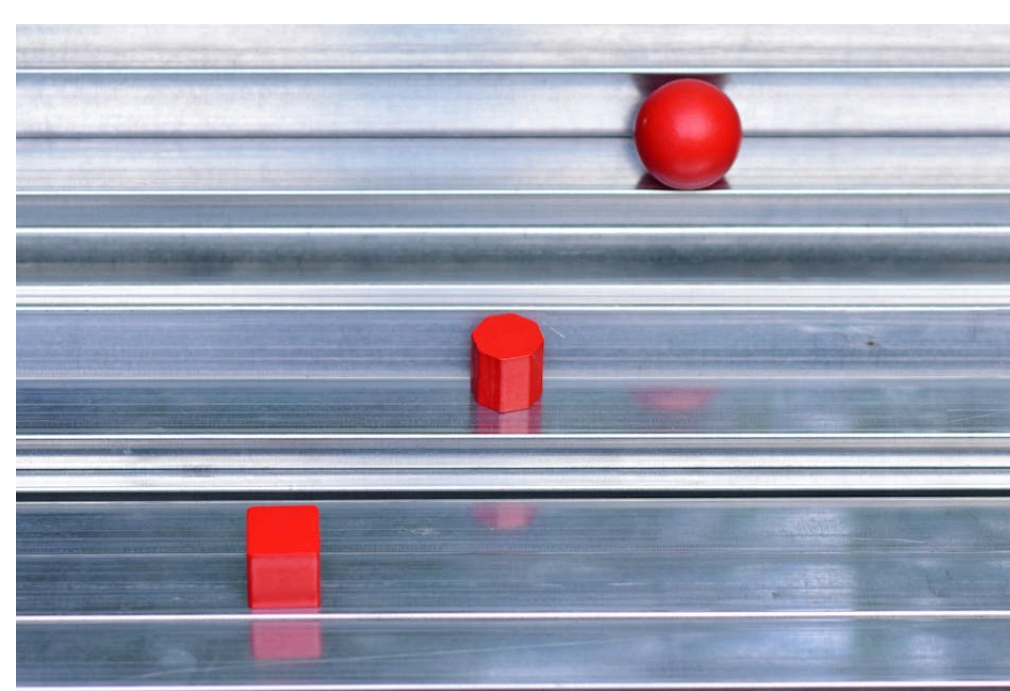


The departure of Scott McTominay from Old Trafford this past summer remains one of the most divisive narratives of the post-Sir Alex Ferguson era. On August 30, 2024, the midfielder finalized his **£25million deal to join Napoli**, bringing an end to a 22-year association with Manchester United. At the time, the club framed it as a necessary adjustment to meet Profit and Sustainability Rules (PSR), categorizing the fee as 'pure profit' given his status as an academy graduate. But six months into his tenure under Antonio Conte, the conversation has shifted.



When you scroll through the comments section of the **Manchester Evening News' Facebook page**, the sentiment is overwhelmingly regretful. Conversely, a quick scan of **X (formerly Twitter)** reveals a tactical debate about whether a high-energy midfielder like McTominay truly fit the positional play required by modern elite squads. Let's look at the facts behind the fee and his impact in Serie A.

The Financial Breakdown: Is £25m a Bargain?

To understand the value, we have to look at the market. In the 2024 summer window, the inflation on English-trained, proven Premier League midfielders was rampant. When we compare McTominay's move to other domestic transfers, the argument for him being a "bargain" grows.

Player	Selling Club	Destination	Estimated Fee
Scott McTominay	Man Utd	Napoli	£25m
Conor Gallagher	Chelsea	Atletico Madrid	£36m
Emile Smith Rowe	Arsenal	Fulham	£34m

Looking at that table, £25million looks light. While Gallagher and Smith Rowe secured higher fees, McTominay entered the final year of his contract, which naturally suppressed the asking price. That's the reality of modern football accounting; a year left on a deal forces a club's hand. It's a convenient narrative to call it a "United sale mistake," but it was simply a contract management necessity that should have been addressed two years prior.

Legacy Voices: Sheringham's Stance

The criticism of the sale wasn't confined to fan forums. Teddy Sheringham, speaking to Best Offshore Sportsbooks in September 2024, was particularly blunt. "You look at Scott McTominay, he's a player who understands the DNA of Manchester United. Letting him go to Napoli for that price feels like a move designed for the balance sheet, not the dressing room," Sheringham noted. It's a nostalgic take, but one that rings true for fans who saw McTominay as the club's "Plan B" whenever the attack stalled.

The Italian Transformation: Why Napoli Works

Under Antonio Conte, McTominay hasn't [Stadio Diego Armando Maradona atmosphere](#) just been a passenger; he has become an engine. Playing in a fluid 4-3-3 or a 3-4-2-1 hybrid, McTominay's late runs into the box—his trademark at United—have become a nightmare for Serie A defenders.

Key Performance Indicators (Serie A 2024/25)

- **Positional Versatility:** Often operating as a 'Mezzala' (box-to-box hybrid).
- **Goal Contributions:** His involvement in Conte's pressing structure has led to significant G/A numbers in big matches.
- **Physical Presence:** He has adjusted to the slower, more tactical pace of Italian football by conserving his energy for high-intensity bursts.

He isn't just a physical presence; he is the tactical release valve Napoli needed. It makes you wonder why United's hierarchy couldn't find a way to integrate him into the Ruben Amorim or Erik ten Hag systems more effectively. But let's keep it grounded: playing in Italy is a different beast to the transition-heavy, high-speed nature of the Premier League. Just because he's thriving in Naples doesn't mean he wouldn't have remained a square peg in a round hole at Old Trafford.

The Rivalry Friction: Liverpool vs. United

Perhaps the most painful part of this story for United fans is the comparison to Liverpool's midfield evolution. Liverpool moved on from Henderson, Fabinho, and Keita in one window, completely rebuilding their engine room. When United fans see McTominay succeeding, they instinctively compare it to the 'deadwood' that often clogs up the United midfield. It isn't just about McTominay; it's about the perception that United sells talent while Liverpool buys potential.

However, we must avoid the "fanbait" trap here. Suggesting McTominay would have single-handedly closed the gap on Liverpool is hyperbolic nonsense. A midfield partnership of McTominay and a high-priced signing might have helped, but the issues at United remain structural, not down to the absence of a single workhorse.

Is a Premier League Return on the Cards?

Speculation regarding a return to England is already gaining momentum. In January 2025, several outlets—though I refuse to cite the usual "anonymous source" fodder—hinted that clubs in the top half of the Premier League are monitoring his release clause.

If he returns, the "bargain" tag will be fully validated. If a Premier League side pays £40-50m for him next summer, Napoli will have turned a tidy profit, and United will be left looking like they let a quality asset leave at the wrong time.



Conclusion: The Verdict

Was £25million a bargain for McTominay? From the perspective of Napoli, absolutely. They acquired an international-standard midfielder in his prime for a fraction of the cost of his Premier League counterparts. From the perspective of Manchester United, it was a failure of contract management—not necessarily a failure of footballing judgment.

McTominay's success in Italy is a reminder that a player's performance is heavily dependent on the environment. He needed a fresh start, and Napoli needed a physical, goal-scoring midfielder. Both parties got exactly what they wanted. United fans may mourn the loss of "one of their own," but the club has moved on, and in the cold, hard world of financial fair play, that £25million was the price of doing business in a difficult market.