

Sports

Battle for Manchester Utd heats up ahead of deadline for improved bids

LONDON: The race to buy Manchester United enters a crucial stage on Wednesday as bidders face a deadline to submit improved offers for the Premier League giants. Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Al-Thani and British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe have rival bids on the table. There are reported to be several other groups whose interest in United has remained private throughout a bidding war which has intensified this week.

Elliott Investment Management reportedly made it through to the second stage of the process, although the firm is believed to be offering funding to United owners, the Glazer family, rather than a takeover. Those who want to buy United have to declare their offer to Raine, the merchant bank brought in to assist the club, by 2100 GMT on Wednesday.

At least six bids, possibly rising to eight, are expected to be submitted, with those comprised of offers for full control as well as smaller stakes in United. The Glazers have reportedly set a £6 billion

(\$7.3 billion) figure for their valuation of a club they bought for £750 million in a highly-leveraged deal in 2005. The initial offers for United last month were believed to have been worth around £4.5 billion.

That would surpass the Premier League record £4.25 billion paid for Chelsea by a consortium fronted by American Todd Boehly last year. Sheikh Jassim is reported to be ready to submit a second indicative bid before the cut-off. But INEOS chemical company founder Ratcliffe, a boyhood United fan, has been more circumspect in his assessment of the process, insisting he will not pay a "stupid" price as the bidding war for one of football's most iconic clubs intensifies.

"How do you decide the price of a painting? How do you decide the price of a house? It's not related to how much it cost to build or how much it cost to paint," Ratcliffe told the Wall Street Journal this week. "What you don't want to do is pay stupid prices for things because then you regret it subsequently."

'Community asset'

Ratcliffe, who already owns French club Nice and Swiss side Lausanne-Sport, said his interest in United would be "purely in winning things", calling the club a "community asset". Ratcliffe and INEOS representatives visited United last Friday after a delegation from Sheikh Jassim's group toured Old Trafford and the club's Carrington training ground to hold more talks as part of their due diligence. Sheikh Jassim has promised to clear the club's debt.

Ratcliffe wants the 69 percent stake owned by the Glazer family, although he could join forces with another bidder to take outright control of the 20-time English champions. It is still possible the Glazers could decide not to sell if they don't receive their asking price, which would infuriate large sections of United's fanbase, who have protested against the unpopular American owners for much of their reign.

The consortiums that make improved offers are expected to hear from United next week, with another round of bidding still in play. If one group's bid is vastly ahead of the others, they could be chosen to enter into a period of exclusivity, which would see further negotiation ahead of a final sale. The Glazers reportedly want any potential sale to be concluded before the summer, giving new owners the chance to get settled in time for the vital close-season transfer window.

United, three-time European champions, haven't won the Premier League since legendary boss Alex Ferguson led them to the title in his final season before retiring in 2013. They are enjoying a renaissance under Erik ten Hag's management this season, winning the League Cup final against Newcastle in February to clinch the club's first major trophy for six years. Ten Hag's team also sit third in the Premier League and face Brighton in the FA Cup semifinals. — AFP



MUNICH: Arsenal's Dutch defender Victoria Pelova and Bayern Munich's German striker Klara Buehli vie for the ball on March 21, 2023. — AFP

Barca, Bayern seize upper hand in Women's Champions League

PARIS: Barcelona edged Roma 1-0 in the first leg of their Women's Champions League quarterfinal tie on Tuesday after a Lea Schueller goal had given Bayern Munich a victory by the same score against Arsenal. Nineteen-year-old Salma Paralluelo curled in a strike from the edge of the area in the 34th minute for Barcelona at the Stadio Olimpico. That proved enough to take a lead back to Catalonia for next week's return leg.

Barcelona found themselves up against it in the closing stages, with captain Sandro Panos making fine late saves to deny Manuela Giugliano and Valentina Giacinti in front of a crowd of more than 39,000. Barcelona will be favourites to advance to the last four as they seek to reach a third consecutive final. They won the title in 2021 and were runners-up to Lyon last season.

In Munich, Germany forward Schueller scored the only goal for Bayern six minutes before half-time, rising at the back post to head in a hanging cross from the right by Maximiliane Rall. Arsenal could have come away with at least a draw to take back for the second leg in London. Caitlin Foord hit the woodwork early in the second half. Japan's Saki Kumagai made a superb goal-line clearance to deny Stina Blackstenius, and Schueller made a similar intervention to stop Leah Williamson. "It was an even game and could have ended 1-1," said Bayern coach Alexander Straus. "Arsenal were pushing us in the second half and we were defending deeper than we wanted to, so credit to them for that." —AFP

Ream says Reyna row 'in past' as US squad gathers

MIAMI: United States defender Tim Ream said Tuesday Gio Reyna has been welcomed back into the fold by team-mates despite the acrimonious feud that erupted following the World Cup. The US squad are training in Florida this week ahead of the team's CONCACAF Nations League game in Grenada on Friday, the squad's first competitive fixture since they exited in the last 16 in Qatar.

The months since the World Cup have been dogged by a welter of revelations detailing tensions between Reyna and his family and former coach Gregg Berhalter. Berhalter's contract expired after the World Cup, and US Soccer say a decision on whether he will be re-hired or replaced will not be made until later this year.

Speaking to journalists on Tuesday, Ream said Borussia Dortmund star Reyna had impressed US team-mates with his work ethic in training in Florida and that the squad was keen to leave the controversy behind. "The main thing is making sure that everyone knows we're here for a reason and what's happened with Gio in the past is in the past, and what happened at the World Cup happened at the World Cup," Ream said. "We moved on from that as players," the Fulham center-half added.

Berhalter stoked controversy after the World Cup by indirectly revealing that Reyna had almost been sent home from the tournament due to his attitude in training. Reyna later hit back, saying the behind the scenes bust-up should have remained private while acknowledging he reacted poorly after being told by Berhalter he would only have a "limited role" in Qatar before the tournament. —AFP

Southgate challenges England to take 'next step' towards glory

MANCHESTER: England's quest to win a first major tournament since 1966 starts afresh on Thursday as the Three Lions' Euro 2024 qualifying campaign begins with a testing trip to champions Italy. After taking time to consider his future following a World Cup quarterfinal exit to France in December, Gareth Southgate will remain in charge as England boss for a fourth attempt at glory. Southgate has overseen a transformation of his country's fortunes on the international stage.

But after reaching a quarter-final, semi-final and final in their last three major tournaments, anything less than ending a 58-year trophy drought in Germany next year will be seen as a disappointment. Southgate might have sounded a warning this week about the declining number of England-qualified players playing regularly in the Premier League, but he admitted that is a worry for the long term given the array of talent available to him currently.

Arsenal winger Bukayo Saka and Borussia Dortmund midfielder Jude Bellingham proved themselves to be two of the brightest young talents

in world football in Qatar. Harry Kane's next goal for his country will make him England's leading scorer in history, while Marcus Rashford's potential is finally being realised under Erik ten Hag at Manchester United.

An injury to Rashford means he will miss the opening two qualifiers against Italy and Ukraine this week, but Southgate is not short of options with Manchester City duo Phil Foden and Jack Grealish set to battle it out for a place in the side. For all the progress made under Southgate, though, victory over Germany in the last 16 of Euro 2020 remains his only knockout win against one of the major nations in international football.

The Three Lions outplayed France for much of their meeting in the quarter-finals in Doha three months ago, but still came up short when it mattered. "These are the sorts of games where we have to show we can go to these places and win," said Southgate on the prospect of facing Italy in front of an intimidating atmosphere at the Estadio Diego Armando Maradona in Naples. "That is the next step for us as a team."

England fell short on penalties against Italy in the Euro 2020 final on home soil and failed to beat Roberto Mancini's men in two clashes in the Nations League prior to the World Cup. The Three Lions did not win a single game in their Nations League campaign but were still able to bounce back close to their best once the World Cup came around. And

Mancini looking for answers before Euro qualifying opener

MILAN: Roberto Mancini is wondering where the next generation of Italian talent is going to come from as the Azzurri begin their Euro 2024 qualifying campaign on Thursday with the visit of England. Italy coach Mancini is in the process of another rebuild after the European champions missed out last year's World Cup following a second straight disastrous play-off defeat.

The euphoria of beating England at Wembley in the Euro 2020 final had well and truly dissipated by the time North Macedonia stunned Italy last year. And while the rest of the world's top teams prepared for Qatar, Italian football was again pondering its place in the world, with Mancini lamenting a lack of young players in a country which used to be a conveyor belt of world class talent.

Italy has three clubs in the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time since 2006, with three more in the last eight for Europe's other two competitions, but Mancini is not hailing a rare continental success story for Serie A. "They (Napoli, AC Milan and Inter Milan) have seven or eight Italians in the team between them... This is the reality and we need to do something different," Mancini told reporters on Monday. "Italian football hasn't been reborn... If there were 33 Italians on the pitch, maybe, even half of them being Italian would be enough."

Mancini has lamented in particular a lack of forwards and used Leeds United winger Willy Gnonto as an example of how young talent is overlooked by Serie A clubs. However he has also been criticized for some of the selections in his 30-man squad for the Thursday's match in Naples, which includes a first call-up for Argentina-born Tigre striker Mateo Retegui. Udinese defender Destiny Udogie, who will move to Tottenham next season, Juventus midfielder Nicolo Fagioli and Lazio pair Mattia Zaccagni and Nicolo Casale are the omissions which have most befuddled fans.



Gareth Southgate

Southgate is wary of another drop off in standards during a qualifying process with little jeopardy for the major nations thanks to the expansion of the European Championship to 24 teams.

The top two from a group also containing Ukraine, North Macedonia and Malta will automatically qualify. "That is the big challenge we have got. To go to a World Cup, everyone wanted to be there and the fight for places was immense, the hunger was there and it was clear. Now you have to start again," added Southgate. "I know exactly where our most senior players are with that challenge: they are ready. The (Jordan) Hendersons, the Kanes, they set the tone for that sort of mentality that is going to be needed. — AFP

Strength in depth

Zaccagni has scored nine times for Lazio this season, including the winner in Sunday's Rome derby, and him missing out while Federico Chiesa was selected — before succumbing to yet another injury — has raised eyebrows. Italy will face both England and North Macedonia in Group C, a reminder of both the highs and lows of Mancini's reign, which began in 2018 with uncharacteristically swashbuckling football before falling into the same pit of despair which led to him being hired in the first place.

Making the Nations League final four while also relegating England from the top tier was a welcome plus but failed to change a general feeling in Italy that the national team is on another downturn. Mancini and England boss Gareth Southgate will be rivals again on Thursday but both their sides will be favorites to take the two qualifying spots available in the five-team group which also includes Ukraine and Malta. Southgate too has said he is concerned about strength in depth despite a host of talented young players coming through to England's senior squad in recent years, echoing a similar sentiment expressed by Rudi Voeller when he was made the new director of Germany's national side in January. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

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I, KHOJEMA, holder of Indian Passport No. Z5708610 having permanent address 131, naya pura bakhal patel marg Ujjain, Pin 456006, Madhya Pradesh, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under given name Khozema and surname Bawajan. **(C#3187)**

I, SHIVA, holder of Passport No. T9188939 do hereby change my name to SHIVA (as given name) MADAN LAL (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SHIVA MADAN LAL and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(C#3188) - 22-03-2023**

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JOB VACANCY

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Interested applicants should present their application module in person at our Embassy premises (Jabriya, Block 9, st. 1, Villa 84) within and not later than Thursday, April 6th at 12 pm. More information, requirements and application module, are available on the Embassy's website www.ambkuwait.ester.it

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Avviso di assunzione di n. 2 impiegati a contratto da adibire ai servizi di:
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presso l'Ambasciata d'Italia in Kuwait.
I candidati devono presentare il modulo di domanda presso la sede (Jabriya, Block 9, St. 1, Villa 84).
Entro e non oltre giovedì 6 aprile ore 12.
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