

'Freakish' Greenwood is Man Utd's new baby-faced assassin

Teenage kicks: 18-year-old Mason Greenwood has scored 15 times for Manchester United this season

AFP | Madrid

Manchester United have spent more than £1 billion (\$1.2 billion) on new players over the past nine years but the Red Devils latest revival owes much to a home-grown superstar in 18-year-old academy graduate Mason Greenwood.

The young forward was the star of the show as United scored five goals in the Premier League at Old Trafford for the first time since 2011 against Bournemouth at the weekend.

Greenwood smashed high into the Bournemouth net, first with his left foot and then with his right as free-flowing United won 5-2 in a style rarely seen since Alex Ferguson's retirement in 2013.

In his first season with the first team, Greenwood has scored 15 goals despite making just 18 starts in all competitions.

United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, who earned the tag "baby-faced assassin" for his finishing prowess as a player at Old Trafford, rates the club's latest prodigy as "one of the best -- if not the best -- finisher I have worked with and seen".

Greenwood's second against



Anthony Martial of Manchester United celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal

'More like a man'

Revitalised by the January signing of Bruno Fernandes, United were in fine form before football's three-month coronavirus shutdown.

But far from seeing their momentum slowed, the manner in which Solskjaer's men have returned has raised hopes they could even mount a title challenge to Liverpool and Manchester City next season.

Greenwood did not let the lockdown period go to waste as he reportedly gained three kilograms of muscle mass.

"Mason is looking more and more like a man," said Solskjaer prior to the season's restart.



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younger," said Rashford. "If you keep learning, there's no limit to what you can become."

United's immediate future is focused on securing a return to Champions League football, with a trip to relegation-threatened Aston Villa next up on Thursday.

The swagger and speed with which United have played in the past three games has come, significantly, in the only three matches Fernandes and Pogba have started together.

Pogba seemed destined to leave Old Trafford for the second time in his career prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Now, with finances tighter across European football, it is unlikely interest from Real Madrid will materialise this summer.

For the first time in his second spell at United, Pogba's role in the midfield suits his skill-set, with Nemanja Matic providing the platform for the French World Cup winner and Fernandes to share the creative burden.

"We know that they (Rashford, Martial and Greenwood) can score goals, we know that they've got pace, energy, they're youthful, they'll learn, they'll improve," added Solskjaer.

"With the players that we have that can provide the passes with Paul and Bruno, the creativity that we've got in the team now is exciting."



Manchester United's Paul Pogba is challenged by Tottenham's Eric Dier (file photo)

Mason Greenwood has been hailed by manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer as one of the "best finishers" he has seen



Manchester United's Mason Greenwood (left) vies with Sheffield United's Jack Robinson (file photo)

Rodgers hopes late leveller at Arsenal sparks Leicester revival

AFP | London

Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers is hoping Jamie Vardy's late equaliser to salvage a 1-1 draw at Arsenal on Tuesday will prove a turning point as the Foxes try to cling on to a place in the Premier League top four.

Rodgers's men have now won only once in six games since the English season restarted last month, but made the most of Eddie Nketiah's red card 15 minutes from time at the Emirates.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's strike gave the Gunners a well-deserved first-half lead, but Kasper Schmeichel in the Leicester goal ensured Arsenal

failed to add to their advantage.

And after Nketiah saw red, Vardy slotted home from Demarai Gray's cross to open up a four-point lead on fifth-placed Manchester United, who travel to Aston Villa today.

"I think it's huge for us," said Rodgers. "The second half we were outstanding. We were much quicker in our play and even 11 v 11 we were the better team."

"I was really pleased with how we managed 11 v 10. We got a deserved goal and if we had made the final pass we could have gone on and won the game. We take a point and it could be



Leicester's Jamie Vardy shoots to score a goal against Arsenal

a very important point for us." Arsenal's own chances of a top-four finish appear gone as

they remain nine points adrift in seventh.

But after a poor start to the re-

start with back-to-back defeats at Manchester City and Brighton, there were more promising signs from Mikel Arteta's men as his reign at the Emirates begins to take shape.

"We lost two points today that in my opinion we completely deserved," said Arteta. "You can see the effort, intensity, and desire the players are putting in. I am extremely proud."

"You have to learn, when you play against this opposition you have to kill them."

Bukayo Saka has flourished since Arteta replaced Unai Emery in December and the 18-year-old was again at the heart of an

excellent first 45 minutes from Arsenal. Saka created the opening goal as he latched onto a defence-splitting pass from the outstanding Dani Ceballos and teased Jonny Evans into falling over his own feet before laying Aubameyang's 20th Premier League goal of the season on a plate.

But for Schmeichel in the Leicester goal, the hosts would have been out of sight before half-time as the Danish number one produced an incredible low save to deny Alexandre Lacazette in between further smart stops from the French striker and Saka.