

Sports

Mane's signing eases pressure on Bayern to keep wantaway stars

Mane's transfer a coup for Bundesliga champions

BERLIN: Sadio Mane's transfer from Liverpool to Bayern Munich is a coup for the Bundesliga champions, who have signed a ready-made replacement for either wantaway striker Robert Lewandowski or winger Serge Gnabry. Mane, 30, arrives in Munich on a three-year contract with sufficient star status to enhance Bayern's attack.

"Often it's the other way around, but this time a Bundesliga club has signed a top Premier League player," German magazine Kicker commented last week. The Senegal forward reportedly cost the German giants around £35 million (41 million euros, \$43 million), only slightly less than the sum Liverpool paid for him in 2016.

Crucially for Bayern, Mane can replace either Lewandowski, who insists his Munich "story has come to an end" as he eyes a move to Barcelona, or Gnabry, who is stalling over signing a contract extension. In six years on Merseyside, Mane led Liverpool's transformation under Jurgen Klopp from Premier League also-rans into serious contenders for major trophies. One of Klopp's first major signings, Mane won a clean sweep of Champions League, Premier League, FA Cup, League Cup and Club World Cup titles in his time at Anfield.

'Low maintenance'

Liverpool legend Jamie Carragher sees Mane as a great signing for Bayern. "My favorite @LFC player of this era - low maintenance, high performance & never injured," Carragher said on Twitter this week. "Trophies & goals galore, a true Liverpool Legend. Thank you, Sadio." Another former Reds player, Dean Saunders, has claimed his talent will be wasted in the Bundesliga, where Bayern have just capped a decade of dominance by winning a 10th straight league title. "The league is nowhere near a challenge for Mane. He'll get goals. They win 5-0 every week, only one team can win the league," Saunders told TalkSport. "It's not a challenge. He will get in his armchair, light a cigar up, he'll play for Bayern in third gear and he'll coast for two years and ruin the best two years of his life as a footballer."

Mane scored 120 goals in 269 games for Liverpool.



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's Senegalese new forward Sadio Mane plays with the ball during a press conference after he signed a three-year deal with German first division football club FC Bayern Munich on June 22, 2022. —AFP

That pales into comparison with the phenomenal tally of 238 Bundesliga goals in eight years which Lewandowski, twice voted FIFA's best male player, managed in 252 appearances games for Bayern. However, it is his all-round, high-energy game that made Mane a favorite at Liverpool. He can also perform just as well playing off both wings as through the middle.

Mane's career began far from the spotlight of the Allianz Arena. "In the village you're going to be a farmer, there's no other job to do. My dream as a kid was to make history and win all the trophies," he said in the documentary Sadio Mane: Made in Senegal. Spotted by French club Metz while playing in Dakar, around 400km from his native village, he moved to

France in early 2011. Three years later, he left for RB Salzburg, where he learnt German and impressed with 31 goals in 63 games.

He helped them win the Austrian league and cup double in 2014, then graduated to England's Premier League when he was snapped up by Southampton. After two years on England's south coast, Liverpool swooped for Mane, who became the second highest transfer in the club's history at the time when the Reds paid £37 million for him. After scoring the winning penalty to claim Senegal a first ever African Cup of Nations title and qualifying his country for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, Mane faces a new challenge with Bayern. —AFP

Swedish veteran chases elusive swimming gold; youngsters eye records

BUDAPEST: Swedish great Sarah Sjöström, who is seeking a first World Championships gold in the 100m freestyle, advanced from a depleted talent pool in the heats in Budapest on Wednesday. While the 28-year-old Swede is trying to turn back the clock, the day could be dominated by a pair of youngsters. David Popovici and Leon Marchand, who are threatening world records in the evening finals.

Sjöström has 17 World Championship medals. She has four in the 100m free, but none are gold. She qualified fourth fastest in the heats. Australian teenager Mollie O'Callaghan set the best time. Another Australian, the number two seed Shayna Jack, who had already won two relay medals as she returned to major competition in Budapest after a drug ban kept her out of the last worlds and Olympics, was a late scratch after an accident.

"Due to an unfortunate incident in this morning's training session, I have broken my hand. I am broken hearted to announce that I have to withdraw from the rest of the competition," Jack posted on social media. She said she would focus on the Commonwealth

Games in Birmingham later this year.

The field had already been winnowed with the top three in last year's Olympics all out. Champion Emma McKeon is also focusing on the Commonwealth Games, silver medalist Siobhan Haughey of Hong Kong has been knocked out of the championships by an ankle injury and Australian Cate Campbell is taking a year off. Canadian Kelsey Wog was fastest in women's 200m breaststroke qualifying. American Lilly King, the silver medalist in Tokyo, was second.

After King missed a medal in the 100m breast on Tuesday, her college coach, Ray Looze, told American media that she was racing at "80 percent of what her capability is." Olympic champion Tatjana Schoenmaker of South Africa is skipping these championships. Another Olympic champion, Australian Zac Stubblety-Cook was narrowly quickest in the men's 200m breaststroke heats, edging Dutchman Caspar Corbeau by 0.06sec. American Shaune Casas topped qualifying in the men's 200m backstroke ahead of 19-year-old Australian Joshua Edwards-Smith.

Third world record

Wednesday's finals offer another sighting of three of the teenage breakout stars of the week and the tantalising possibility of a third world record in the championships. Popovici, the 17-year-old Romanian who broke another world junior record in 100m freestyle qualifying. His big-name rival Caeleb Dressel withdrew after winning his heat for unspecified health reasons.

future Hall-of-Famer, regarded by many as one of the best tight ends in history, retired for the first time in 2019 after helping the New England Patriots clinch their sixth Vince Lombardi Trophy.

After sitting out the 2019-2020 season, Gronkowski came out of retirement to be reunited with former Patriots team-mate Brady, and was a pivotal figure in helping Tampa Bay clinch the Super Bowl in the 2020-2021 campaign. On Tuesday however Gronkowski said his second retirement was permanent. "I want to thank the whole entire first class Buccaneers organization for an amazing ride, trusting me to come back to play and help build a championship team," Gronkowski said in a statement on



BUDAPEST: Sweden's Sarah Sjöström competes in a heat for the women's 100m freestyle event during the Budapest 2022 World Aquatics Championships at Duna Arena on June 22, 2022. —AFP

That leaves Popovici, who swam 47.13sec on Tuesday, chasing the world record of 46.91, set by Brazil's Cesar Cielo in 2009, just before high-tech streamlined suits were banned. There is a slim chance that Marchand could challenge Ryan Lochte's 2011 record in the 200-medley final. The 20-year-old Frenchman swam the second fastest ever 400m medley when he won gold in that event on Saturday. In the women's 200m butterfly, the fastest qualifier, 15-year-old Canadian Summer McIntosh, is simply after her first gold to follow her silver in the 400m freestyle. —AFP

Instagram. "I will now be going back into my retirement home, walking away from football again with my head held high knowing I gave it everything I had, good or bad, every time I stepped out on the field. "From retirement, back to football and winning another championship and now back to chilling out, thank you to all."

Brady, who formed a near-telepathic understanding with Gronkowski during their seasons together in New England and Tampa, was among the first to offer congratulations. "Love you as a man, teammate and friend," Brady wrote on Instagram. "One of a kind in every way." A larger-than-life presence, "Gronk" was known for his effervescence and irreverence on and off the field. —AFP

Smith, Holmgren tipped for top spot in NBA Draft

NEW YORK: US college star Jabari Smith Jr. is strongly tipped to be chosen with the top pick by the Orlando Magic when the 2022 NBA Draft takes place on Thursday. The 19-year-old Smith, who excelled for Auburn University's Tigers this year during his only season as a college player, has emerged as the bookmaker's favorite to be chosen first in Thursday's annual scramble for the top collegiate talent.

The 6ft 10in power forward impressed for the Tigers in a college season that saw him average 16.9 points per game along with 7.4 rebounds and 2.0 assists. Smith, whose father Jabari played four seasons in the NBA, is also a distant cousin of Kwame Brown, the No 1 pick in the 2001 draft.

Brown's NBA career ought to be a cautionary tale for Smith and other hopefuls in the draft, where top picks often fail to live up to lofty expectations. Brown, who ended his professional career with a scoring average of just 6.6 points per game, is routinely described as one of the "biggest busts" in NBA draft history. Conversely, players chosen way down the pecking order on draft day often emerge as dominant MVP-caliber talent.

Denver's Nikola Jokic, the NBA's Most Valuable Player for the past two seasons, was chosen with the 41st pick in the draft in 2014, while Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo, the back-to-back MVP in 2019 and 2020, was chosen 15th overall. There are strong grounds, however, for believing that Smith may have little difficulty living up to his expected top billing. The teenager has a rare combination of size and shooting touch, with deadly accuracy from three-point range and an athleticism likely to make him a defensive asset for any team that ends up recruiting him.

Smith's biggest rival for the No.1 pick is expected to be Gonzaga University's Chet Holmgren, who stands an imposing 7ft tall. The 20-year-old Bulldogs standout also offers a combination of elite ball-handling and footwork as well as being an expert shot-blocker. Holmgren averaged 14.1 points per game with 9.9 rebounds for Gonzaga. If Orlando fail to pick Holmgren with the first choice, he is almost certain to go to the Oklahoma City Thunder with the second pick.

James Jones, an assistant coach with the US Team at last year's Under-19 World Cup that Holmgren played in, describes him as a "Kevin Durant kind of player." "He has great instincts. He's the kind of guy that can do multiple different things," Jones told AFP. "He's not one kind of player, he can do a lot of different stuff, very versatile. "As a kid, leader, hard worker, great person, very friendly, very outgoing, and very dedicated into becoming the best basketball player he can." "He's a Kevin Durant kind of player in terms of his skill level, to be able to do some of those things.

He's obviously not Kevin Durant. But he has that skill, a similar skill set." Other talent in the top echelon of the draft on Thursday includes Duke University's Paolo Banchero, tipped to be taken by the Houston Rockets with the third pick. Jaden Ivey, who averaged 17.3 points per game for Purdue, could also feature high in the draft, with the Sacramento Kings lurking as a possible destination for the 20-year-old. —AFP

Over and out as Gronkowski retires for the second time

MIAMI: Tampa Bay Buccaneers tight end Rob Gronkowski announced his retirement from the National Football League for the second time on Tuesday, walking away from a partnership with quarterback icon Tom Brady that included four Super Bowl victories. The 33-year-old

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Rawda	22517733
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Khaldiya	24848075
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