

SPORTS

Solskjaer wants United ready for return to "normality"

AFP | London

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is looking at transfer targets during the lockdown and believes Manchester United are well-placed to exploit any knock-on effects of the coronavirus suspension.

With training and matches halted in a bid to curb the spread of COVID-19, the Norwegian has used some of this unexpected free time to pinpoint how best to improve the squad.

Jadon Sancho, Jude Bellingham and Jack Grealish are among the names liked with the club, with Solskjaer working with United's staff to fine-tune targets.

"Football is going to get back to normality at one point, and it's very important we're ready when that happens," the United manager told Sky Sports.

"We want to be the best at everything, and of course now is a chance to spend more time, you discuss players, discuss plans."

Asked whether United can exploit the transfer market when football returns, Solskjaer said: "Who knows how the market is going to react to this? Who knows which clubs need to sell players?"

"There might be just a situation there where you can



Manchester United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer kicks the ball during a training session

exploit, and I know that we at Man United, we are one of the biggest, and the biggest, financially well-off.

"I'm sure we are capable, when we get back to normality, that we can do the business that

we want to." Solskjaer's team last played on March 12 against Austrian side LASK in a Europa League last-16 first-leg game played behind closed doors, which they won 5-0.

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OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER

Marcus Rashford and Paul Pogba are likely to have recovered from their injury lay-offs by the time football resumes.

"In a way, they have got an opportunity here to play a bigger part in this season than they had hoped," said Solskjaer.

"And they are big players for us, some of the most important players."

United are currently fifth in the Premier League table, chasing a top-four berth that would guarantee entry into next season's Champions League.

"We can kick on, I'm sure we can get a good start and climb up that table if we keep doing the right thing," said Solskjaer.

"Even with the FA Cup and Europa League, if that does go ahead, we've got good chances there."

Paraguay court releases Ronaldinho into house arrest



Retired Brazilian football great Ronaldinho arrives at a hotel in Asuncion

AFP | London

A Paraguayan judge on Tuesday ordered the release of Brazilian football great Ronaldinho and his brother into house arrest while they await trial on charges of using false passports to enter the country.

Judge Gustavo Amarilla told reporters that he had ordered the "continuation of house arrest in a hotel for Ronaldinho and his brother."

The pair were jailed one month ago to await trial, but their lawyers have posted bail of \$1.6 million.

Ronaldinho, considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, was a star of Brazil's 2002 World Cup win and played for European giants Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan, among others.

The ruling means the broth-

ers can swap their grim police cell block -- which has also housed Paraguay's former soccer federation chief and the ex-speaker of the lower house of parliament -- for a plush colonial-style hotel in downtown Asuncion.

The brochure of the refurbished 107-room Palmaroga Hotel, located in the capital's historic center, describes it as offering "a seamless blend of early 1900s Renaissance grace and modern comfort as well as luxury."

"I have the assurance of the hotel managers that they, at their own expense, can observe house arrest there," Amarilla told a news conference.

Paraguay's appeals court last month rejected a request to release the pair, meaning the two-time world player of the year spent his 40th birthday behind bars.

Mane would 'understand' if Liverpool were denied title

Omnisport | London

Sadio Mane would "understand" if the 2019-20 season was scrapped due to the coronavirus pandemic, even though Liverpool are just two wins away from claiming the title.

The Reds have been champions-in-waiting for some time, having taken 79 points from 29 games to open up a 25-point lead over Manchester City.

Yet the Premier League, like the vast majority of competitions across the world, has been halted due to restrictions designed to limit the spread of

COVID-19.

It remains to be seen when, or even if, the Premier League will return as the hiatus has extended past the beginning of May already.

However, Mane insists there are bigger concerns given over 83,000 people have died after contracting coronavirus worldwide.

Asked if he felt like a champion already, Mane told talkSPORT: "I think not yet. I love my

want to get the trophy, it's what I would love.

"But with this situation, whatever happens I will understand.

"It has been difficult for Liverpool, but it has been more difficult for many millions of people around the world.

Some people have lost family members and that is the more complicated situation.

"But for myself, it's my dream and I want to win it this year.

"If that's not the case, I will accept. It's part of life. Hopefully we will win it next year."

Some - such as Manchester United's Luke Shaw - have suggested the Premier League should be voided if the season cannot resume.

However, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said earlier this week he sees "no way" in which Liverpool could be denied the title.

The Reds have not won a top-flight championship since 1989-90, prior to the inception of the Premier League.



Sadio Mane

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SADIO MANE

Mourinho admits he was in the wrong over training session



Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho (L) looks on during a training session (file photo)

AFP | London

Tottenham boss Jose Mourinho has accepted he was in the wrong for holding a one-on-one training session with midfielder Tanguy Ndombele in a public park in London.

Mourinho was pictured on social media flaunting government rules by meeting up with the midfielder Tuesday, even though they kept to social distancing guidelines.

Fellow Spurs players Davinson Sanchez and Ryan Sessegnon were spotted running side by side in a separate session, while Serge Aurier filmed himself on Instagram running alongside a friend.

"I accept that my actions

were not in line with government protocol and we must only have contact with members of our own household," said the Portuguese manager.

"It is vital we all play our part and follow government advice in order to support our heroes in the NHS and save lives."

London Mayor Sadiq Khan told the BBC the players and Mourinho should be leading by example.

"My concern is people, particularly children, who might support Spurs or follow football may see these images, pick up a paper, watch the internet and think, well if it's OK for them, why isn't it OK for me?" he said.

PSG launch crowdfunding platform to fight coronavirus

Reuters | Paris

Paris St Germain are launching a crowdfunding platform to help the local hospitals amid the coronavirus outbreak, the French champions said yesterday.

"By opening a crowdfunding platform... Paris St Germain is keeping the solidarity momentum toward the caregivers of the Paris and Ile de France (region) hospitals, the volunteers and beneficiaries of the Secours Populaire... and Action against Hunger," the Ligue 1 club said in a statement.

"The club is calling on the whole PSG family to contribute."

PSG, who have already raised 200,000 euros (\$217,240) by selling a 'Tous Unis' (All United) jersey, added that they would announce new solidarity measures in the coming days.

On Tuesday, sports daily L'Equipe reported that a French League working group had been discussing wage cuts for Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 players but added that no final decision had been made yet.