



Marseille's Alexis Sanchez celebrates after scoring a goal during a French League match against Auxerre at the Velodrome stadium in Marseille, France, on April 30, 2023.

DANIEL COLE Associated Press (AP photo)

MLS

Continued from B1

now than ever, despite some baseless rumors in the past.

The question would be where he lands and how much he'd make. Would Ramos require a DP spot? If that's the only way to add him, would it be worth it in this version of MLS?

The 38-year-old made 33 appearances across all competitions for Sevilla this season, showing he still has juice in those legs after making 671 appearances for Real Madrid and oversteering his trophy cabinet.

Any teams that need a defensive anchor and a culture-setter could do much worse, and the incoming San Diego FC are one of those teams. Chucky Lozano (who is in advanced talks with San Diego) and Ramos would be a great push to center stage for an expansion club. Another obvious option is LAFC, given the market (the LA Galaxy don't have a DP spot and already have TWO center backs 35 or older) and their recent history. Hey, why not Austin FC?

Best fits: San Diego, LAFC, Austin

Nacho

Another Real Madrid center-back with a stocked trophy cabinet, Nacho will depart his boyhood club this summer after 368 senior appearances across 13 years with the club (23 years if you count youth levels).

Like Ramos, the same benefits and questions apply. Nacho would undoubtedly be an asset to any team in the league on the field, but at what budget charge? Also like Ramos, he continues to be linked to a move to the United States. Nacho is 34, so his age is a bit more appealing than Ramos, though his individual accolades didn't nearly hit Ramos' peak.

Once again, San Diego would make sense as a landing spot for a great defender in this league and for a culture-setter from day one. Sporting KC isn't afraid of a veteran Spaniard, and Austin needs more defensive help, though I'd be surprised if they used a DP spot there.

Best fits: San Diego, Sporting KC, Austin

Marco Reus

Marco Reus joined Borussia Dortmund in 2012 and now, a dozen years and huge successes later, the former German international will become a free agent this summer.

Naturally, MLS is an option. Specifically, as The Athletic reported on Wednesday, there have been preliminary talks with St. Louis City to potentially reunite with his good pal and former Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Bürki.

Reus turns 35 this month and hasn't surpassed 1,500 league minutes in either of the last two seasons. He was still very productive — 11 goals and 13 assists in just under 2,800 minutes — but for the investment any MLS team would make, health would be a risk.

The deal would almost certainly require a DP spot, so only clubs with that flexibility will be considered.

Beyond St. Louis, several clubs make sense for Reus, Chicago has gone big-star hunting (Sheridan, Shaqiri, Bastian Schweinsteiger) in recent years, LAFC getting a shot for similar reasons, though they've had far more success with that approach.

Best fits: St. Louis, Chicago, LAFC

Alexis Sanchez

At 35 years old and with a lot of mileage on him, Alexis Sanchez may be a risky signing for an MLS club. He also still could be a

star in this league.

Sanchez didn't have a regular role with Inter Milan this season as it won the league title, but he's still just 12 months removed from an excellent season with Marseille in which he scored 18 goals with three assists in just under 3,500 minutes.

The Chilean legend would fit particularly well at a club where he can play off a traditional forward, be it as a second striker or an inside forward role out wide (with minimal defensive duties).

Teams that fit that bill and can sign a DP include Chicago, Houston and Real Salt Lake. The latter two aren't usually markets that host to stars with the name recognition Sanchez has, and couldn't outbid Chicago if Chicago did indeed want him, but he'd fit their respective squads.

Best fits: Chicago, Houston, RSL

Memo Ochoa

After a quick Italian sojourn, venerable Mexican goalkeeper Memo Ochoa will be a free agent this summer and seems likely to return to North America.

Ochoa has been linked with San Diego, but sources briefed on the situation say there are no active talks and the club currently does not have any plans to pursue the goalkeeper. It's likely he could get more money at a big club in Liga MX as no MLS club would make him a DP and there aren't a ton of teams who currently need a goalkeeper — but it's still possible he could land in the U.S.

San Jose needs a boost in goal but only for the short term, as starting goalkeeper Sherrie Westwood will be back in 2025 (and maybe by the end of this year) after undergoing hamstring surgery. New England signed Aljaz Ivacic and is probably set in that department, but we'll see.

Best fits: San Jose, New England, Orlando

Iker Muniain

Athletic Bilbao legend Iker Muniain announced he would depart his boyhood club this summer. Muniain, 31, didn't play much this season, but he had been a constant for more than a decade at the club. In the 2022-23 La Liga season he didn't have great box score numbers (four assists) but his underlying numbers were elite. Per FBref, he was in the 99th percentile among attacking midfielders and wingers in both shot-creating actions and progressive passes.

Any club with deep pockets that wants an elite chance-creating attacking midfielder could do much, much worse. Atlanta United moving to make Muniain the Thiago Almada replacement (or complement) would be fairly natural. The Chicago Fire desperately needs an elite chance creator and has the financial muscle to outbid anyone. Charlotte FC wants another DP attacker this summer.

None of those three clubs play the full-tilt possession game that might be the perfect fit for Muniain — but hey, the reigning champs Columbus Crew do, and they could add a DP this summer...

Best fits: Atlanta, Chicago, Charlotte, Columbus

Michael Antonio

West Ham forward Michael Antonio has been linked with a potential move to MLS before and surely will be again this summer. Though some see the 34-year-old Jamaica international as injury-prone, this year was the first in which he missed more than a game here or there due to injury since 2020-21. He still contributed seven goals and two assists in just under 1,900 minutes for his club. He's just a year removed from 14 goals and five assists in

around 2,800 minutes, leading West Ham to win the UEFA Conference League. The top-end talent is there.

The perfect club for Antonio would be one where he's purely additive, rather than integral to their success. Could he give an already strong Vancouver group a boost? Would RSL roll the dice?

Best fits: Vancouver, Real Salt Lake

Joshua Windass

Sheffield Wednesday forward Joshua Windass has been on the radar of MLS clubs for a while, and the interest is mutual.

In the offseason, a couple of clubs made their interest known, with Real Salt Lake eventually targeting the English attacker, though a deal never materialized. RSL later signed fellow Englishman from the Championship, Matt Crooks.

Wednesday was part of the Wednesday team that orchestrated a great escape from relegation this season. He led them to promotion from League One last season and has 40 goals and 17 assists in four and a half seasons at the club.

The 30-year-old can play as a number nine, second forward or anywhere across the attack, so he should be able to provide a boost to any club needing an attacking jolt. RSL would have made a lot of sense, but they filled their need with Crooks.

The New York Red Bulls could be a good fit if they don't use a DP spot on a forward, while his quality and versatility could make him a strong option for both Colorado and Philadelphia, to name a few.

Best fits: New York Red Bulls, Colorado, Philadelphia

Paddy McNair

Middlesbrough and Northern Ireland international center back Paddy McNair isn't the most famous name on this list, but would be an extremely useful signing for any club that could get it. McNair, who just turned 29, is adept in both central defense and defensive midfield. He is a product of Manchester United's academy but has made the majority of his professional appearances in the Championship with Boro.

As long as he'd accept a deal under max-TAM (no more than \$1.7 million) as expected, McNair would be an excellent signing for an MLS club and a sign of the league continuing to evolve.

The Colorado Rapids could use another high-level defense-minded player, more likely at No. 6 rather than central defense if Lamine Diarra's purchase option isn't picked up. D.C. United needs more top-end defensive quality, too. If Minnesota United can scratch up the salary space, that's another snag fit.

Best fits: Colorado, D.C. United, Minnesota

Thomas Isherwood

A lot of what I wrote about McNair applies to Thomas Isherwood, 26, who has spent the last few years with Darmstadt and helped guide the club to promotion to the Bundesliga. The former Sweden youth international spent time in Bayern Munich's academy at the end of his youth career.

In his prime, top-five league proven center back on a free transfer? Isherwood fits the bill for plenty of teams at the right price. The clubs above for McNair all track here too, while Philadelphia is often proactive in replenishing talent in the squad when they see an opportunity.

Dallas needs another center back but would probably need to move players out to find the salary space.

Best fits: Minnesota, Philadelphia, Dallas

PREP SPOTLIGHT » ASHLEY LAM



Skyline's Ashley Lam looks to defend her Class AA golf title this year.

There's nothing Skyline golfer Lam can't do on course

By ERIC BUTLER

(Special to The Tribune)

Skyline's Ashley Lam thrives in competition. It was a sibling rivalry, of sorts, that got her into the game in the first place.

"When I first played, I started and stopped a lot," said Lam, "until I started playing with my brother."

Her brother Sean, two years her older, went on to be part of four straight team champions at Skyline. And last year, Ashley added to the family legacy with an individual title.

At the 2023 state event, Lam fairly squashed the rest of the field — winning the 5A championship by nine strokes.

Lam, who said she's been "working on my wedges and short game" ever since, knows that the rest of the field is itching to narrow the gap this year.

But the Eagles' senior is fine with that.

"I love competition when they are trying to beat me," Lam said. "It makes us all better golfers."

"We will miss her as she moves on to the next level. She has set a great example that will hopefully lead our program into the future," Skyline coach Kenny James said of Lam, who plans on attending Westminster College. "On a golf course, and with a club in her hand, there is nothing she cannot do."

Jazz

Continued from B1

have stifled him somewhat, though. SBNation's Ricky O'Donnell feels Williams needs to go to a "patient team with a clear developmental plan," where "he should have a high enough skill level to turn into a good NBA wing eventually."

The Ringer

Stephon Castle, UConn

Now a national champion, Castle impressed observers this year by stepping into Connecticut as a freshman and not looking to star, but rather to do all of the little things correctly. He's a terrific defender, a smart playmaker, and can change a game with his hard work on the court. On the downside ... he's an improving shooter, but certainly not a good one right now.

The Ringer's Kevin O'Connor felt that Castle would make a "perfect complement" next to Keyonte George, thanks to his "defense-first abilities." "Castle needs to improve as a shooter but brings just about everything else the Jazz could use next to George," O'Connor continued.

This would be considered an unexpected fall for Castle, however — all of the other mock drafts predicted Castle would be selected before No. 10.

CBSports.com

Isiah Collier, USC

Collier was another player that, at one point this year, was considered a potential No. 1 pick. The guard had a hot start in early play with USC, but then struggled to run that team, with you guessed it, missed shots and turnovers. His playmaking isn't considered top-tier, either.

Boyle Boome from CBSports.com says Collier reminds him of another Jazz guard: Collin Sexton. "His motor runs hot and he adds an element of explosiveness that makes it difficult for teams to defend," Boome writes.



PETER K. APPEL Associated Press (AP photo) UConn guard Stephon Castle shoots the ball during the first half of a game against North Carolina on Dec. 5, 2023, in New York.

The Athletic

Rob Dillingham, Kentucky

Rob Dillingham was maybe the NCAA's brightest teenage scorer last year. He's fast, and can use that speed in both the half court and transition. He can shoot very well, especially for someone who turned 19 during the course of the season. The big question mark: He might be the worst defender in the class, standing at only 6-1 with bad fundamentals to boot.

Still, The Athletic's Sam Vecenie feels Dillingham's upside and scoring chops make sense on Utah's roster. "Dillingham's electricity with the ball in his hands, mixed with Keyonte George's shot making, would be a very fun offensive combo for coach Will Hardy," Vecenie writes.