

# Antoine Griezmann can show true colours for Barcelona after smoothing his relationship with Lionel Messi

France striker has not had the best of times in Spain, but his fortunes could be changing



Antoine Griezmann and Lionel Messi warm up before the match between Atletico Madrid and Barcelona at the Wanda Metropolitano. AFP



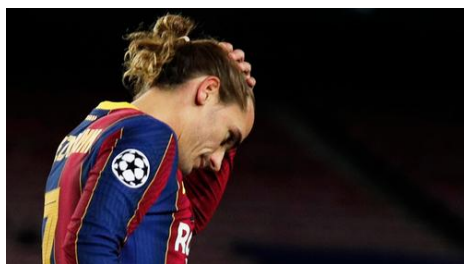
Liliane Tannoury  
December 10, 2020

Antoine Griezmann arrived at Barcelona in the summer of 2019 from Atletico Madrid with star billing, but has been unable to meet those lofty expectations.

The France striker has been criticised for his performances and recently became embroiled in controversy after statements from his uncle and ex-agent, both accusing Lionel Messi of being behind his struggles.

Harassed by the media, he chose to give an interview to the TV programme Universo Valdano to clear the air, to explain that in fact he does have a good relationship with Messi.

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What the interview did not explain is why Griezmann could be so impressive in the blue of France, yet fail to hit the heights with Barca.

That, in my opinion, was down to two reasons; the way Ronald Koeman was using him in Spain and, despite his assurances, his relationship with the Messi.

Griezmann is an excellent second striker, playing close to the opposition area.

However at Barca, under the orders of Ernesto Valverde, Quique Setien and now Koeman, he was forced to play out of his natural position and was never totally comfortable.

While at Barca it does not work, for France his contribution has been spectacular. Didier Deschamps' confidence in allowing Griezmann to play in his ideal position plays a big part. The player made that obvious.

"I feel good because Deschamps knows where to put me," said Griezmann after France's win over Croatia, in which he scored. "I benefit from that, as well as the confidence that the coach and my teammates give me."

His words, of course, were immediately interpreted in Spain as a dig at Koeman. However, things seem to be changing at Barca.

Recently he showed that same impressive quality when he played in his ideal position against Osasuna, Ferencvaros and Cadiz. It could herald a new beginning for Griezmann.

Which brings us to the relationship with Messi.

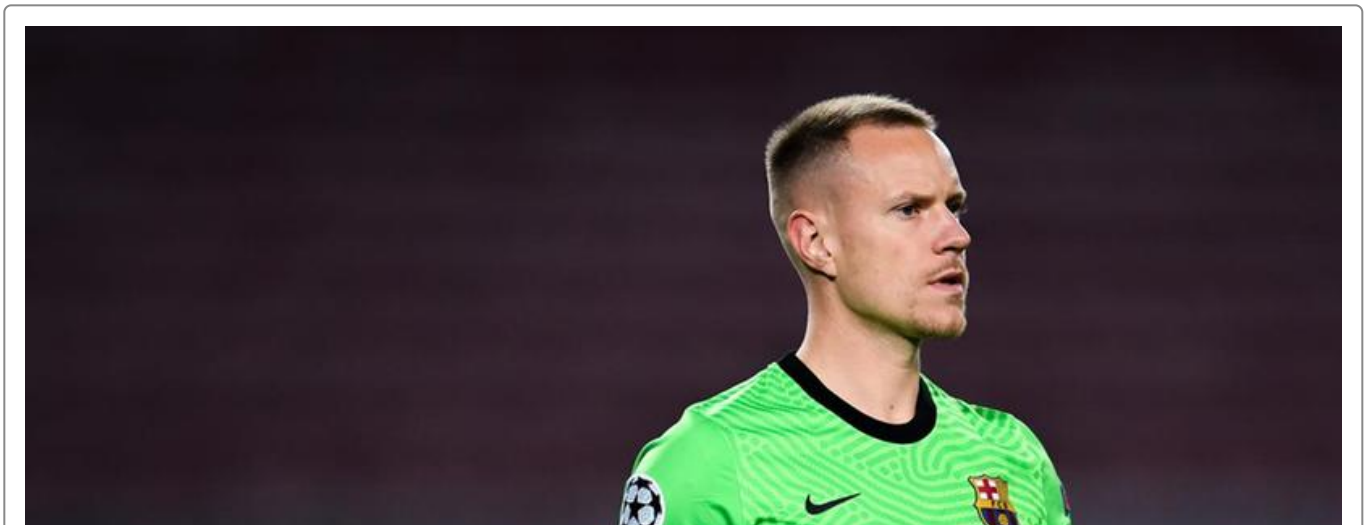
It is clear that Messi did not like some of Griezmann's past statements, and he would have preferred the club to re-sign Neymar from PSG.

Griezmann knew it and was smart in his interview. He wanted to pacify and it appears to have worked, that peace has returned and all is healthier.

The result in Cadiz last weekend was a disaster for Barcelona but once again Griezmann's performance was praised.

I think it unlikely Koeman will play Griezmann out of his ideal position again. He needs him to shine.

## Barcelona v Juventus player ratings







BARCELONA PLAYER RATINGS: GK Marc-Andre ter Stegen, 6 - Left cruelly exposed for both of Juventus' first-half goals, but pulled out a quite brilliant one-handed save to deny Ramsey a third goal for Juve early in the second period. Getty Images



Updated: December 10, 2020 07:38 AM