

MLS POST-GAME QUOTES

Portland Timbers vs. Sporting Kansas City
May 9, 2026 – Providence Park (Portland, Ore.)
Final: Portland Timbers 6, Sporting KC 0

Portland Timbers Head Coach Phil Neville

On his takeaways from tonight's win...

"We're nowhere near the level that I believe we can be at. You saw a team that dropped their ego and played as a team. I've given the great example of the other night in the [Paris Saint-Germain F.C.] game, [Ousmane] Dembélé got subbed at 66 minutes and sprinted off the field and hugged his teammates. And then every time a camera went to the bench, he was on the bench cheering on his teammates. And I think we saw that from our team today. Get rid of the egos. LAFC, we win. We lose at Minnesota, San Diego we win. We lose at [Real Salt Lake] — and the RSL performance was a disgrace. We win tonight with a good performance. So it's ego. People have got to drop their egos and then just keep pushing forward. Super proud of the performance. I've told them I want a nine-point week and nothing less than that. And that means that every single one of them in there have got to drop their ego. It's not about an individual. It's about the team. And I thought you saw the team tonight — a proper team."

On the statement a game like this makes...

"I suppose the scoreline is a statement, but that level of performance is what I've seen every day, say since the international break. Style of play, the aggression, the quality and like I say, I think we've had some good performances and then some big learnings, good performance and some learnings. I think every day this week, I've told them that it's now time to deliver. After the game last week, I went out there and I said, 'it's on me, it's on me, it's on me.' Now it's on us all to deliver. And there's only so many times you can protect a group of young players, and there's only so many times you can say they're young. Well, they're not young — they're men. And now's the time to deliver. I think that extra bit of expectation, that extra bit of pressure, I think, has been a great challenge for this group. They don't realize how much I love them. And sometimes you've got to be really tough with the people that you love. And this week, we've been tough with them, because, like I say, I thought that the performance last week in RSL was unacceptable. I think this week everyone left their ego at the door, and everyone trained, played — I didn't name the team until an hour before kick off today, because I wanted everyone to feel like they had an opportunity to play — and I thought that 25 minutes in the first half was something special."

On what he said at halftime with the Timbers winning 4-0...

"I wanted to make sure that we did drop. The second half's always difficult. It's human nature. The mental side of the second half is like we're probably in a little bit of cruise mode. So it was the clean sheet mentality, it was keeping possession of the ball, making sure that we stuck to our principles. And I knew that I could get some of the players that probably had been deserving to start. You know, I look at [Alexander] Aravena. Aravena should be starting this team, and he came on and he looked really good. We took José Caicedo off because he had a yellow card, and gave Diego [Chará] the opportunity to go on. And Joao [Ortiz]'s been fantastic. And Ari Lassiter, I felt all week, in a way, I've let him down, because I've been playing players in front of him when he's been playing well. So I wanted to reward him for the person that he is, and the player and the importance to the group as well. So it was good to make those changes in the second half to make sure we can have freshness on Wednesday. And I wanted a professional performance in the second half. And I'd say that the last 15 minutes wasn't what I wanted. I felt that people got a little bit selfish. But I think when you got players coming on and they want to really, really make an impact, you get that little bit of that in a game, particularly when you're four, five-nil up."

On the Timbers' offensive performance tonight...

"We've been practicing that for two months now. I thought the LAFC game was probably similar. There was a period in the LAFC game where I thought we produced moments like we did tonight, without the goals. I think the LAFC game was, for me, the template to how I wanted for this group to play. We have a saying within the group. We want them to dance a little bit. We want to go out there and dance. Like when you go to a discotheque, you go there to dance, to have fun, to express yourself, to play without fear, to just go there with your friends and just have the best night of your life. And I said to them, that's how I want my team to be. I want to go on the pitch and dance, and the celebration is a byproduct of the happiness and enjoyment, because that's what this group is. And so when they play with that kind of feeling of freedom, then you get performances like tonight. Now, you know, the caveat to that is we've got to do that in the next two games, and then the game at home against San Jose, because there are bigger tests to come."

On the team's defensive performance...

"Kamal [Miller] gave the defense some real composure. Since the sending off, Alex Bonetig has come and done well, and I feel like we've really thrown Alex in at the deep end in terms of some of the early starts that he's had. Particularly the way we wanted to control the game, I thought Kamal was, in a way, one of our best players in the way that he controlled the game of football for us, so that was pleasing. Clean sheets are the foundation for success. It's no coincidence. I think we're not getting carried away with this. It's the biggest [margin of victory] in the club's history, but I want consistency, and that's what we better demand. And like, I say, we've got to leave our egos at the door and just demand that type of performance, consistency and level. And this group can go as far as it possibly can. I really feel — I think I said a couple of weeks ago — I really feel we're building something special. With that there's going to be growing pains, and we've had growing pains, but I said some before the game that the people of Portland, their life is this club. So when they go out there, they want to be entertained. And I wanted them to go and entertain. I think you saw that. I think they were entertained."

Portland Timbers midfielder Cole Bassett

On scoring his first Timbers goal at Providence Park in front of the Timbers Army...

"It felt amazing. For me, it took a few games too long. I know I was out for a few games. So it's, you know, not as far into the season for me as it is for maybe others. But I think for me, you know, as a goal-scoring midfielder, I feel like I should have a few already. So nice to get the first one off my back, and hopefully they keep rolling. Especially in that game, those are the ones where you want to stay in and get two and three. But I think it was important for certain guys to come in and showcase their abilities. I'm really happy for those guys, especially Ari [Lassiter], coming in and delivering."

On the team leaving egos at the door to get a result like tonight...

"[Phil Neville] reminded us of this midweek. We were watching [FC Bayern Munich vs Paris Saint-Germain F.C.], and I don't know if he said this in the press conference, but Dembélé put his ego aside in the week. And he was sitting there, urging his team on, and [Neville] said to us, we have all the talent in this room, but I feel like there's certain times where your ego needs to be put aside, and it's better for the team in the end. Obviously, none of us want to get subbed off in the 60th minute. We want to keep going and keep playing. But how can you be a bigger man and know that the other guys have been working really hard at training, and you know, they're a part of the success too. It's not just the starting 11. It takes all 25 of us in the squad throughout the year. So it's very important for those guys to come on. But for us as guys that come off, I know we were sitting there on the bench a few of us, and we're like, ah, we just wish we were staying on so we could score a few more. So I think it's the hunger to want to stay on, but

also putting your ego aside when you do have to come off and just acknowledge that those guys coming on have a job to do as well.”

On keeping the momentum from tonight going...

“Phil said it postgame that we can't be satisfied with a win like this. We've won, then we've lost, we've won, then we've lost. I think for us, we need to build momentum and stack wins. It's very easy in this league to climb up the table really quick if you stack a few wins. And that's the reality of it. So for us, the talent that we have in that room and the goals and expectations that we have for the second half of the season, we said that we want to have a nine point week. We know it's not going to be easy going away in MLS is never easy, and flying across the country five, six hours definitely isn't easy, but I think we have the group ready to do it. There were a lot of us that came off today that weren't playing 90 minutes, so we're going to be ready to go and wanting to get out there again and continue this momentum. So for us, it's one game at a time, but it starts by just getting back at the training ground tomorrow and putting in the work again and knowing that we need to set ourselves up for a busy schedule in the second half of the year.”

Portland Timbers forward Kevin Kelsy

On building momentum from his two goals and this win...

“Ultimately it's a good thing that I can help the team. I always want to do it in a positive manner, and I want to keep pushing the team forward. It'll all become easier if we continue this way. We'll stay united. We'll work hard internally. We have good healthy competition.”

On Phil Neville telling the players to check their egos at the door to play like a team...

“Yes, 100%. There's times when — and actually I would say almost all the time — the team is above the name on the back of the jersey. I try and be a little selfish sometimes, yes, but it's just to be able to provide positivity.”

On scoring two goals from team moves he started...

“It was just what we've been working on. I'm happy that the team is growing in confidence. Like I said, we've been working on this, and we know this from within the locker room. Everything is working right now. We like to take advantage of these opportunities.”