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Rested Messi ready to help Barcelona win La Liga and Champions League, says Lenglet

Goal - Lionel Messi is ready to help Barcelona win La Liga and the Champions League after a well-earned rest, according to Clement Lenglet.

Quique Setien is currently preparing his squad for the resumption of the 2019-20 La Liga season, following a there month hiatus caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Barca were on course for a third successive title when the action was stopped in March, having established a two-point lead at the top of the table ahead of arch-rivals Real Madrid.

The Spanish champions were also still in with a chance of winning a first Champions League crown since 2015, and UEFA are currently in the process of coming up with a solid plan to ensure the completion of the competition over the summer.

Messi and co returned to work at Barca›s training ground last month after a frustrating spell in self-isolation, but Lenglet says the Argentine superstar has benefitted from the break and is raring to get back on the pitch for the June 13 meeting with Mallorca.

The Blaugrana defender told Mundo Deportivo of Messi›s condition: “He is ready for what is to come.

“For players like Messi, Antoine [Griezmann], Busi [Sergio Busquets]... who play all the time - as well as with their national teams - and travel a lot, the lockdown was a good thing. They›ve been able to rest.»

Lenglet went on to discuss how important Luis Suarez›s return following a long-term injury lay off will be for Barca in their continued pursuit of a domestic and European double.

He said: “Luis has had time to recover without rushing. He›s looking good in training and seems very comfortable on the ball. He is going to help us a lot.

“We will have to work as best we can to compete for both trophies to the best of our ability. We want to continue working to win the Champions League. I think that we are in good shape; it›s a peculiar season, but we are going to be working to the maximum to win both trophies.»

The 24-year-old was, however, unable to give a similarly positive update on Ousmane Dembele›s fitness, as a fellow Frenchman continues his recovery from surgery on a torn hamstring.

“We don›t know if he›ll be ready for the end of the season, but he›s working to come back as soon as possible,» Lenglet said. “We want him to return quickly, because he has a style that helps us a lot when he plays and that is very different to what we have right now.»

Roger Federer will miss the rest of 2020

The Guardian - Roger Federer has ruled out a return to tennis until next year after revealing he has undergone further surgery on his right knee.

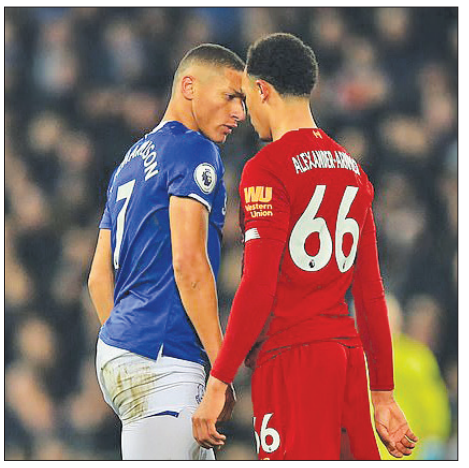
Federer, who will be 39 in August, has not played since his Australian Open semi-final defeat to Novak Djokovic in January and had his first bout of surgery the following month. The tennis season is under lockdown owing to the coronavirus pandemic and Federer has written off returning until the new year.

In a message on his social media channels Federer wrote: “A few weeks ago, having experienced a setback during my initial rehabilitation, I had to have an additional quick arthroscopic procedure on my right knee.

“Now, much like I did leading up to the 2017 season, I plan to take the necessary time to be 100% ready to play at my highest level. I will be missing my fans and the tour dearly but I will look forward to seeing everyone back on tour at the start of the 2021 season.”

Federer’s decision mirrors the premature ending of his season because of the same injury in 2016, returning to win two more grand-slam titles the following year.

The ATP Tour is shut down until at least the end of July, with the US Open and French Open set for a hectic back-to-back schedule in August and September.



Merseyside derby at Goodison Park

Daily Mail - Liverpool›s potentially title-deciding Merseyside derby clash with Everton will take place at Goodison Park after the city council›s safety advisory group deemed it safe enough.

Discussions were being held over neutral venues, with fears that crowds could gather outside the stadium if the match was held at its planned venue in Liverpool.

The fixture was on a list of six which the UK›s football policing lead, Deputy Chief Constable Mark Roberts of South Yorkshire Police, said local forces had requested to be played at a neutral venue due to public health fears amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Merseyside Police appeared to contradict DCC Roberts by saying they were happy to police matches in Liverpool, and that will now be the case.

After discussions this week, it has been decided that the match can be played at Goodison Park on June 21 as planned, ending the possibility of the two sides having to travel 200 miles to Southampton instead.

Liverpool, meanwhile, have also been given the green light to play all of their remaining home games at Anfield, meaning they will get to lift the title on home soil.

The crunch meeting was then held on Wednesday and it has been agreed that it is safe for the big Merseyside derby match to go ahead at Goodison Park as planned.

Man Utd - Stoke cancelled after O›Neill tests positive for coronavirus

Goal - Manchester United had a scare at their Carrington training ground on Tuesday as a friendly was cancelled at the last minute after Stoke City manager Michael O›Neill tested positive for coronavirus.

The two clubs had arranged a behind-closed-doors friendly at United›s training base as Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s side step up preparations ahead of the return of the Premier League, beginning with a visit to Tottenham on June 19.

Players from both teams were spotted arriving at United›s training base only for the Stoke players to leave shortly after, before a ball was kicked.

It is understood Stoke were preparing for the game in the Academy Building when news filtered through from the EFL of a positive Covid test which had been taken the day before in preparation for the restart of the Championship.

The visiting players left the training ground and Solskjaer’s side continued with their preparations including an inter-squad game. It is understood Stoke players and staff had not come into contact with any United players or staff due to safety protocols that are currently in place at the training ground.

Stoke announced on Tuesday evening that it was O›Neill who had produced the positive test and the manager will now enter a period of isolation as the team continue preparations for a return to play.

«Stoke City can confirm that manager Michael O›Neill has tested positive for the Covid-19 virus following the latest round of testing on Monday (June 8),» the club said in a statement. «O›Neill had tested negative in the previous five rounds of testing.

«He will now follow the relevant guidance and undergo a period of isolation, whilst continuing to be in regular virtual contact with his coaching staff and players.

«Assistant manager Billy McKinlay will take charge of training as the Potters prepare for their game against Reading on June 20.

«The Club will be making no further comment on this matter.»

Premier League players and staff have been tested six times for the virus, ahead of next week’s restart, with the latest set of results showing zero positives from 1,195 tests.

Out of the six rounds of tests there have been a total of 13 positives out of 6,274 tests carried out, and none of them have been at United.

Solskjaer’s side returned to their Carrington training base at the end of last month after the go-ahead was given for socially distanced training and preparations have been going well.