

MLS POST-GAME QUOTES

Portland Timbers vs. Minnesota United FC
September 5, 2026 – Providence Park (Portland, Ore.)
Final: Portland Timbers 5, Minnesota United 4

Portland Timbers Head Coach Martí Cifuentes

General thoughts on the match...

"Probably a lot of mixed feelings or a lot of feelings, I would say — happy ones because at the end, obviously, we won. But I would say that we started the game the first two, three minutes a bit shaky. [Minnesota] pressed really hard, really aggressive. We tried a couple of new things. I think that after those minutes we settled down really well, and perhaps it was at the end the first 30-35 minutes, the best I've seen since I've been here. I was enjoying it from the sideline — to see my team, the quality and the build-up, the capacity of creating chances in the last third, individual actions, the goals. I was very pleased, and obviously a lot of good individual situations, like with the goal by Ari [Lassiter]. I think that [Vincent Janssen] today was outstanding. But a lot of good moments. Then almost from nowhere, we concede two goals that we shouldn't concede, and suddenly [Minnesota] are in the game. And at the halftime, we spoke about how important it was to make sure that we could keep a clean sheet during the second half. So then we start the second half, we concede that goal, and suddenly you are 3-3 in a game that you felt that you had a lot of control. We had the quality, the mental strength. So credit to the guys to score the fourth goal. Then understand a little bit what the game was needing because it was not easy with the injuries of José [Caicedo]. He's got a little bit of groin feeling. Then with [Janssen], we agreed with him that perhaps he was ready to play 45 minutes. We stretched that to almost 65-70 because he was doing amazing, but he was very tired and I think that we had to understand this. Then with the 5-3, definitely I think the game should be in some way over. We could have scored more goals than five, but at the end the result is 5-4 and leaves you with a bit of mixed feeling in the sense that you had to defend a little bit in the last minutes in a way that I don't like, because I would like to be more consistent in the way we keep the ball, in the way we manage the lead. But at the end, I'm aware that we are at very early stages in the process. There was a lot of good things that we can take from the game today. Congratulations to the guys because it was a special night as well with the hat trick of [Janssen]."

On the mixed feelings of scoring five goals, but conceding four...

"First of all, I prefer to win 5-4 than to win 1-0. So I'm sure that a lot of people will leave the stadium with a good feeling. They saw a lot of goals. Perhaps what we really need to improve is the way [Minnesota] scored the goals. I think that it was pretty poor from our side, and definitely something that we need to do better and I'm sure that we're going to improve. But I said to the guys, 'it's not easy to win football games, and we need to be happy.' We need to be angry, disappointed. I have a lot of words that I could use when we lose a game. Today we need to be happy because we won and we played a lot of good minutes with excellent goals, and that's what we need to enjoy. Then from tomorrow we do the process as always. We evaluate what are the things that we did well, what are the things that we need to improve, and definitely, of course, when you analyze these four goals, yeah, there's not much I need to say."

On how his team responded to Minnesota tying the game at 3-3...

"Brilliant, and that's what I said. When we sent a clear message at the halftime, I need to say that actually during that break, we analyzed mostly a couple of situations on how we could improve our build-up — especially on the goal kicks, [Minnesota] were very brave, pressing almost 3v3, which we didn't expect. But then we solved it much better in the second half, and then the second part was how we could connect with [Janssen] even better, even more often, because I think that created a lot of problems in the man-to-man marking. But we spoke about if we do this even better, and we manage to defend in a stable way, not have individual mistakes, don't have moments of what I call they are not connected, so we do the

basics well, and then I'm sure that we're going to score goals. And the problem is that we concede after just five minutes, so then we are testing the mental strength of the guys. I think that they were strong. I'm happy that they keep believing, they keep trying, because when you are 3-0 up and then after 20 minutes you lose all that lead, then that is definitely very disappointing. But still we manage, and that's why I want to take the good parts of today's game."

On if he knew Vincent Janssen had scored the Timbers' first MLS hat trick...

"I'm afraid I didn't know, but I have someone in this room that helped me. I think it's very surprising because a lot of good players have been in this club. I think it's been historically a club that can score a lot of goals, especially at home. I was surprised, but that says it all about what a great first game as a starter for [Janssen], and what a fantastic performance for the team as well."

Portland Timbers forward Vincent Janssen

On scoring the Timbers' first MLS hat trick...

"sSper happy. I just feel like I had to make up for my red card a little bit, so I was super excited to get out there tonight. Obviously, my first start. Excited. I felt good from the beginning. I think the first goal was nice. Obviously, a penalty's always helpful. But after that, it was a crazy game. So to have that experience and being able to be out there to help the team in that way was amazing. Obviously I knew about the [Timbers never having scored an MLS hat trick] before. So when I got my second one, I was like, okay, now I really want to get my third one. I knew also that I was not gonna play more than 60, 65 [minutes], so I was in a rush. I think the credit goes to Ari [Lassiter] and how he played that last ball. No one expected that. I think I did, because I know his qualities. It was nice. It was a nice evening for everyone, and I'm very happy that that stat is gone now."

On the back and forth nature of the match tonight...

"Obviously, you need two teams for that, right? So the way [Minnesota] played, it can go either way for us or for them. And I felt like we were the ones that were dominating the game from the beginning. Until obviously you score the third goal, and then you come at a point where you're like, 'What are we going to do right now?' Obviously, a part of us really wanted to go and continue, but until you then concede the first goal, things started to turn, and I felt like we lost a little bit of pressure on them. We lost control of the game, and they started to dominate. And we, as a team, have to do better in certain situations. I think that starts all over the pitch, right? So it's a team effort, and I think we let that slip a little bit from minute 30 to 45, and it's very difficult then to say exactly what went wrong, but obviously I think there's stuff we have to work on as a whole team, and I think we're going to do that. But if you look at the first 30, the way we played, the way we pressed, the way we played possession, that's the way the coach wants, and I think that's what we're working towards. And to keep doing that for a full 90 is our next goal."

On his defensive work rate...

"That's kind of the player I am. I want to be helping everyone on the pitch with also my defensive work. Defense always starts with the forwards, and I think that's one of my things. I would never let my defenders down by not tracking back or by not giving them the full pressure. And if I do, that's absolutely on me, and I'll take responsibility for that. Every game I can help the team by pressing the center backs, tracking back, trying to recover some balls. So that's what I want to do. That's how I want to help the team, and I'm always going to give my full effort. So you can never blame me for that. I will keep doing that, and that's the way I want to help the team. I think that's the way I've always played. And yeah, sometimes you take two yellow cards in a few minutes. So that's the other part about it. I think I have too many yellow cards in my career, but that's just the way I play. And there's two sides to that story. Trying to help a team sometimes a little bit too much, and in a way that's not very good. But that's the way I play, and I'll always keep doing that."

On connecting with the other Timbers attackers...

"That's only gonna happen when you play with each other and also when you train. But I think we have been pretty busy with games, so it's very difficult to get that connection with players only in training. I think today was a very first test for me to really connect with players — and what can I say? That ball from Ari [Lassiter] to me, that is where the goal is. If you don't know each other's qualities, then the guy is not going to play you that ball. He wasn't even looking at me. I knew that he was able to play me that ball. So that's just certain situations. I think if you look back at the first goal, [leading to] the penalty kick. I talked about it with [Kristoffer Velde]. I said, Kris, if you go inside, I will be there for the one-two. Like he played me inside. I put the ball to Jimer [Fory], and obviously no goal, but we were able to win the penalty kick. I think there are moments in games that you talk about before, but still to really do it is something you can only do when you're on the pitch together. That's where we're gonna have to make those next steps with each other. That's where I can help the team. It's not about me or about any other player. I came here to help the team any way possible. If Kevin [Kelsy] would have stayed, I would have helped Kevin any minute possible or any training possible, so that's the reality. That's the situation. I'm here to help the team. Whenever you get older, you really like to try to work for the team and then get successful with the team. So that is my goal, and that's hopefully what's going to happen."

Portland Timbers forward Ari Lassiter

On the mixed feelings of scoring five goals, but conceding four...

"I think, like you said, scoring five goals, I think that's really great. I think we could pretty much do that every single game if we really take our chances. Now pushing into the final stretch and the playoffs, we can't really put that on our shoulders to score five goals to win a game. I think we all know that. We have to be solid defensively. I think overall, we all know that it's just not good enough from what we can really do as a team. So hopefully, next Wednesday we really get that effort out of all of us to make sure that we can put in a good 90 minute shift."

On what he saw in the build up to his goal...

"I really think they need to give me that goal. I think that's kind of robbery. Just the second I got the ball, I just saw space and kept attacking. And [Vincent Janssen], I hear [Vincent] just yelling at me to shoot, shoot, shoot. I look up, see the ball, and then I just go for it. Been feeling good all week, feeling good going into the game. So, I feel like I have a lot of confidence right now, and I just took the opportunity. So, thank God I went in."

On Vincent Janssen's hat trick...

"I went over to celebrate. I said 'you made history tonight.' That was the first thing I told him. Since he's come in, he's been all about the team, whether he starts, whether he's on the bench, whether he's playing or not. So I'm really happy for him. I think he deserves it, and hopefully this could really give him a lot of confidence moving into a really important part of the season to make sure we lock into playoff spot. So again, happy for him, and hopefully he can continue that."