

# Timbers ride Dallas Bulls

BY KATIE ARCHER

Providence Park shook with excitement as the Timbers Army anticipation grew for the MLS playoff game. There was not an empty seat in the house and many fans stood the entire game.

By a shrill of a whistle, the Portland Timbers led a charging attack against the Dallas Bulls.

Without wanting to divulge too much information on their game plan, head coach Caleb Porter said, "We had a clear plan on how we were going to approach them and a part of that was predicated on who we had healthy. ... So it was a little bit of a different setup for us but we felt it fit the players in the game and it also fit playing Dallas."

Only 28 seconds into the game, Lucas Melano had already challenged Dallas goalkeeper Jesse Gonzalez.

"We came out aggressively," said Porter. "That was always the main plan. Come out, press and attack. I also knew we could do that because of how organized we are in the back."

Time after time, the Timbers would be in a good formation for a crossing pass to take a shot on goal. The ball would get bounced around into an area where no Timber player was, giving Dallas a chance to clear the attack.

Portland would come right back again and again with aggression.

At the 22:25 mark, Providence Park exploded when Liam Ridgewell finished the corner kick to the back of the net. It was Ridgewell's first goal of the season.

"No, there was no chance the keeper was going to stop that one. It was going in no matter what," said Ridgewell.

Heading into halftime, the Timbers led 1-0.

Out by the 18 yard box, Dairon Asprilla had time to take a shot and the ball sailed into the upper corner of the goal. At 53 minutes, the Timbers were leading 2-0.

"Great goal. He got a hold of it," said Porter. "He's capable of that. You know, he can really hit a heavy ball.

Sometimes it not always the most accurate or precise but I've seen him in training get a hold of that type of shot before so fortunately it came at a good time."

About 10 minutes later, the Timbers would say farewell to their shut out when Dallas player David Texeira got a shot pass Adam Kwarasey.

Ridgewell said for some people it's about scoring goals, but for him and Nat Brochers, it's about keeping clean sheet.

"We feel good about keeping a clean sheet," said Ridgewell. "It was annoying tonight they scored one goal. That's the way we are."

Ridgewell did leave the game after tweaking his calf and is confident that he will be ready to play in their next game.

The steadiness of the Timbers mêlées against the Dallas defense brought back the earlier tension of all the nearly missed goals.

Breaking into stoppage time, Brochers finished a bounced around ball for a goal, putting the Timbers up 3-1.

"It was a big one for sure," said Brochers. "After they scored against us we were reeling a little bit, but we kept our composure and I think Papa [Paparatto] did a great job to angle that one on goal and fortunately, I was there to clean it up."

Unsure if he remembers everything that happened during his goal, Brochers said, "I was told I had a couple of stabs at it and kinda like chopping a tree down, I finally got it in."

Having goals made by Ridgewell, Asprilla and Brochers shows the depth and the teamwork of the Timbers.

"We're a team," said Porter. "It's the first thing I always say to my club when I take over a team. It's not first team, second team, its one team and I need all of you. That's been the case this year."

Speaking about the fluidity of the team, Fanendo Adi said, "Yeah, I mean, that's what we expect from everybody. You know, the guys have been really working hard in training. ... The group is very motivated and everyone is feeling the moment so

we'll just enjoy it."

The Timbers will be on the road to Dallas, Sunday, Nov. 29, for the final game between them and the Audi MLS cup game.

"We just need to focus on the next game," said Adi. "We just need to focus. Enjoy this one for today but focus for the next one."



Jorge Vaillafana challenges Kellyn Acosta for the ball.



Lucas Melano defends the ball against Dallas' Je-Vaughn Watson.