

MANCHESTER UNITED JANUARY TRANSFER TARGETS - CM/DM



WILLIAM REES

RECRUITMENT TASK

FIND MANCHESTER UNITED A NEW AND VERSATILE
MIDFIELDER

MATCH THE POSITIONAL PROFILE AND SUITABILITY TO THE
CURRENT STYLE OF PLAY

FUTURE VALUE AND PLAYER POTENTIAL

ABILITY TO COVER AS A #6 OR A #8

COMFORTABLE/EXPERIENCED PLAYING IN MULTIPLE
DIFFERENT SYSTEMS



RECRUITMENT PROCESS



SQUAD DEPTH



ISSUE - SQUAD DEPTH IN MIDFIELD



POSITIONAL DEPTH - CM/DM

Currently contracted to the club in the midfield positions are **Kobbie Mainoo**, **Casemiro**, **Manuel Ugarte**, **Bruno Fernandes**, and **Mason Mount**. While this appears strong numerically, there are clear profile and role imbalances within the group. Casemiro and Ugarte are the only natural defensive midfield options, with Casemiro entering the later stages of his career and Ugarte profiling more as a ball-winning midfielder than a controller of the midfield. Mainoo, Bruno Fernandes, and Mount are all more advanced or hybrid midfielders, with Mainoo still developing and Bruno and Mount best utilised higher up the pitch. As a result, there is limited cover for a true defensive midfielder, particularly when injuries arise and rotation is required. Additional depth from a midfielder capable of operating as both a No.6 and No.8 — would provide structural balance and reduce reliance on specific profiles within this unit.



POSITIONAL PROFILE CM/DM

TECHNICAL QUALITIES

- **Ball circulation & progression** – Secure short passing, ability to play through pressure, and progressive passes that break lines.
- **Receiving under pressure** – First touch, body orientation, scanning, and ability to receive on the half-turn in central areas.
- **Ball carrying** – Ability to carry through midfield zones when space opens, attracting pressure and releasing teammates.
- **Defensive technique** – Tackling execution, use of body, timing of challenges, and interceptions in central areas.

TACTICAL QUALITIES

- **Game understanding** – Reads phases of play, recognises when to slow or accelerate tempo, and understands positional responsibility in and out of possession.
- **Build-up intelligence** – Ability to operate as a single pivot or in a double pivot, adapting role depending on team structure.
- **Positional versatility** – Comfort playing as a No.6 or No.8, with the intelligence to adjust spacing and depth.

OUT OF POSSESSION

- **Defensive positioning** – Awareness of space between lines, screening the back line, and covering central zones.
- **1v1 defensive duels** – Effectiveness in ground duels, body positioning, and recovery defending.
- **Press resistance & execution** – Ability to step out to press, cover passing lanes, and recover into shape.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- **Discipline & composure** – Calm decision-making in high-traffic areas, avoids unnecessary fouls or turnovers.
- **Responsibility & leadership** – Willingness to organise, demand the ball, and take accountability in central areas.
- **Competitive mentality** – Intensity in duels, pressing actions, and second-ball situations.

PHYSICAL

- **Mobility** – Short and medium-distance acceleration to cover spaces and engage opponents.
- **Endurance** – Capacity to sustain high involvement across both attacking and defensive phases.
- **Strength** – Ability to hold off pressure, protect the ball, and compete physically in midfield duels.



LONGLIST

ANGELO STILLER – VfB STUTTGART (SPORTS360 GmbH)

QUINTEN TIMBER – FEYENOORD (FORZA SPORTS GROUP)

CONOR GALLAGHER – ATLETICO MADRID (ELITE MANAGEMENT)

RUBEN NEVES – AL HILAL (GESTIFUTE)

BOUBACAR KAMARA – ASTON VILLA (SPORT COVER)

AMADOU ONANA – ASTON VILLA (BTFM)

JOAO GOMES – WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS (CARLOS LEITE)

ELLIOT ANDERSON – NOTTINGHAM FOREST (CAA STELLAR)

MANU KONE – AS ROMA (ESN)

ADAM WHARTON – CRYSTAL PALACE (OMNI SPORTS)

CARLOS BALEBA – BRIGHTON (IF FOOTBALL)

LESLEY UGOCHUKWU – BURNLEY (WASSERMAN)

HAYDEN HACKNEY – MIDDLESBROUGH (RELATIVES)

SANDER BERGE – FULHAM (KEYPASS AS)

LUCIEN AGOUME – SEVILLA (ND SPORTS MANAGEMENT)



SHORTLIST

ELLIOT ANDERSON – NOTTINGHAM FOREST (CAA STELLAR)



ADAM WHARTON – CRYSTAL PALACE (OMNI SPORTS)



CARLOS BALEBA – BRIGHTON (IF FOOTBALL)



RECOMMENDED PLAYER

ELLIOT ANDERSON



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PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



ELLIOT ANDERSON

AGE: 23 (06/11/2002)

HEIGHT: 179cm / 5'9

POSITION: CENTRAL/DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER

PREFERRED FOOT: RIGHT

CURRENT CLUB: NOTTINGHAM FOREST

CONTRACT END: 30/06/2029

AGENCY: CAA STELLAR

PLAYER OVERVIEW

Elliot Anderson is a 22-year-old English central midfielder currently playing for Nottingham Forest, having previously developed at Newcastle United. He has represented England at international level and is now establishing himself as a top Premier League midfielder.

POSITIONAL PROFILE/PLAYING STYLE SUITABILITY

Anderson operates primarily as a central midfielder with the ability to play as a more advanced No.8 or as a deeper midfielder in a double pivot. He is comfortable receiving under pressure, carries the ball aggressively through midfield zones, and shows good energy in progressing play forward. Out of possession, he is active and competitive, contributing to pressing actions and defensive recoveries rather than sitting passively. While not a pure holding midfielder, his mobility, work rate, and technical security make him suitable for systems that require box-to-box contribution alongside a more positionally fixed No.6.

POTENTIAL/FUTURE VALUE

Anderson is still in the early growth phase of his senior career and continues to develop consistency at Premier League level. His physical profile, intensity, and technical base suggest he can become a reliable top-level central midfielder, particularly in high-tempo systems. With continued development, he projects as a player capable of operating regularly at Premier League level and pushing toward international recognition.

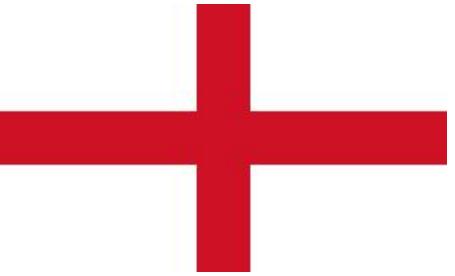
TRANSFER STATUS

Anderson is under long-term contract at Nottingham Forest and any future transfer would likely require a significant fee given his age, Premier League experience, and homegrown status, with Forest in a strong position to retain him unless a strong offer is presented.

RECOMMENDATION

Anderson would be a strong addition for Manchester United as a high-energy central midfielder who can contribute both in and out of possession. His mobility, ball-carrying ability, and pressing intensity would add balance to the midfield group and provide useful profile variety alongside existing options.

PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



ELLIOT ANDERSON

AGE: 23 (06/11/2002)

HEIGHT: 179cm / 5'9

POSITION: CENTRAL/DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER

PREFERRED FOOT: RIGHT

CURRENT CLUB: NOTTINGHAM FOREST

CONTRACT END: 30/06/2029

AGENCY: CAA STELLAR

2025/2026 OVERVIEW:

Premier League: 21 appearances (21 starts), 1,890 minutes, 1 goal, 2 assists
Europa League: 5 appearances (3 starts) 339 minutes

INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES

England National Team: 6 appearances, 439 minutes
England U21 National Team: 12 appearances, 2 goals, 1 assist, 743 minutes
Scotland U21: 1 appearance, 90 minutes
Scotland U17: 3 appearances, 134 minutes
Scotland U16: N/A

INJURY HISTORY

Back injury Oct 2023 - Feb 2024 (missed 126 days and 29 games)

RELATIONSHIPS

N/A

SUMMARY

Anderson is a dynamic central midfielder who would add energy, ball carrying, and intensity to Manchester United's midfield unit. He offers flexibility across central roles and can adapt to different game states, contributing both in pressing phases and in transition. While not a pure holding midfielder, his work rate and mobility would complement more positionally disciplined profiles.

RECOMMENDED PLAYER

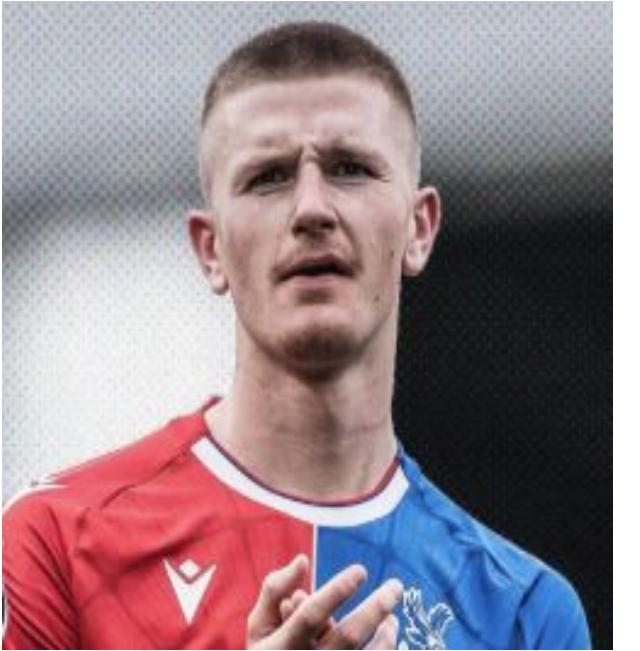
ADAM WHARTON



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PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



ADAM WHARTON

AGE: 21 (06/02/2004)

HEIGHT: 185cm / 6'0

POSITION: CENTRAL/DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER

PREFERRED FOOT: LEFT

CURRENT CLUB: CRYSTAL PALACE

CONTRACT END: 30/06/2029

AGENCY: OMNI SPORTS

PLAYER OVERVIEW

Adam Wharton is a 20-year-old English defensive midfielder currently playing for Crystal Palace, having joined from Blackburn Rovers. He has represented England at youth international level and has quickly adapted to Premier League football.

POSITIONAL PROFILE/PLAYING STYLE SUITABILITY

Wharton operates primarily as a deep-lying midfielder, comfortable acting as a single pivot or as part of a midfield pair. He is technically secure, composed in possession, and shows strong awareness when receiving under pressure. His passing range allows him to dictate tempo and progress play through central areas rather than relying on ball carrying. Out of possession, he is disciplined positionally, reads the game well, and contributes through interceptions and intelligent pressing rather than physical dominance. His profile suits possession-oriented sides that require a calm organiser at the base of midfield.

POTENTIAL/FUTURE VALUE

Wharton's rapid transition to Premier League football highlights his maturity and game intelligence. Given his age and stylistic profile, he projects as a long-term solution in deeper midfield roles, with the potential to reach top-six Premier League and European competition level. His composure and decision-making suggest a high ceiling as his physical development continues.

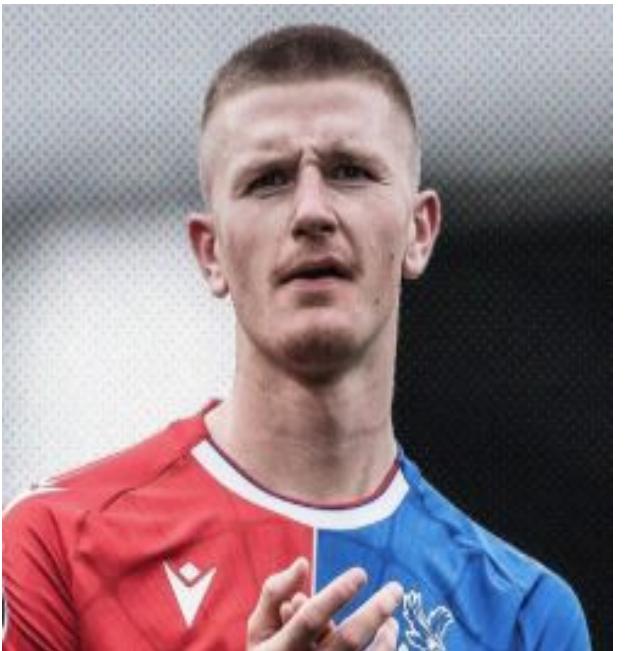
TRANSFER STATUS

Wharton is under long-term contract at Crystal Palace following his recent transfer. Given his age, English status, and immediate impact at Premier League level, Palace are well positioned to retain him, and any future move would likely command a premium fee.

RECOMMENDATION

Wharton would provide composure, control, and positional discipline at the base of midfield. His calm use of the ball and understanding of tempo would help stabilise United's midfield structure while offering long-term value in a key position.

PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



ADAM WHARTON

AGE: 21 (06/02/2004)

HEIGHT: 185cm / 6'0

POSITION: CENTRAL/DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER

PREFERRED FOOT: LEFT

CURRENT CLUB: CRYSTAL PALACE

CONTRACT END: 30/06/2029

AGENCY: OMNI SPORTS

2025/26 OVERVIEW:

Premier League: 18 appearances (18 starts), 1,482 minutes, 2 assists
EFL Cup: 1 appearance (1 start) 90 minutes
Community Shield: 1 appearance (1 starts) 85 minutes, 1 assist
UEFA Conference League: 5 appearances (2 starts) 238 minutes

INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES

England National Team: 3 appearances, 108 minutes played
England U21 National Team: 3 appearances, 118 minutes played
England U20 National Team: 3 appearances, 147 minutes played
England U19 National Team: 6 appearances, 193 minutes played
England U16 National Team: N/A

INJURY HISTORY

Groin surgery Nov 2024 - Feb 2025 (missed 93 days and 20 games)
Ankle injury May 2025 - May 2025 (missed 7 days and 1 game)

169 career games with over 12,000 minutes in his career, indicating he has played most games in his career.

RELATIONSHIPS

Kobbie Mainoo - teammates for England at Euro 2024

SUMMARY

Wharton is a composed deep-lying midfielder who would provide control and structure in central areas. He is comfortable dictating tempo, receiving under pressure, and maintaining positional discipline. His profile offers balance to a midfield unit by prioritising game management and ball circulation over physical dominance.

RECOMMENDED PLAYER

CARLOS BALEBA



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PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



CARLOS BALEBA

AGE: 22 (03/01/2004)

HEIGHT: 180cm / 5' 10

POSITION: CENTRAL/DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER

PREFERRED FOOT: LEFT

CURRENT CLUB: BRIGHTON AND HOVE ALBION

CONTRACT END: 30/06/2028 (OPTION FOR A +1)

AGENCY: IF FOOTBALL

PLAYER OVERVIEW

Carlos Baleba is a 21-year-old Cameroonian defensive midfielder currently playing for Brighton & Hove Albion. He is a full international for Cameroon and is regarded as one of the most physically gifted young midfielders in Europe.

POSITIONAL PROFILE/PLAYING STYLE SUITABILITY

Baleba profiles primarily as a defensive midfielder capable of operating as a single pivot or in a double pivot. He combines elite athleticism with ball-carrying power, regularly driving through midfield with intensity and confidence. In possession, he is comfortable receiving centrally and progressing play through carries and forward passes, though his game remains more direct than controlling. Out of possession, he is aggressive, covers large areas, and excels in duels and recovery actions, making him well suited to teams that demand high physical output and defensive presence from their midfield anchor.

POTENTIAL/FUTURE VALUE

Baleba has significant upside due to his age, physical tools, and exposure to a high-level development environment. As his positional discipline and decision-making continue to mature, he has the potential to develop into a top-level defensive midfielder capable of competing at Champions League level. His international experience at a young age further supports his long-term projection.

TRANSFER STATUS

Baleba is under long-term contract at Brighton and is considered a core asset within their squad. Any transfer in the near term would likely require a substantial fee, with Brighton historically well positioned to retain or maximise value on players of this profile.

RECOMMENDATION

Baleba would offer United a powerful, athletic midfield presence capable of impacting games physically and defensively. His ability to cover ground, win duels, and carry the ball from deep make him well suited to be the next addition to the Manchester United midfield.

PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



CARLOS BALEBA

AGE: 22 (03/01/2004)

HEIGHT: 180cm / 5' 10

POSITION: CENTRAL/DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER

PREFERRED FOOT: LEFT

CURRENT CLUB: BRIGHTON AND HOVE ALBION

CONTRACT END: 30/06/2028 (OPTION FOR A +1)

AGENCY: IF FOOTBALL

2025/26 OVERVIEW

Premier League: 16 appearances (14 starts), 903 minutes

EFL Cup: 3 appearances (2 starts) 167 minutes

International: 10 appearance (9 starts), 742 minutes

INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES

Cameroon Senior National Team: 15 appearances, 1 assist, 1,157 minutes

INJURY HISTORY

Unknown muscle injury Jan 2025 - Feb 2025 (missed 8 days, 1 game)

132 games played with over 7, 500 minutes in his career, indicating he has played in most games in his career.

RELATIONSHIPS

Bryan Mbeumo - current teammates with the Cameroon National team

Leny Yoro - ex teammates at Lille

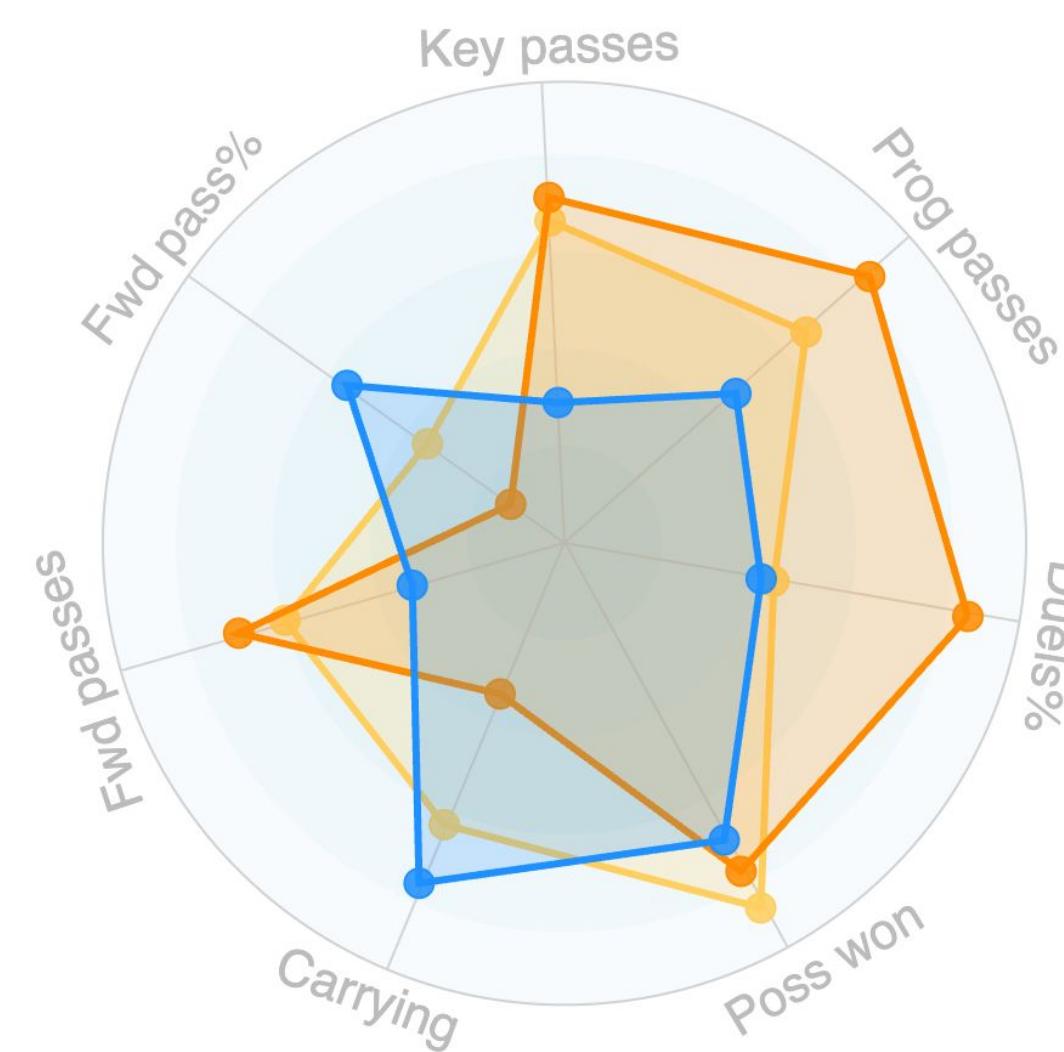
SUMMARY

Baleba is a physically dominant defensive midfielder who would bring athleticism, ball-winning ability, and presence to United's midfield. He is capable of covering large areas, competing aggressively in duels, and contributing to both defensive stability and ball progression. His profile suits high-intensity environments and adds a strong physical dimension to the midfield group.

PLAYER COMPARISON CHARTS

2024/2025

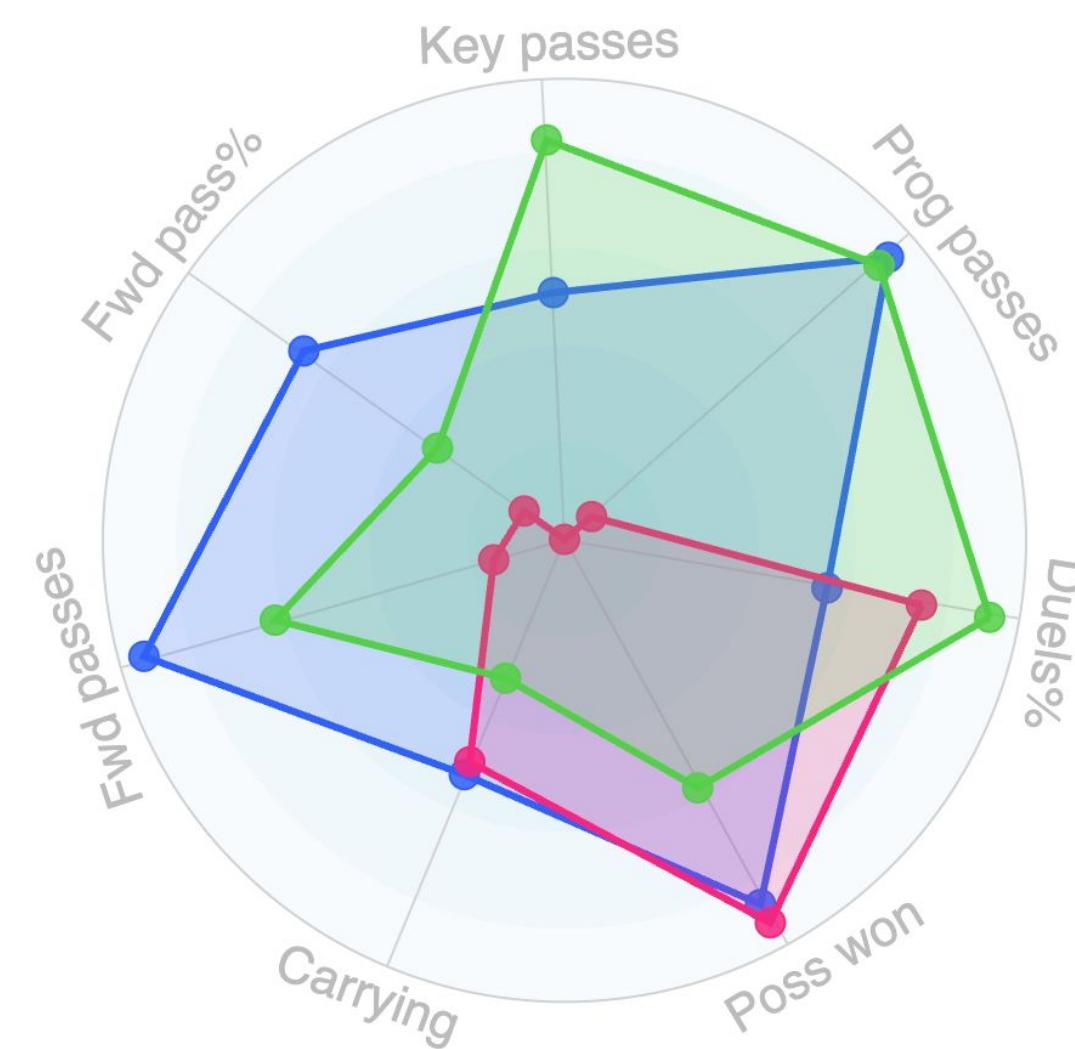
Percentiles	Duel%	Poss won	Prog carries	Fwd passes	Fwd pass%	Key passes	Prog passes	Minutes
E. Anderson 24/25 Nottingham Forest, 22	46.1	89.7	66.3	62.8	36.7	69.9	69.5	2943 X
A. Wharton 24/25 Crystal Palace, 21	88.8	80.7	35.5	73.2	14.4	75.0	87.8	1409 X
C. Baleba 24/25 Brighton, 21	43.3	73.0	80.1	34.2	58.2	30.5	49.3	2924 X



PLAYER COMPARISON CHARTS

2025/2026

Percentiles	Duel%	Poss won	Prog carries	Fwd passes	Fwd pass%	Key passes	Prog passes	Minutes
E. Anderson 25/26 Nottingham Forest, 23	57.8	89.6	55.2	94.5	69.8	53.7	93.2	1981 X
C. Baleba 25/26 Brighton, 22	78.6	94.1	52.2	15.9	10.8	0.2	7.8	964 X
A. Wharton 25/26 Crystal Palace, 21	93.6	60.9	32.5	65.0	34.0	86.8	90.5	1606 X



SUMMARY

STRATEGY

BASED ON THE DATA, SCOUTING OBSERVATIONS AND POTENTIAL OF TRANSFER.

POSITIONAL

DATA AND SCOUTING OBSERVATIONS SHOW THESE PLAYERS HAVE THE ABILITY TO PLAY BOTH CENTRAL MIDFIELD AND DEFENSIVE MIDFIELD.

TEAM

DEPTH CHARTS DEMONSTRATE A NEED ACROSS THESE POSITIONS.

NEED

DATA, SCOUTING OBSERVATIONS AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION INDICATE THESE PLAYERS WOULD BE A VALUABLE ADDITION TO THE SQUAD.



CONCLUSION

Among the three profiles I have assessed, Elliot Anderson emerges as the most complete and immediately impactful option. He is currently performing at the highest level, showing consistency and adaptability for a struggling team in a demanding Premier League environment. His ability to contribute across multiple midfield roles, combined with his work rate and ball-carrying quality, makes him the most reliable solution while still having potential to reach even higher levels. He is already operating at the level Manchester United require and would immediately slot into the starting XI.

From a squad-building perspective, it makes sense to continue to invest in young players while also bolstering the midfield for the next decade. Nottingham Forest are likely to face difficulty retaining a player of his calibre as he is simply too good for a team at their current level, and while the transfer fee would be significant, upwards of £100m, it reflects the reality of the market for high level midfielders and he fits into that bracket. If United are prepared to invest decisively in midfield, breaking the bank for one — and potentially even two — midfielders is justified. Anderson offers the strongest blend of reliability and scalability, making him my standout choice to be the next big money signing for Manchester United.





THANK YOU