

SPORTS
sports

Ighalo set for Man United stay as Martins prepares to join Shanghai



Odion Ighalo in action during a match (file photo)

Reuters | Hong Kong

Nigerian striker Obafemi Martins is on the verge of a return to Shanghai Shenhua, Chinese media have reported, increasing the likelihood Odion Ighalo will make his stay at Manchester United a permanent one this summer.

Ighalo has made an impressive start to life at United, scoring four times in eight games since signing on loan until May 31 from the Chinese Super League club.

Martins, who was previously contracted to Shenhua from

2016 until the end of the 2018 season, was reported by Titan Sports to have arrived in China on Tuesday and was being lined up to replace Ighalo ahead of the Chinese Super League season.

China's domestic league has yet to start the 2020 season after kick off was delayed indefinitely due to the coronavirus outbreak but speculation is mounting that the campaign will begin in late April or early May.

England's Premier League has been suspended due to the pandemic and will not resume before April 30.

Messi, Guardiola donate one million euros to battle virus

Reuters | London

Barcelona forward Lionel Messi and Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola have each donated one million euros (\$1.08 million) towards the fight against coronavirus.

Argentina international Messi's donation will be split between Hospital Clinic in Barcelona and another medical centre in his home country, according to a report in Marca.

"Leo Messi made a donation to the clinic to fight the coronavirus," Hospital Clinic wrote on Twitter. "Thank you very much, Leo, for your commitment and your support."

Former Barcelona player and manager Guardiola made his contribution to a campaign launched by the Angel Soler Daniel Foundation and Medical College of Barcelona.

"Pep Guardiola has made a donation of one million euros to the Angel Soler Daniel Foundation for the acquisition and supply of health equipment to



Manchester City manager Josep Guardiola watches Lionel Messi of FC Barcelona during a match (file photo)

deal with the Covid-19 pandemic," said a statement from the College.

"The donation campaign promoted by the Medical College of Barcelona and managed through the Angel Soler Daniel Foundation aims to collect medical materials and financial contributions from collegiate

doctors and the general population, for the purchase of medical equipment and equipment that is currently lacking in health centres in Catalonia.

"It will also help finance the alternative production, through 3D printing and other methods, of respirators and personal protection equipment for health-

care staff."

Before Guardiola made his donation, the campaign had raised 33,000 euros in three days.

Spain is the country worst affected by the disease in Europe outside of Italy, with 2,696 deaths and almost 40,000 positive cases.

Bayern Munich, other Bundesliga clubs, take pay cut

AFP | Berlin

Footballers at Germany's top teams including Bayern Munich have agreed to take pay cuts to help clubs survive the economic impact of the coronavirus, media reports said on Tuesday.

Newspaper Bild said players and club officials at champions Bayern, top of the Bundesliga when the season was halted on March 13, have accepted a 20 per cent cut in their salaries.

Like all top European leagues, the German top flight is losing income from broadcasting, sponsorships and ticket sales during the Covid-19 pandemic, with matches in Germany sus-

pended until at least April 2.

Bayern have a massive wage bill which reached 336 million euros (\$525.7 million) last year, almost half of club turnover.

Players at Borussia Mönchengladbach were the first in the Bundesliga to propose a pay cut, followed by others at Werder Bremen, Schalke 04 and Borussia Dortmund. Bayer Leverkusen players are in talks over pay cut proposals with management.

Second-placed Dortmund said their squad members had already taken a salary reduction to show solidarity with the club's 850 employees.

Coach Lucien Favre and club directors have also made a personal offer to take a pay cut.



Bayern Munich players celebrate after a match

Ferdinand urges United to stay out of Coutinho transfer chase

The Independent | London

Manchester United have been linked with a transfer bid for Barcelona attacking midfielder Philippe Coutinho, but former defender Rio Ferdinand does not think he fits the bill.

The Old Trafford club are expected to continue their rebuild with a couple of big-name additions to the squad in the summer—or whenever a moved transfer window allows—and Coutinho has been regularly linked with a move back to the Premier League.

Having starred for Liverpool for several years before moving to Barcelona, it's easy to see why he would have admirers on these shores, but Ferdinand has listed multiple reasons why United should steer clear. "At Liverpool he was an



Philippe Coutinho runs with the ball during a match (file photo)

amazing player, but since he left Liverpool he hasn't really done it yet," Ferdinand said on Instagram.

"He struggled at Barcelona, struggled to fit in there and then he hasn't done amazingly well at Bayern.

"I would have said Man United before Bruno Fernandes turned up, but not now."

Rooney admits Liverpool 'deserve' Premier League title

Goal | London

Wayne Rooney believes Liverpool deserve to win the Premier League title and insists the campaign needs to be completed to decide promotion, relegation and European qualification.

The Premier League season has been thrown into doubt by the coronavirus pandemic with the campaign postponed until at least May 2 because of the global health crisis.

With Liverpool only needing six points to claim their first league title in 30 years, the former Manchester United and Everton star feels the Reds have earned the honour and it should not be taken away by a season cancellation.



Everton's English striker Wayne Rooney (L) slides in to tackle Liverpool's English midfielder James Milner (R) during a match (file photo)

The Derby County skipper will eventually be completed once the Covid-19 saga relents

and it could compromise next campaign.

"Liverpool will win the Premier League. [They] have been fantastic. They have put so much work in. They deserve this title. Can you imagine waiting 30 years and then having it taken away like this? The right decision has been made," Rooney said in his weekly column in The Times.

"It's also right in terms of promotion and relegation and Champions League places. These issues are so big for the clubs involved that I imagine there would be a lot of legal fights if the season was just abandoned. The fair thing is to finish 2019-20 — even if we have to lose next season in the process.

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