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Chicago Fire Soccer Club Acquires Central Defender Marcelo

The Chicago Fire Soccer Club announced today it has acquired central defender Marcelo dos Santos Ferreira, commonly referred to as Marcelo, via transfer from Portuguese first-division club Sporting CP. The 29-year-old defender is under contract for the 2019 and 2020 MLS seasons. He will be added to the Fire's roster pending the completion of a physical and receipt of his International Transfer Certificate (ITC).

"Marcelo will add necessary leadership along our back line," said Chicago Fire Soccer Club President and General Manager Nelson Rodriguez. "He is a smart defender who participates in every phase of the game. He is known as a solid teammate and he is driven to win, which fits our locker room well."

Marcelo joins the Fire after spending the past eight seasons in the Portuguese Primeira Liga, compiling 172 league appearances (171 starts). A native of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Marcelo began his career in Portugal's first division with

Rio Ave FC in 2011. The central defender spent seven seasons (2011-18) with Rio Ave FC, tallying at least 20 league starts in five of his seven seasons with the Club. Additionally, while playing with Rio Ave FC, Marcelo made 11 appearances (10 starts) in the UEFA Europa League.

Joining Primeira Liga powerhouse Sporting CP ahead of the 2018-19 campaign, Marcelo has made one appearance for the Club, starting and playing 90 minutes in the Portuguese League Cup against G.D. Estoril Praia on Oct. 31, 2018.

Transaction: Chicago Fire Soccer Club acquires defender Marcelo dos Santos Ferreira via transfer from Sporting CP on Dec. 27, 2018.

Name: Marcelo dos Santos Ferreira Position: Defender Height: 5'10" Weight: 163 lbs. Date of Birth: July 27, 1989 Birthplace: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil Citizenship: Brazil Last Club: Sporting CP

CREDIT: CHICAGO FIRE SOCCER CLUB









Bears enter playoffs as NFC's hottest team after win over Vikings

The Chicago Bears delivered on their promise to treat Sunday's regular-season finale against the Minnesota Vikings with a sense of urgency.

By doing so, the Bears could be handsomely rewarded when the playoffs begin next week.

The Bears not only vanquished a division rival 24-10 -- and the Vikings have some serious soul-searching to do in the offseason -- but they ensured themselves a full head of steam entering the postseason. The Bears will play host to the Philadelphia Eagles at 4:40 p.m. ET Sunday in the wild-card round.

The Bears fell short of clinching a first-round playoff bye by virtue of the Los Angeles Rams' blowout victory over the San Francisco 49ers, but Chicago opens postseason play as the hottest team in the conference, winners of four straight and nine of its past 10.

Nagy declared, on more than one occasion throughout the week, the Bears were not content to simply go through the motions just because they had already locked up -- at a minimum -- the No. 3 seed.

Rather, the Bears played to win at U.S. Bank Stadium, within reason.

"Of course coach Nagy could have sat us," Bears cornerback Prince Amukamara said. "I remember earlier in the year he got some flak for sitting us during that fourth preseason game. He doesn't let anyone control what he thinks and he's going to do what he wants to do for the team. I hope he is the coach of the year. I know he's not thinking about it, but we are thinking about it."

The Bears were never going to tempt fate with injured wide receiver Allen Robinson, safety Eddie Jackson and linebacker Aaron Lynch, all of whom were inactive on Sunday. Chicago also pulled receivers Anthony Miller (shoulder) and Taylor Gabriel (shoulder) out of the game at the first signs of trouble and limited right guard Kyle Long to one half of action in his return from injured reserve.

Still, even after Los Angeles built a sizeable second-half lead over San Francisco, the Bears went for the knockout punch. Nagy kept Mitchell Trubisky and the rest of his offensive starters on the field for Chicago's deciding touchdown





Bears Continued...

drive, and for good measure, he called for Trubisky to throw the ball to reserve linebacker Nick Kwiatkoski for a successful two-point conversion.

This wasn't about the Bears worrying about next week's opponent at Soldier Field.

As the No. 3 seed, the Bears shouldn't be afraid to play anyone at home, especially with their defense.

Of course, on paper, the Vikings would have been the easiest team for the Bears to play in the first round. Minnesota was a colossal bust in 2018, a team that was favored to reach the Super Bowl in the preseason. Instead, the Vikings came out on Sunday totally flat and uninspired -- at home -- in a do-or-die game with playoff ramifications.

The Bears beat a team they were supposed to beat. They buried the Vikings, and in the process, they picked up their fifth division win of the year after winning just three NFC North games under John Fox from 2015 to 2017.

"It was strictly business out there today," Bears defensive tackle Akiem Hicks said. "We have an opponent, a division opponent. I think that we have proven that we are the best team in the division.

"Against division opponents there is always that feeling when you see them again next year when you're like 'Oh man, they kicked our butt last year, we have to go in and play really, really well to win this game.' Now everybody has to look at us like that, and that is what we want."

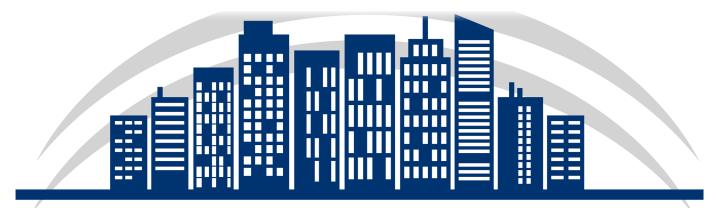
The defending Super Bowl champion Eagles will be a tough assignment next week. Philadelphia embarrassed the Bears last year, a game that most of the holdovers from the Fox era are sure to remember.

But there is nothing to suggest the Bears won't be up to the challenge.

CREDIT: Jeff Dickerson ESPN Staff Writer

http://www.espn.com/blog/chicago-bears/post/_/id/4708906/bears-enter-postseason-as-nfcs-hottest-team-after-vikings-win





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