

SPORTS

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Gary Henley | Sports Reporter
 ghenley@dailyastorian.com

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Photos by Sean Meagher/The Oregonian

Portland Timbers' Diego Valeri (8) celebrates a goal against the Colorado Rapids.

Valeri sets goal records, leads Timbers to 2-1 win over Rapids

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Diego Valeri broke Portland's career goals record and set another team mark by scoring in his fifth straight game, leading the Timbers to a 2-1 victory over the Colorado Rapids on Wednesday night.

Valeri opened the scoring in the 21st minute, heading a left-wing cross from Vytautas Andriuskevicius past goalkeeper Tim Howard. Valeri broke a tie with teammate Fanendo Adi for the club record with 52 goals with his career-high 15th of the season.

"It's an honor. To me, most importantly, the numbers reflect that we have a (good) team. That's the most important for me," Valeri said. "And it's the most important part of the year, so I'm thinking more about that, to be honest, than thinking about numbers. And it made me feel good."

Portland (11-9-7) made it 2-0 two minutes later when Darlington Nagbe received a pass from Andriuskevicius just inside the penalty area, turned and chipped a floating shot over Howard and into the top right corner for his third goal of the season.

Colorado (6-14-4) scored in the 28th minute. Mohammed Saeid intercepted Portland defender Lawrence Olum's pass, dribbled toward the penalty area, and sent a rolling shot from the top of the area past goalkeeper Jeff Atkinson for his first goal this year.

"We didn't do anything wrong, as a team, on the goal we gave up, other than pass the ball to them," Portland coach Caleb Porter said. "And if that goal doesn't happen, I think it's probably going to be a three, four, five-zero game. I mean, we were absolutely electric the first 25 minutes of the game."

The Timbers had an opportunity to restore the two-goal lead almost immediately. Video review ruled that Rapids defender Mike da Fonte pulled Valeri down in the penalty area, giving Portland a penalty kick, but David Guzman pulled his shot wide of the post. Guzman also received a yellow card in the 73rd minute, and will have to sit out Sunday against Seattle.

Portland has won four of its last six to move into a tie for second place in the Western Conference with Sporting Kansas City, a point behind Seattle.



Portland Timbers' Diego Valeri, left, tries to head the ball on to a teammate as Colorado Rapids' Eric Miller (3) defends.



Portland Timbers' Darren Mattocks (11) works against Colorado Rapids' Kortne Ford.



Colorado Rapids goalie Tim Howard gestures.

The Timbers have a chance to overtake the Sounders on Sunday.

"We have confidence in the quality of this team. It's a good time, it's a good moment, in (terms of) points and wins," Valeri said. "But we are always

UP NEXT: TIMBERS

- Portland Timbers (11-9-7) at Seattle Sounders (11-7-8)
- Sunday, 6:30 p.m. TV: FS1

confident in the quality of this team, of these players."

Colorado is winless in its last seven and has lost both games under interim head coach Steve Cooke. Cooke took over for Pablo Mastroeni on Aug. 19.

"They put everything out there, they worked as hard as they possibly could. They're absolutely devastated they haven't got something, but that's football, you know?" Cooke said. "Sometimes it comes down to a couple of moments in a game and the Portland Timbers had two great moments."

While the Timbers got the win, the game ended on a scary note in Portland when Dairon Asprilla appeared to collapse after the final whistle. He was propped on the field for several minutes while he was attended by trainers, who appeared to administer an IV. Even team owner Merritt Paulson came on to the field to see what was happening.

Asprilla was able to get up with help and was eventually carted off the field. Porter said he was taken to a local hospital as a precaution.

Court rejects appeal from football coach on prayers

By GENE JOHNSON
 Associated Press

SEATTLE — A Washington state high school football coach took advantage of his position when he prayed on the field after games, and he's not entitled to immediately get his job back, a federal appeals court said Wednesday.

The three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. District Court of Appeals unanimously held that Bremerton High coach Joe Kennedy's prayers did not constitute protected free speech because he was acting as a public employee, not a private citizen, when he conducted them.

"By kneeling and praying on the fifty-yard line immediately after games while in view of students and parents, Kennedy was sending a message about what he values as a coach, what the District considers appropriate behavior, and what students should believe, or how they ought to behave," Judge Milan Smith wrote for the court.

The judge added that Kennedy "took advantage of his position to press his particular views upon the impressionable and captive minds before him."

Kennedy had previously led players in postgame prayers, but the Bremerton School District ordered him to stop in 2015, saying the practice violated the separation of church and state required by the U.S. Constitution. He lost his job after he defied the ban.

Kennedy then sued, saying his religious rights had been violated. He asked U.S. District Judge Ronald Leighton to force the district to re-hire him while the case proceeds, but Leighton refused — a decision the 9th Circuit opinion upheld.

The case has drawn broad national attention, including when President Donald Trump featured Kennedy at



Larry Steagall/Kitsap Sun
 Former Bremerton High School assistant football coach Joe Kennedy poses for a photo in 2015.

a campaign event in Virginia last October.

"Teachers and coaches don't get to pressure students to pray," Richard B. Katskee, legal director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said in a statement Wednesday. "Students and families have the right to decide whether and how to practice their faith. Public schools should be welcoming places for all students and families, and no student should feel like an outsider at his or her school."

First Liberty Institute, the religious-freedom law firm that represents Kennedy in the case, criticized the decision — saying that by its logic, coaches would not be allowed to bow their head in prayer or make a sign of the cross when players get hurt. The organization said it was reviewing Kennedy's legal options.

"Banning all coaches from praying individually in public just because they can be seen is wrong," First Liberty President Kelly Shackelford said in a statement. "This is not the America contemplated by our Constitution."

The school district said in a statement that it "appreciates the well-reasoned decision."



AP Photo/John Bazemore

Seattle Mariners' Jean Segura (2) celebrates with Nelson Cruz, right, after scoring on a two base hit by Taylor Motter in the eighth inning.

Motter replaces injured Cano, lifts M's past Braves

By CHARLES ODUM
 Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Seattle Mariners are hoping Robinson Cano avoided a serious injury when he was pulled with tightness in his left hamstring.

If Cano misses one or more games, Taylor Motter made a case that he can keep the offense moving.

Motter replaced Cano and gave Seattle the lead with a two-run single in the eighth inning, lifting the Mariners over the Atlanta Braves 9-6 on Wednesday night.

Cano pulled up approaching second base in the third inning after his second double of the game. The Mari-

UP NEXT: MARINERS

- Seattle Mariners (65-63) at New York Yankees (68-57)
- Friday, 4:05 p.m. TV: RTNW

ners also lost center fielder Guillermo Heredia, who left in the eighth after being hit on his right forearm by a pitch from Jason Motte in the seventh.

"The initial signs are they're going to be all right," said manager Scott Servais.

Servais said Cano had "pretty good strength" in the hamstring when tested. He said Heredia has been hit in the same spot "a couple times the last week or so."