

MANCHESTER UNITED SUMMER  
TRANSFER TARGETS -  
ROTATION ST



WILLAM REES

# RECRUITMENT TASK

**FIND MANCHESTER UNITED A NEW ROTATION ST AS JOSHUA ZIRKZEE IS LIKELY TO LEAVE IN THE SUMMER**

**IDENTIFY AN EXPERIENCED, MENTOR-LIKE FORWARD WHO CAN SUPPORT BENJAMIN ŠEŠKO'S DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT BLOCKING HIS LONG-TERM PATHWAY**

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

**COMFORTABLE PLAYING AS A STARTER, ROTATION OPTION, OR IMPACT SUBSTITUTE ACROSS MULTIPLE SYSTEMS**



# RECRUITMENT PROCESS



# CURRENT SQUAD DEPTH



# ISSUE - ROTATION STRIKER PROFILE

## POSITIONAL DEPTH - ST

Currently contracted to the club in the striker position are **Benjamin Šeško**, **Joshua Zirkzee**, and **Chido Obi**, while **Matheus Cunha** and **Bryan Mbeumo** can also operate centrally if needed. While this gives Manchester United several attacking options on paper, there are still clear concerns over balance, role clarity, and experience within the group. Šeško is the long-term striker project and should continue to be developed as the future starting number nine, but he is still young and should not be left as the only natural senior striker option. Zirkzee's future appears uncertain and he could leave in the summer, while Chido Obi is still developing and has not yet been a regular first-team option this season. Cunha and Mbeumo can both play centrally, but they are more natural as flexible forwards rather than true penalty-box strikers.

As a result, there is a clear need for an experienced rotation striker who can provide reliable depth without blocking Šeško's long-term pathway. The ideal profile would be a true number nine with box presence, hold-up ability, finishing quality, and the experience to help younger forwards develop. This type of signing would be cheaper than targeting another high-upside young striker as they would not demand to start every match, and would give United a more balanced centre-forward group for the Premier League, cup games, and European competition.



# POSITIONAL PROFILE ST

## TECHNICAL QUALITIES

- **Finishing & shot selection** – Reliable ball striking, composure in the box, and ability to convert good chances without needing a high volume of shots.
- **Hold-up play** – Secure first touch with back to goal, ability to protect the ball, link play, and bring midfielders/wingers into attacks.
- **Penalty-box movement** – Timing of runs across defenders, ability to find space between centre-backs, and instinct to attack crosses, cutbacks, and second balls.
- **Aerial ability & first contact** – Strength in attacking crosses, competing for direct balls, winning flick-ons, and giving the team a target when playing under pressure.

## TACTICAL QUALITIES

- **Role understanding** – Comfortable acting as a rotation striker, starting cup/European games, or coming off the bench to change the game.
- **Link-up intelligence** – Ability to connect with wide players, combine around the box, and play simple passes that help attacks continue.
- **Attacking positioning** – Knows when to stay central, pin centre-backs, drop short, or attack the space behind depending on the game state.
- **System flexibility** – Comfortable playing as a lone striker, in a front two, or as a late-game target when the team needs more presence in the box.

## OUT OF POSSESSION

- **Pressing discipline** – Ability to lead the press intelligently, screen passes into midfield, and force centre-backs into predictable areas.
- **Defensive work rate** – Willingness to close down, recover into shape, and contribute without the ball even when not starting every match.
- **Set-piece defending** – Adds height, strength, and experience when defending corners, wide free kicks, and late-game pressure.
- **Counter-pressing reactions** – Quick response after turnovers, helping United regain momentum and stop opposition transitions.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL

- **Experience & leadership** – Brings maturity, professionalism, and a strong example for younger forwards like Šeško and Chido Obi.
- **Acceptance of role** – Comfortable being part of a rotation without demanding to start every match, while still performing when called upon.
- **Composure under pressure** – Reliable in big moments, especially late in games, cup matches, and tight fixtures where one chance can decide the result.
- **Competitive mentality** – Strong desire to compete physically, attack the box, and make an impact even with limited minutes.

## PHYSICAL

- **Strength** – Ability to hold off centre-backs, protect possession, compete aerially, and give United a more physical presence up front.
- **Box power** – Sharp enough over short distances to attack crosses, react to loose balls, and separate from defenders inside the area.
- **Durability** – Reliable availability across a long season, especially as a rotation option needed for Premier League, cup, and European fixtures.
- **Functional mobility** – Does not need elite pace, but must move well enough to press, link play, attack space, and stay involved across different game states.



# LOGLIST CRITERIA

**Age:** 27-35

Player should be experienced enough to act as a senior striker/mentor profile rather than another long-term development project.

**Position:** Natural striker / centre-forward

Must have played the majority of minutes as a true number nine, not mainly as a second striker or false nine.

**League Level:** Top 8 European league experience

Player should be coming from a level close enough to adapt quickly to Manchester United and Premier League demands.

**Market Value:** Maximum €40m

Keeps the search realistic for a rotation striker and avoids spending starter-level money on a secondary option.

**Contract / Availability:** Realistic transfer situation

Prioritize players with shorter contracts, reduced roles, relegation risk, financial pressure, or clubs likely to sell.

**Role Acceptance:** Comfortable as a rotation option

The player should be able to start cup/European games, come off the bench, and support Šeško without demanding to be the undisputed starter.

**Profile Fit:** Box presence, hold-up play, finishing, aerial ability

Experienced true number nine who adds box presence, hold-up play, aerial threat, and reliable finishing, giving United a different striker option without blocking Šeško's development.



# LONGLIST

**OLLIE WATKINS – ASTON VILLA (TWO TOUCH AGENCY)**

**VANGELIS PAVLIDIS – S.L. BENFICA (AC TALENT)**

**SERHOU GUIRASSY – DORTMUND (KGSMI)**

**JEAN-PHILIPPE MATETA – CRYSTAL PALACE (PAUL LATOUCHE)**

**ALEXANDER SORLOTH – ATLÉTICO MADRID (KEYPASS AS)**

**PATRIK SCHICK – BAYER LEVERKUSEN (SOCCERTALK GMBH)**

**CHRIS WOOD - NOTTINGHAM FOREST (CAA BASE)**

**DANNY WELBECK – BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION (PSG)**

**RAÚL JIMÉNEZ – FULHAM (DARIO BRIGNOLE)**

**ODSONNE ÉDOUARD – LENS (MKS MANAGEMENT)**

**RICHARLISON – TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (CAA BASE)**

**LUIS SUÁREZ – SPORTING LISBON (LIAN SPORTS GROUP)**

**DOMINIC CALVERT-LEWIN – LEEDS UNITED (SEG)**



# LONGLIST FILTERING CRITERIA

## 1. Rotation Role Suitability

Prioritised strikers who would be comfortable joining as a rotation option, impact substitute, and experienced support profile rather than demanding to be the undisputed starter.

## 2. True Number Nine Profile

Filtered for natural centre-forwards who add box presence, hold-up play, aerial threat, and reliable finishing, giving United a different striker option to the more flexible forwards already in the squad.

## 3. Experience and Mentorship

Focused on older, proven strikers with the maturity, professionalism, and game experience to support Benjamin Šeško's development and help guide younger attacking players.

## 4. Tactical Suitability

Considered players who can operate as a lone striker or in a front two, lead the line physically, link play with runners around them, and adapt across Premier League, cup, and European fixtures.

## 5. Market Opportunity

Considered age, contract situation, current club context, likely fee, and whether the player could be attainable within a realistic summer transfer window.

## 6. Short-Term Squad Value

Prioritised players who can contribute immediately without requiring a long adaptation period, while also avoiding a long-term financial commitment that could block Šeško's pathway.



# SHORTLIST

**DANNY WELBECK – BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION (PSG)**



**JEAN-PHILIPPE MATETA - CRYSTAL PALACE (PAUL LATOUCHE)**

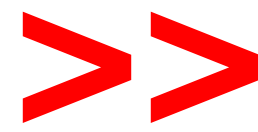


**RAÚL JIMÉNEZ – FULHAM (DARIO BRIGNOLE)**



# RECOMMENDED PLAYER

## DANNY WELBECK



# PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



## DANNY WELBECK

**AGE:** 35 (26/11/1990)

**HEIGHT:** 185cm / 6'1

**POSITION:** STRIKER

**PREFERRED FOOT:** RIGHT

**CURRENT CLUB:** BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION

**CONTRACT END:** 30/06/2027

**AGENCY:** PSG

## PLAYER OVERVIEW

Danny Welbeck is a 35-year-old English centre-forward currently playing for Brighton & Hove Albion. Developed at Manchester United, he has extensive Premier League experience across United, Arsenal, Watford, and Brighton, as well as senior England experience. He is a right-footed striker with strong movement, link play, professionalism, and an experienced personality that would suit a senior rotation role.

## POSITIONAL PROFILE/PLAYING STYLE SUITABILITY

Welbeck fits the profile of an experienced rotation striker who can support United without blocking Benjamin Šeško's pathway. He is not just a penalty-box forward, but a mobile number nine who can link play, press intelligently, combine with wide players, and make clever runs across the defensive line. His experience in multiple Premier League systems would make him a useful squad option, especially in games where United need maturity, movement, and reliable decision-making in the final third.

## POTENTIAL/FUTURE VALUE

Welbeck would not be signed for resale value or long-term financial upside. His value would come from short-term squad impact, leadership, and the ability to help younger forwards develop. He would give United an experienced senior striker who understands the club, knows the Premier League, and can offer guidance to players like Šeško and Chido Obi while still contributing on the pitch.

## TRANSFER STATUS

Welbeck would likely be one of the more realistic and affordable options on the shortlist. He is at a later stage of his career, only has one year left on his contract, his market value is low compared to younger striker targets, and he would not require United to make a major long-term financial commitment. Brighton may still value his experience highly, especially after his strong recent form, but the deal would be more achievable than signing a younger starting-level striker.

## RECOMMENDATION

Welbeck would be a sensible rotation striker target for Manchester United. He would add experience, Premier League reliability, link play, intelligent movement, and leadership to the forward group. The main appeal is that he would not block Šeško's development, but would provide the type of senior support United currently lack behind him.

# PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



## DANNY WELBECK

**AGE:** 35 (26/11/1990)

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**POSITION:** STRIKER

**PREFERRED FOOT:** RIGHT

**CURRENT CLUB:** BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION

**CONTRACT END:** 30/06/2027

**AGENCY:** PSG

### 2025/2026 OVERVIEW:

Premier League: 34 appearances (23 starts), 2066 minutes, 13 goals, 1 assist  
FA Cup: 2 appearances, 1 assist, 102 minutes  
EFL Cup: 1 appearance, 1 goal, 78 minutes

### INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES

England National Team: 42 appearances, 16 goals, 4 assists 2328 minutes  
England U21 National Team: 13 appearances, 5 goals, 839 minutes  
England U19: 10 appearances, 3 goals, 1 assist, 651 minutes  
England U18: 2 appearances, 2 goals, 180 minutes  
England U17: 11 appearances, 3 goals, 649 minutes

### INJURY HISTORY

Patellar tendon May 2015 - Sep 2015 (missed 123 days and 13 games)  
Knee surgery Sep 2015 - Feb 2016 (missed 155 days and 36 games)  
Cartilage damage May 2016 - Jan 2017 (missed 239 days and 41 games)  
Ankle injury Nov 2018 - May 2019 (missed 204 days and 40 games)  
Hamstring injury Oct 2019 - Jan 2020 (missed 104 days and 18 games)  
Hamstring injury Sep 2021 - Dec 2021 (missed 90 days and 11 games)  
Hamstring injury Oct 2023 - Dec 2023 (missed 57 days and 11 games)

### RELATIONSHIPS

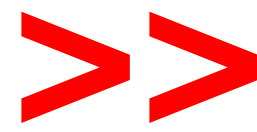
Michael Carrick (ex teammates at Manchester United)

### SUMMARY

Welbeck is an experienced Premier League striker who would give Manchester United a reliable short-term rotation option. He can link play, press with intelligence, attack the box, and provide leadership around younger forwards. While he would not be a long-term investment, he fits the role well because he understands the club, knows the league, and could support Šeško's development without demanding to be the main striker.

# RECOMMENDED PLAYER

## JEAN-PHILIPPE MATETA



# PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



## JEAN-PHILIPPE MATETA

**AGE:** 28 (28/06/1997)

**HEIGHT:** 192cm / 6'3

**POSITION:** STRIKER

**PREFERRED FOOT:** RIGHT

**CURRENT CLUB:** CRYSTAL PALACE

**CONTRACT END:** 30/06/2027

**AGENCY:** PAUL LATOUCHE

## PLAYER OVERVIEW

Jean-Philippe Mateta is a 28-year-old French centre-forward currently playing for Crystal Palace. He is a right-footed true number nine with strong Premier League experience, physical presence, and a clear penalty-box striker profile. At 1.92m, he gives United the size, power, box movement, and direct goal threat they would want from a rotation striker behind Benjamin Šeško.

## POSITIONAL PROFILE/PLAYING STYLE SUITABILITY

Mateta fits the profile of a physical, Premier League-proven striker who can lead the line as a more traditional number nine. He is strong attacking crosses, occupying centre-backs, pinning defenders, and providing a central target in the box. He would give United a different option to Cunha and Mbeumo, while still being capable of starting games, coming off the bench, and giving the team more presence in matches where they need a direct focal point.

## POTENTIAL/FUTURE VALUE

Mateta offers more short-to-medium-term value than long-term resale upside. He is not an old stop-gap, but he is also not another development project who would block Šeško's pathway. His value comes from being in his prime years, already adapted to the Premier League, and capable of contributing immediately. He gives United a striker who can still perform at a strong level now, while also adding experience, physicality, and competition around the younger forwards.

## TRANSFER STATUS

Mateta is more realistic than some higher-profile striker targets because his Crystal Palace contract runs until 2027, meaning Palace may need to make a decision before his value drops further. He has also been the subject of strong market interest, with reports of bids and Palace setting a clear valuation, so there is already evidence that a transfer could become possible. The main thing United would need to check carefully is the medical side, after a move to AC Milan reportedly collapsed following additional medical tests.

## RECOMMENDATION

Mateta would be a strong rotation striker target for Manchester United. He would add Premier League experience, physicality, box presence, aerial threat, and a reliable central goal threat without forcing United to change the long-term plan around Šeško. He is more ambitious than a pure short-term stop-gap, but still realistic enough to fit the role if the fee and medical checks are right.

# PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



## JEAN-PHILIPPE MATETA

**AGE:** 28 (28/06/1997)

**HEIGHT:** 192cm / 6'3

**POSITION:** STRIKER

**PREFERRED FOOT:** RIGHT

**CURRENT CLUB:** CRYSTAL PALACE

**CONTRACT END:** 30/06/2027

**AGENCY:** PAUL LATOUCHE

### 2025/2026 OVERVIEW:

Premier League: 28 appearances (24 starts), 3 goals, 758 minutes

Community Shield: 1 appearance, 1 goal, 90 minutes

EFL Cup: 3 appearances, 225 minutes

Conference League Qualifiers: 2 appearances, 1 goal, 180 minutes

UEFA Conference League: 10 appearances (7 starts), 1 goal, 3 assists, 540 minutes

### INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES

France National Team: 3 appearances, 2 goals, 179 minutes

France U21: 11 appearances, 3 goals, 1 assist, 447 minutes

France U20: 1 appearance, 77 minutes

France U19: 3 appearances, 1 goal, 212 minutes

France Olympic Team: 6 appearances, 5 goals, 523 minutes

### INJURY HISTORY

Meniscus tear Jul 2019 - Dec 2019 (missed 132 days and 15 games)

Head injury Mar 2025 - Mar 2025 (missed 22 days and 1 game)

Knee problems Jan 2026 - Mar 2026 (missed 38 days and 8 games)

### RELATIONSHIPS

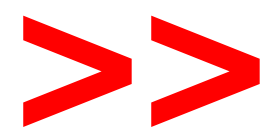
N/A

### SUMMARY

Mateta is a powerful Premier League striker who would give Manchester United a proper senior number nine behind Šeško. He can occupy defenders, attack crosses, provide box presence, and offer a more direct goal threat than United's flexible forward options. While the deal would require careful medical checks, his contract situation, age profile, and Premier League readiness make him a strong shortlist option for the rotation striker role.

## RECOMMENDED PLAYER

# RAÚL JIMÉNEZ



# PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



## RAÚL JIMÉNEZ

**AGE:** 35 (05/05/1991)

**HEIGHT:** 187cm / 6'1

**POSITION:** STRIKER

**PREFERRED FOOT:** RIGHT

**CURRENT CLUB:** FULHAM

**CONTRACT END:** 30/06/2026

**AGENCY:** DARIO BRIGNOLE

## PLAYER OVERVIEW

Raúl Jiménez is a 34-year-old Mexican centre-forward currently playing for Fulham. He is a right-footed striker with major Premier League experience, having played for Wolves and Fulham, as well as senior international experience with Mexico. At 1.87m, he offers a true number nine profile with hold-up play, box presence, aerial ability, penalty-taking quality, and leadership value.

## POSITIONAL PROFILE/PLAYING STYLE SUITABILITY

Jiménez fits the profile of an experienced rotation striker who can support Benjamin Šeško without blocking his long-term pathway. He is comfortable playing as a central reference point, linking play with runners around him, competing physically with centre-backs, and attacking deliveries into the box. He would give United a more mature and composed striker option, especially in matches where they need hold-up play, penalty-box presence, and better control in the final third.

## POTENTIAL/FUTURE VALUE

Jiménez would be a short-term squad value signing rather than a resale investment. His value would come from experience, professionalism, leadership, and the ability to mentor younger forwards while still contributing on the pitch. His recent Fulham form and continued role with Mexico show he can still perform at a good level, and his experience would be useful for helping Šeško develop the details of centre-forward play.

## TRANSFER STATUS

Jiménez would be one of the most realistic options on the shortlist because his Fulham contract expires this summer. That makes him a low-cost opportunity for United, especially if they are looking for an experienced rotation striker rather than a major long-term investment. Fulham may still try to keep him because of his experience, but his contract situation gives United a clear opportunity to approach the deal without paying any transfer fee.

## RECOMMENDATION

Jiménez would be a sensible rotation striker target for Manchester United. He would add Premier League experience, hold-up play, aerial presence, penalty-box movement, and leadership to the forward group. He would not block Šeško's pathway, but he would give United a more reliable senior number nine option for rotation minutes, cup games, European fixtures, and late-game situations.

# PLAYER DOSSIER - MANCHESTER UNITED



## RAÚL JIMÉNEZ

**AGE:** 35 (05/05/1991)

**HEIGHT:** 187cm / 6'1

**POSITION:** STRIKER

**PREFERRED FOOT:** RIGHT

**CURRENT CLUB:** FULHAM

**CONTRACT END:** 30/06/2026

**AGENCY:** DARIO BRIGNOLE

### 2025/2026 OVERVIEW:

Premier League: 35 appearances (35 starts), 3110 minutes, 1 goal, 3 assists  
FA Cup: 1 appearance, 37 minutes

### INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES

Mexico National Team: 125 appearances, 44 goals, 16 assists, 7850 minutes  
Mexico U23 National Team: 2 appearances, 1 goals, 155 minutes  
Mexico Olympic Team: 4 appearances, 1 assist, 68 minutes

### INJURY HISTORY

Knee injury Sept 2016 - Oct 2016 (missed 44 days and 10 games)  
Skull fracture Nov 2020 - Feb 2021 (missed 80 days and 17 games)  
Fitness recovery Feb 2021 - Jul 2021 (missed 149 days and 24 games)  
Hip problems Sep 2022 - Nov 2022 (missed 46 days and 9 games)  
Hamstring injury Jan 2024 - Mar 2024 (missed 44 days and 6 games)  
Hip injury Sep 2025 - Oct 2025 (missed 19 days and 3 games)

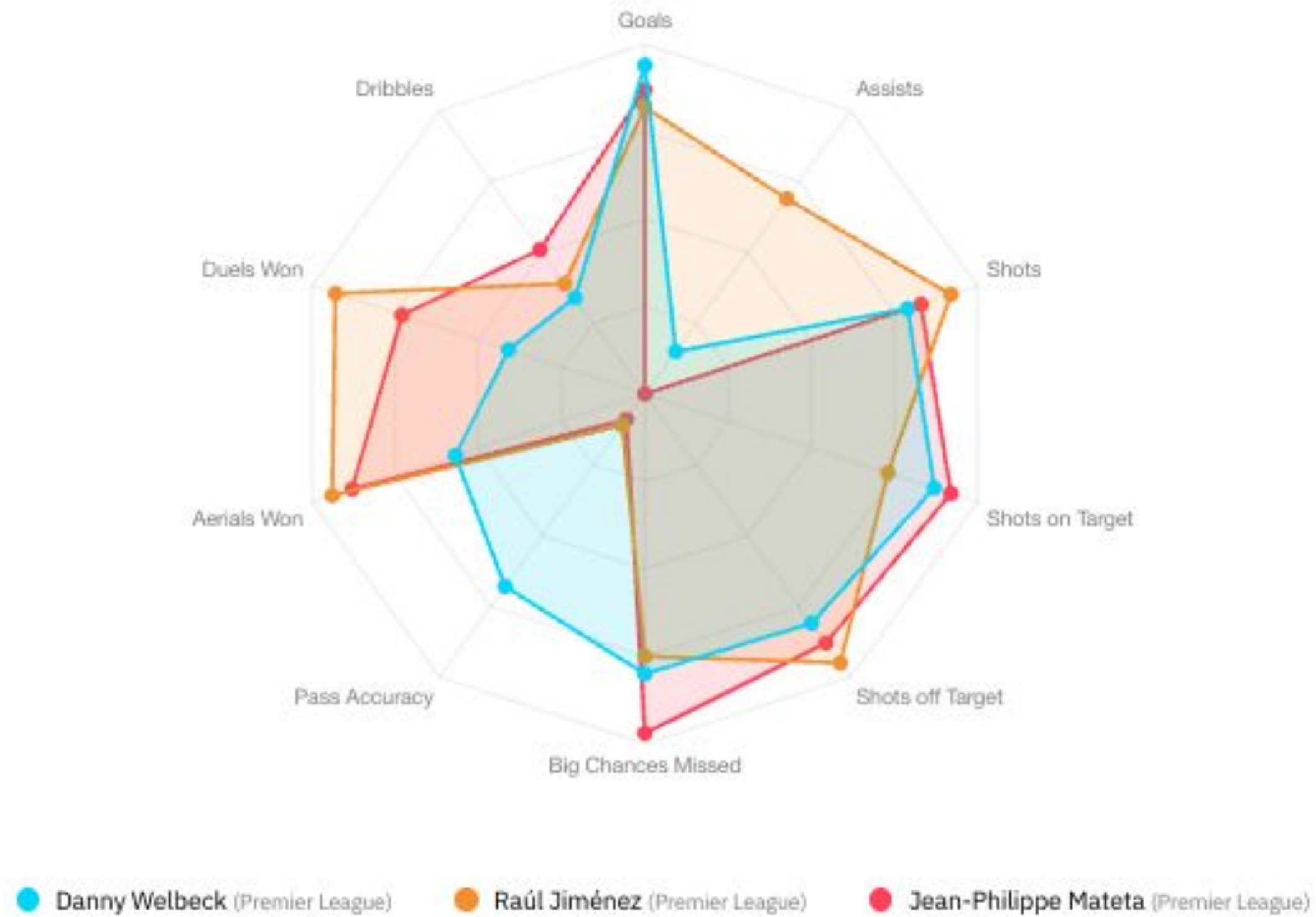
### RELATIONSHIPS

N/A

### SUMMARY

Jiménez is an experienced Premier League striker who would give Manchester United a proper senior number nine behind Šeško. He can link play, compete physically, attack crosses, and provide composure in the box, while also bringing leadership and international experience. He would not be a long-term resale signing, but he fits the rotation striker brief well because he offers reliable short-term value without disrupting United's long-term plan at centre-forward.

# PLAYER COMPARISON CHARTS



This radar chart compares Welbeck, Jiménez, and Mateta across key striker metrics, showing the different type of rotation profile each player offers. Welbeck profiles as the more mobile and possession-friendly option, with strong goal output, decent shooting involvement, and better passing security, making him useful in a fluid attacking system. Jiménez stands out as the most traditional experienced number nine, with strong duel and aerial numbers, good assist output, and solid overall attacking contribution. Mateta offers the strongest direct goal-threat profile, ranking well for goals, shots on target, dribbles, and physical presence, although his high big-chances-missed figure suggests he can still be inefficient in front of goal.

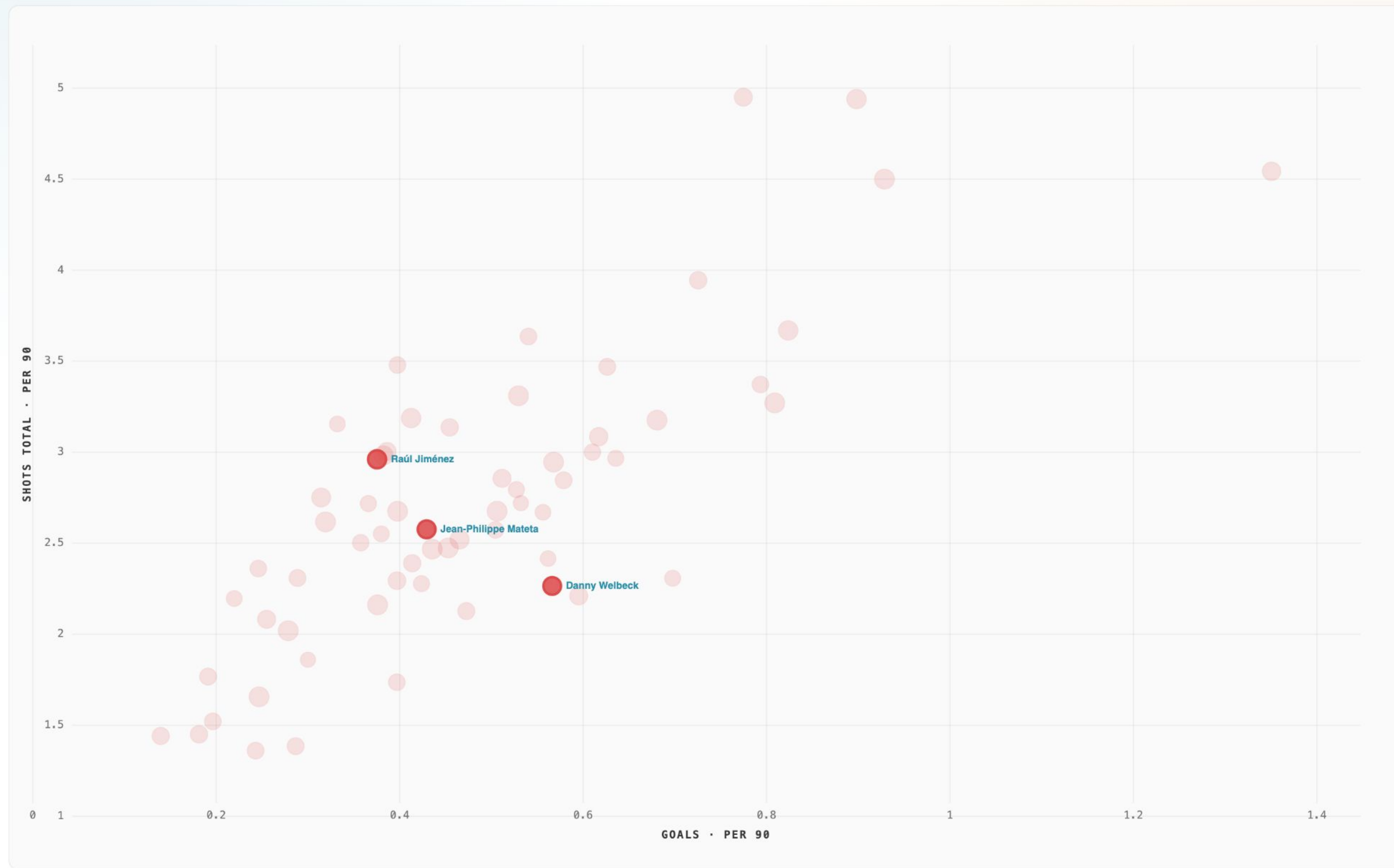
Overall, the chart shows that **Jiménez is the safest experienced No.9 profile**, **Welbeck is the best mentor/link-play option**, and **Mateta is the most powerful and goal-focused option**, but also the one who may be less realistic as a pure rotation striker.



# FINISHING METRICS COMPARISON

## Shots Total vs Goals

8 Leagues · Centre Forward · 2025/2026 · 63 players



SCOUTINGSTATS.AI

7 MAY 2026

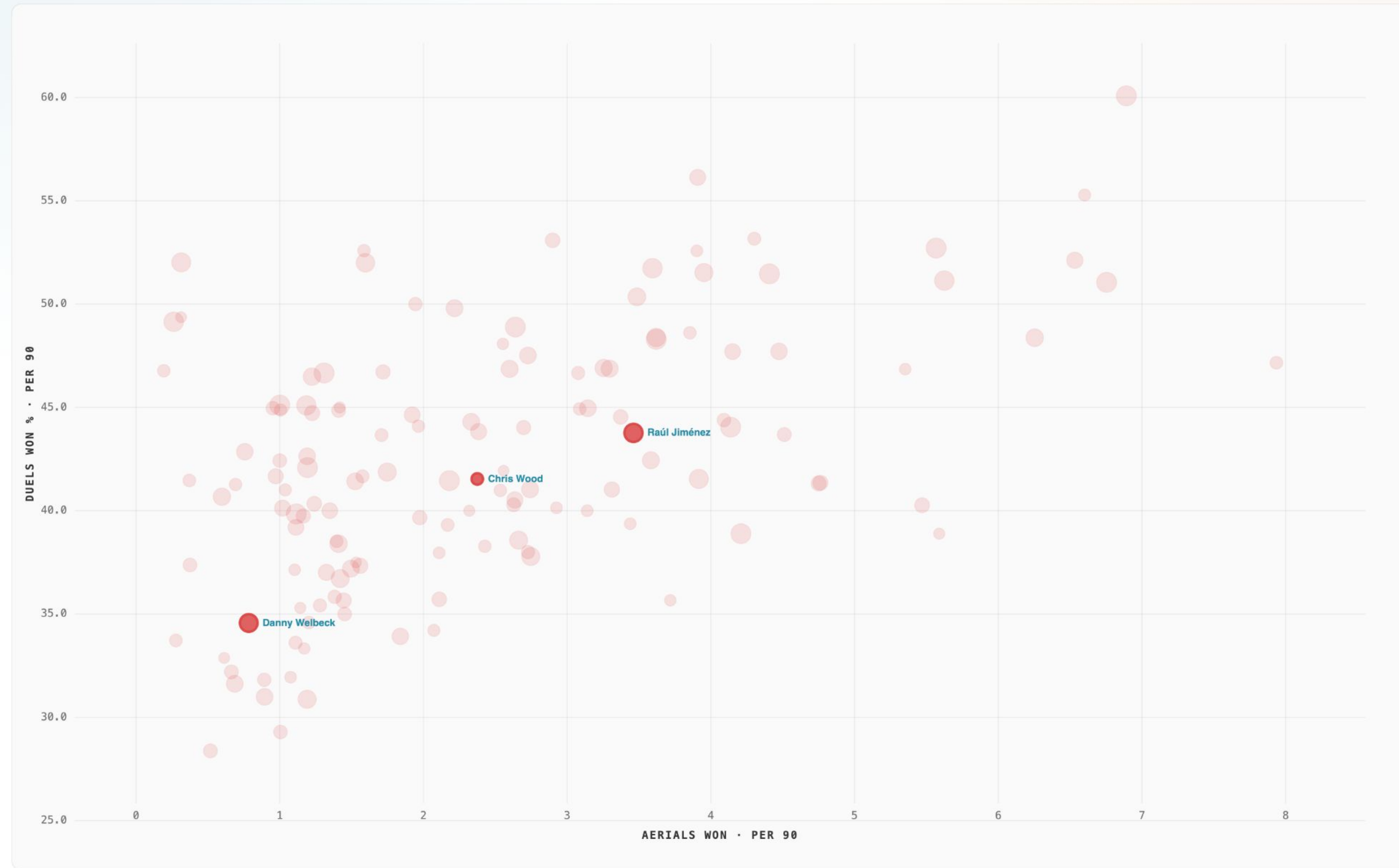


Compared to all STs from the Top 8 Leagues, aged 27-37, min 1500 mins played

# TARGET MAN METRICS COMPARISON

## Duels Won % vs Aerials Won

8 Leagues · Centre Forward · 2025/2026 · 136 players



SCOUTINGSTATS.AI

6 MAY 2026

Compared to all STs from the Top 8 Leagues, aged 27-37, min 1500 mins played



# SUMMARY

## **STRATEGY**

United need an experienced rotation striker who can replace Zirkzee if he leaves, support Šeško's development, and add reliable depth without blocking the long-term pathway at the No.9 position.

## **POSITIONAL**

The profile needs to be a true centre-forward with box presence, hold-up play, aerial threat, finishing quality, and the ability to contribute as a starter or impact substitute.

## **TEAM**

With Šeško still developing, Chido Obi not yet a regular first-team option, and Cunha/Mbeumo better suited as wide players, United need a more natural senior striker in the squad.

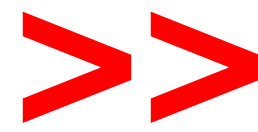
## **NEED**

Data, scouting observations, and squad planning show that an experienced No.9 would give United better balance across Premier League, cup, and European fixtures.



# FINAL RECOMMENDATION

## DANNY WELBECK



# WHY DANNY WELBECK?

Danny Welbeck stands out as the best rotation striker option because he offers the clearest balance of experience, role suitability, Premier League readiness, and mentorship value. He is not being signed to replace Benjamin Šeško as the long-term striker, but to support him, compete for minutes, and provide a reliable senior option across the season. His understanding of Manchester United, experience at the highest level, and ability to operate in different attacking systems make him a strong fit for the specific role the squad needs.

For Manchester United, Welbeck would give the forward group maturity, professionalism, and a different type of striker profile without disrupting the long-term plan. He can link play, press intelligently, attack the box, and contribute as a starter or impact substitute when required. With Šeško still developing, Chido Obi not yet ready to carry regular first-team responsibility, and Cunha/Mbeumo better suited as flexible forwards, Welbeck would add the experienced No.9 support United currently lack while allowing the younger strikers to grow without being overburdened.



# RISK ASSESSMENT

The main risk with Danny Welbeck is availability rather than role suitability. He fits the experienced rotation striker profile well, but at this stage of his career United would need to be realistic about managing his minutes across a full season. He won't need to be used as a week-in, week-out starting striker, but as a senior squad option who can contribute in selected starts, cup games, European fixtures, and late-game situations.

The sporting risk is still relatively low because Welbeck understands the Premier League, knows the club very well, and would not hinder Benjamin Šeško's long-term pathway. The key concern would be making sure the contract length, wages, and squad role are sensible. If managed properly, he would give United experience, leadership, and reliable striker depth without creating a major financial or development risk.



# POTENTIAL SQUAD 2026/2027





THANK YOU