



## WESTERN CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS - 2L

### FC DALLAS v COLORADO RAPIDS

Sat., Oct. 28, Pizza Hut Park (7:30 p.m. MT; Altitude)

**LEAGUE HEAD-TO-HEAD:** COL 14 wins, 51 GF; DAL 20 wins, 70 GF; 7 ties  
**2006 HEAD-TO-HEAD:** DAL 3 win, 9 GF; COL 0 wins, 3 GF; 1 tie

**AT PIZZA HUT PARK:**

6/24: DAL 1, COL 0 (Cooper 32)

7/29: DAL 4, COL 1 (Rhine 8; Nunez 71, 74; Cooper 90 – Beckerman 34)

**MLS CUP PLAYOFFS:** COL 3 wins, 11 GF; DAL 2 wins, 10 GF; 3 draws



**REFEREE:** Abbey Okulaja.

SAR (bench): Greg Barkey; JAR (opposite): George Vergara  
 4th: Ricardo Salazar

**INJURY REPORT:** COLORADO RAPIDS – OUT: MF Terry Cooke (R groin); FW Luchi Gonzalez (groin); QUESTIONABLE: DF Aitor Karanka (R hamstring); PROBABLE: DF Dan Gargan (R ankle) ...  
 FC DALLAS – OUT: GK Jeff Cassar (R hip), QUESTIONABLE: FW Carlos Ruiz (R quadriceps)

**SUSPENDED:** COL: FW Thiago Martins (through Oct. 29)

**WARNINGS** (suspended if yellow card in next game played):

DAL: Carlos Ruiz ... COL: Kyle Beckerman, Dan Gargan



**The biggest decision before the first leg** was who would start in goal for FC Dallas. Despite missing the final four matches of the regular season, head coach Colin Clarke tabbed Dario Sala - and the Argentinian responded with six saves as the Hoops ran out 2-1 winners. "He made some big saves and kept us in it. He had a good game. He was sharp," Clarke said. "It wasn't surprising. He had worked during the week and looked good. Our only concern was the calf being 100 percent and that he didn't hurt it or pull it. That would have been it for his season right there." Said Bobby Rhine: "I thought he looked really sharp. He made a couple of big saves. Even on the goal, he made a great save on the first shot. I thought he had a good game back there." ... After scoring the first goal, FC Dallas weathered a storm over the remainder of the first half that only saw Colorado pull level. But Abe Thompson's goal gave the lead for good. "I thought our boys were absolutely magnificent. They showed a lot of character. We got the early goal and then they came at us and caused us some problems. But we held in there and come out in the second half and did a great job," Clarke said. "It's halftime and we are 2-1 up. There is still a long way to go." ... Once again, it was the skill of Ronnie O'Brien that led to the game-winner. "I looked up and Abe had about 10 yards of space on the back post. I thought he was offside but I was able to get the ball to him," O'Brien said. "He had a great touch and a great finish so he gets all the accolades for the game-winning goal." Said Clarke: "That is [Ronnie O'Brien's] strength. He has great vision. He picks up his head and whips in a great cross." ... The Hoops still have to put aside memories of last year, when the Rapids were able to grind out a 2-2 draw over 120 minutes in the second leg (following a goalless first leg), Colorado eventually advancing on penalty kicks. "Last year is the playoffs that hurts the most because it was this group of guys," Clarke said.

**The Rapids are facing their biggest road test** of the season. But away from Denver they've not seen much success. They won just twice on the road in 16 games -- last on Sept. 2 (going 0-2-3 in their final five away matches). Both road victories came by 1-0 scorelines -- which would guarantee only a penalty kick shootout in the second leg. The Rapids also haven't won in Dallas since May 2001 (12 meetings in all competitions), and haven't won by two goals there since July 1999. Still, said midfielder Pablo Mastroeni to the Denver Post: "I'll give it to you in very plain, simple English, and that is quit thinking and just play. That's it. No thought, just go out there and play, end of story. There's no theme, there's no rhyme, there's no motivation, there's nothing - just go out and play. I could be articulate about it if you want. We've been articulate all year, and it hasn't gotten us anywhere." ... The Rapids must also find a way to stop an FC Dallas attack that scored 28 goals at home (third-most in MLS) while also posting the best home record over the regular season. "We've had the worst defense in (MLS) this year, and you want to say it's not reflective of who we are, but I think it is," goalkeeper Joe Cannon said to the Post. "Those mistakes are things that we've made all year long. It's just disappointing and frustrating because I feel the potential of the group is so much better." ... Rapids boss Fernando Clavijo could have some injury concerns. Terry Cooke, the league's assist leader, is out for the second leg with a groin injury, and while Jacob Peterson is expected to be ready in the other wide midfield role, he has been slowed by a thigh injury. Central defender Aitor Karanka was forced from the field after just 28 minutes with a hamstring injury, but Clavijo will have Mike Petke back from a first-leg suspension. Right back Dan Gargan has also been slowed by a knock suffered in the first game. Chris Wingert came in for Karanka in the first leg and could reprise that role; along with Hunter Freeman and Eric Denton, Wingert is a candidate to play as fullback if Gargan cannot play.



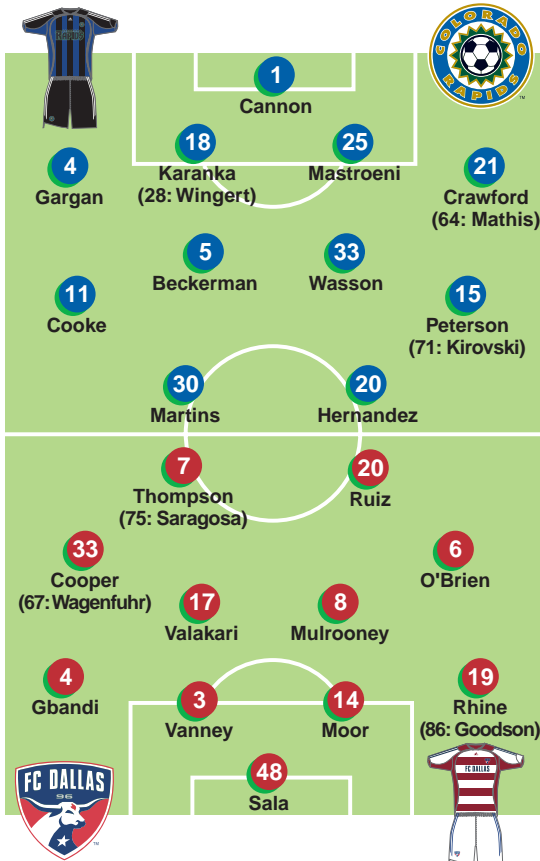
FC DALLAS		COLORADO RAPIDS	
SUBSTITUTES FROM		SUBSTITUTES FROM	
1	Hislop GK	3	Denton DF
5	Saragosa MF	4	Gargan MF
9	Mina FW	9	Mathis MF
10	Nunez MF	10	Nkong MF
11	Goodson DF	13	Tarley FW
12	Alvarez MF	14	Noel FW
13	McCarty MF	16	Wingert DF
16	Wagenfuhr DF	18	Karanka DF
18	Smith MF	22	Jordan GK
21	Yi DF	24	Coundoul GK
22	Dello-Russo DF	26	Harvey DF
23	Wagner DF	27	Keel DF
24	Moore MF	31	Gotsmanov FW
25	Oduro FW	32	King FW
27	Pitchkolan MF		
30	Burse GK		



**1 COLORADO RAPIDS v FC DALLAS 2**  
Sat., Oct. 21, Invesco Field (A: 4,176)



DAL -- Carlos Ruiz 1 (Chris Gbandi 1) 15  
COL -- Terry Cooke 1 (unassisted) 23  
DAL -- Abe Thompson 1 (Ronnie O'Brien 1) 55



REFEREE: Hilario Grajeda.

SAR (bench): Thomas Supple; JAR (opposite): Rob Fereday;  
4th: Abbey Okulaja

**TOTAL SHOTS:** 17 (Martins 5)  
**SHOTS ON GOAL:** 7 (Hernandez 3)  
**FOULS:** 13 (Hernandez 4)  
**OFFSIDES:** 4 (Martins 2)  
**CORNER KICKS:** 6  
**SAVES:** 2 (Cannon 2)

**TOTAL SHOTS:** 6 (6 tied with 1)  
**SHOTS ON GOAL:** 4 (4 tied with 1)  
**FOULS:** 13 (Valakari, Vanney 3)  
**OFFSIDES:** 3 (Ruiz 2)  
**CORNER KICKS:** 2  
**SAVES:** 6 (Sala 6)

**CAUTIONS**

Gargan 57 (Reckless Foul)  
Beckerman 86 (Dissent)

**EJECTIONS**

Martins 88 (Serious Foul Play)

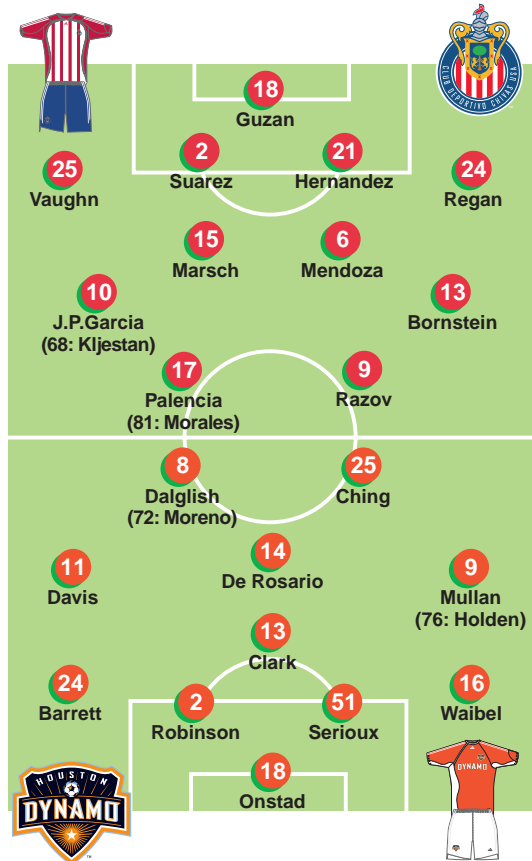
Excellent goalkeeping from Dario Sala and opportunistic goals from Carlos Ruiz and Abe Thompson gave FC Dallas a 2-1 victory in the first game of their Western Conference Semifinal Series against the Colorado Rapids. Ruiz put FCD into the lead after 15 minutes with a goal shrouded in some controversy. A throw-in went over his head, and as he spun away from Colorado defender Aitor Karanka, there were appeals for a handball. But Ruiz continued in alone on goal and slotted the ball under Joe Cannon. The Rapids pulled level eight minutes later. Thiago Martins lashed a shot off the post, but Terry Cooke followed up after it flashed across the goal and curled into the net. But the Hoops pulled back in front 10 minutes after the second-half restart. Ronnie O'Brien floated a terrific crossfield pass, finding Abe Thompson beyond the back post, and after bringing down the ball he stabbed home a tight-angle shot - though there were Colorado appeals for offside. The Rapids were left a man down in the 88th minute when Martins was sent off for elbowing substitute Clarence Goodson after they jostled for possession.



**2 CHIVAS USA v HOUSTON DYNAMO 1**  
Sun., Oct. 22, The Home Depot Center (A: 15,110)



CHV -- Ante Razov 1 (unassisted) 45  
CHV -- Juan Francisco Palencia 1 (Sacha Kljestan 1) 68  
HOU -- Brian Ching 1 (Brian Mullan 1, Craig Waibel 1) 75



REFEREE: Jorge Gonzalez.

SAR (bench): Nate Clement; JAR (opposite): Craig Lowry;  
4th: Brian Hall

**TOTAL SHOTS:** 9 (Palencia 9)  
**SHOTS ON GOAL:** 4 (Palencia 2)  
**FOULS:** 4 (Palencia 2)  
**OFFSIDES:** 0  
**CORNER KICKS:** 3  
**SAVES:** 9 (Guzan 9)

**TOTAL SHOTS:** 15 (Ching 5)  
**SHOTS ON GOAL:** 10 (Ching, DeRosario 3)  
**FOULS:** 9 (3 tied with 2)  
**OFFSIDES:** 2 (Ching, Dalglish 1)  
**CORNER KICKS:** 8  
**SAVES:** 2 (Onstad 2)

**CAUTIONS**

Mendoza 38 (Reckless Foul)

**CAUTIONS**

De Rosario 37 (Reckless Foul)  
Onstad 46+ (Dissent)

Chivas USA won their first-ever playoff game in dramatic fashion, defeating Houston Dynamo 2-1 to open their semifinal series. Ante Razov gave Chivas the lead just before halftime, curling a delicate free kick over the wall and inside Pat Onstad's left-hand post. Midway through the second half Juan Francisco Palencia - one of a number of Chivas starters who returned from injury for the match - doubled the lead. The former Mexican international flicked a powerful inside the near post from a Sacha Kljestan free kick from beyond the right corner of the Dynamo box. But Brian Ching halved the lead seven minutes later from a well-worked goal, driving home a low Brian Mullan cross from the right corner with a first-time strike. Then three minutes from the end, Ching was bundled over from behind by Jason Hernandez as he nearly got in alone on goal, and referee Jorge Gonzalez pointed to the stop. But second-year goalkeeper Brad Guzan guessed correctly, diving to his left to smother Dwayne De Rosario's effort and send Chivas to Texas holding a slim advantage in the series.