

Solskjaer defends under-fire Man Utd striker Greenwood



Manchester United's Norwegian manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (L) and Manchester United's English striker Mason Greenwood react after a match

Reuters | London

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer yesterday defended the professionalism of Mason Greenwood, saying the “whole English press” have targeted the Manchester United forward after he was sent home from England duty last month.

The 19-year-old has made a big impact at Old Trafford since making his first-team debut in March 2019, scoring 17 goals last season and recently making his international debut.

Greenwood was sent home from his first England camp for breaching coronavirus protocols in Iceland and he has reportedly been warned about his behaviour, including his time-keeping, by the club.

But Solskjaer, speaking at his pre-match press conference yesterday, brushed that issue aside as the teenager prepares to make his return against Chelsea this weekend.

“You do (make a target for yourself) when you play well and I’m not concerned at all with Mason making a target of himself,” said the United boss.

“He’s come in, he’s played fantastic, he played his first league game against (Arsenal) last season, was brilliant and just kicked on.

“Yeah, he’s made a mistake this summer with England and suddenly the whole English press go after him and that’s something we’ve got to look after.”

17 goals were scored by Mason Greenwood last season for Manchester United after making his first-team debut in March 2019

Solskjaer described Greenwood as a “fantastic boy to work with”.

“I have to disappoint you, he’s never, ever late for training, he’s never a problem when he’s in the training ground,” he said.

“He’s always on time. I’ve seen the stories, actually some ex-United players talking about him and they don’t really know anything what they’re talking about because, well, we’ve got photographers outside the training ground every day so they can check the time every day.”

The Norwegian boss added: “He’s a good trainer, he trains really well, and I cannot believe all these stories about him not being professional.”

Greenwood missed United’s impressive Champions League win at Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday with an unspecified issue, while captain Harry Maguire and new signing Edinson Cavani were other high-profile absentees.

Solskjaer said he expected all three of them to be available for the visit of Chelsea on Saturday.

Bale starts as Spurs win, Celtic undone by Milan

Gareth Bale helps Tottenham ease to Europa League win against Lask

● AC Milan withstood a late onslaught to beat Celtic

● Arsenal fight back as Ozil tweets his support

AFP | Paris

Gareth Bale said it felt good to be “loved and appreciated” after helping Tottenham to a 3-0 win over LASK of Austria in the Europa League.

The Welsh international started his first match since his return from Real Madrid and played for an hour before Jose Mourinho gave him a break.

Bale had come on as a substitute last Sunday with Tottenham 3-0 up against West Ham before his team collapsed to give up a 3-3 draw.

“It is amazing to be back,” Bale told BT Sport on Thursday.

“It is a big reason why I play well and why I came back. You want to be loved and appreciated. I will give everything for this shirt.”

However, he admitted it will take time to find his feet.

“I am a bit stiff. It is like a mini pre-season for me and I am trying to get minutes into the legs,” he said.

Despite Bale starting, it was on-loan Carlos Vinicius who made an impressive debut in the Group J opener.

Vinicius started in place of the resting Harry Kane and he made goals in either half for Lucas Moura and Son Heung-min, while he would have also netted himself had Andres Andrade not scored an own goal.

Bale made that goal where Andrade put through his own net.

Leicester made the perfect start in Group G with a comfortable 3-0 win over Zorya Lu-



Tottenham Hotspur's Welsh striker Gareth Bale (L) runs with the ball during the match

hansk of Ukraine.

James Maddison, Harvey Barnes and Kelechi Iheanacho were on the scoresheet.

In Glasgow, Celtic struggled against Serie A leaders AC Milan who were 2-0 up at half-time thanks to goals from Rade Krunic and Brahim Diaz.

Mohamed Elyounoussi reduced the arrears after the break, but Jens Petter Hauge broke clear to secure Milan’s Group H 3-1 win in stoppage time.

Milan were so comfortable that they could afford to take off Zlatan Ibrahimovic just after the hour.

Ozil TV support

Earlier Thursday, Arsenal came from behind to down Rapid Vienna 2-1 and Rangers beat Standard Liege 2-0.

After a goalless first half Arsenal went behind when keeper Bernd Leno fluffed a clearance on a night he will want to forget.

Taxiarchis Fountas capitalised on Leno’s clanger, much to the joy of the 3,000 home fans allowed in to watch under coronavirus safety protocol, but



Arsenal have not claimed a European trophy since lifting the old Cup Winners’ Cup in 1994

the Gunners then turned the game around in four second half minutes.

David Luiz put them level with a deft glancing header off Nicolas Pepe’s free-kick, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang then tapping home to bag the three Group B points.

It was an eventful night for Mikel Arteta’s side.

Alongside eight yellow cards, there was an eye-catching display from Thomas Partey on his first start since his transfer deadline day move from Atletico Madrid.

A frustrated follower of the game from his London sofa was

Mesut Ozil, who has been left out of both Arsenal’s Europa League and Premier League squad.

“When I can’t support on the pitch tonight, I will support in front of the TV in London.” tweeted Ozil.

The other Group B game was being played out in Dublin where Dundalk, only Ireland’s third ever representative in the group stage, were beaten 2-1 by Norwegians Molde.

In Belgium, Steven Gerrard’s Rangers took on Standard Liege fresh from their Old Firm derby win over Celtic which moved them four points clear in the Scottish Premiership last weekend. James Tavernier scored from the spot after Noe Dus-senne handled in the area to put them into a 19th minute lead.

Then three minutes into stoppage time Kemar Roofe produced a wonder goal from the halfway line, the ball flying over the head of bewildered keeper Arnaud Bodart. Benfica had claimed the first goal of the night and they went on to beat Lech Poznan in Poland 4-2 in the other Group D game.

Pique lays into Barca over Messi situation

Reuters | Barcelona

Barcelona defender Gerard Pique has torn into the club over their handling of the Lionel Messi contract situation, which resulted in the forward attempting to leave in the close-season.

The criticism comes on the eve of the first Clasico against Real Madrid this season and two days after the 33-year-old Pique signed a new three-year deal at Barca, with a vote of no confidence against the board also imminent.

Club president Josep Bartomeu was the target of a scathing interview by Messi, who ultimately ended up staying at the Camp Nou, however the relationship between the two seems irreparable, something that has left Pique astounded.

“I ask myself: How can it be that the best-ever player to have played the game, who we have been lucky enough to enjoy, wakes up one day and sends



Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (L) and Barcelona's Spanish defender Gerard Pique sit on the bench during a match (file photo)

a Burofax (recorded delivery mail) because he feels like he’s not being listened to?” Pique told La Vanguardia newspaper.

“It’s all too confrontational. What’s going on? Messi deserves everything; the new sta-

dium should be named after him first and then the sponsor. We should preserve our figureheads, not underappreciate them. It really gets to me.”

The defender also addressed media reports that Bartomeu

“What’s going on? Messi deserves everything; the new stadium should be named after him first and then the sponsor. We should preserve our figureheads, not underappreciate them. It really gets to me

LIONEL MESSI

knew the club hired a social media agency to criticise the players earlier this year.

Bartomeu has denied the allegations.

“I, as a Barca player, see that my club have spent money, money they’re now asking us for (in salary reductions), to criticise us - and I’m not talking about criticising people outside the club, but current players - it’s atrocious.

Kapil Dev stable after angioplasty

Reuters | London

Cricket great Kapil Dev, who captained India to their 1983 World Cup triumph, is stable after undergoing an

emergency coronary angioplasty having suffered chest pain.

“Currently, he is admitted in ICU and under close supervision...” the hospital said.

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