Messi officially becomes a free agent as superstar's Barcelona contract expires

Lionel Messi has become a free agent after the Barcelona star's contract expired at the end of June.

Although Barcelona were hopeful of signing Messi to a renewal before the June 30 deadline, the 34-year-old is now officially unattached.

Barcelona still believe that Messi will eventually sign a new deal, but his status as a free agent will generate concern among the club's fans and management.

What is the status of contract talks?

The two sides continue to be in consistent dialogue, with Barcelona president Joan Laporta communicating with Jorge Messi, the player's father and agent.

An agreement continues to be elusive though, due to the complex nature of Messi's demands and Barca's uncertain financial situation.

Goal has learned that both sides continue to discuss economic and tax-related issues in relation to Messi's contract, as well as the player's image rights.

In addition to any financial considerations, Messi is looking for assurances that the club will be able to build a competitive team around him in the near future.

Barcelona won the Copa del Rey in 2020-21 but missed out on their two biggest goals - La Liga and the Champions League.

Messi becoming a free agent adds a new layer of complexity to the situation. Should Barcelona re-sign the player, he will have to be registered with La Liga as a new signing.

As a new signing, Barcelona would have to find a creative solution to fit Messi into the framework of La Liga's financial regulations.

La Liga president Javier Tebas has already warned Barca that they must bring their wages down, or they won't be able to register Messi ahead of the 2021-22 season.

What happens next?

Barcelona continue to be confident that Messi will sign a new contract, but the Argentine becoming a free agent is still a worrying development.

Messi is currently with Argentina at Copa America, where the Albiceleste will face Ecuador in the quarter-finals on Saturday.

Goal understands that Messi is calm and focused on his national team, rather than his contract situation.

Goal

Jadon Sancho: Man Utd agree £73m fee with Borussia Dortmund for England winger

The 21-year-old England winger, who is yet to have a medical or agree personal terms, is expected to sign a five-year contract with the option of a sixth.

The fee, payable over five equal instalments, will see Sancho become the second-most expensive English player of all time behind Harry Maguire.

Defender Maguire joined United from Leicester for £80m in 2019.

United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has identified four key positions he wants to improve as they look to build on their progress last season.

After steering his side to second in the Premier League and the Europa League final, the Norwegian is looking to strengthen the right side of his midfield, then the central defensive, midfield and attacking areas.

Sancho fills the first of those.

'Talented trailblazer, reluctant star, hybrid of the modern age'

The deal brings to an end a long chase for the Londoner, who joined Dortmund from Manchester City in 2017.

United expected to sign him last summer but could not agree a fee.

Sancho scored 50 goals and registered 57 assists in 137 appearances for Dortmund, scoring twice in the German Cup final to help the Bundesliga side to a 4-1 victory over RB Leipzig in May.

He has won 20 caps for England since his international debut in 2018, scoring three goals, and was named in the Bundesliga Team of the Season in 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Could Sancho be heir to Messi's crown?

City to United via Dortmund - Sancho timeline

March 2000: Born in Camberwell, south London, growing up in nearby Kennington.

2007: Spotted by Watford at the age of seven, registering as a player two years later.

March 2015: Joins Manchester City shortly before his 15th birthday for a fee rising up to £500,000.

August 2017: Leaves City aged 17 without making a senior appearance, joining Borussia Dortmund for about £10m.

October 2017: Part of England squad that wins the U17 World Cup, though he only takes part in the group stage before being recalled by Dortmund. Makes his Dortmund debut as a late substitute in a 2-2 draw at Eintracht Frankfurt.

April 2018: Scores his first Dortmund goal in a 4-0 win against Bayer Leverkusen a month after his 18th birthday.

October 2018: Makes his England debut aged 18 in their Nations League draw with Croatia, the first player born in the 2000s to play for the Three Lions.

September 2019: Scores his first England goals at the age of 19 in a 5-3 win against Kosovo.

February 2020: Becomes the only teenager to score 25 Bundesliga goals after hitting the opener in a 5-0 win over Union Berlin a month before his 20th birthday.

June 2020: Ends the 2019-20 season with 20 goals and 18 assists in 44 appearances for Dortmund in all competitions.

May 2021: After his proposed move to Old Trafford fell through in 2020, Sancho notches 16 goals and 20 assists across all competitions in 2020-21 for Dortmund, earning him a spot in Gareth Southgate's Euro 2020 squad.

Sancho's move to Old Trafford will see him link up with Marcus Rashford, Edinson Cavani, Anthony Martial and Mason Greenwood in what could prove a formidable attack for Solskjaer's side. Sancho scored 16 goals in all competitions during the 2020-21 season, five fewer than Rashford, but four more than Greenwood, and nine more than Martial. Cavani, who joined United on a free transfer last year after leaving Paris St-Germain, netted 17. In four seasons at Dortmund, Sancho notched 57 assists and created 65 big chances, more than Rashford, Martial, Greenwood and Cavani during the same period. bbc

Del Norte High student drafted for professional cricket team

Right around the time his school year at Del Norte High was ending, junior Devam Shrivastava became a professional athlete.

And he gets to finish next year and graduate with his friends at Del Norte while playing his sport at the same time.

Shrivastava was chosen as an under-19 player by the San Diego Surf Riders of the Minor League Cricket in the draft.

When the San Diego native was selected, he did not even know he would be chosen after what he thought was a lackluster pre-draft tryout camp.

His dad, Vineet, got a call the night before the draft from the Surfriders' owner telling him San Diego had picked the 6-footer in the priority phase of the draft.

"My whole family went crazy that night," Shrivastava said. "Mom (Smita) and dad were as surprised as I was to be picked from a pool of 300 players for a few spots.

"I still have to do my chores around the house, though," he added.

Shrivastava said he hopes to one day play in the Major League.

"To play cricket for the USA in the Olympics would be the pinnacle for me," he said. "Playing in the majors is the next step. The Olympics would be right at the top of my bulletin board."

There are three forms of game protocols for cricket, according to Shrivastava.

Games used to take five days to play when the sport was first created. A one-day game was created and a third form takes about four hours.

"I've never played a five-day match, but the one-day tournament can take up to 10 hours to play," Shrivastava said.

Shrivastava's introduction to cricket at age 7 was hardly worth remembering. He did not like it despite the fact that his parents were born in cricket-loving India.

"I wasn't much of a fan at first," he recalled.

After India captured the World Cup title in 2011, his attitude changed. He took a newer look at cricket.

Shrivastava also joined the San Diego Cricket Club Academy and he has been playing for 10 years now.

"I still have the first bat my grandfather back in India gave years ago," he said. "It broke, but I kept it because it was a huge gift from him.

"The first day with the academy, I did not know what to do with at first," he said. "The bats are big and heavy and was about as big as me."

Shrivastava has yet to play cricket on an international level.

He has played a number of tournaments around the United States in such cities as Atlanta and Chicago.

There are players, however, from around the world headed for teams in the Major and Minor leagues.

"This league is trying to raise the interest in cricket with these leagues," Shrivastava said. "This is a dream come true for me.

"My mom and I used to watch games on TV and now she's going to be able to watch me play on TV," he said. "This is the biggest honor right below playing for my country."

But first up for the cricket leagues is educating the American public about the game.

hrivastava, who is the bowler — similar to being the pitcher in baseball, has taken on the job of ambassador for his sport to his classmates and anyone else who might ask.

Wimbledon 2021: Andy Murray continues run with vintage five-set comeback win over Oscar Otte

Former world No 1 Murray looked up for the challenge after winning the opening set, but the physical drama of his four-set win over Nikoloz Basilashvili on Monday took its toll as he fell behind and looked to be heading for the exit door.

Despite taking an awkward tumble early in the fourth set, the Scot came back out after the roof was closed showing all his trademark competitive spirit to win a thriller 6-3 4-6 4-6 6-4 6-2.

Otte, making his Wimbledon debut, was playing for the third day in a row having come through a two-day marathon against fellow qualifier Arthur Rinderknech to win only the second deciding tie-break in All England Club history.

He is ranked down at 151 but led by two sets to love against Alexander Zverev in the first round of the French Open before losing in five and Murray knew the German with his unorthodox serving style could prove a difficult opponent on his day and so it proved for periods of their dramatic contest

Four years after limping out of Wimbledon following a quarter-final loss to Sam Querrey, Murray's expectations were severely tempered by ongoing physical issues and a lack of match play heading into this year's Wimbledon.

But after his thrilling victory over 24th seed Basilashvili, the two-time Wimbledon champion continued his winning momentum after the roof was closed under darkening skies at 2-2 in the fourth, claiming 10 out of the next 14 games to make it through to the third round after three hours and 51 minutes.

Speaking to the crowd, Murray said with a slightly rueful smile: "I enjoyed the end, the middle part not so much. What an atmosphere to play in at the end. I needed everyone's help tonight. I played some great shots at the end to finish it but it was a tough match.

"I had to do something differently. I started going for my shots more, started dictating more of the points. I think I played the right way the last couple of sets. The first set and a half was really good, it's just the bits in the middle I'd like to change.

"I'm obviously tired. I fell over a couple of times, pretty slick courts. Considering everything, I feel all right. Hopefully I come out on Friday and play in another atmosphere like this and hopefully perform well."

Murray broke the big-serving 27-year-old twice and seemed to be well on his way to round three when he moved 3-1 ahead in the second. But a loose service game, coupled with a more aggressive approach from his opponent, turned the match completely on its head.

Skysport

Climbing is making its Olympic debut. Here's what you need to know about the sport and its Colorado athletes.

Climbing's standing as a niche sport has always been a part of its appeal.

A rock wall can be a place of solitude or of camaraderie with a small group of fellow climbers. There are no crowds, just the peacefulness of the outdoors and the task of trying to find the best route to the top.

The climbing world could be in for a change after the Tokyo Olympics.

Climbing is an Olympic sport for the first time, and the spotlight will introduce a massive audience to what can be a lonely pursuit.

"For the most part, people were psyched," American Olympic climber Nathaniel Coleman said. "They knew the sport would get more attention, a lot more inflow of money and kind of be recognized as the high-quality sport that it is." The inaugural climbing competition will include three disciplines: lead, bouldering and speed. Lead is similar to what climbers encounter when scaling rock faces outdoors. Climbers have six minutes to climb a wall of about 15 meters with a variety of holds. Whoever climbs highest wins. Ties are broken by time.

In Bouldering, climbers have four minutes to complete each of four "problems" on 4.5-meter walls. The problems include overhangs, wedges and holds barely big enough to hold a fingertip. Some problems involve a "dyno" –jumping in a dynamic movement to the next hold – and occasionally going upside down is the best way up. Climbers get as many attempts as they want within the time limit and receive credit for completing a boulder by securing the top hold with both hands in a controlled manner. There are also zone holds midway up the wall where climbers can earn partial credit.

Speed climbing is a much more specialized discipline, the climbers racing head to head up a 15-meter wall with standardized holds.

The inclusion of the speed discipline did not sit well within the climbing community.

The Tokyo Games will have two medalists — one for each gender — and the International Olympic Committee wanted to show a range of climbing skills, so it included speed in the overall competition.

Lead climbing and bouldering are more in line with what climbers face outdoors. Speed, not so much. As one climber put it, adding speed is like asking a distance runner to compete in a sprint event. Speed will be a separate medal event at the 2024 Paris Games. "Speed climbing is very, very different from the other two disciplines," said Meg Coyne, national team manager and assistant coach at USA Climbing. "First of all, it's rehearsed. Second, all of the mannerisms, habits and techniques are effectively reversed. For athletes to do well on speed, they need train for something that's totally outside the habits they have for the other disciplines." Scoring is determined by multiplying each climber's placement in the three disciplines. Lowest score wins.

If a climber is first in lead, second in bouldering and 10th in speed, their score would be 20 (1X2X10=20). Winning a discipline will put a climber in good position to contend for a medal.

Adam Ondra has been called the world's best climber and has tackled some of the most difficult outdoor routes around the globe. The wiry 28-year-old Czech known for screaming on the wall is not as strong in speed climbing, but is a threat to win both lead and bouldering.

Like Ondra, Janja Garnbret has completed outdoor routes most climbers wouldn't even consider attempting.

The 22-year-old from Slovenia has won six world championships and is the only climber to go through an undefeated World Cup season, winning six events in 2019. She excels in lead and bouldering. The United States joined France and host Japan as the only countries to qualify a full team of four climbers.

Nathaniel Coleman is sort of the de facto captain of the U.S. team, a laid-back climber who leads by example. The 24-year-old from Salt Lake City is considered one of the best American boulderers, but has evolved into a super all-around climber.

Collin Duffy will be one of the youngest athletes at the Tokyo Olympics. The 17-year-old from Broomfield is an adept problem solver — he loves puzzles — and qualified for the Olympics as a sophomore in high school.

Duffy grew up climbing with Brooke Raboutou and now the two friends will be going to Tokyo together. The 20-year-old from Boulder comes from a climbing family and has become adept at all three disciplines.

Kyra Condie had 10 vertebrae fused together when she was 13 to correct scoliosis and has become one of the best climbers in the world. The 25-year-old from Shoreview, Minnesota, does not have the same mobility as other climbers, but makes up for it with problem solving. AP