



HOLMOOD ENDING

A Hollywood screenwriter couldn't have dreamed up MLS Cup 2022 any better. LAFC are top of the league, emerging as first-time champions from Saturday's epic championship match at Banc of California Stadium, beating the Philadelphia Union on penalty kicks after a 3-3 draw for the ages – and also making the hosts the first team to complete a Cup-Supporters' Shield double since Toronto FC in 2017.

Gareth Bale's thunderous 128th-minute equalizing header sent the game into penalty kicks, showing exactly why the Black & Cold signed the superstar forward this summer as he left Real Madrid. That canceled out a possible man-of-the-match performance from Philly center back Jack Elliott, whose first equalizer booked extra frames, and then his go-ahead 124thminute strike pushed the Union on the verge of a first MLS Cup trophy.

But Bale came up huge with the final whistle nearing, and back-up goalkeeper John McCarthy took the hero's cape in the PK shootout by saving two Union efforts – from Jose Martinez and Kai Wagner – after Daniel Gazdag sent the Eastern Conference champions' first attempt over the crossbar.

LAFC first got scores from Denis Bouanga and Ryan Hollingshead in PKs, then Ilie Sanchez's game-winner from the spot sealed a 3-0 advantage for the Black & Gold from 12 yards out. From there, Gelebrations ensued for the Western Conference champions before their 3252 supporters Section – all in a final that pitted the league's top two teams against each other for the first time since 2003.

But the storyline, among many, might be McCarthy. The Philadelphia native and former Union goalkeeper was subbed on in the 117th minute after LAFC's starting goalkeeper, Maxime Crepeau was shown a red card when a Video Review decision reduced the hosts to 10 men. Crepeau also got hurt on the play, suffering a serious-looking leg injury after colliding with Philly forward Cory Burke following an under-hit back-pass; referee Ismail Elfath originally brandished a yellow card that was later upgraded.

All that drama was just during extra time and PKs, as the game reached a new level with each passing period. LAFC midfielder Kellyn Acosta (deflected free kick) and defender Jesus Murillo (corner-kick header) both scored during regulation time, and the Union equalized each time via Gazdag (near-range shot) and Elliott (free-kick header) to make it 2-2.

From there, the Tinseltown effect took over – Elliott's almost-winner, Bale's towering header and McCarthy's PK heroics – to cap an MLS Cup Final that can only be called legendary.

BUL S FIZZIE N TOBONO CONTENT

here are trap games, though it wasn't one Sunday in Toronto when the Bulls lost 113-104 to a good Toronto Raptors team.

There are traps in football, which we suspect Bears quarterback Justin Fields also used Sunday to set an NFL quarterback rushing record.

There are suggestions to shut your trap, which Bulls guard Goran Dragić portrayed with his shush finger signal after making a fourth-three pointer amidst game long booing.

There's a trap in baseball when you almost catch the ball on a short hop and a trap to catch and disable a large animal, like perhaps a velociraptor.

But not for the Bulls against the eponymous NBA team that showed the Bulls, and namely star DeMar DeRozan, the most effective trapping defense since the Milwaukee Bucks exploded the Bulls in last year's playoffs. The fuse took a bit longer this time to burn down and with somewhat less damage as the Bulls merely fizzled out to a 5-6 record for this season. But the effect and the impact was explosively similar in the way the Raptors "held" DeRozan to a pedestrian—for him—20 points and nine shots after 46 points Friday in Boston. While the Bulls were unable to adorn DeRozan with the trapping of success with shooting to avoid the defeat.

There were some efforts as Nikola Vučević had 18 points, 12 rebounds and six assists, but was not involved inside enough after halftime. Dragić had 16 points and four of six threes amidst the heckling from his disinclination as a Raptor last year to reside somewhere other than Slovenia or the U.S. Ayo Dosunmu had 15 points and Patrick Williams added 13 points.



Fred Van Vleet had 30 points and 11 assists for the Raptors on Sunday night.

But Toronto's mini-mite Fred VanVleet terrorized the Bulls backcourt for 30 points, 11 assists and some crucial three pointers. And especially the long-armed and languid Raptors players bewildered the Bulls with steals, offensive rebounds, blocks and all those hustle plays that usually belong to the Greens, Joneses and Carusos of Bulls personality.

The Raptors had a 23-15 margin on the offensive boards, though the Bulls helped by countering with various all-guard or small forward lineups that enabled the Raptors to often look like they were practicing tip drills. Toronto doubled the Bulls on second chance points and had 11 steals that helped lead to 23 points against the Bulls on turnovers.

It hurt the Bulls that backup center Andre Drummond remained out injured along with Coby White. Zach LaVine rested his knee and himself on the first of a back to back with Toronto in the United Center Monday. But it is difficult to make an excuse with Toronto missing its best player, Pascal Siakam, who is in the early season MVP talk.

"Certainly they are a hard team to rebound against with our size," said Bulls coach Billy Donovan. "A couple of times we had to give help in the post and they kicked out and the shot goes up, and sometimes (we're) having a hard time (rebounding). Some of the turnovers were careless. I think we had six the last the last six minutes of the first half and ended up with nine."

That was by halftime after Toronto turned a 30-21 Bulls first quarter lead into a 55-49 Bulls halftime. The Bulls staggered to the locker room with four turnovers and then a Caruso missed three. The headband hustler had a rare rebounds/assists double/double starting for LaVine. The last Bull to do that was current Raptor Thad Young two years ago. But Caruso shot one of 11 and missed all six of his threes as the Raptors frequently left him ample room to try.

BEARS FALL TO DOLPHINS IN SOLDIER FIELD SHOOTOUT



ARTICLE BY: GABBY HAJDUK

While quarterback Justin Fields had a record-breaking day as the Bears offense continued to ascend, the defense once again struggled throughout a 35-32 loss to the Dolphins Sunday at Soldier Field.

With 178 rushing yards, Fields broke the record for most rushing yards by a quarterback in a regular-season game in NFL history held by Michael Vick, who ran for 173 yards Dec. 1, 2002 against the Vikings. He also broke the record for the longest TD run by a quarterback in Bears history on a 61-yard score in the third quarter.

The second-year pro earned a 106.7 QB rating after completing 17 of 28 pass attempts for 123 yards and three passing touchdowns, helping him account for all but 67 of the Bears' 368 total yards of offense.

"It felt good," Fields said of his performance. "Credit to God, of course. Without him, I wouldn't be here. I felt like we played well today as an offense. O-Line blocked great, receivers did what they needed to do in the passing game, downfield blocking, so I think everybody did their part today."

The Bears nearly came back from three double-digit deficits as back-to-back defensive stops late in the game gave the offense a chance to take the lead twice. Facing third-and-10 on the Bears' final possession, Fields threw deep to receiver Chase Claypool who was defended by two Dolphins on the play. While it looked like Claypool was interfered with on the play, no flag was thrown. On the ensuing fourth down play, Fields threw to receiver Equanimeous St. Brown, but he failed to haul in the pass, sealing the game.

"Hard-fought battle," coach Matt Eberflus said, "Disappointed with the loss, and didn't come out the way we wanted to at the very end but certainly excited about the way the guys fought and battled at the very at the end of the game to get those stops on defense. I thought that was really good.".

Miami's offense was just as explosive with quarterback Tua Tagovailoa completing 21 of 30 passes for 302 yards and three TDs to earn a 135.7 rating. Receivers Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle dominated, combining for 228 yards and 12 catches while each scoring a touchdown.

"We were facing obviously two really good receivers today with two of the top-5 receivers, and we need to do better job against those guys of jamming and disrupting at the line of scrimmage," Eberflus said. "I didn't think we did a very good job of that, and also getting guys up underneath them the way we had planned during the course of the week. We needed to execute better on those items."

BEARS FALL TO DOLPHINS IN SOLDIER FIELD SHOOTOUT

The Bears (3-6) took a 3-0 lead on the opening possession with a 32-yard field goal by kicker Cairo Santos. Fields completed passes to tight end Cole Kmet and receiver Dante Pettis to start the drive. On third-and-2, Fields' deep ball to Claypool was incomplete, but cornerback Keion Crossen was called for pass interference, allowing the Bears to reach the Miami 20.

Miami (6-3) quickly grabbed a 7-3 lead on their first drive with a 1-yard touchdown run by running back Raheem Mostert. After completing deep balls to receivers Waddle and Trent Sherfield, Tagovailoa took a shot from the Chicago 33 to Hill in the end zone. Cornerback Kindle Vildor was flagged for pass interference on the play, setting up first-and-goal at the 1. Fields then threw an 18-yard touchdown pass to Kmet, putting the Bears back on top 10-7 with 14:52 remaining in the first half. On first-and-10, Fields faked a handoff to running back Khalil Herbert, spun right to avoid pressure and found Kmet in the flat. The tight end took it into the end zone with help from St. Brown blocking near the goal line. The 15-play, 75yard drive was fueled by a 12-yard catch by Claypool and a 12-yard scramble from Fields on 3rd-and-8.

"I think [Claypool] did a great job this week, studying and preparing for the game," Fields said. "For the plays that he was in, he did the right thing. I think the more reps he gets, the more comfortable he's going to get with the offense, and of course the more detailed he'll be with each and every route."

The Dolphins took a 14-10 lead as Tagovailoa connected with Hill in the end zone for a 3-yard TD. Tagovailoa completed all five pass attempts on the drive for 73 yards while a roughing the passer penalty on defensive end Dominique Robinson set up another first-and-goal for Miami.

Miami extended its lead to 21-14 as Jaelan Phillips blocked Trenton Gill's first punt of the day. Andrew Van Ginkel recovered the ball then returned it 25 yards for a touchdown.

The Bears offense responded with a 12-play, 75-yard touchdown drive to cut the deficit to 21-17 just after the two-minute warning. On third-and-8 from the 16, Fields dropped back and hit leaping receiver Darnell Mooney in the left corner of the end zone for the score. The offense utilized the ground game efficiently as Fields had 26 rushing yards while running back David Montgomery carried it four times for 15 yards.

While Tagovailoa led the Dolphins down the field again with a 39-yard completion to Hill, the Bears got a third down stop to force a 29-yard field goal attempt. But kicker Jason Sanders missed it wide left seven seconds before halftime and the Bears took a knee to go into the break.

Out of halftime, it took the Dolphins just four plays to go 75 yards and score another touchdown, increasing their lead to 28-17. Tagovailoa connected with Hill for 22 yards then completed a 28-yard pass to Wilson. After a 7-yard run by Wilson, Tagovailoa found Waddle in the end zone for an 18-yard score.

Fields answered right away with a 61-yard touchdown run followed by a two-point conversion to pull the Bears within one score at 28-25. On third-and-6, Fields faced pressure and escaped the pocket, then made multiple Dolphins defenders miss as he broke free for the longest touchdown rush ever by a Bears quarterback. Fields then found tight end Trevon Wesco wide open in the end zone to convert the two-point attempt.

"We were expecting man on that play," Fields said. "They went with motion to man and on the snap they went to zone. I was looking for [Mooney], stepping up in the pocket looking for Moon and right when I was about to throw it to him he turned around. So, I kind of had to pull the ball back and at that point, instincts took over, and of course the long run and he made a great block downfield."

However, the Bears defense allowed a third touchdown pass from Tagovailoa to put Miami up 35-25 with 6:02 to play in the third quarter. The Dolphins faced third-and-7 from the 10, but Tagovailoa threw it to Wilson near the left sideline and the RB dove across the goal line for the score.

The Bears offense kept fighting as Fields threw his third touchdown of the day, connecting with Kmet from four yards out, the tight end's second score of the day, to cut the deficit down to 35-32 with 11:38 to play. Fields continued to dominate with his legs, adding 14-yard and 17-yard runs for first downs.



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