

## SPORTS

## ATLANTA UNITED



The on-field play of United's new midfielder Alexey Miranchuk (above) has been described as silky. "He glides with the ball. The ball stays attached to his foot quite well," captain Brad Guzan said. MICHAEL OWENS/ATLANTA UNITED

## Miranchuk adapting quickly, expects to play important role

By Doug Roberson  
doug.roberson@ajc.com

The sun shining through windows and onto his back, Alexey Miranchuk appears naturally illuminated as he waves his hands above his head discussing how things unexplained came together that resulted in him signing with Atlanta United.

Hip-hop. Soccer. The U.S. ... all things that he either loves or was curious to know more about all meshed into one transfer that sent him from Atalanta in northern Italy to Atlanta and the south-eastern U.S.

He couldn't explain the whys. But he's enjoying the when's and where's.

"When I get the opportunity to come here, especially Atlanta, a bunch of rappers from Atlanta, you see how it's, everything is like working. I was always listening to Atlanta rappers, and now I'm in Atlanta, so, I mean, somebody there decides everything in the universe somehow put me here."

Miranchuk will take the next step in that universal plan when he makes his home debut for the Five Stripes in today's MLS match against Nashville at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Miranchuk has two appearances, one off the bench on the road Aug. 24 in a 2-0 loss at the LA Galaxy and the other a start Aug. 31 in the 1-0 win at Charlotte.

Miranchuk took his first tour of the \$1.6 billion stadium Monday. He was in awe of its size and said he can't wait to feel the energy once the supporters arrive for what could be a pivotal match. The match is sold out, according to the team. Atlanta United is in 10th place in the East. The top nine

teams qualify for the playoffs. Atlanta United has seven matches remaining, four at home. Nashville is the second-worst team in the league. Miami, the next match, likely will bring a weakened squad Wednesday. Atlanta United needs the six points. Miranchuk should play an important role.

"I think when he's on the ball, the word I use is almost 'silky,' right?" captain Brad Guzan said. "He glides with the ball. The ball stays attached to his foot quite well. We tend to get in the attacking third, we get into dangerous areas. We just need that, whether it's a final ball, final shot, the final action, I think he's got the quality to help us."

Should Miranchuk score, he doesn't yet know what song he hopes the stadium will play. He said he will worry about it after. He's well-versed in Atlanta's music scene, so he likely won't be surprised should the team break tradition and play something other than OutKast and its "Bombs over Baghdad," which has become the anthem after goals. Miranchuk described them as a "most famous" group.

It's funny how things such as music and sports can tie storylines together.

Rap music and soccer were Miranchuk's loves growing up in a small city of Slavyansk-na-Kubani in southeastern Russia, where he would play soccer in the streets with his friends.

Lil Wayne was the first rap artist that Miranchuk remembers listening to growing up in Russia. Guf was the first Russian rapper he listened to. Miranchuk loves everything about rap culture, "who doesn't like hip-

hop in my generation?" he asked. He's now listening to Gunna, Juice Wrld, Future and Metro Boomin, among others. Miranchuk said he can spit a few lines from songs when he's driving or in the shower. Asked if he freestyles, he said he needed to think because he's never been asked to share that.

Miranchuk's exposure to soccer grew from his father, a truck driver who had a route to Moscow, where he purchased jerseys of famous players, including Ronaldinho's Barcelona jersey, and brought them back for Alexey and his twin brother, Anton, who now plays for Sion in Switzerland.

"We were so excited to wear this because in my city there wasn't, like a big, famous player," Alexey Miranchuk said.

Ronaldinho became Miranchuk's favorite player, first at Barcelona and then at A.C. Milan. Miranchuk said the only thing he tries to copy from Ronaldinho is the joy with which he played.

"It's hard to do the same things," Miranchuk said with a smile.

The Miranchuks moved to Moscow in 2013, when he was 12 years old. He made his debut for Lokomotiv Moscow when he was 17, appearing 178 times with 32 goals. He was purchased by Atlanta in 2020 and helped them win the Europa League earlier this year.

Then the universe stepped in, and he agreed to a \$13 million transfer to Atlanta United. He hasn't yet met any of his favorite rappers but grew curious when told that many have hammered the Golden Spike, part of the team's pre-match festivities.

The move is going well on and off the field. He said

the team and his teammates have welcomed him and are helping him whenever he has questions. He likes the league. He said it's more about transitions than it was in Italy, which was more about tactics. But he's adapting quickly. He had one shot and created two chances in 89 minutes at Charlotte.

"He's a different type of player," interim manager Rob Valentino said. "Sometimes you might not see him actually on the ball ... might see him be in a good space that occupies an opponent, and then eventually, maybe in three passes, he ends up with the ball, or he ends up with a pass that helps link play. He's got a really good understanding of space and teammates and where they're moving. So that integration process has been quick."

Off the field, some things are easier than others. Shopping isn't a problem. Chicken is chicken and rice is rice, he said. He said air conditioning in buildings and ice in drinks were surprising, but he's gotten used to them. He said his thermostat is on a "normal" setting in his apartment, which he moved into earlier this week.

All in all, things are going well, even if the whys aren't quite understood.

"People who don't know exactly what it is like, coming to a new team, new league, and it's supposed to be easy," he said. "It's not. In every sports and every job you need the time to adapt. For me, it's more supportive to feel like, from day one that I'm part of the team, it's my new home. Thanks to everybody who helped me so far now, I don't see any big challenges. It's just, it's just different. I have to adapt. I can do anything. I just have to adapt."

### TODAY'S MATCHUP

Nashville SC (6-13-8) at Atlanta United (8-12-7), 7:30 p.m., AppleTV, 92.9 FM, Mercedes-Benz Stadium

#### ABOUT NASHVILLE

■ **Manager:** B.J. Callaghan  
■ **Away record:** 2-8-3  
■ **Goals for/against:** 26/44  
■ **Expected goals for/against:** 34.6/45.9  
■ **Key players**  
■ **Sam Surridge:** Eight goals, one assist  
■ **Hany Mukhtar:** Five goals, seven assists

#### ABOUT ATLANTA UNITED

■ **Interim manager:** Rob Valentino  
■ **Home record:** 5-5-3  
■ **Goals for/against:** 36/38  
■ **Expected goals for/against:** 40.6/39.0  
■ **Key players**  
■ **Saba Lobjanidze:** Six goals, seven assists  
■ **Daniel Rios:** Six goals, two assists  
■ **Jamal Thiare:** Five goals  
■ **Brooks Lennon:** Six assists  
■ **Alexey Miranchuk:** New signee

#### INJURY REPORTS

■ **Atlanta United**

**Out:** Ronald Hernandez (ankle)

■ **Nashville**

**Out:** Lukas MacNaughton (not disclosed)

#### WHAT WAS SAID

"We've had a little bit of a sample size to see what B.J. (Callaghan) has done as he's coming in, trying to implement some different things. There's an understanding of who the players are. We've seen a lot of them in this league. There's familiarity from players in our locker room who know those personalities and what those players can bring you. Can definitely see that they are trying to change things, and that's going to happen when you have a new coach that comes in. So it's about, whether it's the analysis or the data set of what they do well and what they are trying to improve, and where we can kind of exploit those areas."

— **Interim manager Rob Valentino on Nashville's recent managerial change**

"It's all about confidence, and

it's about the way we approach the game. I think that we approached the game in Charlotte with almost a quiet confidence, knowing that we were going to come out of that game with a result, and that it was a direct rival right ahead of us that actually took three points from us on our home field, and we use that as motivation. So we have to continue to find ways to motivate ourselves and to find motivation to continue to pick up points as we march toward the playoffs." — **Dax McCarty**

#### ATLANTA UNITED PREDICTED 11

■ Goalkeeper Brad Guzan  
■ Centerback Derrick Williams  
■ Centerback Stian Gregersen  
■ Right fullback Brooks Lennon  
■ Left fullback Pedro Azamor  
■ Midfielder Bartosz Slisz  
■ Midfielder Jay Fortune  
■ Midfielder Alexey Miranchuk  
■ Midfielder Xande Silva  
■ Midfielder Saba Lobjanidze  
■ Striker Jamal Thiare  
— DOUG ROBBERSON

### ON THE AIR

#### TV today

Event	Time	Channel	Notes
Auto racing	7:55 a.m.	ESPN2	Formula One qualifying at Baku, Azerbaijan
	12:30 p.m.	USA	NASCAR Cup Series practice and qualifying at Watkins Glen, N.Y.
	3 p.m.	USA	NASCAR Xfinity Series: Mission 200 at the Glen
	6 p.m.	FS1	SuperMotocross at Fort Worth, Texas
Baseball	1:05 p.m.	MLB	Red Sox at Yankees
	7:10 p.m.	MLB	Reds at Twins
	7:20 p.m.	BSSE	Dodgers at Braves
	10:30 p.m.	MLB	Astros at Angels (joined in progress)
Football	Noon	ABC	LSU at South Carolina
		Fox	Alabama at Wisconsin
		ESPN	Memphis at Florida State
		ESPN2	Oklahoma State at Tulsa
		ESPNU	Cincinnati at Miami (Ohio)
		BTN	Arkansas State at Michigan
		ACC	Louisiana Tech at NC State
		FS1	North Texas at Texas Tech
	12:45 p.m.	SEC	Boston College at Missouri
	1 p.m.	CBSSN	UMass at Buffalo
	3 p.m.	CNBC	Howard at Morehouse
	3:30 p.m.	ABC	Texas A&M at Florida
		CBS	Notre Dame at Purdue
		Fox	Oregon at Oregon State
		ACC	Ball State at Miami
		ESPN	Tulane at Oklahoma
	BTN	Prairie View A&M at Michigan State or Nevada at Minnesota	
4 p.m.	ESPN2	West Virginia at Pitt	
	ESPNU	Appalachian State at East Carolina	
	FS1	Troy at Iowa	
4:15 p.m.	SEC	UAB at Arkansas	
4:30 p.m.	CBSSN	Utah at Utah State	
6:30 p.m.	CW	Mississippi at Wake Forest	
7 p.m.	truTV, Max	Kennesaw State at San Jose State	
	ESPN	UTSA at Texas	
	ABC	Georgia at Kentucky	
	CBS	Colorado at Colorado State	
	Fox	UCF at TCU	
	FS1	Air Force at Baylor	
	NBC	Indiana at UCLA	
	ESPN2	New Mexico at Auburn	
	ESPNU	Toledo at Mississippi State	
	FS1	Air Force at Baylor	
	BTN	Northern Iowa at Nebraska or Eastern Illinois at Northwestern	
7:45 p.m.	SEC	Kent State at Tennessee	
8 p.m.	ACC	Maryland at Virginia	
9 p.m.	CBSSN	BYU at Wyoming	
10:30 p.m.	ESPN	San Diego State at California	
	truTV, Max	New Mexico State at Fresno State	
Fishing	8 a.m.	FS1	St. Croix Bassmaster Open at Mississippi River at La Crosse, Wis.
Golf	7 a.m.	Golf	Solheim Cup: U.S. vs. Europe at Gainesville, Va.
	1 p.m.	CW	LIV Golf League at Bolingbrook, Ill.
	3 p.m.	NBC	Solheim Cup: U.S. vs. Europe
		Golf	Korn Ferry: Simmons Bank Open for The Snedeker Foundation at Franklin, Tenn.
	6 p.m.	Golf	PGA: Procore Championship at Napa, Calif.
10 p.m.	Golf	Champions: Sanford International at Sioux Falls, S.D. (T)	
3 a.m.*	Golf	DP World Tour: Amgen Irish Open at Newcastle, Northern Ireland	
Soccer	7:30 a.m.	USA	Premier League: Manchester United at Southampton
	10 a.m.	USA	Premier League: Leicester City at Crystal Palace
	12:30 p.m.	NBC	Premier League: Everton at Aston Villa
	7:30 p.m.	AppleTV, Ion	MLS: Atlanta United at Nashville NWSL: Angel City at Louisville NWSL: San Diego at Utah

#### Radio today

Event	Time	Channel	Notes
Football	Noon	1340 AM	LSU at South Carolina
	3:30 p.m.	103.7 FM	Texas A&M at Florida

(T) Same-day tape; \* early Sunday morning

#### TV Sunday

Event	Time	Channel	Notes
Auto racing	6:55 a.m.	ESPN	Formula One: Azerbaijan Grand Prix at Baku, Azerbaijan
	3 p.m.	USA	NASCAR Cup Series: Go Bowling at The Glen at Watkins Glen, N.Y.
Baseball	12:10 p.m.	Roku	Orioles at Tigers
	1:35 p.m.	MLB	Red Sox at Yankees
	4:30 p.m.	MLB	Brewers at D-backs (joined in progress)
	7:10 p.m.	ESPN	Dodgers at Braves
Basketball	3 p.m.	WPCH	WNBA: Dream at Liberty
	6 p.m.	CBSSN	Suns at Aces
Football	1 p.m.	CBS	Jets at Titans
		Fox	Saints at Cowboys
	4:05 p.m.	Fox	Rams at Cardinals
	4:25 p.m.	CBS	Bengals at Chiefs
	NBC	Bears at Texans	
Golf	9 a.m.	Golf	Solheim Cup: U.S. vs. Europe at Gainesville, Va.
	Noon	NBC	Solheim Cup: U.S. vs. Europe
	1 p.m.	CW	LIV Golf League at Bolingbrook, Ill.
	3:30 p.m.	NBC	NTT IndyCar Series: From The Streets of Nashville at Nashville, Tenn.
4 p.m.	Golf	Korn Ferry: Simmons Bank Open for The Snedeker Foundation at Franklin, Tenn.	
6 p.m.	Golf	PGA: Procore Championship at Napa, Calif.	
10 p.m.	Golf	Champions: Sanford International at Sioux Falls, S.D. (T)	
Lacrosse	3 p.m.	ABC	PLL Championship: Maryland vs. Utah at Chester, Pa.
Soccer	9 a.m.	USA	Premier League: Arsenal at Tottenham Hotspur
	11:30 a.m.	USA	Premier League: Newcastle United at Wolverhampton
	Noon	ACC	Women's NCAA: Wake Forest at Virginia
2 p.m.	ACC	Women's NCAA: Boston College at SMU	
1 p.m.	ESPN2	NWSL: Houston at Washington	
7:15 p.m.	FS1	MLS: Kansas City at Seattle	
Volleyball	1 p.m.	ESPN	Creighton at Louisville
	3 p.m.	ESPN	Texas at Stanford

#### Radio today

Event	Time	Channel	Notes
Auto racing	3 p.m.	1230 AM	Go Bowling at The Glen
Football	1 p.m.	92.9 FM	Saints at Cowboys
	4:05 p.m.	1230 AM	Rams at Cardinals
	4:25 p.m.	92.9 FM	Bengals at Chiefs
	8:20 p.m.	92.9 FM	Bears at Texans

(T) Same-day tape

#### Calendar

■ **BRAVES** — Today vs. Dodgers, 7:20 p.m. (BSSE); Sunday vs. Dodgers, 7:10 p.m. (ESPN); Monday vs. Dodgers, 7:20 p.m. (BSSE). **680 AM, 1340 AM, 93.7 FM, 103.7 FM**

■ **DREAM** — Sunday at Mystics, 3 p.m. (WPCH); Tuesday vs. Sky, 7:30 p.m. (WPCH); Thursday at Liberty, 7 p.m. (WPCH).

■ **FALCONS** — Monday at Saints, 1 p.m. (Fox); Sept. 22 vs. Chiefs, 8:20 p.m. (NBC); Sept. 29 vs. Kentucky, 1 p.m. (Fox). **750 AM, 95.5 FM**

■ **GEORGIA FOOTBALL** — Today at Sentucky, 7:30 p.m. (ABC); Sept. 28 at Alabama, 7:30 p.m. (ABC); Oct. 5 vs. Auburn, TBA. **750 AM, 95.5 FM**

■ **GEORGIA STATE FOOTBALL** — Today vs. Vanderbilt, 7 p.m. (ESPN+); Sept. 28 vs. Georgia Southern, TBA; Oct. 12 vs. Old Dominion, TBA. **88.5 FM**

■ **GEORGIA TECH FOOTBALL** — Today vs. VMI, 3:30 p.m. (ACC+); Sept. 21 at Louisville, 3:30 p.m. (ESPN/2); Oct. 5 vs. Duke, TBA. **680 AM, 93.7 FM**

■ **KENNESAW STATE FOOTBALL** — Today at San Jose State, 7 p.m. (truTV, Max); Sept. 28 vs. UT Martin, 6 p.m. (ESPN+); Oct. 4 vs. Jacksonville State, 7 p.m. (CBSSN).

■ **STRIPERS** — Today vs. Buffalo, 6:05 p.m.; Sunday vs. Buffalo, 1:05 p.m.; Tuesday at Jacksonville, 7:05 p.m.

■ **UNITED** — Today vs. Nashville, 7:30 p.m. (AppleTV); Wednesday vs. Miami, 7:30 p.m. (AppleTV); Sept. 21 at Red Bulls, 7:30 p.m. (AppleTV). **92.9 FM**

■ **UNITED 2** — Sunday vs. Huntsville, 3 p.m. (AppleTV); Thursday at Crown Legacy, 7:30 p.m.; Sept. 24 vs. Miami II, 7:30 p.m.

### GEORGIA LOTTERIES

#### FRIDAY, SEPT. 13

**Cash 3 Midday:** 8-6-1

**Cash 3 Eve.:** 2-1-0 (Thu.)

**Cash 3 Night:** 8-0-9 (Thu.)

**Cash 4 Midday:** 0-8-1-4

**Cash 4 Evening:** 8-7-6-8 (Thursday)

#### Cash 4 Night:

9-2-9-0 (Thursday)

**Georgia Five Midday:** 2-6-8-1-3

**Georgia Five Evening:** 7-1-7-6-9 (Thursday)

**Fantasy 5:** 5-15-23-25-29 (Thursday)

On the Web: galottery.com By phone: 1-800-GALUCKY  
Please verify numbers with Georgia Lottery Corp. before claiming a prize.