

MLS POST-GAME QUOTES

Portland Timbers vs. Houston Dynamo FC
March 14, 2026 – Shell Energy Stadium (Houston, Tex.)
Final: Houston Dynamo 3, Portland Timbers 2

Portland Timbers Head Coach Phil Neville

On the team's structure and thoughts on the result...

"We're going through a difficult moment, but I think for the work that everybody's doing, I think tonight was a real good snapshot of the tactical approach that we want to work on. Possess the ball well. We dominated possession. We controlled the game, apart from a 10-15 minute period in the start of the second half. We knew they were going to come out in the second half and that little bit of lack of experience, just didn't manage that period well. I think that the players that we played in midfield — the team selection that we made — was partly forced upon us, but partly is the fact that we have so much belief in these young players. We have so much belief in the system we want to do. We want to dominate games, we want to control possession, we want to cause teams tactical problems. And I think we did that. I think the tactical plan in the first half, the players executed it fantastic. And like I say, just the 20 minute period in the second half, where [Houston] got a little bit of momentum. I think the frustration is that for all the good plays, — our structure I thought was fantastic — it was a couple of mistakes that have really cost us. We're going through a tough moment, and the dressing room's hurting. I take full responsibility for that. The players are giving absolutely everything. They are performing to a really, really high level in terms of what we expect. And I've told them that the performances aren't matching that, and they will. They've got to keep believing in themselves. This is great learning for the younger players in the team and for the experienced players how to handle these difficult moments, because life's tough sometimes, and at this moment in time, it's tough. But tactically, I thought the team was fantastic today. With a little bit more energy, with a little bit more fitness in terms of [Alexander] Aravena and [David] Da Costa in the game, I think we should have at least come out with a point."

On dealing with the stages of the game fighting for a comeback and conceding late...

"I didn't think at any moment the structure of the team fell apart. You look at the third goal. It was a mistake, which happens. So I think at that moment when the opposition are down to 10 men, it's about game management. It's about staying with your runs and sustaining the attacks and keeping possession of the ball — something that we did. I might be wrong, but I think we out possessed them in the game. Our chances, big chances. Our [Expected Goals] was more than them in the game. So that was a real positive, and we had some outstanding performances in that performance. I think for the first time this season, we had the structure that I wanted, the structure that we'd worked towards, the structure that we planned, the structure that we'd recruited for, and now we just need to get better within that structure. And you know, we're getting punished for the littlest things. We're getting punished for not just being smart enough at this moment in time, but it's my job to make sure that the team is smart. This run that we're on at the moment is purely on my shoulders, and I'm confident that we can turn the corner because I see the work that's being done every single day by my staff, by my players. They're an incredible bunch. I think this is a great learning for everybody."

On doing more to close down shots from distance...

"I think I'd be lying to say that we're not seeing the same thing. What I would say is that the Diego Rossi shot was a brilliant shot. The goal in Colorado was a deflected goal, so I don't count that. Tonight I thought we could have prevented it. We do need to be better at getting out of the box and stopping those long shots. We're defending the actual box, we're defending the corner kicks so well. Any kind of cross coming into the box, we're defending really well. It's another aspect that we just need to be better on. I felt

in a 20 minute period, we sunk a little bit too deep, but there was fatigue there. For Aravena, for David Da Costa. David Da Costa probably shouldn't have started the game, but because of where we're at this moment in time, we had [Cole] Bassett and Antony drop out yesterday in training. We prepared all week for them to play. So it was an obstacle that we had to overcome. But I think in the first half we controlled the game. I really did from a tactical point of view. Sometimes you get on these runs and things don't go for you. And I felt tonight that things didn't quite go for this group of players. I keep saying that it will turn and we've got to make sure it turns quick."

On James Pantemis' condition after a collision late in the game...

"I think he's got a bad gash to his head. There's no concussion there I don't think. He's okay."

Portland Timbers forward Gage Guerra

On scoring his first goal of the season tonight...

"It always feels good to hit the back of the net. Just trust that it's coming and keep doing the same things every week. I look back at a lot of film, and I was just a couple steps off and just a little late sometimes. So really tried to hone in on that. Luckily, one fell to me tonight."

On sticking to the team's plan when results don't go your way...

"I think that's all you can do. There's really no other option. You have to keep faith, and you have to believe in each other and continue to work and trust that it's going to pay off. Unfortunately, it didn't tonight. It was last minute. We couldn't get a result on the road. But we're that close, and especially with the circumstances, with the injuries we're having, you know, we're putting together squads that are fighting to win games and we're going to continue to fight."

On starting his third game out of the first four games this season...

"It's an honor. It's also super rewarding for a lot of hard work, a lot of dedication, and I want to do my best for those who believe in me, for those that make those decisions on who plays and who doesn't. I want to do my best for the guys that I'm playing over, so it's really just another motivating factor. Last year, like you mentioned, not not a lot of playing time, but just wanted to stay positive and control what I can control. It's still a learning experience, but incredibly grateful for the opportunities that I've been given."