

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Anton Saletros

Press Conference



come to MLS in Chicago. I'm curious how you're feeling about that now and how that's been a motivator for you, do you feel, so far this season looking ahead to that?

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us today. We are here with midfielder Anton Saletros.

Q. Curious, you've had the opportunity on the pitch to work with Mauricio Pineda and Dje D'Avilla. What do you think they both offer in terms of a partner for you in the midfield, because they're different players that can add something when they're on the pitch?

ANTON SALETROS: We played a couple of different systems the last three games, but as I said, great players. Good on the ball, defensively good, and yeah, will help the team a lot this year. It's definitely nice to play with both of them.

Q. Speaking about the different systems, you've been part of a two-man midfield, sometimes when the Fire is playing with the back three, part of a three-man midfield, and then the partnership with that third person has been different. Sometimes it's been Zinckernagel and Robin Lod, and we've seen some different formation combinations. Can you talk about how your role changes in terms of being responsible for getting forward and creating specifically with those different systems?

ANTON SALETROS: Of course, it's a bit different, but we work not too much with the system. More with the positioning and stuff like that. But, of course, it gave us different dynamics when we had three in the back or play four in the back.

So, yeah, for me it's all about helping the team every game. Doesn't matter the system or formation. We are pushing every day to get better. Yeah, we're looking forward to the game on Saturday.

Q. Anton, I'm curious, with really big games coming up for Sweden internationally, you mentioned to us in preseason that the opportunity to try to earn your place in that squad potentially for the World Cup was a factor in your decision-making to leave Europe to

ANTON SALETROS: Of course, you always want to represent your country, especially when World Cup coming up. But you have to work hard every day in training, keep developing, keep pushing, and then we'll see which players the coach decides to call up.

Yeah, of course, it's not only motivation to me. Every day to play here and be a part of this group is also really good.

Q. Anton, one person we've seen you connect really well with especially in the attacking areas has been Maren Haile-Selassie. What do you think has worked well with you two given his ability to push forward from a winger spot and create angles for you to attack the penalty area that aren't necessarily directly at goal?

ANTON SALETROS: No, I think Maren has done a good job playing wing back. Maybe it's not his normal position, but he's done a great job. For me it's always easy when the attacker makes the run in space and he makes the decision for me. So it's been easy.

Yeah, unfortunately, we haven't scored, haven't made a system yet, but we're working on it.

Q. So far how have you adapted to the league, and how do you see the level of MLS?

ANTON SALETROS: I'm still adapting, adapting to new teammates, adapting to new opponents, but every day we're pushing it. It's been great so far. League is tough. Some really good players.

Yeah, I think the league is growing, the league is developing, and it will be really interesting in the future. For now, we're so focused on Saturday and make a really good impact on that game.

Q. Thinking about that game on Saturday, you just faced Columbus Crew who liked to play a lot with possession, like a lot of balls in the midfield. D.C. looked like they had their most success last week

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against Miami when they were just going direct, kind of staying wide, and then trying to cut in. Changing opponents from a team like the Crew to D.C., how did that change what it is you're looking to try to do on the pitch?

ANTON SALETROS: I think every team has their own characteristics of the team. Columbus is say more possession-based team. Now we're going into D.C., a more straight-forward, attacking team, a more direct team. Then we got to handle those kind of things. There will probably be more second balls and collect loose balls and try to play from there.

Q. Anton, the last match from D.C. United versus Inter Miami, they dropped pretty deep in the defensive line. What would you say would be the biggest challenge for a midfield group when facing the team this Saturday, this weekend?

ANTON SALETROS: Yeah, I think offensively trying to break them down. If they go back in a low block, to have the keys to unlock their defensive shape. That's going to be really important.

Then, as I said before, the second ball. They play quite direct, so you need to be able to hold that game as well. It's going to be an interesting game.

Q. Anton, a couple of weeks on from having been trusted with the captain's armband in your debut. I'm curious how you're balancing your instinct to be a leader and the fact that clearly your teammates have started to respect you really quickly and balancing that with the fact that you're still so new to the team and that you're still getting to know everybody. I'm curious how you strike that balance.

ANTON SALETROS: For me, it's all about being myself, trying to impact the team, trying to be a positive vibe around the team, but most comes down to be myself. Yeah, if I wear the armband or not, I'm going to continue to be myself and help the team in most possible ways I can.

Q. Anton, I'm curious, you've had a couple of center back pairings behind you with Mbo, Jack, and Joel kind of rotating through those three spots. What do you think has been good about that three-man trio in terms of working to keep clean sheets, especially in the last few matches now that all three have been available?

ANTON SALETROS: I think especially the last game, they did a tremendous job keeping a clean sheet, even at home when we were running down. So they've been work really

well. Yeah, I think the whole team defensively have been really good this far of the season.

Of course, we can always improve, but they have done a great job. Yeah, if you keep a clean sheet, then at least you get to get one point.

Q. So with the D.C. United trying to keep the game compact centrally, what would be the key to finding space between their midfielders and their defensive line? Well, specifically midfield line.

ANTON SALETROS: You have to play where they give you space. If they're too compact, you got to go wide and try to go in centrally. We looked a lot again behind them and creating a running game behind their back four.

Q. So one of the stories so far for the Fire this year, unfortunately, has been the injuries that have kept some key members out of the squad. What does it say about the team that they've been able to get results despite not necessarily having the starting 11? Also, in the last game, two players had to leave with injury and had players come in and want to make their debut and make positive contributions even though they may not have been expecting to get those minutes.

ANTON SALETROS: I think the depth of the squad we have this year, guys coming in while other guys are hurt, especially Barroso the last game coming in and, yeah, making a great game in his debut. Yeah, all the other guys are coming in as well.

Of course, we want to have everybody fit and healthy. That's the main goal, and hopefully we can have everybody fit and ready for the games. Then we can be really competitive.

Q. Anton, just because you mentioned Barroso and the performance that he had in Columbus, a young player getting an opportunity, I'm curious what you have seen from him in training, what impresses you about him and maybe specifically in that performance against Columbus?

ANTON SALETROS: I think, first of all, he's fearless. He comes in and, yeah, does his own thing. I think he has great agility, good with both feet, and he has capacity of getting up and down the line.

So, yeah, it's kind of competitive player. It's great to get his debut, but now the real work starts. You have to continue to develop, keep working. Yeah, it's going to be interesting to see what the future brings for him.

Q. I wanted to ask you, your professional career have you ever played in a position that wasn't your position? You consider more of a winger or a creative midfielder.

ANTON SALETROS: I think I've started every position on the field except goalkeeper and center, center back. I've played almost every position.

So, yeah, I've played left back, full back. I've played right back, three in the center back, striker. I've played everywhere, but my main position is center in midfield.

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