

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

Saturday, February 21, 2026  
Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



Houston Dynamo 2, Chicago Fire FC 1

### Q. What do you think went wrong in the second half?

GREGG BERHALTER: It's a good lesson for us. We stopped playing and came out of the locker room and it was like we stayed in the locker room. Really, no movement for each other. Houston, as they bring the pressure, you know, we have to play behind them. We don't play behind them, we give each other balls in difficult positions, and just basically lack of movement.

It's like we were on autopilot, and you know, for us, it's I think a good lesson. If we go out and we play at half speed, we're a below average team. When you see in the first half, when we play with real tempo, you know, it's a really good product. But unfortunately the second half was a very poor performance.

### Q. Do you think the group responded, or at least met that message or heard that message post-match from you?

GREGG BERHALTER: We'll see. We'll find out.

### Q. So in that first half, you had 70 percent possession -- not a lot of shots. Was that frustrating? Was that a topic of conversation in the locker room at half, trying to get -- more turn pressure into chances?

GREGG BERHALTER: Listen, I think when you're playing away from home and you're up 1-0, you'll take it all day, right. I just think it was an excellent half. XG came in the first half, something like .7 in the first half, and you'll take that. That's good enough. They are playing a back five. They are compact, difficult to break down.

I think we had some good movements behind their back line that caused chances, but like I said, in the second half, it was the complete opposite.

### Q. First half or second half there weren't a lot of

corner opportunities, second half, a series of corners, didn't seem to get the performance the team so often did last year. Do you think the lack of production from set pieces was an issue?

GREGG BERHALTER: No, not at all. I think the lack of intensity, the lack of movement in the second half was an issue, and you know, we never really got control of the game. We never really moved up enough into their -- into their final third. And we weren't dangerous enough running behind. It was a poor performance overall in the second half.

### Q. Seemed like in the second half that the team dropped back, was playing defensively.

GREGG BERHALTER: For us, it's about the moment. So there's going to be moments when you're playing away from home and the home team gets the advantage, and I think that's fine. We just have to be smart in those moments, and we weren't in today's game.

You know, I was very critical of Chris Brady and his decision-making and build up from goalkeeper. They are building their pressure and we need to move the field up. We need to get the team up and we can kick from a close position. You know, we're playing into their hands, bringing seven guys forward to press us.

And give them credit. They have earned this victory. Houston did a great job in the second half but a lot of this is -- I mean, a lot of what we're looking at can be improved.

### Q. You noted that you didn't see a response in the second half. Why do you think after neither of Houston's goals that you didn't see a response from the guys in the minutes immediately after?

GREGG BERHALTER: Well, I think we pushed and we tried to get something out of it.

To me, the most disappointing part was the lead-up, from the second half on to their second goal was absolutely way below standard. And that's the most disappointing thing for me.

### Q. A number of MLS debuts tonight, Anton Saletros. You gave the arm brand, and the South Africans,

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**Mbekezeli Mbokazi and Puso Dithejane. Can you tell us what you saw from them to start?**

GREGG BERHALTER: I think they are both really good players, and they both had really strong preseasons. Missing, being shorthanded made the decision a lot easier. You know, missing Andrew, Jack and Jonathan Bamba.

But for us, we think we have a deep enough squad. We think we have a squad that could have and should have won that game, and we're really disappointed with the second half.

**Q. You went with the back three and you went with Sam Rogers ahead of Cups. Curious what you thought of his performance, and what went into the decision between those two as the third center back?**

GREGG BERHALTER: They have been battling all preseason. You know, we thought the first game of the season, Sam has won a lot of games last year being on the field and we thought that would be a good decision.

**Q. So when you have a second half like that, is it more of a mentality thing, mistakes on field, or maybe just it's an early season thing like you mentioned, also, that some guys might run out of gas, and how do you coach it up now, you have a week to the next game, what you saw in the second half?**

GREGG BERHALTER: We talked about it. We talked about it in the press conference, and you know, we knew we would be fatigued. I think maybe as a coaching staff, we could have made some earlier subs. Get some fresh legs on. Kind of counteract that.

To me, you saw lack of movement from the guys, a lack of support when the player -- when a player had the ball.

But I think there's times where we need to be smart, we need to be compact, and we need to not give them any space, and then we can play from there. You know, the first goal is an example. We are all over the place with our pressing. We are up at the 18, both midfielders out of position and they are playing balls behind us from deep in their own half.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...