

Two Canadian soccer players off to Europe following World Cup performances]

By **Robert Belardi**

Two Canadian soccer players signed with European clubs this past week following exposure at the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

CF Montréal fullback and former Aurora resident Alistair Johnston signed with Glasgow Giants Celtic FC of the Scottish Premiership on a five-year deal.

Also out of CF Montréal, 20-year-old midfielder Ismaël Kone was purchased by EFL Championship side Watford FC, in what is a record-breaking deal for the MLS side according to Italian soccer journalist Fabrizio Romano.

In the tournament, Johnston played every minute for Team Canada in all three of their World Cup defeats to Belgium, Croatia and Morocco respectively.

The 24-year-old, who was selected 11th overall by Nashville SC in the 2020 MLS SuperDraft, was first invited to Canada Camp in January 2021. He made his debut with the national team on March 25, 2021, as a substitute against Bermuda and has since gone on to make 33 appearances.

Last December, Johnston made the move to return to Canada to sign with CF Montréal, scoring four goals and contributing five assists.

Tenacious and relentless on and off the ball, Johnston packs a punch in his position and will have the chance to play Champions League football next year.

As for Kone, the Ivorian born midfielder appeared in all three World Cup matches as a substitute.

Having moved to Canada when he was just seven years old, Kone grew up playing soccer in the AS Notre-Dame-de-Grâce system before moving to CS Saint-Laurent in 2019. He signed a pro MLS contract with CF Montréal in 2020, and scored his first goal in his first appearance for the club in a 3-0 over Santa Laguna in the CONCACAF Champions League.

This past year, Kone made 26 appearances for Montréal, scoring twice. Internationally with Canada, Kone has made nine appearances and scored his first goal for Canada against Bahrain, in a friendly match on November 11 prior to the tournament.