

MLS POST-GAME QUOTES

Portland Timbers vs. San Diego FC
August 19, 2026 – Providence Park (Portland, Ore.)
Final: Portland Timbers 3, San Diego FC 1

Portland Timbers Head Coach Martí Cifuentes

General thoughts on the match...

"Very happy. Hopefully one of many. We need to be happy when we win football games. So today is the night to be proud of what the guys delivered. I would say one of the things we talked with the group was starting the game and I think that we did. So it was something that I was aware of before joining, but I didn't want to bring it up because as a new head coach, you don't want to create issues before it happens, right? But in the first two games, we conceded first, and it's something that we wanted to correct, which I think we did today starting the game really well. I think the level of energy that I felt in our possession was much better than against Chicago, and perhaps the way we approached the game. It was based on the fact that I learned a little bit as well about the team after the Chicago experience. I'm a coach that likes to press high, but today we're playing against a team that has a very clear identity, that have been playing under the same coach — I would say — in a very similar way for the last couple of years. They're very good when they introduce this winger in. They create this box in the midfield, so it creates an overload, it's very difficult to press against them. So we had to be a bit more patient on our triggers to press, which I think we did. But at the same time, with not so much time to train, we talked with the guys about opportunities that will come up if we could intercept, if we could regain the ball in certain areas, that will cause a lot of counters. I think the first half was good in that sense. It was very disappointing to concede in the last minute, but we said to the guys that the game was there for us to take it, and I think we did in the second half. Again, I want to reinforce against a very good team, but I think the bench impact, once again, was very positive. We had options, in my opinion, to score even more goals, and perhaps the only bad news today, obviously, is the injury to Brandon [Bye]. Let's see about the imaging. But let's see what happens. But we want to dedicate these three points to him."

On if the team's plan was to hit San Diego on the counter attack...

"I learned a lot about the team and about where we are in the Chicago game because we don't have, basically, time to train. So since I came here, it was just about recovering and preparing for the next game. But we never had the opportunity to do even one single drill to create how we really want to press and so on. Everything has been through videos. Everything has been through very easy, light sessions. So it's difficult to implement the clear triggers on how we want to press. So today, instead of being perhaps more brave, if you want, and in the way we wanted to press in Chicago, knowing that — especially in that area — San Diego is very good. We were a bit, if you want, a bit lower on the pitch. I think that when we pressed high, especially in restarts and goal kicks, we did really well. But obviously, in an open game, you need to be more careful on the triggers. I think the guys did really well. I want to highlight today. I think that José Caicedo had a fantastic game, breaking a lot of passing lines, regaining a lot of balls, being good as well when regaining, selecting the right option. We knew because the way [San Diego] are structured in this possession phase that there will be a lot of opportunities for us to counter."

On adjustments he made at halftime...

"Credit to the players. I think that against Tijuana as well, we conceded a goal and we managed to do the comeback. Against Chicago we conceded two early goals. I would say that sometimes some teams could give up and we didn't. So I think that the mental strength is there. So credit to them. It's not me doing any magic thing at halftime. Obviously, we try to be positive. We try to focus on the points that we felt, the areas that we felt, could make a difference in the second half. But the main message was that we had to win the second half. That we couldn't be disappointed because it's already gone. And this is part of my

philosophy. We're gonna make mistakes. Football is a game of mistakes, and usually the team that makes the least mistakes, is the one that wins. But you cannot be disappointed just because something happens. So credit to the players — and as I said, I think that they show a lot of mental strength.”

On Cole Bassett’s performance...

“Very good. I think that Cole is a very smart player. I said to him when joining that I think he will be able to score goals for us because he has this strength about getting in from the second line and getting into scoring positions. I think today he hit that post — could have been brilliant finishing. He was very smart today. One of the things that we noticed is that when San Diego overloads those pockets, you cannot give them that space. That’s the reason why today we sit with the two deeper sixes. So Cole was sitting lower with José, and I think that helped us to have a little better control of the pockets, perhaps a little bit less of impact to regain the ball high on the pitch, but at the end, I think it was the right decision because again, the time with the team has been short, so I think was the right decision.”

On the current state of the Timbers’ attack...

“I’m happy. I think that we got the talent that we need to implement, perhaps according to my philosophy, my coaching style, certain things that perhaps we can establish high on the pitch for longer periods. But I think the desire is there, and obviously today we scored fantastic goals. So I think that [Kristoffer Velde] showed his quality on the first goal. David [Da Costa] scored a fantastic goal, and then as well the whole collective, I would say, the principles that we had in the second goal, I think were very good. So we’re gonna try to keep growing, but the talent is there. That is my job to get the best of all the players. Let’s see again what happens at the end of the window. But in that sense, I’m happy with all the players.”

On the players that have impressed him most in his first few weeks as Head Coach...

“For me now, I have the best players in the world, all of them, and they are my boys. So my mom was asking me, ‘how are those guys? Are they good?’ And I said, for me, ‘they are the very best.’ I think that I got a very good impression of many players. Obviously, when a new manager comes in, new coach comes in, I think that all the players try to show that they want to get that spot in the 11 and everybody raised the level, which is great. One of the main messages that we have said is that for me the bench impact is key, not over one game but over the season. So I’m someone who believes in rotation. I think that for instance today José and Ariel [Lassiter], that came fresh from the Chicago game, made a big difference. I think that Ariel was very unfortunate to receive a yellow card in a situation that, for me, perhaps should have had a yellow card on the fullback, in my opinion. But yeah, I think that both of them were brilliant. So I’m impressed with the attitude of the guys. I’m impressed with how open they have been to all of our instructions in a very congested schedule, and from there, I think that everybody is showing a high competitive level.”

Portland Timbers forward Kristoffer Velde

On his favorite moment of the match besides his goal...

“Good question. Probably David [Da Costa]’s goal. That was a nice one. Obviously, Ariel [Lassiter]’s as well. Good play. A little bit frustrating first off because I think we could have used the momentum we had a little bit more and score a few more goals. In the end it turned out good. So happy with that.”

On his connection with Jimer Fory...

“I think it’s always been okay. Like sometimes it depends who you play with. Sometimes Fory likes to come [forward], and sometimes he has a more defensive position. Sometimes he leaves me more for one-on-ones. When we have the confidence and we have the rhythm like we have today, it’s obviously

good. But I feel like me and Fory always have good communication, and we try. Sometimes it's good, and sometimes it's better."

On adjustments made at halftime...

"It was good. I think it was only me going a little bit crazy inside the dressing room. I needed to go to the toilet and calm down a bit. Like I said, it was a little bit frustrating first half, but we reacted well in the second and got an early goal and kept producing. It was fun to play today. 3-1 against San Diego, and we know how difficult it is to play against them. We showed today that we can beat the best teams."

On Martí Cifuentes' influence on the team so far...

"Obviously a few changes in terms of attacking, first and foremost. Like today, it's hard to defend San Diego because they're so good on the ball. So I feel like we struggle a little bit, especially closing the lines in between us, and the balls came through a few times. But I think he tried to keep it simple. I think he just kept building on what Jack [Cassidy] did for the weeks he was here. Not complicate stuff too much. Obviously, there's a lot of information, but we have a lot of experienced guys in the team, and I think it will turn out good. We just need to keep building confidence and keep getting great performances like today. It doesn't matter who's on the sideline to me. We are there on the pitch, 11 guys to fight for whoever's on the sideline coaching."

Portland Timbers midfielder David Da Costa

On his favorite moment of the match besides his goal...

"For me, the best moment in this game is the spirit of this team. For me, the game was difficult because we played against a good team. We know San Diego. When you play football like that it is difficult to defend, but we defend like a team, and for me that's very good because — okay we concede one goal — but after that we defended together and we score three goals at home. Best feeling."

On what he saw leading up to his goal...

"Kristoffer Velde had the ball. He took a 1v1, and I'm waiting for the pass, and I was ready. He passed the ball to me, and I'm face-to-face with the defender. I took a little space, and I shot because I saw a little bit of space, and I saw the ball go back in the back of the net."

On if he's returning to his best after a shoulder injury last season...

"Last year was difficult because every game, every training, the shoulder went out. It was difficult because with your legs you can play, but when you do a little movement, it was difficult. But now I feel good, feel better, and confident with the team. We prepare every game. Now we need to switch fast because we have a big game this week."

On coming to the end of a congested match schedule...

"Finally [laughs]. But we work for that. It's amazing to play soccer, and when you have three games every week like that, it's amazing to play with the team. And it's okay if you feel tired after the game, but it's a part of the game. We need to recover fast."