



Mesut Ozil transfer to MLS? Here are four potential landing spots for the Arsenal star

Overseas chatter about Mesut Ozil potentially ditching Arsenal to come play in Major League Soccer picked up again over the weekend, begging the obvious question: Which MLS clubs would provide the best landing spot?

There are several factors to consider, including team fit, the availability of a Designated Player slot and a willingness to splash some big cash. We ran all the relevant info through the ol' transfer-o-meter and in turn it spit out four great MLS destinations for a wily playmaker who has racked up over 200 assists for the Gunners, Real Madrid, Werder Bremen and Schalke.

D.C. United

Ozil already has a relationship with the Black-and-Red, even if it's mostly coffee-related at the moment. That could easily change. With D.C. already having lost Wayne Rooney and with Lucho Acosta reportedly set to follow, there is some star attacking power in need of replacing. Ozil may be the perfect target for the Audi Field crew, who suffered from a stale attack approach for much of the season.

LA Galaxy

The G-Men are always on the lookout for international stars, and if Romain Alessandrini and/or Zlatan Ibrahimovic depart, they'll have a DP slot open for Ozil. The veteran dime artist would certainly solve a la-la land problem. The Galaxy have lacked a true offensive engine up the middle, making their attack somewhat predictable for most of the last two seasons. And if Zlatan sticks around, just imagine how much he could score given a fresh avenue toward goal.

Inter Miami

We know David Beckham's expansion club are on the lookout for Designated Player-level difference-makers, and German outlet Bild has claimed that he's tried selling Ozil on a

move to sunny Florida. It's an obvious answer to the question of where the World Cup winner could turn up in MLS, but one that provides an added lure. If Ozil goes to Miami, he can play in a squad that is built around him.



Romain Alessandrini | USA Today Sports Images

Philadelphia Union

Should the Union opt to pick up their option on Marco Fabian, then go ahead and perish this thought. However, the Mexico international's performance did not match his lofty salary and the club could well let him go. If that happens, Ernst Tanner might like to make a run at a playmaker that more closely matches Philly's pass-them-to-death-from-midfield ethos.

Marco Fabian | USA Today Sports Images



CREDIT: Greg Seltzer Contributor



MLS coaching vacancies update: Tab Ramos in at Houston, but quiet on most fronts

They may be dreaming of trophy hoists and assorted other MLS Cup glories in Seattle and Toronto, though for most of Major League Soccer, the offseason is well underway, and that includes personnel decisions on both rosters and coaching staffs.

One of the league's four head coaching vacancies has been filled, yet there's still plenty of mystery about who'll be selected for the others. And there's the not-insubstantial question of what will transpire in New York City... Here's a quick rundown of where things stand.

Houston Dynamo

La Naranja have made their choice, and it's Tab Ramos, as the Dynamo lured the longtime US U-20 national team boss away from the U.S. Soccer Federation to take over their top job. It's the first senior club job for the USMNT icon, and he's provided a few insights so far as to how he plans to go about things.

Montreal Impact

L'Impact have made one big decision thus far, electing to part company with 2019 midseason hire Wilmer Cabrera on

Oct. 24 after just a few short months in charge; the Cabrera era in Quebec will be remembered for an unexpected Canadian Championship final victory and not much else.

At the time club officials said the search for a new head coach was underway; that's one of many tasks facing recently-hired sporting director Olivier Renard, who has a range of roster issues to deal with from Ignacio Piatti to Samuel Piette. Montreal have traditionally taken a global view of their technical recruitment; no credible reports have yet arisen regarding potential candidates.



New York City FC

Technically speaking, Dome Torrent (pictured at top) remains the Cityzens' head coach, and a good

one, too, presiding over the Eastern Conference's top regular-season finisher. The Spaniard raised eyebrows when he cast doubt on his own future in Gotham after NYCFC's latest postseason disappointment, however, cryptically stating that "They are ready for another coach" and that "I need to talk about it in Manchester because this season was a tough, tough season for us" after the upset loss to Toronto FC at Citi Field.

It seems Torrent was frustrated with the slow pace of recruitment that brought Heber to New York, and the club's generally restrained spending compared to the MLS elite. His further remarks to a Spanish-based podcast and ProSoccerUSA's reporting that his top assistant, Albert Puig, has already elected to pursue other opportunities elsewhere, seem to further raise the likelihood of a coaching change for NYCFC. We'll be monitoring both the Bronx and Manchester for updates.

Orlando City SC

The Lions are coach-less since the dismissal of James O'Connor one day after their season finale, and the rumor mill has pumped out a few connections, some more credible than others. There was little meat behind chatter about Portuguese Liga MX veteran Caixinha; perhaps a bit more so to talk of Spaniard Santiago Solari, but it still didn't come to pass.

Most recently, Club Tijuana boss Oscar Pareja was linked to Orlando, logical given his fruitful time working together with Lions EVP of soccer operations Luiz Muzzi at FC Dallas. Pareja and Xolos are in the midst of the Mexican Apertura dogfight; perhaps more will become clear when that competition winds down at year's end.

Real Salt Lake

The Utahns went back to the future for one option to fill their vacant general manager and head coaching positions, reportedly interviewing former boss Jason Kreis, who led RSL during their salad days at the turn of the decade and now splits his time between Inter Miami and the US U-23 national team. That's the latest news, but almost surely not the last.

Current interim coach Freddy Juarez is a longtime club servant who gave a good account of himself in relief of Mike Petke this season, leading Salt Lake to a 7-4-2 record and a third-place finish in the Western Conference standings. That earned them a home playoff game in Round One of the Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs, which they won in dramatic fashion, in tempestuous weather conditions, 2-1 over the Portland Timbers, before a Conference Semifinal loss at Seattle.

CREDIT: Charles Boehm Contributor

Seattle Sounders rave over star Nicolas Lodeiro's "relentless" attitude

When Nicolas Lodeiro is on the soccer field, he never stops.

The Seattle Sounders' 30-year-old Uruguayan playmaker is wreaking havoc once again in the Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs, racking up two goals and four assists in three matches to help spearhead Seattle to their third MLS Cup Final in four years.

As his Sounders teammates and coaches will attest, however, there's much more to Lodeiro's game than just the production on the stat sheet. From minute one to minute 90, every single game and throughout every single practice, Lodeiro is always buzzing, bringing as much energy on the defensive side of the ball as he does in the attack.

It's that all-around skillset and legendary work rate that makes the midfielder such a unique asset, and it's a key reason the Sounders are hosting MLS Cup for the first time at CenturyLink Field against Toronto FC on Nov. 10 (3 pm ET | ABC,

Univision, TUDN, TVAS, TSN).

"He's amazing, man. I mean that almost literally," Sounders general manager Garth Lagerwey said on Friday. "When your DP – the guy who's your best player – is your hardest worker, that sets a tone that nobody else can replicate. You cannot come out here in training on a day-to-day basis and hide, because he's out there. He's out there and he's working.

"He's just relentless. He never stops. It is a force that always has to be accounted for in any game against any opponent. That, I think, is really, really tough to give enough credit and weight to. Because I think he is the absolute force that drives us on and off the field, and it's a credit to him," Lagerwey added

While he's not the only factor in play, it's no coinci-

dence that the Sounders' recent run of final appearances started immediately as soon as Lodeiro arrived to Seattle on a Designated Player contract from Argentine powerhouse Boca Juniors halfway through 2016.

When he recalls the deal that led to Lodeiro's arrival, Lagerwey said the thing that stands out most was his proactive nature about the idea of coming to Seattle and MLS. At the time, players of his pedigree in their prime didn't come to the league with great frequency, and while the Sounders were hopeful throughout their process of courting him, they also knew pulling the deal off would be a lofty proposition.

In the end, Lodeiro's mutual enthusiasm for the opportunity saw it through, and the Sounders have reaped the benefits ever since.

"He wanted to come here really badly," Lagerwey said. "At that time, there just weren't players like him, with the possible exception of [Sebastian] Giovinco, of that level that wanted to come to MLS. [Uruguay] were playing in Copa America and I called him and he couldn't understand exactly what I said, so he put Luis Suarez on the phone, so Luis and I talked through what we were going to do with Nico.

"And I was like, 'Ok, this guy really wants to come.' He's doing everything he can to make sure there's no hiccups and this doesn't get delayed or anything like that."

With the Sounders' attack firing on all cylinders heading into MLS Cup, Lodeiro is locked in as ever, with his dynamic performance in tandem with striker Raul Ruidiaz highlighting one of the most impressive wins in franchise history over LAFC.

"For a player like myself, I love playing with him," winger Jordan Morris said on Saturday. "I think everyone's lucky to have him on the team, but I definitely benefit from having him around because I like to make those runs and he just puts it right on your foot. He makes it easy for you. We're lucky to have him and he's an amazing player, but on top of that, he works really, really hard and he's never stopping. He's a leader out there, both with his work rate and inspiring guys." Lodeiro has also done his finest work in the most crucial circumstances.

His output from this year's postseason gives him seven goals and six assists in 16 career MLS playoff matches, adding to a postseason resume that already includes a 2016 title and a follow-up MLS Cup appearance in 2017.

LAFC star Carlos Vela is the MLS MVP frontrunner for this season, and rightfully so, given his eye-popping stats. But when it comes to players in the league who are the most pivotal to their team's success, Lodeiro has carved out as strong a case as anybody.

"He's in his third final in four years," said Lagerwey. "He's on a trajectory to be one of the best players in MLS history at this point, certainly in Sounders history. But you wouldn't know it if you asked him. If you asked him, I guarantee you he's going to say, 'I want to win on Sunday."



10 reasons why LA Galaxy striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic should stay in MLS

Zlatan Ibrahimovic and the LA Galaxy crashed out of the Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs after losing a 5-3 thriller to local rivals LAFC in an El Trafico that more than lived up to the hype. Even in defeat, Ibrahimovic, who bagged 30 goals in the regular season, made his mark with a goal and a sublime assist.

But in the week since, there is one question that has been asked repeatedly: Will he stay or will he go?

Speaking after Thursday's game, Ibrahimovic, whose contract expires at the end of the year, didn't reveal where his future lies. But he did add that it's not about the money. So, what is it about? Well, here are 10 things that just might persuade the Swedish superstar to stay right where he is.

1. Scoring a goal a game is fun Fifty-three games started. Fifty-two goals.

Have you ever been watching a really dramatic TV show and at some point you realize you just want to check your phone's tiny screen instead of paying attention to the slightly bigger screen you've had "Succession" playing on for the last four hours, so at that point you put on a "Parks and Rec" episode you've seen 10 times that you can keep in the background? It feels kind of safe and you can look up and really focus when you want to. Well, this is kind of like that except the "Parks and Rec" episode where Ben and Leslie get together is Zlatan just casually putting up a hattrick on a Sunday night in July.



Just like he did in Ligue 1 and for spells in Serie A, Zlatan is scoring a goal per 90.

He has the number of MLS defenses across the land. That's a pretty comforting thought, right?

2. Leaving empty-handed is not fun

Zlatan, you've won a trophy everywhere else. Seriously. Every single club since you left Malmo in 2001. It would be a shame to break that. Unless you count "MLS player with the most content generated." I'm unsure how that compares to winning La Liga but I'm thinking ... pretty close? Speaking of generating content...

3. What else are we going to write abou- Holy smokes you've literally already said this "There are no other thoughts, I respect my contract. If I leave, you will have less to write about."

Ok, well at least we know where we stand here.

4. Hollywood

There's real earnings potential here. A transition into movie stardom is steps away at any time. Just think: Zlatan, you could start off your career using your martial arts abilities to do action movies. Then, once you got bored of that, you could learn to frown like Eddie Redmayne and aim for an Oscar-worthy dramatic turn. And once that didn't work, you could do fun-buddy comedies with Kevin James where you have to teach him how to race cars to win money for an orphanage called "Need for Swede." This is a terrible idea. Please, please do not do this.

5. You promised

You said at the beginning of the year that you would break every MLS record. Well, I'm looking around and it doesn't

seem like you've broken any of those. Wow. Crazy. It would be strange to promise something and not follow through.

Definitely not accusing you of anything Big Z, but I'm just saying we follow through with our promises where I'm from. It's the standard any self-respecting person should hold themselves to. If you want to talk about this the old-fashioned way, all you need to know is @ MattDoyle76 on Twitter. Matt Doyle.

- 6. LAFC: Not going anywhere Superheroes need villains, and it goes both ways. Have you ever been as loathed and respected by one fanbase in your career? Another year torturing Bob Bradley and his players has to be pretty appetizing.
- 7. People, like, really like you You've led the league in jersey sales the last two years. Why go compete for that kind of clout elsewhere? It'd be like leaving the Monopoly game where you



own every single space to go give Joao Felix the Atlantic and Ventnor Avenue spaces. Why let others into the market? I promise this reference makes sense.

- 8. Who needs knee ligaments?
- 8. Soccer is great cardio

And a great way to stay healthy. Think about all the Vitamin D you're getting while playing in Los Angeles. So much sun. So many great weather days. It's not only good for your physical health, but it's also good for your mental health. And Disneyland! Have you been to Disneyland yet?!?

9. Thelma in Conway, Arkansas

Thelma grew up in West Virginia. A coal miner's daughter. She moved around a lot once she left her tiny hometown. There were good times. Bad ones, too. She settled in Conway after a lifetime of seeing the world. Conway isn't a big place. She says that after seeing so much it's nice to see so little. Her husband, Roy, won't say it to her, but he'll tell you over a beer that it reminds her of her dad. Somewhere along the way, she started watching you play soccer. She didn't quite know how to pronounce your name at first. Sometimes she still gets it wrong. But she knew that you were something special. And so every night she could, after they put away the dishes, she went to the TV to check if Zlatan was on. It made the slow days in her life not seem so slow. Is Thelma in Conway, Arkansas real? Who knows. But can you risk leaving her behind? Can you?

10. Please?

Pretty please? There's no other athlete besides David Beckham that has resonated on a national level in the same way. It's a blast to watch and having something to write about isn't so bad. No one is ready to let go quite yet. And maybe there's a portion of the audience that is sick of the coverage, but there's also the larger group of people still clicking on articles like this one, even if it's just to complain about it in the comments.

CREDIT: J. Sam Jones Contributor



Tu estacion orgullosamente latina !!!

Seattle Sounders aim for "perfect completion to the trilogy" vs. Toronto FC

Don't count Seattle Sounders general manager Garth Lagerwey among those surprised to see the Rave Green playing for another MLS Cup when they take on Toronto FC at CenturyLink Field Nov. 10 (3 pm ET | ABC, Univision, TSN, TVAS).

Lagerwey's Sounders didn't receive much love as an clear title contender going into the Audi 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs, likely due to an up-and-down regular season that never saw the team kick fully back into gear following a blazing hot start.

But the GM has told anyone who would listen throughout the year he believes the roster he constructed was built to do exactly what it just did: Blaze through the Western Conference playoffs and a make a run at another championship. Coming



off Tuesday's epic road upset of Supporters' Shield-winning LAFC, the Sounders now find themselves in the position of playing a final in their own building for the first time ever, with a chance at bagging their second MLS Cup in four years.

"I think this is the best team we've ever had in Seattle," Lagerwey told reporters at Starfire Soccer Complex Friday. "I've said from day one of the season. I still believe it. You mix that preparation, the excellent preparation, with excellent talent and excellent character of staff and players, I think that's been our formula that's allowed us to have sustained success.

"Now we've got to go win this thing."

This year's MLS Cup Final will take place in the venue Lagerwey won his first league title as the GM of Real Salt Lake in 2009, when RSL triumphed in penalty kicks over the LA Galaxy back when the title match was still played at a neutral location.

Reflecting back on his memories of that victory, Lagerwey said he sees parallels between that RSL squad and the Seattle one that will be playing for the title this year.

"That was my second year doing this and we were a massive underdog in that game and we come to Seattle, this huge stadium and the place was packed and it was rocking," Lagerwey recalled. "I probably didn't appreciate it as much then, but I realize now with my current experience that Seattle fans hated the Galaxy already then, so we had all these random people cheering for us. I walked in and it was kind of like, "Really? This is going to be great!

"But then in that game, we had [Javier] Morales and Will Johnson both go out in the first half with injuries and replaced by [Clint] Mathis and [Ned] Grabavoy. And the message I took from that was, 'Never give up.' We were the underdogs in that situation and the ethos of that team reminds me a lot of this team. It's a group that believes they can get it done." It also represents a chance for Lagerwey to get the better of an opposing front office and coaching staff he knows quite well. Lagerwey worked with both TFC president Bill Manning when he held the same post at RSL, and head coach Greg Vanney when he was RSL's Academy director from 2008-2011. He was also a classmate of TFC general manager Ali Curtis at Duke, and the two have remained friends since their college days.

On Friday, Lagerwey credited Vanney with being "instrumental" and deserving "full credit" for helping spearhead an Academy program at RSL that became one of the most effective in the league at funneling young talent to the first team. Bringing a second MLS Cup to Seattle is obviously the foremost priority on his mind, but Lagerwey did quip that a victory over his old co-workers would be a nice personal cherry on top, should it come to fruition.

"My old boss runs TFC, so for me, I want to beat Bill Manning," Lagerwey said. "It comes down to that. ...There's tons of connections between the clubs, I have a ton of respect for those guys, a whole bunch of talented people over there. "It's almost like the perfect completion to the trilogy now," he added. "We're playing one in Seattle and we've got to win and see if we can assert the upper hand. And I think, again, if you're able to win this game, you get some real respect in terms of MLS teams that have accomplished something. But if you don't, then you're a footnote."

CREDIT: Ari Liljenwall Contributor



New England Revolution sign ex-Manchester United defender Alexander Buttner

TRANSFER TRACKER: Signing

The New England Revolution's search for a solution at left back could have an answer, as the club announced the signing of Dutch defender Alexander Buttner on Friday morning. The deal was completed by using Targeted Allocation

Money.

Buttner, 30, comes to New England after 12 seasons across top flights in Holland, England, Russia and Belgium. He's accrued over 275 appearances with 20 goals and 37 assists across all competitions with Vitesse, Manchester United, Dynamo Moscow and Anderlecht.

"Alexander brings experience at the game's most competitive



levels, and his skill and pedigree will make him an important asset for the club on and off the field," Revolution sporting director and head coach Bruce Arena said in a team release.

Buttner was most recently with Vitesse from 2017-19, after rejoining the club with which he began his professional career. He helped the Dutch club win their first KNVB Cup in 2017 and was part of Manchester United's Premier Leaguewinning side in 2012-13. The Dutchman has also featured extensively in Europa League and Champions League competition.

In bringing experience to New England's left-back position, Buttner could end a revolving door that's existed since 11-year veteran Chris Tierney retired after the 2018 season. Edgar Castillo and DeJuan Jones largely split time there this past season, while Jalil Anibaba also saw time at the position. Going back to 2018, Gabriel Somi (free agent) and midfielder Kelyn Rowe (now at Real Salt Lake) both filled the position at times.

New England are coming off the club's first trip to the Audi MLS Cup Playoffs since 2015, though fell in Round One to Atlanta United. They'll be entering their first full season with Arena at the helm, after the former US men's national team coach took over this past May when Brad Friedel was dismissed.

CREDIT: Jonathan Sigal Contributor

Gregg Berhalter calls 20 players for US national team pre-camp ahead of Nations League

US national team head coach Gregg Berhalter has called 20 MLS-based players in for a pre-camp training squad, which will take place from November 2-9 in Bradenton, Florida.

The squad is comprised of players whose seasons have already ended, thus ruling out European-based players as well as those preparing for MLS Cup with the Seattle Sounders and Toronto FC. Berhalter will keep some players from the training camp around for the Nations League squad.

"We have the opportunity to take advantage of the MLS post-season window to start preparations for the matches against Canada and Cuba," Berhalter said in a media release. "It's



another week to keep progressing as a group as we focus on getting the results we need to advance to the knockout phase of the Nations League."

Berhalter's squad features a few new faces, as Matt Turner and Chase Gasper received their first call-ups while Mark McKenzie and Brenden Aaronson have previously been involved but have yet to debut.

The USMNT face Canada and Cuba in Nations League matches on Nov. 15 and Nov. 19.

USMNT November pre-camp roster

Pos. Player Club

GK Guzan, Brad Atlanta United GK Johnson, Sean New York City FC

GK Turner, Matt New England Revolution

D Cannon, ReggieFC Dallas

D Gasper, Chase Minnesota United FC Lima, Nick San Jose Earthquakes

D Long, Aaron NY Red BullsD Lovitz, Daniel Montreal Impact

D McKenzie, Mark Philadelphia Union

D Zimmerman, Walker LAFC

M Aaronson, Brenden Philadelphia Union

M Lletget, Sebastian LA Galaxy
 M Mihailovic, Djordje Chicago Fire
 M Trapp, Wil Columbus Crew SC
 M Yueill, Jackson San Jose Earthquakes

F Arriola, Paul D.C. United F Baird, Corey Real Salt Lake

F Ebobisse, Jeremy Portland Timbers FC
F Lewis, Jonathan Colorado Rapids
F Zardes, Gyasi Columbus Crew SC

CREDIT: Tom Bogert Contributor



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