MLS POST-GAME QUOTES

Portland Timbers vs. St. Louis City SC
October 28, 2026 – EnergizerPark (St. Louis, Mo.)
Final: Portland Timbers 3, St. Louis City 2

Portland Timbers Head Coach Martí Cifuentes

General thoughts on the match…

"Very happy for the win. Obviously, a difficult game against a team that is having a fantastic season, and I think it was a lot of games since they lost here as a home team. So delighted, especially for the first 60 minutes. I think that the first minutes we already created a chance, and after that the game was more balanced with perhaps a couple of situations as well for [St. Louis]. But slowly, I think that we started to understand how to attack a team that is playing very aggressive in this man-to-man, with the idea of having David [Da Costa] today as a number nine, introducing some fresh legs in the attacking midfielder's position to get more pace, to more capacity to run in behind, and I think the two goals and a couple of more situations we got through the first half, I think that we're getting better. The start of the second half as well, was brilliant. Again, understanding that they will come with energy, with intensity, try to score a goal to change a little bit the mood, and then we score the third one. And I will say that after the third one, perhaps we relaxed. I didn't like that much the way we handled obviously, the last minutes. The development of the second half was not great, and especially after the goal. Even though we didn't concede chances, we were not controlling the game as we would like to. Obviously the last minutes, everything happens. We got a couple of clear situations with [Alexander Aravena], with David, with [Kristoffer Velde] to to close the game, and then when they score the second, obviously it's about just survival. But I'm very happy with the team, how they approached the game. Especially happy because it's the 200th victory of Timbers in MLS, if I'm not wrong, and it's 100 games for James [Pantemis] as well as a goalkeeper for the Timbers, which is a great achievement. Overall an important three points."

On the defensive strategy to shut down St. Louis' offense…

"[St. Louis] is a mature team that has a good idea on the way they want to play. I said that. I think the coaching staff has done a very good job, and they can change the way they build up, especially for the first 60 minutes. I think they were building with a structure that we call three-plus-one, with a lot of rotations, with players coming inside, dropping out, and then it's difficult to predict how they're going to build up because then after these 60 minutes they started the three-plus-two structure. They can change that from game to game, but as well during games. We agreed with the guys during the last couple of days. We decided to make sure that we're defending with two holding midfielders, so to say. So when attacking, when in possession, Joao [Ortiz] was playing higher than Diego [Chará]. But when defending, Joao was dropping a little bit more to help Diego cover these pockets that usually they crowd with a lot of players, or with playing with two strikers, as they have done for some periods of the game."

On Kristoffer Velde's performance…

"He's doing great. As I said to you during the week, self-confidence is not an issue for Kris. He's a brilliant player, so important for us. After the last minute, he was making some efforts to help

defensively, but we felt that having some fresh legs will help, and when we swap to a back five with Finn, we wanted to just save him. But he's doing great, and as I said, for me today, he scored probably three goals."

Portland Timbers midfielder Cole Bassett

On his pass to Kristoffer Velde ahead of the Timbers' first goal…

"Just get him into the space 1v1. Honestly, it wasn't the rotation that we were normally doing throughout the game. I think a lot of times we wanted our fullbacks low, so Jimer [Fory] would kind of be in the spot that I am. Kris would be wide, and I would be the guy running through the gap. But I think we figured out that throughout the first half, the more movement that we had, the more confusing it was for [St. Louis]. So in that moment, I ended up in Jimer's spot. Jimer was in Kris's, and Kris was in mine, and caused some confusion. Got Kris in a 1v1, and you know he's been doing that all year for us. So you give him a 1v1, I think he scores many of those. So it was a great sequence from us, and something that we worked on and Martí [Cifuentes] set us up in that way."

On the team's versatility to shut down St. Louis…

"It was honestly a quick turnaround from the last game, so we didn't have that much time to prepare. I think Martí's made the rules very clear for us as the three months have gone on. I think we're starting to understand more his system and the way that we can change our system in a few days. This was completely different than what we did versus Charlotte, and we're starting to get that adaptability into the team. It was a little bit different. We wanted to keep David [Da Costa] high as a nine so that he could drop into the pockets and drag a center back out and defensively keep him high as well. So I was just tasked with marking [Chris] Durkin and trying to figure out if they play with two or one six, and they ended up with one."

On how he impacted the game from the left side of midfield…

"My preferred position is definitely on the left. It was a bit different. I almost felt like a nine in this game at times having to hold the ball up. But me and [Kristoffer Velde], I think since the day I came here, the first training, first game in preseason, we've kind of had a connection. I like to get him the ball, and he's given me a few chances. But I would probably say half of my assists this year are to Kris. We just have a good connection and good feel for where each other are going to be on the pitch."

On the team taking confidence from a second win in a row…

"We're trying to build momentum. We know that we have four finals. We got the first one the other night. We accomplished the second one today. Now we got two more, but you can't look forward to the last one. You've got to just take it one at a time. We know the other results, all the teams around us keep winning as well. All we can do is control what we're doing as a team and win our games and try to get as many points as we can and hope that one team slips up because if so, we want to be right there to catch them."