

# Timbers perfect . . . for a half

## Down 2-0, mighty Cosmos, Chinaglia charge back

It could have been a perfect night. Timber Jim, the Portland Timbers' energetic cheerleader, returned from a brief retirement with his chain saw humming. The weather was perfect.

And so was the home team in the first half, as the Timbers dominated the first half and took a 2-0 lead against the mighty New York Cosmos. That was before the Cosmos roared back to win 3-2 Wednesday night.

Perfection. At halftime the Timbers left the field to a standing ovation — the mighty Cosmos had been humbled. Unfortunately for the Timbers, all that noise awoke the sleeping giant — Giorgio Chinaglia.

The North American Soccer League's version of Super Man admitted he thought he and his mates had been had as he took his halftime breather. "At halftime I would have been happy if we could have just gotten a bonus point (goal) out of this game," recalled Chinaglia, after he had led a ferocious charge which gave the Cosmos the win in Portland.

After spending most of the first half tangled up with Portland's Young Jeung Cho, Chinaglia shocked the Timbers and their 15,233 fans with an incredible goal 64 minutes into the game. With the ball apparently heading wide off the head of teammate Steve Moyers, Chinaglia threw his legs into the air and volleyed the ball into the top of the Timber net.

The Timber defenders were still shaking their heads 3:27 later when Chinaglia, prowling like a hungry cat, took a short pass from Andranvik Eskan-



darian and rolled the ball just inside the right post for the equalizer.

Ironically, the play began with Cho coughing up the ball in the penalty area, leaving the shaken Portland defense in a state of panic. When the ball came to Chinaglia all he had to do was turn and push a fast roller past scrambling Portland goalkeeper Bill Irwin.

The Timbers, who had been trying to hang on and

protect their lead since the intermission, tried desperately to rev up the offense again. But with the Cosmos in high gear, the Timbers had trouble getting out of reverse.

Chinaglia, who now has nine goals on the season to lead the league, appeared to have netted a third goal when he broke free and drilled the ball into the left corner of the net with about 10 minutes left to play. But the linesman called offsides, and the Timbers had a reprieve.

"I thought it was a good goal," Chinaglia said in the victors' locker room. "But that's the way this game is, sometimes you get the calls, sometimes you don't."

As the league's all-time leading scorer with 164 career goals, it is easy for Chinaglia to be philosophical about bad breaks. It is also easy to see why he received the undivided attention of the Portland defense, allowing midfielder Richard Chinapoo to roam free as he latched on to a Steve Wegerle pass and put it away for the game winner with 2:15 left.

Dejection. "The Timbers dominated the whole first half. They deserved to be ahead 2-0 and could have gotten more," said Chinaglia, recalling the long-forgotten first half, which was highlighted by two John Bain goals.

"Natural goal scorers have to have that kill in them," said Chinaglia of his second half explosion. "Other people might not have gone for that goal," he said of his spectacular first goal. "You have to go sometimes for impossible goals. Fortunately for me, it went in."

It was very unfortunate for the Timbers, who could only sit in the locker room and wonder about what could have been a perfect evening.

## Timbers plagued with attendance woes

The looks of frustration and disappointment were nothing new to the faces of Portland Timber fans, players and coaches as they filed out of Civic Stadium Wednesday night.

The Timbers had watched a 2-0 lead disappear, losing to the New York Cosmos in a 3-2 loss. There always has to be a loser, and the Timbers have filled that role well against the Cosmos over the years.

This year is different, however. With the league down to 14 teams this season after hitting a high of 24 two years ago, and with attendance down almost everywhere, even owners of the winners are wearing long faces.

"It's like a fast-growing disease," said Cosmos coach Julio Mazzei, who

is talking about a disease which claimed seven franchises since the end of the last outdoor season.

Dwindling attendance in NASL stadiums is the first major symptom of the disease that may claim another franchise shortly. The Edmonton Drillers managed to stay afloat for at least another week when they delayed payment on outstanding loans.

In addition to Edmonton, 1982 is a make or break year for the franchises in Jacksonville, San Jose, San Diego and Portland. In other words, all is not well in the NASL.

Wednesday night could have, and probably should have, been a big night for the Timbers. The mighty Cosmos were in town for the first time in three

years, the weather was beautiful, and the Timbers were coming off of a big road win. There should have been 20,000 people there, but only 15,233 found their way to Civic Stadium.

Harry Merlo, Chairman of the Board of Louisiana-Pacific, owners of the Timbers, must have been at least as disappointed with the numbers in the stands as he was with the numbers on the scoreboard Wednesday.

The crowd of more than 15,000 was the biggest of the year, but that is to be expected with the Cosmos in town. The question now is how many of those fans will return next Wednesday when San Jose is the opponent.

Believing that the rapid expansion of the league following Pele's arrival is the

major reason for today's problems, Mazzei is willing to be patient.

"The other leagues, like basketball and football, took 20 years to develop. I think it's too early to judge."

But owners such as Louisiana-Pacific may not hold off on judgments much longer. Louisiana-Pacific warned Portland that this might be the last gasp if interest doesn't pick up.

"The key is survival until the kids grow up and come to the games, that's all," said Chinaglia in Wednesday's aftermath.

It is a well-known fact that the NASL is relying on America's youth to take it to the big time. Only time will tell if the league can stay on its feet.

Stories by Paul Danzer

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