

Audi
2019 CUP
PLAYOFFS























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#### Alejandro Bedoya inspires Philadelphia's first playoff win: "[He's] the definition of a captain"

Philadelphia Union captain Alejandro Bedoya isn't known for leaving games early.

In arguably his biggest game as a Union player on Sunday, though, Bedoya had to watch from the bench as a cramp kept him from seeing out the final eight minutes of the team's first ever playoff win in a 4-3 extra time thriller on Sun-

day.

"He literally had the quad [injury], he had been kicked about 15 times and put so much into the game, he was incredible on the night," head coach Jim Curtin said. "The definition of a captain, the definition of a leader but no injury there, just some tightness and cramping."

Bedoya was returning from a quad strain, which he said was the first muscle injury of his career picked up in the first half of a 2-0 loss to the Columbus Crew on Sept. 29. He missed the regular season finale, a 2-1 loss at home, on Oct. 6.

With his team down a pair of goals inside the first half hour on Sunday, he stepped up with a momentum-shifting goal to spark Philly's comeback in the 30th minute.

"Fortunately, the goal that Ale scored kind of comes from nothing, it's a quick free kick from Haris [Medunjanin] but that certainly changes the game because the mind is a powerful thing," Curtin said. "When we score that goal, Red Bull has some thoughts on the last time we played here as well so things start to creep back into their minds. So it kind of flipped the momentum."

The Red Bulls momentarily took the momentum back just before halftime when Tom Barlow capitalized on an Andre Blake drop to restore the two-goal lead. But the Union found themselves back on the front foot again in the second half before finishing off the Red Bulls in extra time with key contributions from Fafa Picault and Marco Fabian off the bench.

"I was just pissed off, that third goal," Bedoya said. "It was a cheap goal to give up so that was a bit deflating but at the same time after I got my emotions in check I just said we've been here before."

Bedoya said even behind, he knew they'd get their chances and that he thought they were "the better team." Overcoming a two-goal deficit to win 3-2 at home against the Red Bulls in June certainly played into that thinking.

"It was just a matter of being patient and not letting them get another goal," Bedoya said.

The goals Philadelphia needed came from defender Jack Elliott in the 52nd minute, Picault 12 minutes from full time, and Fabian in stoppage time of the first extra time period.

"We had the wind in the second half and I think our intensity just showed out," Elliott said.

Bedoya's goal was his second his third playoff appearance after scoring in a 3-1 road loss at Toronto FC in 2016. Like all his teammates on the field, Sunday's playoff win was the first of his career.

"That is something that we have not had yet, but now we have it," Curtin said of the win. "Everyone is going to remember this game."

CREDIT: Matthew Ralph Contributor

# DC United admit extratime collapse in Toronto is "hard to process," hail Wayne Rooney's influence

That was not the way it was supposed to end.

Wayne Rooney's era at D.C. United came to a bitter conclusion on Saturday night at BMO Field as his side fell 5-1 to Toronto FC in Round One of the Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs.

D.C. fell behind in the first half, but earned an extra 30 minutes with a dramatic equalizer from Lucas Rodriguez in the third of four minutes of second-half stoppage time. That momentum did not last long, though, as the Black-and-Red coughed up the go-ahead goal three minutes into extratime and would go on to concede three more before the first 15 minutes were up.

"It's hard to process that," D.C. head coach Ben Olsen said post-match. "A lot of emotion to tie it up there late. We

played what I thought was a pretty good game, better chances than them really in regular time... didn't put them away. And then early in the overtime you give up two goals and the wheels come off. They came out with a better mentality after the break, they punished us for it."

To hear D.C. United defender Steve Birnbaum tell it, the extratime collapse was an aberration compared to the rest of his team's season, in which they conceded the second-fewest goals (38) in all of MLS, and only one more than runaway Supporters' Shield winners LAFC.



"It's devastating because we know we're better than that," said Birnbaum. "Our whole season we've prided ourselves on not giving up goals and giving up four in maybe ten minutes was tough."

Equally disappointing as the defensive miscues were the chances left on the table in the 90. Rooney had a bevy of chances, including a clear second-half look that he put right at TFC 'keeper Quentin Westberg and a one-on-one opportunity for Ola Kamara that Westberg also saved.

"We didn't make enough plays to win it in regular time," said Olsen. "And then we threw so much at it in the end, personnel-wise. Going into the overtime our personnel wasn't right. It's disappointing. It's an unfair scoreline when you look at the game itself, in regular time. But they scored five goals and we scored one."

Rooney, who did not speak with reporters after the game, was subbed off in the 105th minute, a move Olsen attributed to nothing "nothing other than getting a fresh body in there" after a putting more than a few miles on his legs during the game. It marked the end of a productive year-and-a-half spell in D.C. for the England superstar, but ultimately one that ended without a playoff win in two attempts as he returns home to play for Derby County FC.

"We wish him the best," said Birnbaum. "We know he's going to go on and do great things. It was a pleasure to play with him. Wanted to play for him, to play with him. I learned a lot from him."

His time in MLS, though brief, left an impact.

"He gave a lot to the organization," began Olsen. "From a team standpoint, on the field, some wonderful moments. He was a great teammate, good to our fans, appreciative of the support we got – the fan base, but also the community of the D.C. area. Personally, it was a joy to work with him, he's made me a better coach."

Added Birnbaum: "One of the greats. Came in last year and turned our team around completely. He's been a great presence for us. We've been lucky to have him. I can't say enough about the person that he is."

That he will not be there tomorrow was still sinking in.

"I hadn't really thought about that it was the last game. Weren't expecting it would be our last game," said D.C. mid-fielder Paul Arriola. "He's helped this club in a lot of ways. I can't tell you enough good things about him. A great friend, a great teammate. I wish we could have done more to continue this run."

CREDIT: James Grossi Contributor

## Are Real Salt Lake playoff dark horses? "We like flying underneath the radar"

Real Salt Lake finished the regular season with two consecutive wins, part of a 3-2-1 run down the stretch. They allowed the third-fewest goals in Major League Soccer and beat all four of the Eastern Conference's top seeds in 2019.

But none of that has created as much buzz as some of the other Western Conference playoff teams have around them right now. And that may just be how RSL likes it.

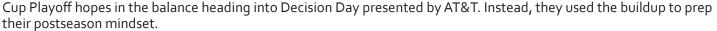
"We like flying underneath the radar," goalkeeper Nick Rimando said. "We're not the highlight team, but we handle our business under cover. That being said, there's no reason we can't make it to MLS Cup."

The Seattle Sounders were the only other team to close out the regular season with consecutive wins, and while RSL may not have been spectacular all year, they were consistent, and that has prompted sky-high confidence for a young team with solid veteran leaders who enjoyed limited playoff success a year ago.

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Official Ticketing Partner of Major League Soccer "I think everybody is buying in on how we're playing and the commitment that needs all around the park, and it shows," Rimando said.

After nerve-jangling conclusions to their previous two regular seasons, RSL didn't leave their Audi 2019 MLS





Part of the lack of buzz is that there isn't one player to focus on for RSL. In a conference with big names like Carlos Vela, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Diego Valeri and plenty more, the team is still the star in Utah.

"It's going to be a collective," head coach Freddy Juarez said. "We feel confident in what our collective defensive shape has been this season. But on the flip side, we have Albert [Rusnak], we have Damir [Kreilach], Sam Johnson, [Jefferson] Savarino, [Joao] Plata and Bofo [Saucedo] can come off the bench if they don't start. Those are all guys who can make a difference in games and we've seen that throughout the season."

Now under-the-radar RSL will face a Portland Timbers team they lost to twice this season in Round One of the Audi MLS Cup Playoffs (Saturday, 10 pm ET | ESPNews, ESPN Deportes in US; TSN4, TVAS in Canada). The same thing happened last year and RSL came away with an unexpected road win over LAFC.

Being higher-ranked and at home gives them a little more to play with than a year ago.

"It's awesome to get another home game," Rimando said. "To play in front of our fans and where we're most comfortable is big for us."



CREDIT: Kevin Nielsen Contributor

#### Toronto FC 5, DC United 1 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs Match Recap

After allowing an equalizer in the third minute of second-half stoppage time, Toronto FC broke out for four goals in the first half of extra time to defeat D.C. United 5-1 on Saturday night at BMO Field in Round One of the Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs.

Richie Laryea finished off a combination with Michael Bradley and Nick DeLeon to give Toronto the lead again, Jonathan Osorio scored twice in an eight-minute stretch, and then DeLeon completed the onslaught with a stunning curler off the underside of the crossbar.

Much earlier, Marky Delgado gave TFC the lead on a rebound after Bill Hamid spilled Alejandro Pozuelo's dipping shot.

It all amounted to Toronto's first playoff victory since winning the 2017 MLS Cup, on a night the Reds played without a pair of injured stars, forward Jozy Altidore (quad) and and defender Omar Gonzalez (hamstring).

Lucas Rodriguez scored the leveler for D.C. off Wayne Rooney's corner kick, flicked on by Frederic Brillant, in a game that marks the end of Rooney's time with the Black-and-Red.

Paul Arriola was sent off for his second bookable offense in the 118th minute, with both cautions coming in the second half of extra time.



32' - TOR - Marco Delgado 90'+3' - DC - Lucas Rodriguez 93' - TOR - Richie Laryea 95' - TOR - Jonathan Osorio 103' - TOR - Jonathan Osorio 105'+1 - TOR - Nick DeLeon



\$12,000 was contributed to the Audi Goals Drive Progress fund

#### Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: Toronto has now scored five goals in three of their 11 postseason games all time, the previous two coming in their run to the 2016 MLS Cup. Meanwhile, D.C. has failed to advance past its opening playoff game for a third consecutive postseason appearance. They were eliminated on penalties following a 2-2 draw with Columbus Crew SC in last year's Knockout Round, and lost 4-2 to the Montreal Impact at the same stage in 2016.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: Only minutes after Rodriguez's goal breathed new life into D.C., they went behind again after a pair of lapses. Arriola turned the ball over to Michael Bradley in his own half and Luciano Acosta failed to disrupt Bradley as he spun toward goal on an attack that ended with Laryea finding the net.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Jonathan Osorio. The Canada international was a part of a second big win at BMO Field in five nights when he pounced for his extra time brace, including a very stylish finish for his second goal.

#### Up Next

TOR: Wednesday, Oct. 23 vs. New York City FC, Eastern Conference semifinals (7 pm ET | FS1, TSN, TVAS) DC: End of the season "Zack's fine," said Berhalter. "He'll play tomorrow."

CREDIT: Ian Quillen Contributor



Tu estacion orgullosamente latina !!!

## Omar Gonzalez, Jozy Altidore out vs. D.C. United in Audi MLS Cup Playoff match

Toronto FC will be without two of their biggest stars against D.C. United on Saturday in their Round One Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoff match.

Omar Gonzalez and Jozy Altidore were not named in Greq Vanney's matchday squad, both suffering from leg injuries. Altidore suffered quad injury in TFC's Decision Day presented by AT&T match against Columbus Crew SC while Gonzalez failed a fitness test prior to the match due to a hamstring injury. Gonzalez was not named on the Reds' injury report entering the match.

In Gonzalez's 14 starts, TFC conceded 1.1 goals per game and averaged 1.9 points per games. In the 20 games he did not, Toronto conceded 1.8 goals per game and averaged just 1.2 points per game.





CREDIT: Benjamin Baer

New Media Editor

## Michael Parkhurst injury further depletes Atlanta United defender depth



Atlanta United survived and advanced against the New England Revolution Saturday in the first round of the MLS Cup playoffs, but it came at a cost in the form of Michael Parkhurst, who left the game early with a shoulder injury.

The 35-year-old center back — who recently announced his retirement upon season's end — collided with an opponent and dislocated his left shoulder according to Atlanta United manager Frank de Boer after the match. Team physios were unable to relocate Parkhurst's arm into the shoulder socket on the field, and he left the stadium in an ambulance to a local hospital with the joint still dislocated.

The injury happened just over a minute into stoppage time after Atlanta United had already used its final sub of the game.

"It's not easy to finish a game with 10 players, so it's unfortunate

what happened to the old man," Josef Martinez said afterward. "In these important games at the end of the season, you always benefit from having experience, so we had quys step up who haven't played a lot of minutes this season. It's unfortunate what happened to Parky."

"Hopefully it's not too serious," said Atlanta United goalkeeper Brad Guzan. "He was obviously massive for our team and was having a fantastic game. A play in the first half when it was 2-v-1 he snuffs that out. So hopefully it's not too serious and he gets well sooner than later."

Frank de Boer speculated in his post-match press conference that the injury was "all bad news" and that it's the type of injury that will probably keep him out for the duration of the playoffs.

"Normally, he's probably out for a couple of weeks," said De Boer. "We have to think about how are we going to solve this. We will enjoy this victory today, but tomorrow, we are going to find out who we play against, and then, I will have to make my decisions on who will play. It's quite thin at the back right now."

Jeff Larentowicz said Parkhurst's injury just means there's an opportunity for another player in the squad, and they'll need to be ready just the way Parkhurst was after Miles Robinson pulled his left hamstring while on duty with the US men's national team.

"About a month and a half ago, me and [Parkhurst] were kind of buried on the bench and not thinking that we were saving ourselves for a playoff game," said Larentowicz. "You have to be ready, and I think with [Parkhurst] now injured for an unknown time, and Miles the same, somebody has to step up."

CREDIT: Joe Patrick Contributor



## What's different about Atlanta United in 2019? Lessons from MLS Cup run provide clues

Ask any Atlanta United fan what they remember about the team's 2018 season, and they're bound to rattle off a list of memories: winning MLS Cup, Josef Martinez winning the Golden Boot and 2018 Landon Donovan MLS MVP awards, Miguel Almiron's leading role – all of it.

What you're unlikely to hear is just how defeated the team was after letting the Supporters' Shield slip through their fingers in a 4-1 loss at Toronto FC to end the regular season. That was only after the manager, Tata Martino, announced that he was leaving at the end of the season.

Talk about a bad week.

"We have to be much, much better in big games," said Michael Parkhurst at the team's training facility almost exactly a year ago. "We know that it doesn't have to be pretty, maybe take a few less risks and lock up defensively. We need to do that, and we haven't done it in big games."

What a difference a year makes.

Atlanta, just in its third year as a club, has won MLS Cup, U.S. Open Cup and Campeones Cup titles since that fateful day in Toronto. The experience of righting the ship before last year's playoff

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run may prove most valuable as the Five Stripes look to repeat as champions, starting with Saturday's matchup (1 pm ET | Univision, TUDN, TVAS, TSN4) against the New England Revolution in Round One of the Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs.

"It was an identity check last year, I think," Julian Gressel said. "We got beat down and [had to] regroup and try to come together and not go at each other, but pull on the same strings and go in the same direction."

A year later, Atlanta arrive at the playoffs with core differences. There's a new manager in Frank de Boer. There are different players through the likes of Pity Martinez, Emerson Hyndman, Justin Meram and Florentin Pogba – all of whom are likely to feature in some capacity on Saturday. There's even the new single-elimination playoff format that Atlanta will have to contend with.

But no difference between the two sides is bigger than an intangible quality: experience.

"Ultimately, what it comes back to is we've been in this situation and we've played important games at home," Gressel said. "We've made the run before as where other teams have not. I hope that experience will pay off a little bit and we have that edge going into this."

There are lessons from last year's playoff run that could apply when the East's No. 2 seed takes to Mercedes-Benz Stadium, according to midfielder Darlington Nagbe. They've learned and recalibrated, even as some of the XI has changed.

"Last year the way we did it, being able to make a run through the playoffs, switching up our style of play a little bit in the playoffs, I think lets us know that playoffs are different," Nagbe said. "You can play well in the regular season and get by, but I think you need to turn it up a little bit in the playoffs in terms of energy. The opponent is trying a lot harder, as well. It's different when you know if you lose you're going home."

While Gressel and Nagbe made references to Atlanta's pragmatic approach in the 2018 playoffs, it's not entirely clear what a more-pragmatic version of De Boer's team looks like.

Since mid-summer, the Dutch manager has deployed an aggressive 3-4-3 shape after the team struggled for goals in the first half of the season. De Boer then shifted his team to a back four in the second half of his team's 3-1 win over the Revolution last weekend, leaving open the possibility of a new team shape. That's particularly true after MLS Defender of the Year candidate Miles Robinson suffered a hamstring injury while with the US men's national team. The center back is currently out week-to-week.

However Atlanta takes to the field, expect a certain wisdom that only comes from being here before.

"The biggest thing is we recognize moments to [go forward] and moments to not do it," Nagbe said. "That's the biggest thing, and I don't know if it's Frank [de Boer] as much as it is guys on the field. If you feel it, then go, but if you don't feel like it's a time to go, then wait a little bit."

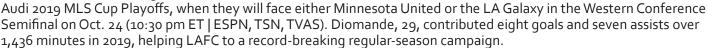
CREDIT: Joe Patrick Contributor

## MLS reinstates LAFC forward Adama Diomande after SABH program assessment

LAFC forward Adama Diomande has been reinstated by Major League Soccer, the league announced Friday.

Diomande voluntarily entered MLS's Substance Abuse and Behavioral Health (SABH) program on Sept. 20 and was assessed by SABH program doctors. He has been cleared to resume all team activities, including competition.

Diomande's return comes just under a week before LAFC's first game of the



CREDIT: MLSsoccer staff



### Pity Martinez left out of Atlanta United starting XI in Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoff opener

It has been an up-and-down first season in Atlanta for Pity Martinez. That theme continued into the postseason. The 2018 South American Footballer of the Year and most expensive acquisition in MLS history had five goals and nine assists in his first season with the Five Stripes and traded barbs with head coach Frank de Boer earlier this season. More recently, he was dropped from De Boer's starting XI on Decision Day presented by AT&T and did not appear off the bench.

On Saturday, in Atlanta's 1-0 win over the New England Revolution in the Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs, Martinez did not get off the bench again. De Boer opted for Ezequiel Barco in the starting lineup after the 20-year-old started and played 63 minutes on Decision Day. It was Barco's 11th start of the season.

"I always put the team in what — in my point of view and in good conversation with my staff — which team can have the most chance to win," said De Boer earlier this week. "If it's with both [Barco and Pity] then it's with both. If it's with one of them, it's with one of them. I will choose what I think is the best chance that we can win the game. It doesn't always mean you put your best players on the pitch, but in my point of view, you put your best team on the pitch."

Joining Pity on the bench was Eric Remedi, who was on the bench for the third straight match. On the backline, Michael Parkhurst replaced Miles Robinson, who suffered a hamstring injury while on international duty with the US men's national team. Parkhurst would leave the match in stoppage time due to a shoulder injury.

On the other side, Scott Caldwell replaced Luis Caicedo in central midfield for the Revolution. Caicedo started 22 of the Revs' last 24 matches while Caldwell has played 90 minutes just once since May 4.



CREDIT: Benjamin Baer New Media Editor



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