

MLS

40 years later, Seattle and Portland still angry rivals

Sounders host Timbers Sunday

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

TUKWILA, Wash. — Gonzalo Pineda knows what makes a good rivalry. He’s stood in the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City wearing the red-striped jersey of Chivas de Guadalajara getting ready to face Club America, the most heated matchup in all of Mexican soccer. He wore the green of Mexico in Columbus, Ohio, and watched his side lose to the United States in World Cup

qualifying — of course with the score line of 2-0. And he’s stood in both Providence Park and CenturyLink Field awash in the din of Seattle and Portland getting together. “It’s almost the same rivalry. It’s the same, I don’t know if it’s hate, but we don’t like each other,” Pineda said. “That’s good. That’s part of the passion and that’s part of the rivalry. I think in the field it’s almost the same. Inside the field it’s almost the same. Every challenge, every 50/50 ball you have to go in very hard and try to (not have) the passion overwhelm you and that’s something you have to watch out too.”

Nearly 40 years to the day of the first meeting between Seattle and Portland professional soccer franchises, the Timbers and Sounders will get reacquainted on Sunday night for the first of three scheduled MLS matches this season. It’ll be the 89th all-time meeting, dating back to that first matchup on May 2, 1975, in Portland when the two sides were NASL foes. It hasn’t been a consistent 40 years of soccer with lapses when both cities were

without their teams. But when the Timbers and Sounders have been around, other rivalries fall short in comparison. “Without a doubt, Seattle-Portland is a special game. It’s a special occasion and it’s something you’ve got to see,” Seattle coach Sigi Schmid said. “All games are important. The (Western Conference) is so competitive, not just the Cascadia teams, everybody in the West it’s going to be a tight race all year. Every

point is important.” It’s now the fifth season of the Sounders and Timbers both playing in the MLS and the game continues to hold a marquee spot on the schedule to get maximum national exposure. There have been memorable individual moments, wild games and even a playoff meeting between the two sides in the first four years. Schmid scoffed at the idea that some of the luster has faded from the game. “It’s still special. It’s like asking somebody from Real Madrid, ‘Is the Barcelona-Madrid game still a special game.’ It’s always going to be a special game

and this is going to be a special game forever.” Unlike some rivalry games where the pace gets slowed and goal scoring chances are rare, Seattle and Portland games have been exceedingly wide open in recent seasons. In the past eight matches over two seasons, Seattle has outscored Portland 17-11. “I think the games we’ve played against Portland have been exciting games,” Seattle’s Clint Dempsey said. “I think both teams go out and try to win the game and try to impose their style on the other team. So I think it’s always a fun one for the fans to watch.”

NFL

Ducking the spotlight, some stars decide to skip NFL draft

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

The hat-and-hug routine with the NFL commissioner that has become a rite of passage for many college football stars on draft night is not for everybody. The waiting is the hardest part, even for players good enough to be invited to the draft, and some prefer to do it away from the ever-present eyes of a national television audience. “I know that the draft is really a great event and a great thing to go to,” said University of Pittsburgh offensive tackle T.J. Clemmings, a potential first-round pick who declined an invitation to attend the draft in Chicago next week. “It also can be pretty stressful. Nobody knows where they’re going to go. But the wait, I’d rather have that wait with my friends and family here at home in New Jersey.” There will be several noticeable absences when the three-day draft starts Thursday night, including potential top picks. Florida

State quarterback Jameis Winston, Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota and Alabama wide receiver Amari Cooper all plan to skip the spotlight. Either Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback could be the first overall selection, with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers holding the top pick and in need of a passer. The last time the No. 1 pick did not attend the draft was 1994, when Cincinnati selected Ohio State defensive tackle Dan Wilkinson. But this year, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell might have to wait until pick No. 3 or even 4 — Cooper could go in the top three, too — to pose for a picture with a just-drafted player, his new team’s jersey in hand. Not to worry. Goodell won’t be lonely. Twenty-eight players are scheduled to attend, including Southern California defensive lineman Leonard Williams and West Virginia receiver Kevin White. The NFL pays for two first-class or four coach



AP Photo/Mark J. Terrill, File
In this Jan. 1, 2015, file photo, Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota, center left, greets Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston after Oregon’s win in the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif.

airline tickets for each player, whichever the player chooses, and two hotel rooms, plus some in-town transportation. Since 2010, the NFL has had at least 23 prospects attend each draft. Players often slip out of the first round and into Day 2 — which can be a little uncomfortable. Quarterbacks tend to draw the most attention, especially when they aren’t selected

as early as projected. Cal’s Aaron Rodgers was the first to endure the long, televised wait when he dropped to No. 24 in 2005 before being scooped up by the Green Bay Packers. Southern California Heisman Trophy winner Matt Leinart (No. 10 to Arizona in 2006) and Brady Quinn (No. 22 to Cleveland in 2007) also endured the slide. Leinart said he’s glad he had the experience of going

to the draft, but he would plan things differently if he could do it over again. “I would have stayed home, had a big party in my parents’ house with all my closest family and friends over. Been just super relaxed. Played golf. Whatever it may be,” he said. “Enjoyed it with my family in a stress-free environment.” Last year it was Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel who had to wait backstage, with TV cameras cutting to him on just about every pick as he checked his phone and took swigs out of a water bottle. The Browns ended up taking Manziel at 22, and the cameras switched focus to Teddy Bridgewater, Louisville’s star quarterback. The Vikings kept Bridgewater from having to return for Day 2 by taking him with the 32nd and last pick of the first round. Geno Smith was not so lucky back in 2013. The West Virginia quarterback tumbled all the way out of the first round after there was talk he could be an early first-rounder. Smith considered

not showing up for Day 2, but did and the New York Jets took him with the seventh pick of the second round. Mariota and Winston probably don’t need to worry about sliding that far, but still have decided there’s no place like home. “I want the people who have been there since Day 1 to enjoy this moment,” Winston told NFL Network after his pro day at Florida State last month. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I would look forward to spending with my family.” Mariota will be in his beloved home state of Hawaii, with more than 200 people at his high school alumni clubhouse, he said. “For me it was a way to culturally pay respect to where I come from and to be with my family and friends, and at the same time to be with everybody who has helped me get here, and making sure they are all a part of this moment,” Mariota said. “These are the people who got me here.” The commissioner can wait.

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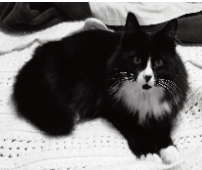
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