



Player Watch

Wednesday, 8th February 2017



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The work of a team should always embrace a great player but the great player must always work

Sir Alex Ferguson

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The Purpose:

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This is going to be a weekly post, which goes up on Wednesday. It will discuss the performances of players we are linked with and also discuss the ongoing process of the Reserves and the Academy.

I'll be watching a considerable amount of matches and highlights as well as reading numerous articles online, so if anyone would like to help out, you're more than welcome.

After a few weeks, I should have got a formula together of how to prepare this and after that time comes, I expect steady improvements and also more detail and longer length.



1. Antoine Griezmann

Forward - Atletico Madrid

Games:

Home, vs. Barcelona, Copa del Rey - Semi Final

Home, vs Leganes, La Liga

Oh, Antoine Griezmann! He is one of the most in-demand players in the world at the minute, after shining in La Liga the past few seasons and lighting up Euro 2016. He has constantly been linked with a move to Old Trafford but he will come at a significant price, similar to the price packet given to Juventus for the signing of Paul Pogba.

Although I have some doubts at the position he would play for United, and the effect it would have on players already at the club, it would be a major coup and would again signal the power of the biggest club in the world.

Atletico Madrid 1 - 2 FC Barcelona

So now, onto his performances of the last week. Firstly, Griezmann and his Atletico side faced a regular rival in the form of Barcelona. In a game dominated by the duo of Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, Griezmann was able to nod a header in, after being set up a Diego Godin header.

His overall performance was that of a mixed bag. He started off by giving the ball away in the lead-up to Suarez' goal and looked lacklustre in some of the runs he made. He showed his temper in a silly 5 minute spell, where he gave away two freekicks, just outside the box.

He had the chance of winning the game late on, but dragged his shot wide, much to the delight of Jasper Cillessen.

All in all, Antoine was one of the better players in a weaker performance from the Atletico team.

On to the game against Leganes.

Atletico Madrid 2 - 0 Leganes

In a game against weaker opposition, it would be Fernando Torres who would shine as he scored two goals and gave Atletico their first win in four games.

It was a game fit for Antoine to have a large impact, but unfortunately he performed worse than his midweek display against Barcelona.

When Torres was felled in the box, up stepped Griezmann. However, he shot straight at the keeper, who parried it out and El Nino flicked it in off the rebound. It was another disappointing effort and he has now missed five of his last seven penalties for the club.

The penalty looked to damage his confidence and apart from a few neat one-twos and clean passes, he was largely invisible.

He was subbed off for Vrsaljko in the 73rd minute.

How would Antoine Griezmann fit into our lineup?



The big rumour is that Griezmann will join us in the summer transfer window and will become our new number seven, now that Memphis Depay has moved on to Lyon. But, how would we use him?

I can't personally see him playing on the wings for us, so playing as an attacking midfielder behind Zlatan behind him seems the most logical option or vice versa with Ibrahimovic playing behind him. The problem with this is that Pogba will have to drop deeper and play as a true number six, so we can't get the best of both worlds, until Zlatan moves on or retires. However, accommodating multiple world class players in your team is a situation every team would like to have.

In my personal opinion, we will be capable of mounting a charge on a number of trophies but we won't see the true potential of our future lineup until Zlatan Ibrahimovic moves on but the signing will send fear down the necks of our rivals once again.



2. Nelson Semedo

Right Back - S.L Benfica

Games:

Home, vs. Nacional, Primeira Liga

The most popular rumour at the minute has been circulating for the past week or so, and they are stating that we have agreed a deal to sign Nelson Semedo in the summer. The rumoured fee is different on multiple sites but they seem to range between £27 million and £35 million. A significant fee for a 23 year old right-back but these prices are becoming the norm and expect to see them rise further in the coming years.

With Antonio Valencia ageing, this would be the ideal replacement for the electric fullback and he could possibly lock this position down in the next few years.

How does Semedo play?

Nelson has been catching the eyes of many teams across Europe for his aggressive attacking play from right-back and is one of the main contributors to Benfica's offensive line.

As a very eye-catching dribbler, he favours taking on players and whipping crosses in for the forwards, and most importantly, he can use both feet to cross.

However, he is also a clever footballer and is able to switch the play across field with accurate and flamboyant passing, and for his age, he is a very confident and reliable offensive wing-back. Whether he will be able to keep up with the pace of the Premier League is unknown, but at this point he ticks all of the boxes.

Unfortunately, there are a few weaknesses in his game like any other player.

Firstly, he struggles with airballs and he is often outmuscled by the opposite team's forward players. This leads on to him finding it difficult to defend on set-pieces but from what I have seen, he seems to do enough to force weaker efforts from the offence.

Secondly, you'll see him lose the ball occasionally and due to his position up the field, you see empty space open up on the right-side of the field leading to a counter-attack. However, he is a very hard-worker and tries his best to get back and defend the attack.

Again, it is difficult to compare the Premier League and Portuguese League but from the gameplay I have been able to watch, he seems like a top young player, and we need him to sign on the dotted line.

S.L Benfica 3 - 0 Nacional

In the win over Nacional, Semedo was effective on the wing and was able to create multiple chances from crosses whilst also cutting in and opening up spaces for the midfielders. It must be noted that Nacional are 17th in the table and we should look to develop our opinions when we see him play against tougher opposition.

3. Victor Lindelof

Centre Back - S.L Benfica

Games:

Home, vs. Nacional, Primeira Liga

Lindelof is one of the more unusual transfer rumours, in the fact that multiple sources reported that we were in talks to sign him early on in the January window and some even went ahead and said we had agreed a deal. The stories in Portugal said the deal was done, Sky said we were close and even the BBC were stuck in the middle just like several other establishments when the deal didn't materialise. There was even talks that a 20% sell-on fee, that Vasteras inserted in the contract when Victor was sold, was holding up the deal.



In the end, he didn't join but you can expect that if we do go back into the market, Lindelof will be one of the players we will be looking at.

Since 2004, Mourinho has signed 7 total players from the Portuguese league, which may be surprising to many people who thought he had signed considerably more players from the nation. However, it must be noted that 5 of these 7 players were defensive players or defensively minded. These players were; Fábio Coentrão, Ricardo Carvalho (x2), Paulo Ferreira, and Nuno Morais.

At the young age of 22, we would be paying around £35 million+ for a 22 year old player, who has won 11 caps for the national team and made it into the Champions League Breakthrough XI for 2016.

How does Victor Lindelof play?

Firstly, Lindelof stands at 6ft 2in, so he is very physically imposing and rarely will you see him lose an aerial battle, something which is key in the Premier League. Also, for a player of his size, he is surprisingly quick and is often deployed at right-back by Sweden.

Secondly, one thing that is a misconception is that he is a very tough and aggressive player, this is partially incorrect. Whilst being very strong, he doesn't slide into tackles and this is illustrated by the fact he has only picked up one yellow card this season and only got booked five times the whole of last season.

Finally, he likes to break forward into the midfield but when pressured, seems to release a pass quickly and can often seem to lack confidence in his possession of the ball. However, this seems to be his only weakness and as he is still a young player, he is on a great path in becoming an extremely well-rounded defender.

S.L Benfica 3 - 0 Nacional

In a game that Benfica dominated, Lindelof had very little to do but cleaned up wherever he was needed.

He spent the majority of the game slightly further up the pitch with the rest of the Benfica defence as they kept the aggression on Nacional.

He ended the game with 93% pass success and won 2/4 aerial duels, however it must be noted that he was going against Aristeguieta, who is the same height as Victor, so it was always going to be difficult and provided valuable experience, even if it was a lower-tier player.

Like Semedo, it was difficult to see Lindelof's true ability in this game, so we will have to keep an eye on him over the next couple of weeks.



4. Memphis Depay

Forward - Lyon

Games:

Away, vs. ASSE, Ligue 1

Home vs. AS Nancy Lorraine, Ligue 1

Memphis Depay was the player we all wanted at Old Trafford, when he was lighting it up in the Eredivisie. Louis Van Gaal was able to sign him early, despite there being competition from all over Europe. We now had one of the best young talents in the world and we were all hoping he turned out to be a future superstar.

Fast forward 625 days and he signed a deal with Lyon, with most of us thinking what could have been.

However, with the news that his new contract included some sort of buy-back clause; many of us are still hoping that he regains his confidence and realises his true potential.

ASSE 2 - 0 Lyon

In his full debut, Depay started his career at Lyon with a performance which felt very similar as to when he was at United. He would lose the ball on multiple occasions whilst trying to perform something flashy, would misplace simple passes and couldn't really get anything going. He struggled with tracking back and was caught out of position multiple times.

He had a chance to make amends and score his first goal for the club when he was played through on goal by Tolisso, but his weak shot was saved by Moullin.

He was replaced in the 65th minute and drew criticism for another poor performance.

L'Equipe gave him a rating of two, and it led to Bruno Genesio having to defend him.

“

“Memphis has not played for some time”

“It is simply necessary that he regains rhythm, a physical level that allows him to express his qualities. There is no concern about that”

”

Lyon 4 - 0 AS Nantes

After his performance against St Etienne, he was on the bench for the game against Nantes. However, he got his chance to get back into the team, when Valbuena picked up a leg injury and he was able to replace him late in the first half.

In a much improved performance, we saw glimpses of Depay getting some confidence back as his positioning and awareness was considerably better than what it has been recently.

In the 58th minute, he was played through by Gonalons and was able to slot the ball past Chernik and into the back of the net. It was very similar to his tame effort against ASSE, and will no doubt boost his confidence. He had a late shot, which was from outside of the box, saved by the keeper in a game dominated by Lyon.

Hopefully, Memphis will take a lot from this and continue his improvement as he attempts to adapt to the French League, something he was unable to do in England. Will he get to a level where we will want him back? We'll have to wait and see, but it's going to take a considerable amount of time and what I see most likely happening is that he joins a middle-tier team, which I think he would be more suited to. So if he does come back to the Premier League, I expect him to join a side like Everton or Southampton, unless he turns into a sensation again.



Useful Links and Videos:

Griezmann:

Atletico vs. Barcelona - Extended Highlights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3ax2cKbghg>

Atletico vs. Legance - Extended Highlights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSeeG9QxfYQ>

Antoine Griezmann: The HUGE Manchester United Debate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSVDQX8VtIU>

Semedo:

Benfica vs. Nacional - Extended Highlights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwCYrV8Mmpk>

Nelson Semedo; Goals, Skills, Assists, 2016/2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5KrYwtmaYA>

Lindelof:

Benfica vs. Nacional - Extended Highlights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwCYrV8Mmpk>

Victor Lindelof; Benfica, Skills, 2016/17

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uc45GMFEV1s>

Depay:

Memphis Depay vs. Saint-Etienne, 2016/17

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoDGapP5KBY>

Memphis Depay vs. Nancy, 2016/17

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFguxGqYBcw>

Amazing skill by Memphis Depay

<https://twitter.com/mrmichaelbarton/status/828495277627695104>

Does anyone want to get involved?

So, now we have come to the end of the first post, I want to talk about some things which I want to achieve with this weekly series.

Firstly, there was so much I wanted to do this week and start it off well and then progressively add to it every post.

There was going to be two more “chapters”, which discussed the Academy and the Reserves. This was basically going to go over their past results and also discuss all the top talent we have and give basic fact-files on a lot of the players.

Unfortunately, I was unable to do this just because of a lack of time and poor planning from me.

I’m in University at the minute and this is something I’ve wanted to do for a long time but after thinking about it yesterday, I basically thought I had to get the first post out today otherwise the weekend was going to be here, and the content I had already written would go to waste and then I would never do another one.

I did have some help, although there wasn’t great communication between us due to technical issues and also time differences.

So, u/ArmchairScout agreed to do the Depay section and I would do the Academy/Reserves but there were some issues and he didn’t get back to me and as I wanted to get it out before I went to bed, I quickly came up with the Depay section

I felt bad for doing this and I know you would have done a better job u/ArmchairScout; I hope we can organise this better in the future.

If anyone would like to help, you can contact me on Reddit:
TheFanboyDreams.