

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA



## Maren Haile-Selassie Press Conference

**Q. Curious, after the way last week's game ended where Houston comes back, what's the level of urgency not only just to get back out on the pitch for this team this weekend but to get back on the pitch and playing well when you take the field against Montreal?**

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Yeah, so first of all, I think last week wasn't a bad game from start to finish. I think first half we saw many positive things that we took away from that game, too.

But I would say regardless of that game, the home opener is special every year. Just kind of like setting a tone at home, what the fans can expect of us this year. It's a very important game for us. You can probably say even more now that we didn't get the result we wanted in the first game. I think it's very important that we step on the pitch looking for three points at home and also offering something good for the fans.

**Q. One of the points of conversation about the team last year was despite the crowds being good early on, despite the success the Fire had on the road, it took a long time for that first home win to come, including a draw against Montreal early in the season where you guys started off ahead and then conceded, ending 1-1. Has that been a point of conversation amongst the team or has that been something you've been able to turn the page from mentally?**

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: I would say a little bit of both. Obviously it's a new year, a new team, so we don't want to think too much about things that didn't go as well last year but also common this year. I remember before the first game that we set some goals for ourselves. One of them was for sure at home, have a better record.

First of all, it's going to give us more points, and we're going to be more likely to achieve our goals, but also just for our fans, to show them what our quality is on the pitch. I know we've been very good away from home last year,

but in this league, I think away from home the points that you get should be bonuses and at home you should do the homework for sure. We want to start that way from this weekend, just with a fresh mentality, not thinking about last year too much, but being conscious that we want to have a very good start as well.

**Q. Maren, your entire time here we've seen you be a really flexible player, even getting thrown in at left back last minute in a preseason game this year. I'm curious for you as a player, how is a week of training and preparation when you know what your role is going to be or most likely to be different from one where you could get to Friday or even match day and not know what Gregg is going to ask of you?**

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: That's a good question. I would like to say it's not a big difference because you want to prepare the best way possible for the game, but of course, if you have an idea what position you're going to play on the weekend, you can already prepare and also get in a routine and get in a habit.

Like with the injuries that we had, with the players that were missing, for example, last week, as a player you have to be ready to do what's asked of you, and like you mentioned, I think of myself as a player that is versatile, who can help the team in many positions but also not just help but also excel and play well in the position.

Whenever the coach asks me to step in or help or whatever, I'm just trying to give my best.

**Q. What do you think is the big difference between the squad last year and the squad this year, especially in the first game?**

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Still very early to say. Obviously, new players, new team. But we have a lot of ideas, some things we trained last year that we bring this year. Last year I would say was very new for everyone, new staff, new ideas, and this year we have a little bit more of an idea of what the staff is asking of us, maybe a better understanding of the players on the pitch.

We've got some experienced players, too. We added some experienced players who have a lot of quality.



We've been playing together for a year now. We have the ideas, like I said, that we know, and I think it's going to be very exciting, a good year for us.

**Q. I'm curious, there's a lot of competition this season in those wide areas with Chris coming back from his absence last year, Robin Lod joining the team. I'm curious what the dynamic is in that group when there is a lot of competition for places, but you guys are all very distinct players with very distinct skill sets who maybe it doesn't feel like you're competing exactly with each other. I'm curious what that dynamic has been like in that winger group with unique players all competing for limited minutes?**

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Yeah, like you said, especially in that position we have different kinds of attributes and players who have different qualities and strengths. I think that's a very good thing for the team and the coaching staff as well so they have more options in case someone is maybe out of form or injured or not available, whatever. You have confidence in the other players that can step in.

But also just like competing between each other. Even though we don't see each other as enemies or whatever, but still, you want to prove your spot. You have to earn your spot, too, and confirm it.

I think overall it's just a net positive for what we want that we have this amount of quality players in the team and in certain positions.

**Q. Maren, this game starts in the early afternoon. I'm curious how that changes your approach mentally to the game, if it does at all, and if you have a preference between games that happen afternoon or evenings.**

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: Yeah, for sure it changes something in the preparation. You have to reschedule almost the things that you do, your habits, and maybe adapt or change. Me personally, I prefer playing a little bit earlier. Maybe this one is a little bit too early, but a little bit early, I like it, because otherwise the day with get very long and you're just kind of waiting for the game. Like that, you wake up, you prepare, you have a good meal, whatever, and then it's go time.

I prefer playing a little bit earlier, but for sure you have to adapt and plan ahead and schedule kind of the things that you want to do so you're ready for the game.

**Q. Maren, I wanted to ask you about working with Anton Salétros now that he's been here. We saw you two connect with the shot that was only saved because of the goalkeeper's face last week. What does**

**he bring when you can have those types of passes from the midfield that allows you to space out the game more where he can create from nearly anywhere on the pitch?**

MAREN HAILE-SELASSIE: First of all, I would say he's a very good guy, good guy in the locker room, good guy on the pitch, somebody you can tell who has been in this leadership role previously, brings that mentality on the field, too, and who is very positive with the teammates.

But also just a very good player. Like you mentioned, with his left foot, it gives a little bit of a different dimension for our game. He can open up the game a little bit for us. Also in preseason you saw he had a change of sides on the field that we didn't necessarily have before because we have a lot of players who like to combine in small spaces, which you can do, too, but I think it just brings another option for us as a team. He can play short, but he can also look to switch sides, also, to play behind.

Very good player. Also good on set pieces. Another left-footer, which we don't really have a lot. Just gives us more options as a team.

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