

Red Bull New York Clips: June 4, 2008

1. Red Bull transfer rumors and roundups (Brian Lewis – New York Post Blog)
http://blogs.nypost.com/sports/soccer/archives/2008/06/by_brian_lewis.html
2. Report: Villarreal could buy Altidore and loan him to Huelva (Ives Galarcep – Soccer by Ives blog)
http://www.soccerbyives.net/soccer_by_ives/2008/06/report-lays-out.html
3. Altidore to be sold to Villarreal for \$8 million (updated) (Ives Galarcep – Soccer by Ives Blog)
http://www.soccerbyives.net/soccer_by_ives/2008/06/altidore-sold-t.html#more
4. 'A new landmark' for MLS: Gazidis on the Altidore transfer (Michael Lewis – Big Apple Soccer)
http://bigapplesoccer.com/teams/redbulls2.php?article_id=14294
5. Red Bulls' Jozy Altidore headed for Spain after Villarreal Oks transfer (Michael Lewis – New York Daily News)
http://www.nydailynews.com/sports/more_sports/2008/06/04/2008-06-04_red_bulls_jozy_altidore_headed_for_spain.html
6. Q&A with Ivan Gazidis about the Jozy Altidore transfer (Jack Bell – New York Times Blog)
<http://goal.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/qa-with-ivan-gazidis-about-the-jozy-altidore-transfer/>
7. Red Bulls' Altidore headed to Spain (ESPN/Associated Press)
<http://soccer.espn.go.com/news/story?id=542723&cc=5901>
8. Altidore leaving MLS for Spain (ESPN Soccernet) VIDEO
<http://sports.espn.go.com/broadband/video/videopage?videoid=3426559&categoryId=2731137>
9. Red Bulls' Altidore headed to Spain (Brian Lewis – New York Post)
http://www.nypost.com/seven/06052008/sports/red_bulls_altidore_headed_to_spain_113962.htm
10. Spanish club to pay record sum for an M.L.S. star, Altidore (Joshua Robinson and Jack Bell – New York Times)
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/05/sports/soccer/05altidore-web.html?_r=1&ref=soccer&oref=slogin
11. Altidore appears headed for Spain (Brian Trusdell/Associated Press – Herald News)
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/05/sports/soccer/05altidore-web.html?_r=1&ref=soccer&oref=slogin
12. Red Bulls lose star for \$10M (Frank Giase – Star-Ledger)
<http://www.nj.com/redbulls/ledger/index.ssf?/base/sports-0/1212640736300380.xml&coll=1>

1. Red Bull transfer rumors and roundups

By: Brian Lewis
New York Post
June 4, 2008

There is a lot of information floating around about the Red Bulls' transfer targets, and maybe even more disinformation. So here's a roundup, to the best of my knowledge, of where they stand with Jorge Rojas, Diego Jimenez, Gabriel Cichero, Harry Kewell and Ulises de la Cruz.

Here's a sneak peak at El Zurdo Rojas for a teaser...

Jimenez _ a 22-year-old Mexican defender whose contract offer from the Red Bulls was first reported here in the Post _ is away from the club handling some family issues. But Juan Carlos Osorio said he doesn't plan on waiting past this week for an answer, and that he's also going to start looking into the Argentinean market for players soon. Stay tuned on this.

Rojas has been on Osorio's radar since he coached at Millonarios, and the Post reported back in April that he was trying to sign El Zurdo. That chase is coming to fruition, with the Venezuelan telling cash-strapped Atletico Maracaibo he'd accept a fraction of the back wages they owed him if they let him go on a free. Now he's hashing out terms with Red Bull.

For the record, I know he's played a lot of fullback at times, but Osorio sees him strictly as an attacking midfielder, on the wing and yes, centrally as well. You can check him out: Venezuela is playing Brazil Friday in Foxboro. 1) I wonder if Osorio and Jeff Agoos drive up and come back with a signature. 2) I wonder if Rojas still has runs left in him like the one at 3:15 of this clip.....

SBI reported that Cichero joined Rojas as one of Osorio's three summer targets, but the coach told the Post that while he rates the 24-year-old Venezuelan, Deportivo Italia was asking for "a lot of money" and the defender was NOT one of his three targets...at the moment. I didn't see Cichero when he was in preseason camp with Red Bull last year in Florida, but this video gives you an idea of his game.

As far as Liverpool's Kewell and de la Cruz, don't believe everything you read. Yes, the latter is leaving Reading, and yes he's boys with Juan Pablo Angel, and yes Osorio thinks he can play. But at 34 coming off an EPL contract, he's too old _ and probably too expensive _ for Osorio's liking, and not on the coach's wish-list.

Buzz up!

2. Report: Villarreal could buy Altidore and loan him to Huelva

By: Ives Galarcep
Soccer by Ives Blog
June 4, 2008

Spanish newspaper Marca delivered a story today laying out a scenario that would have Villarreal buy Jozy Altidore, then loan him out to fellow La Liga squad Recreativo Huelva. The story doesn't so much report the scenario has done, but as a presumable likelihood now that Villarreal has reportedly completed the sale of young defender Martin Caceres to Barcelona for a tidy profit of \$16 million.

Is the scenario likely? It is possible, but not done (Steve Goff is reporting that the deal is close). What does appear certain at this point is that Altidore will be sold this summer and Villarreal has the interest and the cash to make it happen. Red Bulls sources stated last week that parent company officials from Red Bull were still weighing whether to sell Altidore and for how much, but that his desire to leave and the club's desire to have a quick resolution to his status would make a deal likely to be completed before the July 1 opening of the European transfer window.

In other words, Altidore's last day as a Red Bulls player is coming soon.

Would Marca's scenario be a good one for Altidore? Based on the Caceres' successful path from Uruguay to FC Barcelona, it might not be a bad one. Altidore would struggle for playing time with Villarreal, but can step in with Recreativo Huelva and see significant playing time. Caceres was a free transfer from Uruguayan club Defensor to Villarreal, which promptly loaned him out to Recreativo Huelva. There, Caceres became a staple of Huelva's defense and caught the eye of Pep Guardiola, the new Barcelona manager. Now Caceres is a Barcelona player expected to have a key role on Guardiola's revamped squad.

That scenario must sound like a beautiful one for Altidore, who is clearly eager to move on to a new challenge.

So here are the big questions. 1) How much effort will Altidore have in what could be his last matches for the Red Bulls? 2) What will Red Bull do with the transfer money? Will it invest it in the academy or in finding new players for this season and 2009? 3) How will the Red Bulls replace Altidore this season?

The answer to that first question remains unclear. In an ideal world, Altidore would handle his situation like Tim Howard did in 2003. Howard delivered some stunning performances in the final weeks before his transfer to Manchester United, never showing much in the way of being distracted. The more scary scenario would be to have Altidore finish out the string like Clint Mathis did in the fall of 2003, when he was virtually useless in the final weeks before his eventual departure to German club Hannover 96.

Ultimately, the Red Bulls know they have to sell Altidore, and Altidore isn't likely to find a better scenario than the one at Villarreal. While the Marca piece reads more like a "Here's what we think might happen" piece than an actual news story, the scenario could very well be what happens.

What does seem clear is that there might not be many more chances to see Altidore play in MLS, with his last match at Giants Stadium possibly being with U.S. national team against Argentina on Sunday (multiple sources have told SBI that Altidore will be called in for the Argentina match). The Red Bulls do play one more home game after Thursday night's match against Chivas USA, on June 21 against FC Dallas, but national team and Olympic team commitments could force him to miss that match.

What do you think about the possibility of Altidore being sold to Villarreal and the growing likelihood that he will leave MLS this summer? Do you want him to go already? Do you still want him to stay with the Red Bulls the entire 2008 season? Are you hoping he winds up in the EPL?

3. Altidore to be sold to Villarreal for \$8 million (updated)

By: Ives Galarcep
Soccer by Ives Blog
June 4, 2008

U.S. national team forward Jozy Altidore has been sold to Spanish club Villarreal for a fee of \$8 million, sources with knowledge of the deal confirmed on Wednesday afternoon.

The New York Red Bulls confirmed that they have reached an agreement with Villarreal on the fee. Sources tell SBI that the fee is \$8 million with a sell-on clause and performance bonuses that could increase the fee to \$10 million.

According to sources, Altidore has already reached an agreement on a new contract.

The sale shatters the old record for largest transfer of an MLS player, which was set when Clint Dempsey went from the New England Revolution to Fulham after the 2006 season.

The deal has been agreed in principle, but cannot become official until July 1, when the European transfer window opens.

Altidore is still expected to play in the Red Bulls match against Chivas USA on Thursday.

What do I think of the move? I think it's a dream move for a player who was ready for the jump. Yes, he did lose focus and was distracted by the impending European move, so he wasn't training or playing as well as he could have been for the Red Bulls, but he's still a good kid and quality prospect who could flourish in Spain (and let's face it, older and more experienced players have fallen victim to Europe-itis as well).

I have said for more than a year now that I thought Spain was the best league for him to go to and now not only will he be there but he will go to a smaller team where he can get playing time (assuming the scenario where Villarreal loans him to Recreativo Huelva happens.)

What will this mean for the Red Bulls? The team will be hard-pressed to replace him, but will have resources to bolster the team in several areas. They won't find a player as good as Altidore this year, but they will have the chance to add multiple upgrades this summer and will have a nice war chest to go and sign a high-profile designated player in 2009.

I also think that ultimately, losing Altidore early and getting a chance to replace him this season could have its advantages. Altidore was slated to miss considerable time with U.S. national and Olympic team duties, so now the club will be able to acquire a player who will be here the full schedule and who presumably won't be distracted by an impending move to Europe.

4. 'A new landmark' for MLS: Zazidis on the Altidore transfer

By: Michael Lewis
Big Apple Soccer
June 4, 2008

MLS deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis Wednesday called the American soccer record \$10 million transfer of Red Bulls forward Jozy Altidore "a new landmark" for the league.

MLS and the Red Bulls Wednesday agreed in principle to transfer Altidore to Villarreal of La Liga. The deal easily eclipsed the 2006 transfer that sent New England Revolution midfielder Clint Dempsey to Fulham (England) for \$4 million.

"This is obviously a new landmark for us," Gazidis said. "I don't think it will be the high tide mark. It will continue to increase."

Slowly, but surely MLS has been catching the attention of European clubs and scouts in recent years.

"I think it's a tremendous statement for Major League Soccer for a young player who developed in our league who attracts this kind of transfer fee that approaches fees of players around the world," Gazidis said.

"It's a real statement of the level of respect the league has gotten overseas. I don't think five years ago we would have seen this."

It's certainly a long way from the \$1.5 million transfer of former Columbus Crew and U.S. National Team forward Brian McBride to Fulham F.C. (England) in January, 2004.

In some respects the Dempsey and Altidore transfers are expected to make similar impacts for the league. With Dempsey's millions, the league re-invested it in acquiring three foreigners who became the 2007 MVP finalists – Luciano Emilio (D.C. United), Juan Pablo Angel (Red Bulls) and Cuauhtémoc Blanco (Chicago Fire) for 2007.

"The money from Josmer's transfer will allow us to do it again on the field," Gazidis said.

"The revenue it generates will make the Red Bulls a better team and MLS a better league over time."

And of course, it is good for Altidore as well, who can develop his potential and soccer skills even further in one of the best leagues on the planet.

"Jozy is a tremendous player," Gazidis said. "This is a terrific move for him. He can take this into La Liga and develop as a player."

5. Red Bulls' Jozy Altidore headed for Spain after Villarreal Oks transfer

By: Michael Lewis

New York Daily News

June 4, 2008

Meet American soccer's new \$10 million man, Jozy Altidore.

Major League Soccer Wednesday agreed to send the Red Bulls' 18-year-old forward to Villarreal of the Spanish First Division for an American soccer record \$10 million transfer fee, according to reliable MLS sources.

The Bulls confirmed that the league and the club had agreed in principle to a transfer fee that MLS deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis called "a new landmark for us."

The deal would not become official until July 1, when the European transfer window opens.

The previous U.S. transfer record involved former New England Revolution midfielder Clint Dempsey, who was sent to Fulham (England) for \$4 million in 2006.

Altidore is doubtful for tonight's 7:30 game vs. Chivas USA at Giants Stadium. The club's scoring leader with three goals, Altidore suffered a bruised left ankle in Monday's practice.

"Jozy is a tremendous player," Gazidis said. "This is a terrific move for him. He can take this into La Liga and develop as a player."

The Bulls will receive two-thirds of the transfer fee - about \$6.6 million. That money would allow the Bulls bring in some international players once the MLS transfer window opens July 15. The Bulls are close to signing Venezuelan midfielder and captain Jorge Rojas.

Villarreal, which finished second this season, reportedly will loan Altidore to Recreativo Huelva for the start of the 2008-2009 campaign.

Altidore was born in Livingston, N.J., and grew up in Florida. His performance (four goals) at the Under-20 World Cup in Canada last summer raised his profile in Europe. He further cemented it by scoring his first international goal in a 2-2 tie against Mexico Feb. 6.

Altidore, who has connected for 15 goals and five assists in 37 games since joining the Red Bulls in 2006, is expected to be on the U.S. team for the Beijing Olympics.

6. Q&A with Ivan Gazidis about the Jozy Altidore

By: Jack Bell

New York Times Blog

June 4, 2008

Ivan Gazidis, the deputy commissioner of Major League Soccer, discussed on Wednesday the pending transfer of Red Bulls striker Jozy Altidore to Villarreal of Spain's La Liga.

Q: Can you confirm the transaction?

A: Yes I can. We have reached an agreement with Villarreal for the transfer of Jozy Altidore and we have given them permission to speak with Jozy to finalize personal terms between him and the club. The next step is for Villarreal to reach agreement with Jozy, then he'll have to have a physical, and assuming all goes to plan, the transfer would become effective.

Q: So he would be Villarreal property after that?

A: Yes, immediately once they have reached an agreement and he has passed his physical.

Q: Do you think he's played his last game in M.L.S.

A: Well, since this is outside the transfer window, he will be available for them from the beginning of the window, which is July 1. But they obviously ... when they do a transfer like this, they want the player to take a break. And once the transfer is complete, he's done with Red Bulls.

Anyway, it's my understanding he has an ankle knock that would keep him out Thursday's game. It really depends on how quickly the rest of the paperwork gets done.

Q: Can you tell us what the transfer fee is?

A: As a league, we have never commented on transfer figures, but I can tell you that it is the most M.L.S. has ever received for a player.

Q: How did this deal come about?

A: Villarreal approached us and told us they had a serious interest. We spent some period of time speaking to them about the possibility. Jozy has been very focused on the Red Bulls, and it seems to us he has not had his mind anywhere except the week to week game to game in M.L.S. Before this, we had no significant discussions with Jozy until it became real, and that just happened, it was just finalized yesterday [Tuesday]. Jozy is really fully focused on the move, and is working on details. Of course, he could have stepped in and said he didn't want to go to this club and that probably would have been it.

Jozy has been on their radar as a serious prospect for months. But in terms of serious discussions toward finalizing the deal, that only happened in the last few days.

The Red Bulls obviously were involved at every step and there has been no conflict or anything like that.

Q: There was a report in the Spanish news media about Villarreal possibly loaning out Jozy to Recreativo Huelva. What do you know about that? And does that in any way factor into any decision the league made?

A: That's really something to be discussed between Jozy and Villarreal. It really none of our business. We know that Jozy wants to go somewhere where he will be successful. Villarreal has a good record of sending players where they can develop. I'm sure they want to evaluate Jozy to see if he's ready to play regularly for the first team. If they feel that it would be better for his development to be loaned out, that's something they will consider. It's a model they've used before successfully. They are heavily invested in Jozy, his development and future success, and we're very confident they will do what is best for him.

Q: Where does that leave the Red Bulls?

A: Our summer transfer window opens on July 15 and the Red Bulls have a month to prepare. I don't know what their plans are, but in terms of what's available to them, two-thirds of the revenue from the transfer will be held by league on their behalf. They can use up to \$500,000 to be used as an allocation for a player beyond their salary budget. The remainder of their two-thirds would be available to them to use on a replacement player, a designated player next year since they have two right now. It could also be used for other investments in their M.L.S. product, for example the money could be used to invest in youth development, training facilities, etc.

That money could split among as many players as they wanted to bring in. Of course, there are some limitations about how they can use it. They still have to stay within the salary budget.

Q: There has been much talk recently about the idea of M.L.S.'s developing players and then selling them to the highest bidder, with some folks saying you need to hold on to guys better. Then at the same time there is the idea that selling players is simply the way it's done in world soccer. How does the league see it?

A: First of all, it's a positive statement about the value placed on the young players we're developing. By a substantial margin this is the highest transfer fee ever paid for an M.L.S. player. It represents the recognition the league has been getting in every quarter; from being named league of the year by the SportsBusinessJournal to on the field seeing our players who have made names for themselves here and in Europe. In M.L.S., our clubs and players have been valued at unprecedented levels.

Villarreal mostly evaluated Jozy not from what he's done with the national teams, which has been limited, but from his play in M.L.S. They are looking at the league as very credible and this kind of fee compares favorably with some major names around world. It's a tremendously positive statement.

For Jozy, it is a real opportunity to develop his game. La Liga is a terrific league. It will be a real test for him and it's a great step — for Jozy as well as for the league and the Red Bulls. Obviously, we wouldn't be making this move unless we felt revenue from the transfer was going to enable us to make the league and the Red Bulls better. Otherwise there is no incentive to do it. I do believe that although losing Jozy is something we have to address, with his replacement I believe the resources from the transfer will enable the Red Bulls to take a step forward. I believe you're going to see some exciting things on the field from them.

Q: What is your impression of how Altidore has been dealing with all the transfer talking swirling around him.

A: He's been really great. It hasn't been a case where he's lost focus because he was thinking ahead. He's certainly had this as his long-term goal and dream. But at the same time he's understood that he had to continue to produce. For an 18-year-old he has an incredibly mature way of addressing things and he has his mind focused.

7. Red Bulls' Altidore headed for Spain

ESPN/Associated Press

June 4, 2008

NEW YORK – Red Bulls striker Jozy Altidore appeared headed for Villarreal, with the Spanish first-division club agreeing to a transfer deal with Major League Soccer for New York's teenage forward.

Altidore, praised by some as the United States' best soccer prospect, still must negotiate a contract with Villarreal before he can join the club, the Red Bulls said Wednesday.

No transfer terms were released but a person with knowledge of the deal said it was worth a minimum of just under \$10 million, nearly double the amount previously paid for an American when English club Sunderland bought Claudio Reyna for \$5.7 million in 2001. The person could not speak for attribution because league policy is to not disclose financial terms.

Reyna transferred to the Red Bulls last season. The previous record paid for an MLS player was the \$4 million Fulham paid for Clint Dempsey after the 2006 MLS season.

MLS deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis said the transfer was negotiated relatively quickly, was a record amount for an American and that the league was under no "compulsion" to sell Altidore.

"This was a decision we and the Red Bulls took rationally, with the objective to achieve a couple of things: provide Jozy with an opportunity he's been looking for, and more importantly from our point of view, give us resources to elevate the team and the league," Gazidis said.

"It's an offer we wouldn't be accepting unless we believed the money gave us the opportunity to make the Red Bulls and MLS better. Our only motivation is that we received such value that it can let us make a step forward."

MLS is a single-entity league in which the league owns all the contracts and pays the players out of a central fund. Teams negotiate individual contracts with league oversight.

Red Bulls spokesman Andy McGowan said Altidore, whose contract with MLS wasn't due to expire until 2011, was unlikely to play in Thursday night's home game against Chivas USA because of an ankle injury, but would speak about the transfer just before the match.

"I think he was happy," Red Bulls sporting director Jeff Agoos said in describing Altidore's reaction to the transfer. "I think every young MLS player wants to go play for a team in Europe."

The 18-year-old Altidore already has made three appearances for the U.S. national team and scored his first goal against Mexico in February. He was a key member of the U.S. team that qualified for the Olympics in April and was expected to lead the team in Beijing.

He scored nine goals for the Red Bulls last year, his first full season in MLS, to finish eighth in the league in scoring. With his combination of speed, size and strength, he has been mentioned repeatedly as a possible transfer target since the end of last season, including Real Madrid.

Altidore leads the Red Bulls this season with three goals in eight games.

He made his U.S. national team debut in November, entering as a substitute in a 1-0 victory over South Africa in Johannesburg. He added his first goal in a 2-2 tie against Mexico in Houston, becoming the youngest player to score a goal for the United States in the modern era.

8. Harkes on Altidore

By: John Harkes
ESPN Soccernet
June 4, 2008

<http://sports.espn.go.com/broadband/video/videopage?videoid=3426559&categoryId=2731137>

9. Red Bulls' Altidore heading to Spain

By: Brian Lewis
New York Post
June 5, 2008

The most promising young soccer player in America - the rising star Freddy Adu was hyped to be - is being sold. The Red Bulls are transferring 18-year-old phenom Jozy Altidore to Spanish club Villareal for \$10 million - the highest price ever for a U.S. player.

Oh yes, tonight's must-win game against Chivas USA (7:30, MSG Plus) has been relegated to nothing more than a footnote. The Red Bulls play tonight without oft-injured captain Claudio Reyna (disc), but of far greater concern is playing without Altidore for good once his transfer goes through.

The Livingston, N.J., native had started drawing interest after his four goals - including a brace vs. Brazil - in the Under-20 World Cup. But after Real Madrid, Reading and Arsenal had all shown various degrees of interest, it was fast-rising Villareal that closed the deal.

The team leader with three goals, Altidore suffered a left ankle contusion in practice Monday, and didn't train Tuesday or yesterday; but the club claims he'll be available for tonight's game against Chivas, winners of three straight.

Once he reaches personal terms with the so-called Yellow Submarine - who reached the Champions League semis in 2006 and qualified for next season's Champions League by finishing second in La Liga - the Red Bulls will get two-thirds of the transfer fee.

But most of that has to go into infrastructure - training center, youth system, etc. - with only \$500,000 able to be used as allocation or salary money. And with Altidore gone, they have even more needs.

With Reyna hurt, Dave van den Bergh - who missed Saturday's loss in Houston to be with his wife, who gave birth Monday - could slide into a central attacking midfield role. The club is closing in on a free transfer for Venezuelan Jorge Rojas, who could play there or left wing.

"It's for a good reason that [La Liga] is the best league in the world, if not the best one. He's going to have to step it up. He's going to have to be 100 percent every single day," said van den Bergh, who played in La Liga himself for Rayo Vallecano.

"He can't take days off. He can't be happy with a decent couple of balls every now and then. He has to be 100 percent every time. There'll be a good learning process for him. He's only 18 years old, has a lot to learn and has a lot of potential."

10. Spanish club to pay record sum for an M.L.S. star, Altidore

By: Joshua Robinson and Jack Bell

New York Times

June 5, 2008

The Spanish club Villarreal reached an agreement in principle with Major League Soccer and the New York Red Bulls to sign Jozy Altidore, an 18-year-old striker, a team official said on Wednesday and Ivan Gazidis, the league's deputy commissioner, confirmed.

Altidore, whose lightning pace, strength, eye for the goal and potential have already made him a star in the United States, must still negotiate personal terms with the club and pass a medical exam to complete the transfer negotiated by M.L.S., which owns all of its players' contracts.

A fee was not announced, but a club official confirmed that it will be the largest transfer fee paid for an M.L.S. player, a sum that is likely to surpass \$10 million and could end up being more, depending on Altidore's performance. The figure could also increase depending on whether Altidore is subsequently sold by Villarreal.

Altidore, who has an ankle injury and was not expected to play for the Red Bulls on Thursday night against visiting Chivas USA, is likely to have played his last game for the club. He is expected to join Villarreal, which finished second last season in Spain's La Liga, on July 1. Still to be determined is what role, if any, Altidore will play on the United States men's Olympic team, which he helped to qualify for this summer's Beijing Games. Villarreal might not want Altidore to leave the club so soon after joining it, and Altidore might be reluctant to jeopardize his season with a new club by playing for the Olympic team.

"Right now, I'm still a Red Bull player until all this is worked out," Altidore said Wednesday night in a telephone interview. "That said, I'm just excited about a new challenge. And whether I stay with Villarreal or get loaned out, I'm excited to be going to play at a higher level. I'd like to play in the Olympics, but if the club says no ... then again, that's in the future."

A part of the transfer money will be allocated to the Red Bulls for player development, money that the club could also use to obtain players once the league's transfer period begins on July 15.

"It wasn't an easy decision for our organization and for M.L.S. as well," said Jeff Agoos, the Red Bulls' sporting director. "But I think in the player's best interest, I think this is the right way to go."

Altidore made his professional debut for the Red Bulls in 2006 and scored 18 goals in 29 games through his first two seasons. This year, with the Red Bulls off to a mediocre start (3-3-3), he leads the team in scoring with three goals in eight appearances.

"This only got hot recently," said Gazidis, the deputy commissioner. "Jozy has been on their radar as a serious prospect for months. In terms of serious discussions, they happened in the last few days."

The deal had been rumored in recent weeks, and there had been speculation that M.L.S. had received offers from other European clubs. The Reading team in the English Premier League came calling in January, and Altidore has been watched by scouts from some top clubs, including Manchester United, Chelsea and Real Madrid. But he has long asserted that while he wanted to move to a European club, the amount of playing time was paramount, and the prospect of going to a big club and sitting on the bench had little or no appeal.

"I've had an amazing time in M.L.S.," Altidore said. "It has been a thrill. For right now, I'm still a Red Bull player, whether it's for hours, days or weeks." A year ago, another American wunderkind, Freddy Adu, moved across the Atlantic. He left Real Salt Lake of M.L.S. for the Portuguese club Benfica but has spent most of his time on the bench. Signing with a European team is understood to be the logical next step for promising young American players to pursue their development. With Altidore, it was always a question of when, not if, he would leave the M.L.S.

"Over the last 12 or 18 months, we knew that at some point Jozy was going to make a move, whether it was to Europe or to South America," Agoos said. "We knew that we were going to have him for a short amount of time. But for both the club and the player this makes a lot of sense."

But last month, Altidore wrote in a blog post on nytimes.com that he did not see a move on the horizon.

"When it comes to Europe or anything else," he added in the May 6 post, "you really can't consider any of it unless you do the things you're supposed to do. And right now, making a change is not in my mind."

Villarreal finished 8 points behind the champion Real Madrid. That earned Villarreal an automatic berth in next season's European Champions League. How much of that Altidore will experience, however, is uncertain. The Spanish newspaper Marca reported on Wednesday that he could be sent on loan to Recreativo de Huelva, which finished 16th in Spain's top flight last season.

Altidore, who is of Haitian descent and grew up in Florida, has impressed at the international level for the United States national team, scoring a dramatic header against Mexico on Feb. 6. He made his debut for the senior national team as a substitute in a game in South Africa late last year.

After his rookie season in M.L.S., he earned a spot on the United States under-17 squad. He followed that with a superb 2007 season that was capped by three goals for the United States under-20 team at the FIFA U-20 World Cup in Canada. Altidore was included in the pool of players that Bob Bradley, the national team coach, was considering for international matches against England, Spain and Argentina, but Altidore did not travel to Europe with the team. The

United States will play Argentina on Sunday at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., the Red Bulls' current home.

"This is a positive statement about the value placed on the young players we are developing," Gazidis said. "By a substantial margin, this is the highest transfer fee paid for an M.L.S. player and represents the recognition we have gotten in every quarter of the soccer world. And I want to stress that Villarreal's evaluation of Jozy came not from his time with the national teams, but from his play in M.L.S."

11. Altidore appears bound for Spain

By: Brian Trusdell

Associated Press (in Herald News)

June 5, 2008

NEW YORK – Red Bulls striker Jozy Altidore appears headed for Villarreal, after the Spanish first-division club agreed Wednesday to a record transfer with Major League Soccer for the teenage forward.

Altidore, praised by some as the United States' best soccer prospect, must negotiate a contract with Villarreal before he can join the club, the Red Bulls said.

"It wasn't an easy decision for us to make," said Red Bulls sporting director Jeff Agoos. "Jozy is obviously a very important player for us, and we would have liked to have him.

"However, we thought this was in the best interest of both the player and the club."

No transfer terms were released, but a person with knowledge of the deal said it was worth a minimum of just under \$10 million, nearly double the amount previously paid for an American when English club Sunderland bought Claudio Reyna for \$5.7 million in 2001. The person could not speak for attribution because league policy bars the disclosure of financial terms.

Reyna transferred to the Red Bulls last season.

The previous record paid for an MLS player was the \$4 million Fulham paid for Clint Dempsey after the 2006 MLS season.

MLS deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis said the transfer was negotiated relatively quickly, was a record amount for an American and that the league was under no "compulsion" to sell Altidore.

"This was a decision we and the Red Bulls took rationally, with the objective to achieve a couple of things: provide Jozy with an opportunity he's been looking for, and more importantly from our point of view, give us resources to elevate the team and the league," Gazidis said.

"It's an offer we wouldn't be accepting unless we believed the money gave us the opportunity to make the Red Bulls and MLS better. Our only motivation is that we received such value that it can let us make a step forward."

MLS owns all player contracts and pays the players out of a central fund. Teams negotiate individual contracts with league oversight.

Red Bulls spokesman Andy McGowan said Altidore, whose contract with MLS wasn't due to expire until 2011, was unlikely to play in tonight's home game against Chivas USA because of an ankle injury, but would speak about the transfer just before the match.

"I think he was happy," Agoos said in describing Altidore's reaction to the transfer. "I think every young MLS player wants to go play for a team in Europe."

The 18-year-old Altidore already has made three appearances for the U.S. national team and scored his first goal against Mexico in February. He was a key member of the U.S. team that qualified for the Olympics in April and was expected to lead the team in Beijing.

He scored nine goals for the Red Bulls last year, his first full season in MLS, to finish eighth in the league in scoring. With his combination of speed, size and strength, he has been mentioned repeatedly as a possible transfer target since the end of last season, linked to teams such as Real Madrid, Chelsea and Arsenal.

"I think this is a tremendous statement, that a young player primarily on the basis of his performance in MLS, is attracting this level of interest from a world renown club," Gazidis said.

Altidore leads the Red Bulls this season with three goals in eight games.

He made his U.S. national team debut in November, entering as a substitute in a 1-0 victory over South Africa in Johannesburg. He added his first goal in a 2-2 tie against Mexico in Houston, becoming the youngest player to score a goal for the United States in the modern era.

"We were aware of the interest that many teams had and knew at some point we would be forced to make a difficult decision regarding his future," Agoos said. "We're all very excited for Jozy. He's 18 years old and has an extremely bright future ahead of him.

"In my experience working with him, he's been a top-class professional and has done well managing the expectations placed upon him."

Staff writer Stefan Bondy contributed to this report.

12. Red Bulls lose star for \$10M

By: Frank Giase

Star-Ledger

June 5, 2008

The move came a bit sooner than expected and the price was bigger than expected, but that's what can happen when expectations are that high.

Major League Soccer reached an agreement in principle yesterday to sell Red Bulls forward Jozy Altidore to Spanish club Villarreal for a league-record transfer fee.

No terms were announced, but a person with knowledge of the transaction said the fee was \$10 million. The person declined to be identified because he is not authorized to reveal the details. The deal is pending Altidore passing a physical and agreeing to terms on a contract.

"There's never a great time to have a player like Jozy leave, but I think with the substantial offer Villarreal made, we felt we couldn't hold back any longer," Red Bulls sporting director Jeff Agoos said. "We felt it was the right time for Jozy and we also felt that with the allocation money that we would get, as well as the remaining transfer fee, it would help strengthen the club overall."

The Red Bulls will receive two-thirds of the transfer fee, with \$500,000 of that available as allocation money to bring in another top player. Altidore, 18, will receive a fraction of the fee, with the remainder split among the rest of the league's owners.

It was not clear when Altidore would join Villarreal. He injured his ankle in practice Monday, did not practice the past two days and is not expected to start when the team plays host to Chivas USA tonight at Giants Stadium.

Altidore, who was not available to the media yesterday but will be before tonight's game, could possibly play for the U.S. national team against Argentina in a friendly Sunday night at Giants Stadium. He made his national team debut Nov. 17, coming on as a substitute in a 1-0 victory over South Africa in Johannesburg. His first start – and his first goal – came in a 2-2 tie with Mexico Feb. 6. He is also expected to play for the Olympic team at the Beijing Games.

Altidore's fee smashed the MLS transfer record. The league received \$4 million when Clint Dempsey was sold to Fulham in 2007.

Altidore, a 6-1 forward who was born in Livingston but was raised in Florida, is considered one of the country's most promising goal-scorers. He starred on the U.S. Under-17 team before being drafted by the Red Bulls in the second round of the 2006 SuperDraft.

This year Altidore has a team-high three goals in eight games, and has 15 goals and five assists in 37 career games. His signing is another indication that MLS is viewed as a strong league around the world.

"Life has to go on. The most important thing is the club itself," Red Bulls coach Juan Carlos Osorio said. "It happens all over the world, where clubs are always interested in players from other clubs. Unfortunately we cannot compete with European clubs as to try and keep Josmer here because, for his future and his family's future, when a European club comes knocking on your door, it's very difficult to say no to them."

Osorio said the Red Bulls are close to signing Venezuelan national team captain Jorge Rojas, a left-sided midfielder who will be playing against Brazil tomorrow night in Foxborough, Mass. But that was in the works long before Villarreal called.

Villarreal is coming off its best season in years. It finished second in La Liga, the top league in Spain, with a 24-9-5 record, eight points behind Real Madrid. The finish guaranteed the team direct qualification into the 2009 Champions League.

At Villarreal, Altidore will compete for a spot up front with 21-year-old Giuseppe Rossi, who was born in Clifton. Rossi, who scored 11 goals last season, previously played with Manchester United and Parma.