

MLS POST-GAME QUOTES

Portland Timbers vs. Austin FC

August 29, 2026 – Providence Park (Portland, Ore.)

Final: Austin FC 2, Portland Timbers 1

Portland Timbers Head Coach Martí Cifuentes

General thoughts on the match...

“Disappointed. As much as I hate to lose, I hate to lose especially this way. So it hurts. It hurts for many things, but especially in a week that we had a lot of focus and trying to build something. Full respect. I said that it would not be the key of the game, but obviously Austin played a demanding game midweek, so we had to make the difference and start on the front foot and unfortunately, I don't think that we did. First half was not great. We were working against teams that played three box three. We were playing a different solution out of possession where José [Caicedo] was dropping in between center halves, or in that case, in between the left fullback Jimer [Fory] and Kamal [Miller] to create a little bit more of man-to-man situations. I think that we started okay, nothing else than that. But then through the minutes in the first half, [Austin's] 10 started to drop out, so that created a little bit of problems on our press, and then we had to adjust. I think when they took the lead, obviously it was very disappointing. But in the second half, we tried to adjust things. I think that through the minutes we're getting better and better. We create a lot of momentum, but we're missing the final — the cutting edge — especially, I would say, in situations where we could attack with some pace, some imbalance situations for them, and we couldn't beat in the 1v1. We couldn't make the difference. So that was a little bit of perhaps what we missed today. Still, I think that the team once again showed great attitude in the second half. We were pushing to try to get a result, and unfortunately we were 1-1, and then perhaps I could have been more defensive-minded and tried to adjust some things to try to defend the result. But my mindset is always that at home we need to win, but then it's a set-play situation that, obviously we cannot concede in minute 93 in a set play. But we have been saying to the guys that it's important to be strong in every phase of the game, and in that case, set plays are a very important part of the game that can give you points at the end of the season or can take away points. And in that case today, we lost at least one point because of that. I'm very very disappointed about today's performance, and I take it with me.”

On what happened in the 93rd minute that allowed Austin to score...

“I need to see it again. Obviously, it's a lot of emotions when you score a late goal and the other team is kind of pushing to try to get this winning goal. I think in the second half we dominated the game quite a lot. We create chances. It was the post from [Kristoffer Velde] at the end. So we got the situations there, but perhaps everybody needs to do their role in that set play, and I need to look at it. But I think that perhaps we were missing a couple of details on that one.”

On Antony's performance...

“I think that he gave us exactly what we needed. [Mikel] Dealer was on a yellow card against [Kristoffer Velde]. As I said, sometimes it is what it is with the wingers. Sometimes they're going to have moments of brilliance. Sometimes it's more difficult. So we need to have options. And today we had the option of Antony, and I think that he gave us something else. Obviously, it was important as well to give some confidence to Gage [Guerra] with [Vincent Janssen] being suspended. When Antony came into the game, we had to adjust things because the way to attack is different when you don't have a striker. But I think his impact was good, and I'm happy that we have options on the bench, of course. It's very important.”

On how he's settling into his roster and the options he has available...

“I think I had a good understanding before arrival about how the squad, how the roster is. Obviously, as you said, the main thing is that there has been two big injuries in one position that has obviously had an

impact on the way because Eric [Miller] is doing a brilliant job, but we cannot rely on only him for this position. But at the same time, I think that we are learning as well from the players. But we had good conversations before arriving. It's different when you start to work with them daily, and I would say that the last week was the most important one because finally we could spend time in the training ground with them. So that's why today it hurts especially, because we had this week and we wanted to see — both from an individual point of view, but collectively as well — some step forward. Perhaps I would say out of the last 30 minutes-ish I couldn't see that sustained high level that I was expecting. So time to learn, time to improve. No excuses.”

On how he'd like the team to start matches...

“Create more chances in the opposition [half]. Try to play in the opposition pitch. Make sure that the transitions are short when you lose the ball, because mistakes are part of the game. We're going to lose the ball. We're going to lose sometimes the 1v1, but of course dominate the basics. If you are not winning duels, if you are not tracking back 100%, your reactions are a bit slow, then you start to concede more space, more time to the opposition, and that's what we miss because we had a clear picture of how we wanted to start. And it was about creating the first chance, creating the first corner kick, first free kick around the box and make them feel that when a team comes to Providence Park, it's going to be a long, long night. So I don't think that we did that today. That's what I've been saying the last two games, I think, that we took the lead. But for me, it's not enough, two games. We need to create a pattern on how we start the games, and that proves to me that it still is early. Early stage on the things that we want to work on.”

Portland Timbers midfielder José Caicedo

On the differences between the first and second halves...

“To be honest, it was two different games in each half. In the first half, we had kind of planned to play with a line of five. That was the way Coach [Martí Cifuentes] put us out to perform, and I think ultimately that may have been the difference in the game.”

On the different roles he's been asked to do in the Timbers' midfield...

“I feel great to be honest. I got here to Portland to be able to do my part independently of whatever different jobs I'm being tasked to do. I have no problem with it. I think ultimately we'll keep working, and I feel like I've been doing well, working well to earn the starts that I've gotten. And like I said, we'll just keep working.”

On the trust and support he's received from head coach Martí Cifuentes...

“It's something that generates confidence inside of me. Regardless, I know I have to be ready. I've always said I'm here to earn a spot or a starting spot, and for now it's been about working hard and being able to construct that process for myself. No matter what, though, it ultimately does give me confidence, and I try and let Martí know that I'm going to be ready.”