

Soccer

MLS expansion tour continues after Nashville makes its case

By ANNE M. PETERSON
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The Major League Soccer 2017 expansion tour continued this week with official league visits in North Carolina.

Charlotte and Raleigh are among 12 cities hoping to land an MLS team. Nashville appeared to make a strong case recently when league Commissioner Don Garber visited in conjunction with the U.S. national team's Gold Cup opener against Panama.

The turnout caught Garber's eye. The July 8 game drew 42,622 fans to Nissan Stadium. A U.S. women's national team SheBelieves Cup match against France last year drew more than 25,000 fans.

"If you don't have success with friendlies or international competition, you're not going to have success in MLS," Garber told reporters during the visit. "So that's a checked box that we've actually checked a while ago."

The Nashville bid is led by billionaire businessmen John Ingram. The one thing missing is a solid stadium plan, which MLS requires for an expansion franchise.

Twelve locations are competing for MLS expansion franchises. Two winning bids are expected to be announced later this year, bringing the league to 26 teams, with two additional teams to be added in the future.

MLS expanded to 22 teams this season with the

addition of Atlanta United FC and Minnesota United FC. LAFC, which replaces the now-defunct Chivas USA, joins next year. Miami's expansion effort, led by David Beckham, would bring the league to 24.

In addition to Nashville and the two North Carolina bids, the other areas that are vying for an expansion team include: Cincinnati, Detroit, San Antonio, Sacramento, San Diego, St. Louis, Tampa/St. Petersburg, Indianapolis and Phoenix.

Sacramento's bid looks to be among the strongest, with the USL's Sacramento Republic FC drawing very well and detailed plans for a stadium in place. Phoenix has also emerged as a front-runner with a bid that

includes private financing for a stadium and an established star — Didier Drogba — joining the campaign. Tampa Bay won approval in April to expand and upgrade Al Lang Stadium, home of the USL's Tampa Bay Rowdies.

MLS Deputy Commissioner Mark Abbott visited Charlotte on Tuesday and Raleigh-Durham on Wednesday.

North Carolina Football Club owner Steve Malik, leading the Triangle's bid for a team, unveiled plans for a downtown Raleigh stadium and entertainment complex at a news conference before a rally led by the Oak City Supporters. The effort even has a hashtag: #919TOMLS.

"This is the beginning of a journey. We need to get

there pretty quickly if we want to take advantage of the catalyst of an MLS franchise and I believe we can do that," Malik said at a news conference Wednesday.

GAME OF THE WEEK: Looking forward to the weekend, the Cascadia Cup rivalry continues on Sunday when the Portland Timbers visit BC Place and the Vancouver Whitecaps.

The rivalry between the two teams actually dates back to 1975, when both were part of the North America Soccer League, but the Cascadia Cup was created by fans in 2004 as a three-way competition with the Seattle Sounders. Based on points, the Sounders and Timbers are tied atop the table so far this season.

The Timbers defeated the Whitecaps 2-1 earlier this season at Providence Park. Vancouver has won the past three matches at home against Portland.

BEST OF THE REST: Two of the top teams in the Eastern Conference, Chicago and NYCFC, meet on Saturday at Yankee Stadium. The match will showcase two of the league's top players, New York's David Villa and the Fire's Nikolic Nemanja, who leads the league with 16 goals this season.

The Fire are unbeaten in their last 11 matches, going 8-0-3 over the span. NYCFC was going to be coming off a tough challenge on Wednesday night with a match at home against Toronto.

GOLF: McIlroy, Johnson battle the wind, sit six shots back

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5-under 65.

U.S. Open champion Brooks Koepka, with no competition and barely any practice since capturing his first major a month ago, ran off three straight birdies and holed a tough shot from a pot bunker for eagle on the par-5 17th hole for a 5-under 65.

Joining them was Matt Kuchar, who first endeared himself to these British fans as a 19-year-old amateur in 1998 at Royal Birkdale. Kuchar tied the course record with a 29 on the front nine, only to fall into a routine of pars the rest of the way. He still shot 65, his best score ever in a major.

They had a one-shot lead over Paul Casey and Charl Schwartzel on a day that started nasty and ended with 39 players breaking par. The biggest question after a long day on the links was what was in store for Friday, when high wind and occasional showers were in the forecast.

"I thought today's round was extremely important, as they all are," Spieth said, atop the leaderboard at a major for the first time since last year's Masters. "But given the forecast coming in, I thought you really needed to be in the red today. You can certainly make up ground in a round tomorrow, and we'll see it happen. But being able to kind of play with shots, or play a little more conservative because you don't try to do too much on a day like tomorrow, that's nice and very helpful."

Dustin Johnson and Rory McIlroy fall into that category.



AP Photo/Peter Morrison
Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy plays out of the bunker on the 7th hole during the first round of the British Open Golf Championship, at Royal Birkdale, Southport, England Thursday, July 20, 2017.

Johnson, the No. 1 player who hasn't played the weekend at a major since the British Open last year, managed only one birdie on a decent day for scoring and shot 71. McIlroy also shot 71 and was relieved. Coming off three missed cuts in his last four events, he was 5 over through six holes when his caddie gave him a pep talk. McIlroy closed with three birdies over the last four holes to stay in the game.

Phil Mickelson failed to make a birdie, the first time that has happened in a major in five years, and shot 73.

Kuchar was the only one at 65

who played in the afternoon. The wind remained strong, though the course was manageable for everyone who stayed out of bunkers and deep grass and who holed putts.

"I watched some of the golf this morning on TV. It looked awfully challenging," Kuchar said. "It looked like anything under par was going to be a good score. Seemed like the later your tee time, the better draw you got. ... For me, to start my British Open with a 29 on the front nine is a great way to start."

Charley Hoffman had the best start of all, holing out from the rough on the daunting opening hole for

an eagle. He was poised to join the leaders when he reached 5 under with a birdie on the 15th, only to drop shots on the next two holes. Hoffman shot 69 and was in a group that included Ian Poulter and Rafa Cabrera Bello.

Defending champion Henrik Stenson, who played with Spieth, had a 71. Stenson also played with Spieth the first two rounds of the 2015 Masters that the Texan won wire-to-wire and knew what to expect.

But his best shot was with his feet in the sand. Spieth was in thick rough to the right of the 16th fairway when his shot crept into the back of a pot bunker. Not only was the ball on a slight slope, the rake marks left his ball between two ridges.

"This is dangerous," he said to his caddie.

He aimed to the right of the hole to avoid it going off the green on the other side and into another bunker, and it came off perfectly about 10 feet away.

"That was awesome," were his next words to his caddie.

He made the par putt — Spieth made a lot of putts on picked up a two-putt birdie on the 17th and narrowly missed a 7-foot birdie putt on the last. It was his best start in a major since he shot 66 at the Masters a year ago. Spieth rated it among the top five or six rounds he has ever played in a major, not bad for someone who came close to the Grand Slam two years ago.

"I couldn't have done much better today," he said.

TOUR:

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rockslides in thinning air at an altitude of 2,360 meters (7,743 feet).

He sped away from Froome's group and gradually reeled in riders ahead of him on the hairpin bends and steep road — the last being John Darwin Atapuma of Colombia, with about 1.5 kilometers (1 mile) left to ascend.

From there, Barguil labored on alone to win the first stage to finish at the summit of Izoard in the 114-year history of the Tour. Barguil also won in the Pyrenees on Bastille Day.

Only the hardest pines survive at such high altitudes. And only the hardest riders, too.

The climb showed again what was already becoming apparent on the first day of big Alpine mountains on Wednesday: that Froome is super-strong and only Uran and Bardet are capable of staying with him.

They are now the only riders within a minute of Froome overall, after Italian Fabio Aru faded again and continued his slide down the overall rankings.

Going into the Alps, Aru was second overall, breathing down Froome's neck. He is now fifth overall, nearly two minutes behind Froome.

Bardet outsprinted Froome in the final ramp of the climb, and got four bonus seconds for finishing the stage in third place — behind Barguil and Atapuma.

As a consequence, Bardet moved a tiny bit closer to Froome overall, having been 27 seconds behind him at the start of the stage in Briancon.

Uran lost a couple of seconds at the top, and is now 29 seconds back from Froome in third place.

Barguil has recovered remarkably quickly from a pelvis fracture in a crash in April. He was also struck by a car on a training ride last year, fracturing his wrist.

"I had a lot hard luck. Luck is now on my side," he said. "I had big problems, but I never gave up."

DUCKS: Need to replace Brooks, Dorsey, Bell, Ennis, Boucher

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join the Ducks as a grad transfer if he joins Elijah Brown on the roster. The 6-4 Brown earned all-Mountain West Conference honors the past two seasons at New Mexico while averaging 21.7 points per game as a sophomore and 18.9 as a junior.

The son of Golden State Warriors assistant coach Mike Brown committed to Oregon in May.

The Ducks added forward MiKyle McIntosh as a graduate transfer from Illinois State last month. The 6-7 McIntosh averaged 12.5 points and 5.6 rebounds for

the Redbirds last season.

Oregon coach Dana Altman has added a handful of graduate transfers during his tenure but three would be his most in one season. The coach said his positive experience with five previous senior transfers has encouraged him to continue welcoming players for their final season.

Mike Moser and Jason Calliste each played their senior season for the Ducks in 2013-14 while Jay-R Strowbridge played in 2010-11 and Olu Ashaolu arrived the following season.

Dylan Ennis helped Oregon reach the Final Four last season as a grad transfer.

With Ennis and Chris Boucher graduating, Dillon Brooks, Tyler Dorsey and Jordan Bell leaving early for the NBA, and Casey Benson and Kavell Bigby-Williams transferring to other schools, Oregon will return only five players from last season.

Altman has signed four freshmen and two transfers but still has two scholarships open for next season. The coach has said he wants to save some scholarships for the fall signing period and adding Onwuasor would allow him to do that.

Oregon has three seniors on the roster with Brown, McIntosh and Roman Sorkin. That leaves Oregon

with five openings for the 2018 recruiting class with 6-8 forward Miles Norris of Chula Vista, Calif., the only player who has committed to the Ducks.

Onwuasor would add depth to Oregon's backcourt that currently features Brown, sophomore Payton Pritchard and freshmen Troy Brown Jr. and Victor Bailey Jr.

Onwuasor, who is from Inglewood, Calif., played his first two seasons at Texas Tech and averaged 4.2 points per game as a sophomore before transferring to Southern Utah and sitting out a season.

Oregon won a school-record 33 games last season and are 187-70 (.727) in 7 seasons under Altman.

SCOREBOARD

Baseball

MLB				
AMERICAN LEAGUE				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	54	43	.557	—
Tampa Bay	51	45	.531	2½
New York	49	45	.521	3½
Baltimore	46	49	.484	7
Toronto	44	51	.463	9
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	48	45	.516	—
Minnesota	48	46	.511	½
Kansas City	47	47	.500	1½
Detroit	43	51	.457	5½
Chicago	38	54	.413	9½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	63	32	.663	—
Seattle	48	49	.495	16
Los Angeles	47	50	.485	17
Texas	45	50	.474	18
Oakland	43	52	.453	20
Thursday's Games				
Toronto 8, Boston 6				
Baltimore 9, Texas 7				
Kansas City 16, Detroit 4				
N.Y. Yankees 4, Seattle 1				
Friday's Games				
Houston (Fiers 6-4) at Baltimore (Jimenez 4-5), 4:05 p.m.				
Oakland (Blackburn 1-0) at N.Y. Mets (Matz 2-3), 4:10 p.m.				
Texas (Darvish 6-8) at Tampa Bay (Cobb 8-6), 4:10 p.m.				
Toronto (Estrada 4-6) at Cleveland (Bauer 7-8), 4:10 p.m.				
Detroit (Sanchez 1-0) at Minnesota (Santana 11-6), 5:10 p.m.				
Chicago White Sox (Shields 2-2) at Kansas City (Kennedy 3-6), 5:15 p.m.				
Boston (Sale 11-4) at L.A. Angels (Nolasco 4-10), 7:07 p.m.				
N.Y. Yankees (Sabathia 8-3) at Seattle (Moore 1-1), 7:10 p.m.				
NATIONAL LEAGUE				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	57	37	.606	—
Atlanta	46	48	.489	11
New York	43	50	.462	13½
Miami	42	51	.452	14½
Philadelphia	32	61	.344	24½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	52	46	.531	—

Chicago	49	45	.521	1
Pittsburgh	48	48	.500	3
St. Louis	46	49	.484	4½
Cincinnati	40	55	.421	10½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	66	30	.687	—
Arizona	55	40	.579	10½
Colorado	56	41	.577	10½
San Diego	41	54	.431	24½
San Francisco	37	60	.381	29½
Thursday's Games				
N.Y. Mets 3, St. Louis 2				
Arizona 12, Cincinnati 2				
Pittsburgh 4, Milwaukee 2				
Atlanta 6, L.A. Dodgers 3				
San Diego 5, San Francisco 2				
Friday's Games				
St. Louis (Martinez 6-9) at Chicago Cubs (Arietta 9-7), 11:20 a.m.				
Milwaukee (Garza 4-4) at Philadelphia (Nola 6-6), 4:05 p.m.				
Miami (Urena 7-4) at Cincinnati (Bailey 2-3), 4:10 p.m.				
Oakland (Blackburn 1-0) at N.Y. Mets (Matz 2-3), 4:10 p.m.				
Pittsburgh (Williams 3-4) at Colorado (Hoffman 6-1), 5:40 p.m.				
Washington (Scherzer 11-5) at Arizona (TBD), 8:40 p.m.				
Atlanta (Garcia 3-7) at L.A. Dodgers (Wood 11-0), 7:10 p.m.				
San Diego (Cahill 4-3) at San Francisco (Samardzija 4-11), 7:15 p.m.				
MLB				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Vancouver	19	16	.543	—
Tri-City	17	17	.500	1½
Spokane	14	20	.412	4½
Everett	13	21	.381	5½
South Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Hillsboro	20	14	.588	—
Eugene	20	14	.588	—
Boise	19	15	.558	1
Salem-Keizer	15	20	.429	5½
Thursday's Games				
Vancouver 8, Salem-Keizer 3				
Boise at Everett, late finish				
Spokane at Hillsboro, late finish				
Eugene at Tri-City, late finish				
Friday's Games				
Vancouver at Salem-Keizer, 6:35 p.m.				
Boise at Everett, 7:05 p.m.				
Spokane at Hillsboro, 7:05 p.m.				

Eugene at Tri-City, 7:15 p.m.						
Soccer						
CONCACAF Gold Cup						
QUARTERFINALS						
Thursday						
At Glendale, Ariz.						
Quarterfinal Three						
Mexico 1, Honduras 0						
Quarterfinal Four						
Jamaica 2, Canada 1						
SEMIFINALS						
Saturday						
At Arlington, Tex.						
Costa Rica vs. United States, 7 p.m.						
MLS						
EASTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Toronto FC	11	3	6	39	39	21
Chicago	11	3	6	38	37	19
N.Y. FC	10	6	4	34	38	26
Atl. Untd. FC	9	7	3	30	39	27
New York	9	8	2	29	25	26
Orlando City	8	7	5	29	29	29
Columbus	9	10	1	28	30	32
Montreal	6	6	6	24	29	30
Philadelphia	6	8	5	23	26	23
New England	5	9	5	20	29	31
D.C. United	5	12	3	18	17	35
WESTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Portland	8	4	8	32	24	14
FC Dallas	8	7	3	31	18	18
Houston	8	7	5	29	24	29
Vancouver	8	7	3	27	25	27
Portland	7	8	6	27	35	35
Seattle	7	7	6	27	29	31
San Jose	7	8	5	26	23	31
Los Angeles	6	9	4	22	28	33
Real Salt Lake	12	2	2	37	41	11
Minn. United	5	11	4	19	25	42
Colorado	6	11	1	19	19	27
NOTE: Three points for victory, one point for tie.						
Friday's Game						
Atlanta United FC at Orlando City, 4 p.m.						
Saturday's Games						
Chicago at New York City FC, 11 a.m.						
New York at Minnesota United, 1 p.m.						
Colorado at Toronto FC, 4 p.m.						
FC Dallas at Montreal, 4:30 p.m.						
Los Angeles at New England, 4:30 p.m.						
Philadelphia at Columbus, 4:30 p.m.						
Sporting Kansas City at Real Salt Lake, 7 p.m.						
Sunday's Games						

Portland at Vancouver, 3:30 p.m.				
San Jose at Seattle, 7:30 p.m.				
Basketball				
WNBA				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	12	9	.571	—
Connecticut	12	9	.571	—
New York	10	9	.526	1
Atlanta	9	11	.450	2½
Indiana	8	13	.381	4
Chicago	8	13	.381	4
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	16	2	.889	—
Los Angeles	14	6	.700	3
Phoenix	11	9	.550	6
Dallas	10	12	.455	8
Seattle	9	11	.450	8
San Antonio	3	18	.143	14½