorry, getting a point -- sorry -- in a method like this, that felt where the team rallied after a disappointing slower start?

GREGG BERHALTER: You know, I could look at it many different ways, but I think the biggest thing we're taking away is learning about the start of the game and what these games need to look like.

And so I think it's going to help us moving forward. You know, you can't spot the opponent a goal and expect to be able to do that every time, come back every time.

So pleased with, I think, the tenacity and the resilience in the second half but not pleased with the first half and the start of the game.

Q. Like you mentioned, there's things to take away

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and learning lessons. The last two games that were still important to play, and getting two points out of them, how do you prevent slow starts in this next game that it's do-or-die in a sense and make sure those certain mistakes and maybe the lackadaisical starts are corrected for this game in such a quick turnaround, too?

GREGG BERHALTER: You hope that all these experiences that we've had over the last, you know, weeks and maybe even months have hardened us and have shaped us and have really helped the learning to continue, and that's all it's about. It's an inexperienced group in the playoffs, and we're going to have experience it for the first time.

We're looking forward to it. We know all the teams that have made the playoffs are difficult teams, and for us, it's about trying to get a good result at home in front of our fans.

Q. I wanted to ask about Zinckernagel, really dragging the team out of it at the end the way he scored; on the year, 15 goals and 15 assists, can you speak more about him?

GREGG BERHALTER: Phil has been a catalyst for our attack. You see sometimes when we're struggling, he's struggling. How Phil goes, the team usually goes. We need him in the playoffs to be who he is, to continue the goal-scoring form and to be aggressive. I think that's what you see, when he arrives at the top of the box, when he arrives in the penalty box, he has tons of quality.

Q. How happy are you that you have Joel Waterman on your side at this point of the year? He seemed to really become like a calm when the team needed it or do the talking when the team needed it.

GREGG BERHALTER: What I liked about Joel today was his competitiveness. That's contagious. The kid, he competes in every play and you know, it goes a long way, and I think that the second half turnaround wasn't just because of the goals; it was because of the aggressiveness demonstrated by a lot of guys, but especially Joel.

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