

MLS POST-GAME QUOTES

Portland Timbers vs. Inter Miami CF
May 17, 2026 – Nu Stadium (Miami, Flor.)
Final: Inter Miami 2, Portland Timbers 0

Portland Timbers Head Coach Phil Neville

On the difference between the two teams' attacks...

"I think they paid us a lot of respect with the way that [Miami] kept three [players] back. In all the videos, all the games, they were always man for man, but they had an extra guy back all the time. I think that was a big respect to our speed on the counter attack. I just said to the team in there, you know, I was super proud of the way that they competed, and the moments when [Miami] were ruthless in the first half, and we weren't ruthless in the box at all. I thought Kristoffer Velde was incredible, but we need our big players to score goals, and this game was about the big players scoring goals, and I felt that was the difference between the two teams. Their moments they scored, our moments we didn't. But I thought we dominated the game in terms of possession, in terms of our movements. Obviously the amount of passes that we had, we knew that in the last 20-30 minutes they were going to tire. They used all five substitutions. I felt we were building momentum, but we just didn't have the quality in the final third from our big players. And that is something we need to work on."

On if the team had any nerves coming into the match...

"We obviously dealt with the elephant in the room and have played on the pitch with one of the greatest players of all time. And you know what? You don't know how you're going to feel until you've stood in the tunnel or stood on the pitch. You never know. You can say, 'I'm going to be okay' or 'I'm going to be nervous' until you've stood on the pitch and you're up against that person. You just never know. And I felt there were probably three or four instances in the first half where I felt we were just passive. Passive against their front three. There were a couple of balls in behind, and [James Pantemis] made two or three really good saves. We were just a little bit 'oh dear. What do I do?' And I'd said to them before the game, this is a game where you've got to do, you've got to go, you've got to be really proactive. And for 80% of the game, I thought we were, and maybe at half time — they had a couple of chances that could have gone in — but I felt that we were in the game, and we knew that others teams that have come here and have been losing and come back in the game. Ultimately, we just didn't have enough."

On the impact of the recent road games and climate shifts on the players...

"It obviously is a factor. I think [Miami] had two away games this week. I think LA Galaxy had three away games this week. Correct me if I'm wrong. That is just what the MLS is. We were quite lucky that we had an extra day to recover going from one climate, probably three different climates, really. But I don't think that that had nothing to do with how the game panned out. I knew that we were going to be the fitter, strongest team finishing the game, and we just had to be in touching distance, and we had to take one of those chances, and we didn't. I'd say that, you know, their ruthlessness beat our ruthlessness."

Portland Timbers defender Finn Surman

On how he felt defending and blocking shots from a player like Lionel Messi...

"Just like normal. Just annoying that we were losing at the time. I mean it's good to, I guess, somewhat keep us in the game. If he scores it probably ends the game, but you know, it's nice to block a shot, but nothing kind of really out of the ordinary."

On James Pantemis' performance...

"I think it brings myself as a defender and the team a lot of extra confidence and belief when [Pantemis] is playing like that. He obviously has the quality to do that. He's an amazing keeper, and when keepers like that can make big saves that keep us in games, it only helps us and gives us a little bit of a boost. I think it's a really good feeling, knowing that there's someone who can back you up in case I make a mistake, or someone else makes a mistake. We know that he's there to help us and he's been performing really well, so it's only good for the team."

"On if he spoke to the team about playing against some of the best players in the world..."

"That's not something that I really spoke about, to be honest. Everyone kind of has their own preparations and their own ways of dealing with that sort of stuff, you know, whether it's big players or a big game or anything like that. I think that one thing that we kind of said was play the game, not the occasion. Don't get caught up in that, and that's what you can do, really. At the end of the day, they're some amazing players, but they're still just the same football players."