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Chicago Fire Blanks FC Dallas 4-0, Moves Within Three Points of Playoff Position

The Chicago Fire Soccer Club (9-12-10, 37 points) scored four first-half goals to defeat FC Dallas (12-11-7, 43 points) 4-0 at SeatGeek Stadium on Saturday afternoon. CJ Sapong tallied his second brace of the season, while midfielder Przemysław Frankowski and forward Nemanja Nikolić each recorded a goal for the Fire. With the result, the Men in Red are now within three points of a playoff position.

The four goal performance in the first half marked the second-most goals the Fire has scored in a half this season. The Fire previously scored five goals in the first half against Atlanta United FC on July 3.

The first goal came in the seventh minute when Sapong's hustle and determination caused a miscommunication between defender Matt Hedges and goalkeeper Jesse Gonzalez on a back pass to the goalkeeper. As a result, Sapong quickly pounced on the wayward back pass, touching it around Gonzalez before calmly converting his first goal of the game.

Less than 10 minutes later, Chicago doubled its lead when Frankowski scored for a second straight game, notching his third goal of the season. After receiving the ball from defender Jonathan Bornstein on the left wing, midfielder Brandt Bronico cut inside on his right foot and whipped a cross through the 18-yard box to Frankowski, who scored a one-time finish from just inside the six-yard box in the 16th minute.

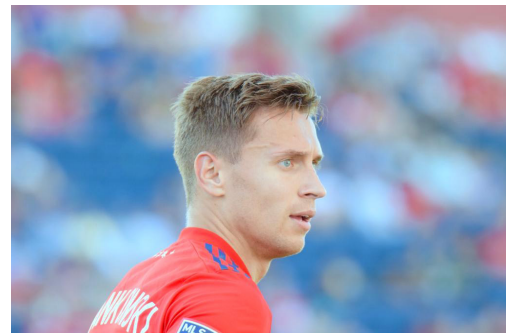
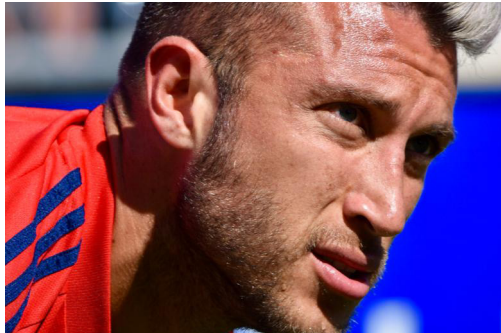
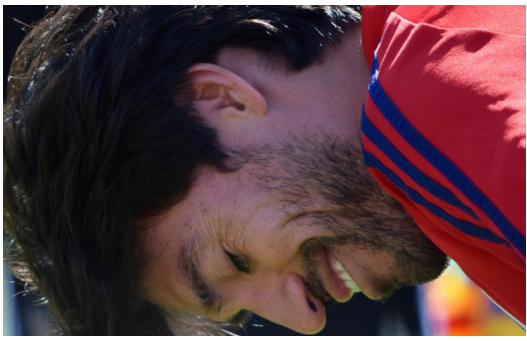


The team's third goal came in the 29th minute when Sapong secured his brace from a well-placed corner kick from midfielder Nicolás Gaitán. The corner kick from Gaitán was whipped to the near post for Sapong, who headed the ball through Gonzalez's legs. The header marked Sapong's 12th goal of the season – the second-most in a single season in his career – and his fourth headed goal of the 2019 campaign. Additionally, Gaitán recorded his 11th assist of the season on the play, which ranks as the most assists in a single season for a Fire player since 2008.

After attempts from Gaitán and Frankowski were pushed off the post by Gonzalez, the Fire eventually added a fourth goal in the 39th minute when Nikolić scored his third goal in his last four games. The goal occurred after Frankowski found the ball on the right side of the box and volleyed it to Nikolić, who took one touch to score from close range.

In the 63rd minute, the Fire came close to adding to their tally when Sapong and midfielder Dax McCarty both hit the post on back-to-back chances. The Fire looked dangerous off another corner kick from Gaitán when McCarty connected with the cross and headed it off the post. Following a clearance from Dallas, defender Johan Kappelhof smartly headed the ball back into the 18-yard box for Sapong, who also rattled the post with a headed attempt. On a defensive end, the Fire notched its eighth clean sheet of the season and sixth clean sheet at home. The team's six clean sheets at home are tied for the second-most in the league in 2019.

Looking ahead, the Fire's next match will take place against FC Cincinnati at Nippert Stadium on Saturday, Sept. 21. Scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. CT, the match will be broadcast live on ESPN+ and transmitted locally in Spanish on TUDN Radio Chicago 1200 AM.



Minnesota United FC 3, Real Salt Lake 1

Powered by a Darwin Quintero brace, Minnesota United emerged with a 3-1 win Sunday evening over Real Salt Lake at Allianz Field. The victory vaulted the Loons up to third place in the Western Conference standings.

The battle of top-four sides in the West was settled by Quintero in the 51st minute, as the Colombian maestro rifled home at the near post to make it 2-1. Quintero collected at midfield, dribbled towards goal and nutmegged RSL center back Nedum Onuoha with his shot.

An insurance goal then came in the 83rd minute, as winger Ethan Finlay made it 3-1. The second-half substitute collected a through ball from right back Romain Metanire, then slotted past Nick Rimando with his left foot.

Finlay's strike capped off three unanswered goals for the Loons, who first tallied via Quintero in the 20th minute. He was played in behind by Kevin Molino, only to dribble Rimando and several RSL defenders before tucking home inside the post.

While Minnesota had the bulk of quality chances, the visitors found the opener in the 17th minute. A near-post shot from Albert Rusnak snuck by Vito Mannone and made it 1-0. Minnesota's goalkeeper was rarely threatened thereafter.

Goals

17' – RSL – Albert Rusnak
 20' – MIN – Darwin Quintero
 51' – MIN – Darwin Quintero
 83' – MIN – Ethan Finlay

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: In a jam-packed Western Conference, it's essential that any playoff contender takes care of business at home. That's exactly what Minnoesta did, as they leapfrogged Real Salt Lake in the standings and are now in the driver's seat for a home playoff game at Allianz Field. Meanwhile, inconsistency continues to hamstring RSL during this stretch run, as they dropped to fourth in the West. There's no reason for Freddy Juarez's group to panic, but some concern is warranted.

Matthew Doyle

@MattDoyle76

RSL have been amazing at stopping counters all year long, but #MNUFC lit 'em up today. And I'll say it: Congrats to the Loons for making the playoffs! It's not 100% official yet, but they're definitely in.

JMoore Quakes

@JmooreQuakes

Been doing some analysis on counters in MLS and created a simple method (poss 3-20 sec, 25+ yds and 3+ yd/sec) for analyzing when attacks were thwarted or end in a shot. I have a high correlation between counters stopped % and xG conceded/attempt. #RSL, man. #Quakes74 #NYCFC

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: There was something sweet about Ethan Finlay's 83rd-minute strike, as you could sense a feeling of relief from the Loons' players and supporters. The Minnesota native's seventh goal of the year put the game out of reach. It was one heck of a finish, too.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Darwin Quintero. The Designated Player had fallen out of favor as of late, scoring just twice across the last two months. Then the Colombian playmaker turned back the clock and put in a vintage performance that was highlighted by a brace. Welcome back.

Next Up

MIN: Sunday, Sept. 22 at Portland Timbers (3:55 pm ET | ESPN, TSN2)

RSL: Saturday, Sept. 21 at New England Revolution (7:30 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in US, on DAZN in Canada)

CREDIT: Jonathan Sigal Contributor



New York City FC 2, San Jose Earthquakes 1

Keaton Parks scored his first MLS goal and Alexandru Mitrita added his ninth three minutes later to put first-place New York City FC in front en route to a 2-1 victory over the San Jose Earthquakes on Saturday afternoon at Yankee Stadium.

The two goals, coming inside the final six minutes of the first half, were enough to extend NYCFC's unbeaten run to seven matches and ensure they finish Week 28 atop the Eastern Conference standings.

For the moment, the Cityzens moved six points in front of the second-place Philadelphia Union, who play later Saturday at home against LAFC.

Chris Wondolowski scored his MLS record-extending 158th career goal and 14th of the season, but the Quakes fell to their second consecutive defeat and fifth in their last seven games.

San Jose began the weekend in fifth in the Western Conference, and depending on other results later could end it as low as eighth and one place beneath the playoff line.

Goals

20' - SJ - Chris Wondolowski

40' - NYC - Keaton Parks

43' - NYC - Alexandru Mitrita

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: Wondolowski's 14 goals are his most in an MLS season since he scored 16 during the 2015 campaign. The 36-year-old could yet post 16 goals for a fifth time during his 15-year career. Meanwhile, NYCFC have now taken seven of nine points since losing their leading scorer, Heber, for what is expected to be a layoff of roughly a month total with a hamstring injury.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: After struggling to see time early in the season, Parks has blossomed over the last few months. His goal combined his sweet distribution with some opportunistic finishing on the second attempt.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Ronald Matarrita. The fullback made several brave interventions inside his own penalty area, and for the most part limited San Jose's Argentine playmaker Cristian Espinoza, who entered Saturday with 12 assists.



Up Next

NYC: Sunday, Sept. 22 at FC Dallas (6 pm ET | UniMás, TUDN, Twitter, MLS LIVE on DAZN in Canada)

SJ: Saturday, Sept. 21 at Atlanta United (3:30 pm ET | Univision, TUDN, Twitter, MLS LIVE on DAZN in Canada)

Toronto FC 3, Colorado Rapids 2

Toronto FC almost saw a two-goal lead go to waste, but in the end claimed a 3-2 win over the Colorado Rapids at BMO Field Sunday afternoon.

Tsubasa Endoh started the scoring early on when he finished a nicely worked triangle between Richie Laryea, Marky Delgado and Jozy Altidore. Alejandro Pozuelo doubled Toronto's lead minutes later with a cheeky panenka after Altidore drew the penalty kick.

It took a bit but Colorado found their footing midway through half.

Keegan Rosenberry got one back after a fortuitous bounce, and the Rapids had a golden chance to draw even before the break after Quentin Westberg brought down Sam Nicholson inside the box. However the Toronto goalkeeper redeemed himself with a diving save of Kei Kamara's PK.

Colorado found the equalizer at the hour mark when Nicholson lofted a cross behind the defense and the ball skipped by Westberg.

However Toronto had the last say, as Jonathan Osorio — who had come in for the injured Nicolas Benezet — put away the winner.

Goals

8' — TOR — Tsubasa Endoh
 13' — TOR — Alejandro Pozuelo
 43' — COL — Keegan Rosenberry
 62' — COL — Sam Nicholson
 70' — TOR — Jonathan Osorio

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: With the win Toronto extended their unbeaten run to seven straight and have now picked up points in 10 of their last 12 games. They retain their top-four position in the East with three games remaining. Colorado falls for the first time under new coach Robin Fraser (now 3-1-0) and despite a strong finish are on the brink of elimination from a playoff spot.



MOMENT OF THE MATCH: The game-winner:

Toronto FC
 @TorontoFC
 Replying to @TorontoFC
 Super subs linking and building @OsoJ92 | #TFCLive

MAN OF THE MATCH: Jozy Altidore didn't score, but he caused Colorado problems all night. Time after time his runs up top drew attention, but few were the times he was contained. Two plays resulted in goals and a number of others set up teammates for dangerous opportunities.

Next Up

TOR: Wednesday, Sept. 18 at Montreal Impact - Canadian Championship Final, first leg (7:30 pm ET; TV TBD)
 COL: Saturday, Sept. 21 at Sporting KC (8:30 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+)

Portland Timbers 0, DC United 1

A first-half own goal was the difference as D.C. United defeated the Portland Timbers, 1-0, at a rain-soaked Providence Park Sunday afternoon.

In the 25th minute, Ulises Segura, wearing the unfamiliar, nameless No. 32 jersey because blood stained his usual kit, sent a cross just inside the six-yard box. Bill Tuiloma slid in to intercept, but directed the ball into his own net.

D.C. had shouts for a second goal before halftime when Wayne Rooney's in-swinging corner kick went off Paul Arriola's back and then caromed off goalkeeper Steve Clark and rolled toward the goal. Eryk Williamson looked to clear the ball off the line, but replays appeared to show the ball was behind the line when the Timbers midfielder booted the ball away.

The Timbers, playing without Sebastian Blanco (left lower leg injury) and Brian Fernandez (stomach bug), twice hit the woodwork, with Diego Valeri heading the ball off the post in the 16th minute. Jorge Moreira's floated cross toward the back post in the second half caromed off the crossbar.

Arriola had a golden chance to put the game away in the 82nd minute, but his open shot went off Clark's hand and the post for a corner.

Goals

25' — DC — Bill Tuiloma (own goal)

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: Ben Olsen's reaction at the final whistle — emphatically pumping his fists — told the importance of these three points for D.C. United, their second consecutive away from Audi Field. They are now in fifth place in the East, inching ever closer to an all-important home playoff game. The Timbers saw a modest two-match winning streak end as they sit in sixth, perilously close to the playoff line.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: it's more like moments plural as the Timbers will rue their luck, or lack thereof on a rainy Sunday afternoon. Twice they hit the woodwork — the first by Valeri would have put them in front. This crossbar carom would have leveled.

MAN OF THE MATCH: in a game of near goals and an own goal, Frederic Brilliant was stellar in central defense for D.C. United. He had seven clearances, including four headed, won four tackles and four aerial duels won to help secure the clean sheet.

Next Up

POR: Wednesday, September 18 vs. New York Red Bulls (10:30 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in US, on DAZN in Canada)

DC: Sunday, September 22 vs. Seattle Sounders FC (8:00 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in US, on DAZN in Canada)



Vancouver Whitecaps 2, Houston Dynamo 1

Fredy Montero scored a game-winning goal in second-half stoppage time, sending the Vancouver Whitecaps to a 2-1 victory over the Houston Dynamo at BC Place on Saturday in a matchup between the bottom two teams in the Western Conference.

Inbeom Hwang converted a second-half penalty kick to open the scoring for Vancouver, while Mauro Manotas scored Houston's only goal of the evening in the 78th minute.

After a scoreless first half, the Whitecaps found the opener in the 54th minute after Manotas was whistled for a hand-ball while defending a free kick in his own box, drawing a penalty kick whistle from referee Robert Sibiga. Hwang slotted home the ensuing look from the spot, giving the home side the 1-0 lead.

Houston got the leveler in the 78th, however, courtesy of a point-blank rebound finish from Manotas after a save by Whitecaps goalkeeper Zac MacMath deflected right in front of goal.

The game looked headed for a 1-1 draw, but Montero played the hero role after coming on as a second-half substitute, cashing home the game-winner just a few minutes before the final whistle off an assist from Theo Bair. Houston had one final chance to level the contest, but Memo Rodriguez saw a free kick from a dangerous spot go just wide of goal, allowing the Whitecaps to snatch all three points.

Goals

54' - VAN - Hwang In-Beom (PK)

78' - HOU - Mauro Manotas

90' - VAN - Fredy Montero

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: The Whitecaps remain in the Western Conference basement at 7-15-9 and 30 points, but it was a nice win in dramatic fashion in front of their home crowd. For the Dynamo, it's the continuation of a 2019 campaign that has seen them struggle mightily once again to procure positive results on the road, as this knocks Houston's record away from home to a dismal 2-13-0 on the season.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: It has to be Montero's game-winner, which made for an exciting ending to a game that featured precious little attacking fireworks.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Hwang has been a bright spot in a frustrating campaign for Vancouver and he was active once again on Saturday, showcasing some of the pinpoint passing and playmaking ability that makes him an intriguing piece for the Whitecaps to build around as they look forward to next season.

Next Up

VAN: Saturday, Sept. 21 vs. Columbus Crew SC (5 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in US; TSN1 in Canada)

HOU: Saturday Sept. 21 vs. Orlando City SC (8 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in US; DAZN in Canada)



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Seattle Sounders 4, New York Red Bulls 2

The Seattle Sounders let a two-goal lead slip away, but had enough down the stretch for a 4-2 win over the New York Red Bulls Sunday afternoon at CenturyLink Field.

Nico Lodeiro scored twice, Jordan Morris scored and assisted on Lodeiro's first goal, and Victor Rodriguez blasted a shot off the leg of the Red Bulls' Sean Davis late in the game as the Sounders took sole possession of second place in the Western Conference. The Sounders are unbeaten in four of five.

The Red Bulls rallied from an early two-goal deficit they faced 23 minutes into the game. Aaron Long made it 2-1 in the 27th minute, and Kaku's second-half goal gave the Red Bulls a chance at a point or more. But the result ended up being their third straight loss.

Goals

2' – SEA – Jordan Morris
 23' – SEA – Nico Lodeiro
 27' – NY – Aaron Long
 67' – NY – Kaku
 83' – SEA – Sean Davis (OG)
 90+4 – SEA – Nico Lodeiro

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: The schedule going forward isn't easy, but the Sounders put themselves

in not only good position to clinch a postseason spot but to earn a home game. They scored in four different ways, with their second goal being three touches without the ball hitting the turf, the first off a set piece and the last one off a long ball from the back. The Red Bulls could have used at least a point, but they are still in playoff position in the East. They, too, have a tough schedule to close out the regular season, starting with what will be an angry Portland Timbers team at Providence Park coming off an own-goal loss.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: The Sounders took the lead for good late when Davis inadvertently beat his own goalkeeper trying to block Rodriguez's shot. The Red Bulls couldn't recover.

Seattle Sounders FC

@SoundersFC

An absolutely lovely assist by Víctor Rodríguez

SEA 3 | RBNY 2 #SEAvRBNY

MAN OF THE MATCH: Put simply, when Lodeiro scores, the Sounders don't lose. They are undefeated in the six matches in which he has scored this season.

Next Up

SEA: Wednesday, Sept. 18 vs. FC Dallas (10:30 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+, DAZN in Canada)

NY: Wednesday, Sept. 18 vs. Portland Timbers (10:30 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+, DAZN in Canada)



LA Galaxy 7, Sporting Kansas City 2

Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored his third career MLS hat trick, Sebastian Lletget also struck for a brace and the LA Galaxy made a statement while moving above the Western Conference playoff line with a 7-2 demolition of Sporting Kansas City on Sunday night at Dignity Health Sports Park.

In the process, Ibrahimovic set a new Galaxy club record by moving to 26 goals on the season, surpassing the 24 goals Carlos Ruiz scored back in 2002. He's now within two of LAFc's Carlos Vela in pursuit of the 2019 MLS Golden Boot presented by Audi.

Joe Corona and Uriel Antuna added goals for the Galaxy, who moved up three spots into fifth in the West standings after beginning the night outside the seven-team West playoff field. It was the third time LA have scored seven goals in an MLS match, and the first since 1998, after an eight-match stretch in which they had only earned five points to slide down the conference standings.



Felipe Gutierrez scored both goals for Kansas City, coming on either side of seven unanswered by the hosts. Coach Peter Vermes' squad is now six points beneath the playoff line with only four matches remaining.

Goals

24' - SKC - Felipe Gutierrez	32' - LA - Zlatan Ibrahimovic	
48' - LA - Joe Corona	51' - LA - Zlatan Ibrahimovic	
69' - LA - Uriel Antuna	77' - LA - Sebastian Lletget	
79' - LA - Sebastian Lletget	85' - LA - Zlatan Ibrahimovic	86' - SKC - Felipe Gutierrez

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: Sunday's result marks the seventh time in MLS history a team has posted seven or more goals in an MLS match, and the second time this season. The Galaxy are the only club to have done it multiple times, including when they set an MLS record for goals by one club in their 8-1 win over the Dallas Burn on June 4, 1998. By way of their 7-1 win over Montreal back in March, Sporting Kansas City become the first MLS club to score seven and concede seven in separate games in the same MLS season.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: In retrospect, it's easy to forget SKC actually held a lead and were playing well through most of the first half when they caught some poor luck, with the ball striking Matt Besler's arm inside the penalty area. Despite Besler not knowing much about his handball, Ted Unkel had no choice but to point from the spot. Ibrahimovic would go on to score on a rebound after Tim Melia saved his spot kick.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Zlatan Ibrahimovic, with a strong honorable mention to winger Cristian Pavon. For all the turbulence Ibra can cause, the big Swede continues to come up at the biggest moments for the Galaxy. And boy was this match a big moment. It's his second hat trick of the season, after also scoring all the Galaxy's goals in a 3-2 win over LAFc on July 19.

Up Next

LA: Saturday, Sept. 21 vs. Montreal Impact (10:30 pm ET | TVAS, MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in the US)

SKC: Saturday, Sept. 21 vs. Colorado Rapids (8:30 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in the US and DAZN in Canada)

CREDIT: Ian Quillen Contributor

Atlanta United 1, Columbus Crew SC 3

Gyasi Zardes and Luis Diaz scored a goal apiece in the second half and Columbus Crew SC got an own goal five minutes from the final whistle, bagging a 3-1 road victory over Atlanta United at Mercedes-Benz Stadium on Saturday.

Josef Martinez scored the lone goal of the contest for Atlanta in the 19th minute, but Columbus struck for all three of its goals after second-half kickoff to take all three points.

The hosts opened the scoring in the first half after a laser cross from Pity Martinez in the direction of a charging Josef Martinez took a redirected deflection into the net, extending the star striker's MLS-record scoring streak to 14 consecutive matches and giving the Five Stripes a 1-0 lead they would take into the halftime break.

Zardes found the equalizer in the 53rd minute, however, cashing home a rebound finish to the top corner after Atlanta goalkeeper Brad Guzan made a reaction save on a shot from Diaz.

Diaz then found the go-ahead tally for the visitors on the hour mark, slotting home a class finish from just inside the area past Guzan to the far post, giving Crew SC the 2-1 second-half lead and shocking the home crowd.

Crew SC got its final tally of the evening in the 85th minute after a botched clearance attempt from Atlanta center back Miles Robinson snuck past Guzan and into the goal, sealing the 3-1 final.



Goals

19' - ATL - Josef Martinez

60' - CLB - Luis Diaz

53' - CLB - Gyasi Zardes

85' - CLB - Miles Robinson (OG)

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: It doesn't do much to help the Crew's faint playoff hopes, but it was nonetheless an encouraging performance for Caleb Porter's men in one of the league's toughest venues. They can build on this performance as they look to close out the stretch run of the season on a positive note. Atlanta still find themselves comfortably above the playoff line at 15-11-3 and 48 points, but they were soundly outplayed for much of the match. Their shot at claiming the No. 1 seed in the East may have come and gone on Saturday as they are now nine points behind NYCFC.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: Diaz's goal was a gorgeous finish and the culmination of a fantastic response from Columbus coming out of the halftime locker room.

MAN OF THE MATCH: On that note, Diaz also gets the nod here for his second-half heroics. The Costa Rican now has two goals and three assists in 10 games on the season.

Next Up

ATL: Wednesday, Sept. 18 vs. FC Cincinnati (7:30 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in US; DAZN in Canada)

CLB: Saturday, Sept. 21 vs. Vancouver Whitecaps FC (5 pm ET | MLS LIVE on ESPN+ in US; TSN1 in Canada)



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