

Every game matters for Vancouver Whitecaps as season enters stretch run in wild Western Conference

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Just like in the Wild West, existential justice is settled with honour, a quick draw, and an unspoken respect in Major League Soccer's Western Conference.

As the defending MLS Cup champion Los Angeles Galaxy ride into town for a [Saturday night showdown](#), the Vancouver Whitecaps are in the 5th and final playoff spot in the Western Conference with 36 points.

That's the same spot where the Whitecaps finished last season, which isn't a fair representation of [the progress they've made since then](#). That's because the Western Conference standings are tighter and more volatile than a coiled-up rattlesnake. The gap between 2nd and 8th is just six points; two games, that go one way or the other, the only difference between being among the league's best or in second-last place.

Led by Camilo's league-leading 14 goals, the Whitecaps have already scored more goals this season than they did in the entire 2012 campaign. They have a deeper squad and are routinely playing in front of [a sold-out B.C. Place crowd](#) where they have a 8-3-1 record, yet one bad result over the next two months could wreck all aspirations of a post-season repeat.

It's a fine line between what's deemed a success or a failure but the frontier has a way of being like that.

Vancouver's playoff push did receive a positive boost. Captain Jay Demerit, who was expected to miss most of the regular season after rupturing his Achilles tendon in this year's opening match, could [earn a spot on the substitutes bench](#) against Los Angeles. His return will give coach Martin Rennie even more depth on his back line, given the

emergence of off-season signing Johnny Leveron, but make Rennie's selection of the starting XI [even more difficult](#).

Along with the rest of MLS, Vancouver will have a keen eye down I-5 on Sunday night when Seattle hosts Portland in Clint Dempsey's home debut, which is arguably [the most highly anticipated MLS match of all-time](#). Here's a statement that isn't arguable: it certainly won't be the last match that will capture the Whitecaps' attention over the next two months.

Vancouver has 10 games left to play this season, evenly split between home and road and only one is against a team outside of the Western Conference. Every dropped point, especially at home, will be agonizing and the standings will differ dramatically from week to week.

The stretch run is here and the Whitecaps are well-equipped to stay in the fight. [Giddy up, cowboy](#).

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