

Soccer

Seattle, Toronto prepared for MLS Cup showdown

By PAUL ATTFIELD
Associated Press

TORONTO — Having played in two World Cups for the United States and finishing on the losing side of the Coppa Italia final when he was with Roma, Toronto FC captain Michael Bradley is no stranger to the big occasion.

But he’s also savvy enough to know that pre-game plans don’t always pan out, so when he leads his team onto the field for Saturday night’s MLS Cup final against the Seattle Sounders, he’ll be keeping an open mind.

“There’s no blueprint for these games, for big games,” he said. “You never know what to predict, you have to be ready no matter how things go to react and to not let anything faze you and to go for it.”

Toronto FC has certainly done that throughout these MLS Cup playoffs, setting an MLS record with 17 goals scored through their first five games. But while Jozy Altidore and former MLS MVP Sebastian Giovinco have captured most of the headlines in that regard with nine goals between them, what takes place in the middle of the field may have a bigger impact on which team lifts the trophy.

That’s where Bradley will go head to head with Seattle’s Osvaldo Alonso and Cristian Roldan, and he knows just how important that battle will be, acknowledging that their



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

In this Dec. 7, 2016 photo, Seattle Sounders goalkeeper Stefan Frei makes a stop as he takes part in training in Tukwila, Wash. The Sounders are scheduled to face Toronto FC in the MLS Cup today in Toronto.

play dictates how much freedom Seattle stars such as Jordan Morris and Nicolas Lodeiro will have.

“I think ultimately what goes on in the center of the field in these games goes a long way to dictating who wins,” Bradley said. “So it’s important for us to feel like in all areas in the center part of the field we’re taking good care of things.”

While Toronto coach Greg Vanney said the attacking nature of both teams could produce “one of the most exciting MLS Cup finals yet,” Seattle counterpart Brian Schmetzer said the matchup between

Giovinco and Lodeiro could produce fireworks.

“Defenders have to be on their toes,” he said. “Nico makes sharp, quick turns. Giovinco does the same. They’re a little different, though. Giovinco is a scorer. Nico has scored his fair share of goals, but Nico can put in those final passes.”

Lodeiro agreed with his coach’s assessment to a point. Though they have both scored four playoff goals so far, for the Uruguayan, that’s where the similarities end.

“We’re completely different players,” he said through an inter-

MLS Cup

Seattle Sounders

Toronto FC

- Today, 5 p.m.
- at BMO Field, Toronto
- TV: FOX

preter. “The only way we’re alike is that we’re short.”

HIGH FIVE: Altidore is the first player in MLS history to score in five consecutive matches in the same postseason. His five-goal total is tied for fifth-most in a single postseason, three behind the record of eight, set by Carlos Ruiz of the LA Galaxy in 2002.

HAT TRICK HOPEFUL: Toronto midfielder Will Johnson is aiming to join a select group of players that have won the MLS Cup with three different teams. After previous victories with Real Salt Lake (2009) and last year with the Portland Timbers, Johnson can become the fifth player to pull off the hat trick.

MORRIS CODE: It took less than a season for Morris to have a game that will live on in Sounders lore no matter Saturday’s outcome.

Morris’ goal in the second-leg of the Western Conference final against Colorado assured Seattle a spot in the championship game. Morris played that game on Nov. 30 despite illness, suffered a knee injury on the

deciding goal and was playing with a slight hamstring strain suffered three weeks earlier.

Morris scored in both legs of the conference finals against Colorado and had an assist in the semifinals against FC Dallas. He’s been a consistent scoring threat in the play-offs and what Seattle hoped it was getting when Morris signed with his hometown team last winter.

BACK TO TORONTO: Stefan Frei was once considered the goal-keeper of the future for Toronto, before an injury that cost him nearly the entire 2012 season derailed those plans.

He’s become the anchor at the back of Seattle’s defense and would relish in winning his first MLS Cup title at the expense of his former team.

Frei and Seattle’s defense as a whole have been solid in the play-offs. Seattle has allowed three goals in five playoff matches, and Frei has been responsible for three shutouts.

EXPANSION FINALE: The previous 20 years of MLS championship matches featured at least one team that was an original from when the league began in 1996. The Seattle-Toronto matchup is the first time two expansion teams are meeting in the championship and ensures at least one soccer hotbed market walks away with a first MLS title.

AP Sports Writer Tim Booth in Seattle contributed to this report.

SEAHAWKS: Cook returns for Packers

Continued from 1B

Pete Carroll’s club must play the rest of the season without Thomas, the former All-Pro safety who broke his lower left leg in last week’s 40-7 win over Carolina.

“You can’t really replace him. All you can do is try to find somebody that can fit in a role that’s similar, that can do 80 percent or even 60 percent of what he does and can help us win the game,” defensive end Michael Bennett said.

Thomas’ job will be filled by Steven Terrell , who was mostly a special teams contributor until a few weeks ago when Thomas suffered a hamstring injury. He’s ready to be tested by Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

“I’m prepared for that, you always think teams are going to take shots deep,” Terrell said.

But what the Packers have done best of late is attack defenses with quick passes on short-to-medium routes, with Jordy Nelson, Davante Adams and Randall Cobb giving Rodgers a trio of reliable receivers. Minus a consistent running game with Eddie Lacy (ankle) out for the year, coach Mike McCarthy has had to get creative to keep defenses guessing.

“But we’re not going to drop back and throw 50-yard spot routes all day because they’ve got a new free safety,” McCarthy said. “I don’t think that’s practical. I mean, you just see how the new guy fits in.”

Other notes and things to watch ahead of Sunday’s game:

COOKING THINGS UP: The return of tight end Jared Cook from a foot injury three games ago gave Rodgers a big receiving target. The 6-foot-5 Cook, who could test the Seahawks over the middle with Thomas out, has experienced some success against Seattle while he played for the Rams.

He has also experienced bone-crunching hits from Seattle’s other tough safety, Kam Chancellor.

“You just can’t worry about it,” Cook said. “You’re going to get hit, you’re going to have defenders in the middle of the field, so you’ve just got to catch and secure the ball.”

RUN IT OUT: Seattle’s run game is starting to find some traction, and that could help if it snows again in Green Bay.

The Seahawks have rushed for at least 125 yards as a team in three straight games. Last week against Carolina was the peak,

with the Seahawks running for 240 yards. Thomas Rawls rushed for 103 yards in the first half against the Panthers, becoming the second Seattle player this season to have a 100-yard game.

ACHES AND PAINS: The injury bug on the Packers’ defense has now hit the linebacker position. Nick Perry (eight sacks) has been ruled out for Sunday with a left hand injury. He was also a solid run defender on the edge.

Clay Matthews is working through a painful left shoulder injury. Starting inside linebackers Jake Ryan (ankle) and Blake Martinez (knee) also have been limited this week. The injuries in part have affected a run defense that has slackened since the opening month of the season.

RUN IT OUT, PART 2: James Starks hasn’t had much production on the ground for the Packers, but he has had his moments on screens and in the short passing game, and that might come in handy against Seattle’s effective pass rush. Christine Michael, who was claimed off waivers from Seattle a few weeks ago, has slowly been getting more carries as he gets up to speed in Green Bay. He had 19 yards on nine carries last week against Houston .

Continued from 1B

The experience during the NFC wild card game forever changed how the Seahawks view any sort of issues presented by the weather. Seattle’s 10-9 victory over the Vikings came in the third-coldest game in NFL history, a frigid minus-6 degrees, with wind chills in the minus-20s throughout that miserable day.

The scope of what’s cold and what players can put up with was completely altered after that experience. And it makes the forecast for Sunday in Green Bay pleasant by comparison. The forecast for Sunday calls for temperatures in the 20s and a chance of snow.

“We’re having a bullish approach to the whole thing, you really have to be tough-minded,” quarterback Russell Wilson said. “We want a tough environment, we look forward to those types of situations and I’m hoping it’s coming down, I’m hoping it’s snowing. I’m hoping it’s kind of a downpour of snow. That would be great.”

The conditions Seattle played through in Minnesota will likely never be topped. Sherman’s most vivid memory was going out for pregame warmups and having his contact lenses freeze up. He had not put a visor on his facemask all season, but had one added before that game,

SCOREBOARD

Local Slate

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

Saturday's Games

Ione vs. McKenzie (at Condon Christmas Tournament), 12:30 p.m.

Condon/Wheeler vs. Prairie City (at Condon Christmas Tournament), 3:30 p.m.

Kamiakin (WA) at Hermiston, 7:30 p.m.

Mac-Hi vs. Grant Union (at Columbia River Clash, Umatilla), Noon

Weston/McEwen vs. TBD (at Kennedy Classic), TBD

Arlington vs. Echo (at Columbia River Clash, Umatilla), 10:30 a.m.

Pilot Rock vs. Union (at Columbia River Clash, Umatilla), 3:30 p.m.

Stanfield vs. Umatilla (at Columbia River Clash, Umatilla), 6:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

Saturday's Games

Ione vs. McKenzie (at Condon Christmas Tournament), 11 a.m.

Kamiakin (WA) at Hermiston, 5:45 p.m.

Weston/McEwen vs. TBD (at Kennedy Classic), TBD

Stanfield vs. Mac-Hi (at Columbia River Clash, Umatilla), 9 a.m.

Arlington vs. Union (at Columbia River Clash, Umatilla), TBD

Umatilla vs. Pilot Rock (at Columbia River Clash, Umatilla), TBD

Echo vs. Grant Union (at Columbia River Clash, Umatilla), 7 p.m.

PREP WRESTLING

Saturday

Irrigon, Echo at Calhoun Classic (at Nyssa), 10 a.m.

Pendleton, Mac-Hi, Heppner at Mulienburg Invite (La Grande), 10 a.m.

Riverside at Culver Invitational, 10 a.m.

PREP SWIMMING

Saturday

Pendleton at Baker meet, Noon

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Today's Games

Blue Mountain at Edmonds, 6 p.m.

Eastern Oregon at Walla Walla, 8 p.m.

Sunday's Game

Blue Mountain vs. Peninsula (at Edmonds), Noon

COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Today's Games

Eastern Oregon at Walla Walla, 6 p.m.

Blue Mountain at Centralia, 7 p.m.

Sunday's Game

Blue Mountain vs. Tacoma (at Centralia), Noon

COLLEGE WOMEN'S WRESTLING

Saturday-Sunday

Eastern Oregon at SW Oregon C.C., TBA

Pittsburgh 7 5 .583 290 236

Cincinnati 4 7 1 .375 245 259

Cleveland 0 12 0 .000 197 352

West

W L T Pct PF PA

Kansas City 10 3 0 .769 302 255

Oakland 10 3 0 .769 358 320

Denver 8 4 0 .667 286 229

San Diego 5 7 0 .417 334 319

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

W L T Pct PF PA

x-Dallas 11 1 0 .917 333 228

N.Y. Giants 8 4 0 .667 245 237

Washington 6 5 1 .542 303 295

Philadelphia 5 7 0 .417 268 245

South

W L T Pct PF PA

Atlanta 7 5 0 .583 386 331

Tampa Bay 7 5 0 .583 277 285

New Orleans 5 7 0 .417 347 335

Carolina 4 8 0 .333 263 321

North

W L T Pct PF PA

Detroit 8 4 0 .667 275 251

Green Bay 6 6 0 .500 295 302

Minnesota 6 6 0 .500 233 209

Chicago 3 9 0 .250 204 270

West

W L T Pct PF PA

Seattle 8 3 1 .708 264 194

Arizona 5 6 1 .458 276 251

Los Angeles 4 8 0 .333 180 262

San Francisco 1 11 0 .083 234 370

xclinched playoff spot

Thursday's Game

Kansas City 21, Oakland 13

Sunday's Games

Denver at Tennessee, 10 a.m.

Cincinnati at Cleveland, 10 a.m.

Minnesota at Jacksonville, 10 a.m.

Arizona at Miami, 10 a.m.

Houston at Indianapolis, 10 a.m.

Washington at Philadelphia, 10 a.m.

Pittsburgh at Buffalo, 10 a.m.

San Diego at Carolina, 10 a.m.

Chicago at Detroit, 10 a.m.

N.Y. Jets at San Francisco, 1:05 p.m.

New Orleans at Tampa Bay, 1:25 p.m.

Seattle at Green Bay, 1:25 p.m.

Atlanta at Los Angeles, 1:25 p.m.

Dallas at N.Y. Giants, 5:30 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 12

Baltimore at New England, 5:30 p.m.

NCAA Bowl Games Schedule

Saturday, Dec. 17

Celebration Bowl

At Atlanta

NC Central (9-2) vs. Grambling State (11-1), 9 a.m. (ABC)

New Mexico Bowl

Albuquerque

UTSA (6-6) vs. New Mexico (8-4), 11 a.m. (ESPN)

Las Vegas Bowl

San Diego State (10-3) vs. Houston (9-3), 12:30 p.m. (ABC)

Camellia Bowl

Montgomery, Ala.

Toledo 19, S. Appalachian State (9-3), 2:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Cure Bowl

Orlando, Fla.

UCF (6-6) vs. Arkansas State (7-5), 2:30 p.m. (CBSN)

New Orleans Bowl

Southern Miss. (6-6) vs. Louisiana-Lafayette (6-6), 6 p.m. (ESPN)

FCS Playoffs

Quarterfinals

Friday

James Madison 65, Sam Houston State 7

Today

South Dakota State (9-3) at North Dakota

State (11-1), 9 a.m.

Wofford (10-3) at Youngstown State (10-3), 11 a.m.

Richmond (10-3) at Eastern Washington (11-1), 1 p.m.

NAIA

Championship

Saturday, Dec. 17

At Municipal Stadium

Daytona Beach, Fla.

Saint Francis (Ind.) (12-1) vs. Baker (Kan.) (14-0), 3 p.m.

Basketball

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

W L Pct GB

Toronto 16 7 .696 —

Boston 13 10 .565 3

New York 13 10 .565 3

Brooklyn 6 15 .286 9

Philadelphia 5 18 .217 11

Southeast Division

W L Pct GB

Charlotte 14 9 .609 —

Atlanta 12 12 .500 2½

Orlando 10 14 .417 4½

Washington 8 13 .381 5

Miami 7 16 .304 7

Central Division

W L Pct GB

Cleveland 16 5 .762 —

Chicago 12 10 .545 4½

Milwaukee 11 10 .524 5

Detroit 13 12 .520 5

Indiana 11 12 .478 6

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

W L Pct GB

San Antonio 18 5 .783 —

Houston 16 7 .696 2

Memphis 16 8 .667 2½

New Orleans 7 16 .304 11

Dallas 5 17 .227 12½

Northwest Division

W L Pct GB

Oklahoma City 14 9 .609 —

Utah 14 10 .583 ½

Portland 12 12 .500 2½

Denver 8 15 .348 6

Minnesota 6 17 .261 8

Pacific Division

W L Pct GB

Golden State 20 3 .870 —

L.A. Clippers 16 7 .696 4

L.A. Lakers 10 15 .400 11

Sacramento 8 14 .364 11½

Phoenix 7 16 .304 13

Friday's Games

Charlotte 109, Orlando 88

Cleveland 114, Miami 84

Toronto 101, Boston 94

Atlanta 114, Milwaukee 110

Detroit 117, Minnesota 90

Houston 102, Oklahoma City 99

Dallas 111, Indiana 103

New York 103, Sacramento 100

Phoenix 119, L.A. Lakers 115

Today's Games

Denver at Orlando, 4 p.m.

Milwaukee at Washington, 4 p.m.

Portland at Indiana, 4 p.m.

Charlotte at Cleveland, 4:30 p.m.

Dallas at Houston, 5 p.m.

Golden State at Memphis, 5 p.m.

Miami at Chicago, 5 p.m.

Brooklyn at San Antonio, 5:30 p.m.

Sacramento at Utah, 6 p.m.

New Orleans at L.A. Clippers, 7:30 p.m.

USA Today Top 25

Men's Top 25

USA Today Top 25 Poll

No. 17 Texas vs. Tennessee, 1:30 p.m.

No. 19 Oklahoma vs. Tulsa, Noon

No. 22 South Florida at Arkansas State, 1 p.m.

No. 25 Virginia Tech vs. Bowling Green, 12:30 p.m.

Hockey

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

GP W L OT Pts GF GA

Montreal 27 18 6 3 39 81 61

Ottawa 27 16 9 2 34 68 69

Boston 28 15 11 2 32 68 66

Tampa Bay 28 14 12 2 30 78 77

Detroit 28 13 12 3 29 70 76

Florida 28 12 12 4 28 66 75

Buffalo 27 10 11 6 26 56 72

Toronto 26 10 10 5 25 74 80

Metropolitan Division

GP W L OT Pts GF GA

N.Y. Rangers 29 19 9 1 39 100 70

Pittsburgh 27 17 7 3 37 93 81

Columbus 25 16 5 4 36 81 54

Washington 26 16 7 3 35 69 59

Philadelphia 29 16 10 3 35 96 92

New Jersey 27 12 9 6 30 69 77

Carolina 27 11 9 6 28 66 72

N.Y. Islanders 26 11 10 5 27 69 75

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central Division

GP W L OT Pts GF GA

Chicago 29 17 8 4 38 78 69

St. Louis 28 16 8 4 36 78 76

Minnesota 26 14 8 4 32 72 55

Winnipeg 30 13 14 3 29 78 87

Nashville 26 12 10 4 28 77 74

Dallas 28 11 11 6 28 72 89

Colorado 26 10 14 1 21 56 75

Pacific Division

GP W L OT Pts GF GA

Edmonton 30 14 11 5 33 90 83

Anaheim 28 14 9 5 33 76 74

Calgary 30 15 11 3 32 75 84

San Jose 27 15 11 1 31 64 58

Los Angeles 26 13 11 2 28 67 69

Vancouver 27 12 13 2 26 65 79

Arizona 26 8 13 5 21 58 82

Friday's Games

Washington 4, Buffalo 1

St. Louis 4, New Jersey 1

Columbus 4, Detroit 1

Minnesota 3, Edmonton 2, SO

N.Y. Rangers 1, Chicago 0, OT

Anaheim 3, San Jose 2

Saturday's Games

Dallas at Philadelphia, 10 a.m.

Ottawa at Los Angeles, 1 p.m.

N.Y. Islanders at Columbus, 4 p.m.

Pittsburgh at Tampa Bay, 4 p.m.

Toronto at Boston, 4 p.m.

Colorado at Montreal, 4 p.m.

Vancouver at Florida, 4 p.m.

Nashville at Arizona, 5 p.m.

Winnipeg at Calgary, 7 p.m.

Carolina at San Jose, 7:30 p.m.

Soccer

MLS

TDS Cup

MLSAY: Seattle at Toronto FC, 5 p.m. (FOX)

Golf

PGA

Franklin Templeton Shootout

Friday

At Tiburon GC

Naples, Fla.

Purse: \$3.1 million

Yardage: 7288; Par: 72

Second Round

Harris English/Matt Kuchar 57-66—123

Jerry Kelly/Steve Stricker 56-68—124

Charles Howell III/Rory Sabbatini 59-69—128

Kevin Chappell/Kevin Kisner 60-68—128

Charley Hoffman/Billy Horschel 61-68—129

Smiley Kaufman/Justin Thomas 63-65—129

Jason Dufner/Brandt Snedeker 60-70—130

Sean O'Hair/Kenny Perry 63-68—131

Luke Donald/Russell Knox 60-71—131

Bryson DeChambeau/Lexi Thompson 62-71—133

Transactions

Friday

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF BASEBALL

— Suspended Toronto minor league RHP Pedro Loficial (Blue Jays-DSL) 72 games after testing positive for metabolites of Stanozolol, a performance-enhancing substance; and Milwaukee minor league RHP Phil Bickford (Carolina-Carolina) and Miami minor league OF Casey Solits (Greensboro-SAL) 50 games each following a second positive test for a drug of abuse, all violations of the Minor League Drug Prevention and Treatment Program.

AMERICAN LEAGUE

DETROIT TIGERS

— Agreed to terms with RHPs Ruben Alariz, Johan Belisario, Endrys Briceño, William Cuevas, Jeff Ferrell, Santiago Garrido, Logan Kensing, Arceño Leon, Dustin Molleken and Cory Riordan; C Miguel Gonzalez and INFs Argenis Diaz, Omar Infante and Gustavo Nunez on minor league contracts.

HOUSTON ASTERS

— Agreed to terms with LHP Cionel Pastro on a minor league contract.

SEATTLE MARINERS

— Sent LHP Dean Kiehekfer outright to Tacoma (PCL).

NATIONAL LEAGUE

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

— Agreed to terms with RHP Fernando Rodney on a one-year contract.

ATLANTA BRAVES

— Received LHP Tyler Pike as the player to be named in a Nov. 28 trade with Seattle.

CINCINNATI REDS

— Agreed to terms with C Rob Brantly, RHP Alejandro Chacin, OF Gabriel Guerrero, LHP Ismael Guillon, INF-OF Hernan Iribarren, LHP Lucas Luetge, RHP Kevin Shackelford and C Shawn Zarraga on minor league contracts.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS

— Sent INF Chis Culpber outright to Oklahoma City (PCL).

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

— Agreed to terms with OF Dexter Fowler on a five-year contract.

SAN DIEGO PADRES

— Sent INF Josh VanMeter to Cincinnati to complete an earlier trade.

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

CHICAGO BULLS

— Assigned GS Jerian Grant and E.J. Hunter and F Paul Zipser to Windy City (NBADL).

LOS ANGELES LAKERS

— Recalled C Ivica Zubac from Los Angeles (NBADL).

FOOTBALL

National Football League

NFL

— Suspended New Orleans S Kenny Vaccaro and Cleveland WR Jordan Payton four games each the league's policy on performance enhancing substances. Fined New York Giants WR Odell Beckham Jr. fined \$12,154 for verbal abuse/excessive profanity toward an official following a Dec. 4 game at Pittsburgh. Fined Oakland P Marquette King \$12,154 for picking up an official's flag and using it as a prop and Oakland WR Michael Crabtree \$12,154 for taunting, during a Dec. 4 game against Buffalo.