

Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Gregg Berhalter

Press Conference



GREGG BERHALTER: I think the first half of the season, the first 14 games are tricky because we don't have that many midweek fixtures.

But as we go into the World Cup break and start, we're going to be playing every couple days and that's where we're going to need these depth pieces and where everyone is going to get game time.

For the players that are not satisfied in training, just show it in training and continue to build and improve regardless if they are on the field or not. That's the mindset we need because we will need everyone throughout the course of the season.

Q. So the Fire are on a five-game undefeated streak but disappointing finish in Cincinnati. What's will you focus on the next week?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think it's just evaluating last week's performance, seeing what we can do better, and then planning for this one game. That's it. That's all we're focused on is SKC.

I think it's misleading where they are in the table. They have played better at times than the results show, and they pose some problems. For us it's being really focused on what we're trying to do, be aggressive and trying to set the team up for success.

Q. Any updates on Bamba or Barroso?

GREGG BERHALTER: Leo is still out, and Bamba will be out as well.

Q. Looking at the right back spot, you have Jonathan Dean. What has it done to have Borso there, as well, understanding that he's going to be a big part of the team with players out longer?

GREGG BERHALTER: For Dylan, the youth national team played him as a winger. For us we see the next level for him potentially being a fullback. And now it's getting him up to speed in a professional game, defending in the penalty box; a number of things that he can continue to work on.

He has a very interesting profile. He's comfortable with the ball on his left foot, right foot, and his mentality is really good.

Q. You've added so much depth in the off-season, and a lot of guys from last year are coming off the bench or not starting regularly. How do you keep them engaged, guys that might have roles changed and keep them fresh mentally, too?

Q. I did want to ask one other question about, reflecting on last Saturday's game against Cincinnati, you felt the team didn't do well enough last year, that set piece defending, and we saw that go not as well at the end of that game. How do you respond as a coaching staff when something that you've improved on, suddenly it's a speed bump and you're trying to get the guys back on track?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think last year, we were one of the better defensive set pieces in the League. We did a good job.

The game against Cincinnati, first of all, let's give them credit because they are a very good set piece team. They are one of the best in the League on set pieces, whether that's free kicks or corner kicks, and they have big boys who can attack the ball.

For us, a couple things we did wrong, and a lot of that is correctable. We looked at the video and worked on it. It's something we want to stay focused. You know, you're playing in front of the crowd and the emotions get high and the noise gets loud. That's where you need to remain calm and execute your job. I don't think we did that well enough on Saturday night.

Having said that, for large parts of the game we were the dominant team and put them on their heels and we saw some good stuff. It's basically continuing to improve. It's the mantra that we have every week, it's very similar.

Q. I wanted to ask you, how do you see the other

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teams in the East, which is very tight right now, Miami with two straight wins and a new coach? How do you feel seeing your team in the mix?

GREGG BERHALTER: For us, I don't look at the table too much. I really focus on what we're doing. Having said that last night was a good night with a lot of ties in Eastern Conference matchups. You like to see that, exciting games.

It's almost too early in the season to tell exactly where teams are headed. Some teams have been strong, stronger than last year. Some teams have been worse than last year. Overall I don't think it's truly shaken out yet.

One thing for sure is Nashville is the top team, deservedly so, and Miami is close on their heels.

Q. Curious, if you could pick one area where the team struggled despite the favorable result the last five games, what would it be?

GREGG BERHALTER: That's a great question. You know, I think in the last five games, we've conceded how many times, four times? Four times, maybe five times, the Detroit game.

It's hard to tell. We've done some good things. For us, it's just continuing to get better in everything, and I don't think -- I don't think you're ever going to hear from me, this is it for us, we're done trying to get better.

For us, there's very high demands on the athletes here, we want them really being focused on getting better, reaching new height, having career years every single year, and to do that, you need to focus on continual improvement.

Q. Talking to Robin, he mentioned how much genuine fun he was having being able to play that forward position while being able to rotate. How important is it to have that find of buy-in from your forward group that sometimes you're going to have to drop back further or rotate from the spot they are most comfortable in just to get the best from the group?

GREGG BERHALTER: Ideally it's about spaces. Ideally if we can find them in high positions, we'd love to do that. Now you need to find the right space, and he's clever enough to do that.

For us, it's really important to get the attacking players involved in the game, and part of it is on them to get open and then part of it is on us to find it and really break the lines and get them involved. I think there's more to come from that group. It's a very talented attacking group. We

love working with them and we are going to continue to are fine and improve.

Q. So there's some shared history with a couple people in Kansas City, Rafa Wiki, who coached the Fire, and also Justin Reynolds who moved to Kansas City in the off-season. He's off to a pretty good start, more minutes than he had already of last year. A guy coming up through the academy like that, may not have had good minutes to get in the depth chart in Chicago, but how good is it that they can move on and find a bigger role and continue to develop and grow, especially with when recruiting the next group of players?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think it's important. For Justin, in particular, we see a ton of talent. He's a talented player. For us, it was really about a change of scenery for him, and then, you know, going out into the real world, so to speak, where you don't have the comforts that you have when it's your hometown. I think he needs that to continue to grow. He's a fantastic talent. You know, I think he has a ton of attributes to be a player for a long time in this league. It's really nice to see him starting doing well.

In terms of Rafa, he's a friend. I've known Rafa I along time. I think when you sign up for these jobs, you're thinking about everything. You're thinking about the training ground, you're thinking about the fans, the stadium, the squad, the ownership, and I believe Rafa is in a good spot. I think it may take longer than some people will have thought but he's at a great club in Kansas City.

Q. This Saturday will be Chicago's Sports Night theme at the stadium. Do you have any Chicago sports team you follow closely or have a soft spot for?

GREGG BERHALTER: I follow all the teams in Chicago. I was watching the Cubs beat up on the Phillies the other night right next to the stadium. I was at a restaurant watching the game on TV and hearing the crowd. Follow the bears. Follow the Bulls, Blackhawks, White Sox, you name it. The Stars, all the teams we like to follow. I think that Chicago is a great sports town, and I think one of the better sports towns in America, and you know, we're proud to be a part of it.

Q. Over the last couple years we've seen guys like Callahan and other guys have success, guys you brought in from the national level. As a coach, what does it mean to you to see these guys succeed at this level and how does it feel to have a growing coaching tree at this stage of your career?

GREGG BERHALTER: I think all those guys are good

human beings, dedicated coaches, and getting the success they are getting.

Marco, we share office space. We see him all the time. We did a camp one time. I knew he was a bright coach. He's another guy that was here and what really impresses me, he's a great guy, stand up guy, and same goes for Miki and B.J. and the whole group. They have done a fantastic job with their clubs and it's nice to see some of the football they are playing and some of the success they are having.

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