

Soccer Source *"Because soccer is like life, only more important"*

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French Soccer Site Does Feature Story On MLS

ESPNsoccernet.fr, the French-language affiliate of ESPNsoccernet, just did an interesting piece on Major League Soccer. There are currently two French nationals playing professional soccer in the U.S.: Chivas USA forward Laurent Merlin, whom you may have heard of, and Sébastien Le Toux, whom you probably haven't. Le Toux just finished a six month contract with USL's Seattle Sounders. I'm not going to translate the whole article but thought I would pass on the gist:

- The story repeats the familiar refrain of how MLS doesn't want to repeat the mistakes of the past (NASL), which has led the league to impose limits to its growth such as the salary cap and designated player rule. This is the main reason why MLS is not yet an attractive destination for European players.
- Interestingly enough, the story predicts this is due to change. It quotes Michael Wiesenfeld, Merlin's New York-based agent, who anticipates MLS will add a second designated player in time for the start of the 2008 season. Wiesenfeld also predicts that the minimum wage for players and salary cap for teams will both treble in 2009.
- There is a lot of talk about the enormous potential of the U.S. soccer market, even though the sport is largely unnoticed by the sports media and U.S. sports fans.
- The 23 year-old Le Toux has positive things to say about his experience in USL, despite the fact that he could have made more money in Ligue 2 (French second division). He loved Seattle and enjoyed playing in USL, where he gauges the "niveau" to be about comparable to lower echelons of Ligue 2.
- Wiesenfeld says the level of play in MLS is roughly comparable to lower level Ligue 1 or top level Ligue 2 but that it's been getting a lot better.

Overall, I think it's definitely a positive piece. People really appear to be pulling for MLS, even in France. If that doesn't make a statement...

