

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA



Coach Gregg Berhalter Press Conference

FC Cincinnati - 3, Chicago Fire - 3

GREGG BERHALTER: I think there's two ways we can look at this game. The first way is to say that the side is much improved from last year in terms of coming from a difficult atmosphere and having the ambition to control the game, to win the game and to play to score goals. So, happy with that. We see a difference between this year and that year in that sense.

But on the other side, the defending was not nearly good enough to win the game. And if it wasn't for us scoring three goals, we would have lost the game because defensively we were very poor tonight. And we have to learn from that. We have to improve that and we have to have much more compactness, shape and pressure on the ball.

Q. It seemed like Evander was really able to take advantage of the spaces that he was getting in the second half, particularly getting a little bit more space between him and the midfielders and the centerbacks. What do you think made him and maybe FC Cincinnati more powerful after that halftime break?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think two things. The first thing was, you know, he moved out to our right-hand side. And you saw that on the first goal in the first half. And then you saw that at times in the second half. And that really helped him. And then he was able to find some good pockets.

For us, it was really trying to keep him on his left foot. And the penalty instance, we did a poor job closing him down, showing him to his left foot. And overall, he had an effect on all three goals. And he's a top player in the league, and we have to do a better job.

Q. The defensive issues in the second half were only a part of the story. The other part, first half you were peppering Celentano with shots. Second half, I only remember three shots that (indiscernible) had. I think only one or two of those were on target. So do you

think that the Fire should have been getting more going forward in the second half and that could have made a difference in the game?

GREGG BERHALTER: Well, I think the best strategy in that sense, especially when we went up 3-1 -- you have you to remember we went up 3-1 in the 49th minute. And from there, it should be about compact defensive shape, waiting for them to open up, hitting them in the counter attack. We didn't transition well in the second half at all.

So I think there's the part where we need to keep the ball more, we need to move them around more. And then chances would be great, getting a fourth goal would be great, but really just keeping the ball, moving them around. And when we have the opportunity to counter attack, playing it out more effectively.

Q. It's the first game that Hugo Cuypers was back after missing two games with injuries, and he certainly was an impactful player. First brace of the year for Hugo. Could you talk a little bit about his performance?

GREGG BERHALTER: Two amazing goals. Two Hugo Cuypers goals. He has the ability to score those, a really good finisher. And it's incredible how much effort he put into the game being out two weeks and not having trained with a group for 10 days. He's still able to run and contribute for 90 minutes.

Q. That brace could have well been a hat trick if he had taken a shot from the penalty spot. But he gave it to Zinckerangel instead who (indiscernible) as well. Is that planned ahead or is that something players decide on the decide on the pitch?

GREGG BERHALTER: No, we have designated penalty takers, and Hugo was number one, Phil was number two. And on the pitch they decided, Hugo decided, to give the ball to Phil.

Q. What does it say about Hugo that he's willing to do that? And it ends up being a right decision to get his teammate some confidence.

GREGG BERHALTER: Yeah, I think it says a lot about Hugo. We know what type of guy he is, what type of character he is, and things like that demonstrate it, that

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he's not a selfish person. He's in it for the team. He shows it by his play and by I think gestures like that.

Q. Growing up as a defender, playing as a defender, when you see these types of performances, what needs to be the response in those first few training sessions after this game?

GREGG BERHALTER: Well, I'm not going to blame this all on the back line, because it certainly wasn't all their fault. But for us, it's collective defending, collective movement was poor tonight. And then you get exposed and you get put in positions you don't want to be in.

Q. The FCC goal that kind of started their comeback, that made it 3-2, that happened right after Joel Waterman came on. Do you think that the formation shift and the tactical changes that happened (indiscernible) for Joel potentially was one of the issues that made things more difficult just in those moments after the change?

GREGG BERHALTER: That was the set piece, you mean?

Q. Yeah.

GREGG BERHALTER: No, I don't think the set piece had anything to do with formation change.

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