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Recommended Citation

Truog, Danial, "2024-10-24 Sounders and Timbers Duel to a Draw on Decision Day" (2024). *The Spectator Online*. 1357.

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Sounders and Timbers Duel to a Draw on Decision Day

Daniel Truog, Sports & Opinion Editor

The wind and rain did little to quell the flames of a Major League Soccer (MLS) rivalry between the two teams most accustomed to playing in miserable conditions. A hotly anticipated matchup between the Seattle Sounders and Portland Timbers ended with a 1-1 draw in the last game of the MLS regular season at Lumen Field Oct. 19.

The matchup was one of the most intense games of the MLS season, with a lot on the line for both teams. The Sounders hoped to break their seven-year rivalry dry spell, not having beaten the Timbers at home since May of 2017. The Timbers narrowly came away as winners of the Cascadia Cup, having the most goals in Cascadia Cup play this year. Had the Sounders scored a second goal, they would have claimed the regional trophy.

Saturday was not just a climactic finish for these two teams.

MLS Decision Day, the final day of the regular season, saw 13 other games played across the country to determine the final standings for the 2024 regular season.

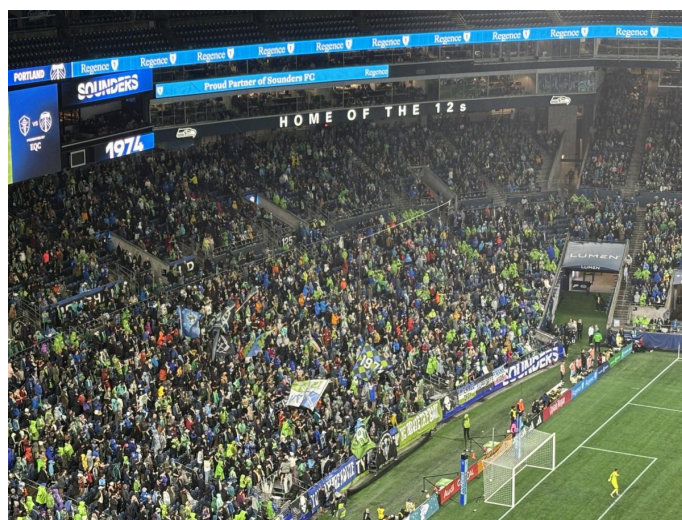
The most disappointing result of these other games for Sounders fans came at the same field where Seattle Reign FC received bad news the week prior. At America First Field in Utah, Real Salt Lake bested the Vancouver Whitecaps 2-1. This win elevated Real Salt Lake to third in the MLS, bumping the Sounders down to fourth in the Western Conference.

Most Sounders games do not open the upper levels of Lumen Field for seating. But with a season-high 36,341 fans in attendance, this tense rivalry game required more seating for everyone curious to see how things would shake out.

Morgan Hoff, a Sounders fan since 2009, left the game disappointed with the outcome but looking forward to the playoffs. He's been to plenty of games but Sounders-Timbers games are special.

"It's always my favorite game to go to. It's the most lively of all the games, the most fans come and it's the most festive," Hoff said.

Sounders fans were rewarded for their support in the 37th minute when a header from Yéimar Gomez Andrade got past Portland goalie James Pantemis. Excitement in the stands hit a new peak after the defender's first goal of the season. However, the Sounders weren't the only ones who brought their energy to Lumen Field.



Daniel Truog

Lumen Field during a Sounders-Timbers Soccer game Oct. 19.

Tucked deep in the northernmost corner of the upper deck, the raucous Timbers fan section refused to slow down after the Sounders scored. The fans started chanting and jumping before kickoff and didn't stop for a moment. At the break between halves, Timbers fan Nathan Mizrachi shared his thoughts on the team's season.

"We've been so fun to watch this year," Mizrachi said. "It's been pretty cool to watch Evander bust moves on people."

Evander, a Portland midfielder, hails from Brazil and would go on to set up Antony for the Timbers' only goal in the 68th minute.

Mizrachi, who became a Timbers supporter in 2017, came to Seattle for the day. Like many other Portland supporters, he wore a vest adorned with patches that made his loyalty clear. A passing fan's vest featured a patch mocking the "Seattle Flounders."

"I like Seattle," Mizrachi said. "Really cool city. I hate the team, but love the city."

Ryan Watts, a fourth-year finance major at Seattle University, attended the match with little allegiance or investment in the season's conclusion.

"I didn't really come into this game with a whole lot of love for either side, to be honest," Watts said.

Coming to Seattle U from Oregon, Watts previously played on a club team affiliated with the Timbers but did not have the best experience. He had a great time at the rivalry match but left the game disappointed by the Sounders' ability to turn shots into goals.

"When [the Sounders] were down a player, I thought for sure that Portland would have taken a little opportunity and made something happen," Watts said. "[The Sounders] had a few really good opportunities that they just couldn't finish."

Finishing with a draw softened the purported decisiveness of Decision Day for Seattle and Portland. But the Sounders are still entering the MLS postseason in a strong position. Seattle has home-field advantage for the first round of playoffs, where they will face Houston Dynamo FC. The first game will be played Oct. 28.