

MLS POST-GAME QUOTES

Portland Timbers vs. Colorado Rapids
October 17, 2026 – Providence Park (Portland, Ore.)
Final: Portland Timbers 0, Colorado Rapids 0

Portland Timbers Head Coach Martí Cifuentes

General thoughts on the match...

"A match with perhaps mixed feelings. The first feeling obviously, is disappointment for not getting the win at home with fantastic support from our fans. Great atmosphere. So that's the first disappointment, I would say. But on the other side, I think that we played a good game against a good team. I think we started the game, perhaps not at the best level, despite we won a couple of the first duels. We won some situations in the beginning, but I think the way [Colorado] build up, they are very good at changing structure from game to game, and actually during games. So today they were building up with three plus two, inverting the left fullback. In the beginning, it was a bit difficult for us to adjust, but after 12-15 minutes we adjusted and we started to be better. I would say that through the development of the first half, we started to gain more control, and the best chances were for us, despite that we conceded an early corner. We spoke with the guys at halftime, we said that the game was there to take it because I think that every turnover we created, every situation that we regained and we could run, we were very dangerous. It was just about the last quality, the last edge to make sure that we could convert these situations into clear chances and into goals. I think the beginning of the second half was brilliant. First 15 minutes, I think we created very dangerous situations, and unfortunately, some of them didn't end on anything. But a lot of cutbacks, a lot of passes through, that we just had to be there in the right time to just tap in and score a goal. Then it's true that perhaps because [Colorado] had a lot of possession and they are a very intense team out of possession, they were forcing us to a good balance between attracting them but running in behind. But perhaps through the development of the second half, we lost a little bit of energy, I would say, of intensity, and then they started to gain a little bit better control. Into the last minutes, it was more emotional to try to get those three points for our fans. But as I said, mixed feeling between angry, if you want, that we all have after not being able to convert our chances and to win at home, and on the other side, proud of the competitiveness of the team, competitiveness of the guys, and the way we fought until the end against a good team. Keeping a clean sheet that is, as well, a step forward into the right direction."

On the defensive performances that helped the team secure a shutout...

"Credit to [Joel Waterman and Jimer Fory], but I would say probably development time together, understanding better the concepts. Today felt that many, many situations out possession were executed well. Then the game is how it is at some moment. You need to win that duel, or you need to be able to do the right thing. But I think that from a tactical point of view, the guys are getting what we want. And again, I think that my feeling is that it's another game where we do a lot of good things, but unfortunately, we don't get the win today. I would say that everybody was outstanding in terms of the competitive edge, the desire, the extra push that is needed as well. So that emotional power. I see that the team is running a lot in all the games. I see that everybody is doing a big effort. But at the same time, today was this perfect timing that the time working together, that understanding of each other's qualities, is starting to flourish. So hopefully, it's a start that we can change very soon because obviously it's very bad numbers."

On finding the balance when a game gets heated between drive and passion...

"In the end, football — soccer — is a very popular sport because at the end, it's about a lot of emotions, right? And I think that energy that fans gave us, it was definitely there. But I say always to the guys that we are the ones that we need to engage the people that come to the stadium. We got different characters

in the squad, that's for sure. I think that you got players like Kristoffer [Velde] that doesn't need too much of a push to get there. I think that others like Diego [Chará] are very calm, very composed. So I think that it's always this interesting balance into finding this energy, this intensity that is needed. That as well, I said the best teams, even though they do a lot of good things in possession, but as well they have a little bit of this personality, this edge that is needed. And I think that today we showed that against a team that, as I said, I cannot praise more Colorado because I look at the table and I think that they should be even higher because I think they play really well. So yeah, it's always this balance. But I really like what I saw today."

On the confidence the team can take from the clean sheet...

"The guys were very disappointed. Now, at the end, when we went to the changing room, usually everybody knows the situation of the table, and that was a must-win game. Still, the message from me was, first of all that as long as there is a chance, we're going to try until the last second. And I don't care if you want what's going to happen. We're going to push until the last second, the last game of the season, whatever it is. If it's the 7th of November or if it's 15th of December. So we're going to push always because that's my nature as a coach. I'm extremely competitive, and I want my guys to feel the same way. On the other side, I told them that I think that they can go home disappointed, but at the same time with heads up, because I think that's a strong foundation. What we're trying to build, it takes time. Because it's much easier to build a team from a counter-attacking point of view, or it's much easier to build a team that goes direct. That doesn't mean that it's easy. I'm saying that it takes less time to introduce the concepts. What we're trying to do is a balance between building up, pressing high, being aggressive when we regain and be able to counter, but at the same time be sure that we are compact when we cannot press high. So it's a lot of things that, as I said, for me the difference between this game and others is that the guys are understanding better and better where we want to go. It might take more time, unfortunately, more time than we wanted or expected. But I think that the games are there for us to take it, and it's just the last push now."

Portland Timbers defender Joel Waterman

On joining the team midseason and adjusting to the defensive group...

"The process has been — I wouldn't say a difficult one. I think it's just like you said, the chemistry along the back line, and obviously untimely injuries happening when they do. I think the best thing I think for any player in any position is consistency. Consistency of playing with certain players. It's definitely a day-by-day process of getting used to each other, used to each other's habits, and whether it's playing on the left side, right side, doesn't really matter to me. You know, our goal is always get clean sheets. I think it was funny. Kamal [Miller] and I had a little joke in the locker room today. We would have taken a 5-4 win. The shutout was great, but we wanted to win. We want to win games ultimately, and yes, of course, as a defender, clean sheets are important. But this time of season, the wins are the most important thing. So I don't go out seeking clean sheets. I try and do what I can do if that's in my control and practice the best habits. That's what coach and I have talked about, making sure that everyone just organized and doing the basics, and you know, you saw tonight we did the basics, and we worked really, really hard to get the result. So I'm really proud of the boys."

On using the motivation when a game gets heated but staying focused mentally...

"You want games to be emotional like that, of course. You don't want it crossing the line. I think we got lucky, and [Colorado] probably got lucky to keep it at 11v11. I think the referee made a good decision just giving out yellows, especially when it's an important game like this. We don't want to go down to 10 men, nine men, whatever it may be. But speaking to what Martí [Cifuentes] said, our passion. It's easy when you play at a club like this to see that passion because the fans bring it every game. Providence Park is one of the most special atmospheres I've played in as a professional, and the fans keep you going, and

the fans are always reacting to every play, and they make themselves known and their presence known, so it's easy for us to get up for games. You know, now obviously, can we reproduce those same results on the road? That's going to be the biggest thing going into next season and obviously finishing up this season, but the passion in this club is amazing. I really trust in the process of where we're trying to go and where Martí sees us going. The passion is the first thing that has to be there every game. That's a non-negotiable. And as long as we show that, we're going to give ourselves the best chance to win games."

On the confidence the team can take from the clean sheet...

"Huge. It's not just our backline or [James Pantemis] or a couple guys. It's the whole 11. We've preached that the last four, five, six weeks here with Martí. Before I even came in, obviously clean sheets were a thing as well. But like I said, we don't go out and try and set clean sheets. We just focus on our habits and what we can do in the controllables, and usually we do the basics and the proper things. They usually end in pretty good results, so we can take a lot of confidence going into next week, but obviously, this game doesn't matter. One clean sheet. Can we do it consistently over and over again? That's going to be the question of this team, and I believe we can. So I'm really excited for next week and training again and playing Charlotte and going after it again."