



# Cristiano Ronaldo is the perfect fit for Manchester United - again

► Portuguese, 36, shocked the world when he announced he would return to Old Trafford



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The news that Cristiano Ronaldo would join [Manchester United](#) arrived on August 27. The following Sunday, Manchester United were away to Wolves in the Premier League. Nine Portuguese players (plus the manager) started or played a part for Wolves. Occasionally the cameras would cut to a Portuguese flag being waved in the stands at Molineux. A lifesize cardboard cutout of [Cristiano Ronaldo](#) also caught the eye. One chant drowned out all others. "Long live Ronaldo! Running down the wing. Hear United sing. Viva Ronaldo!" was belted out from the United section.

Cristiano Ronaldo wasn't at Molineux but he was already on the minds of all United supporters. There is a lot of emotion around this return, not least because it may very well have been decided with the heart. After deciding to leave Juventus, the Portuguese looked set to join United's bitter rivals [Manchester City](#), but the intervention of former teammates like Rio Ferdinand and his [former mentor Sir Alex Ferguson](#) persuaded Ronaldo to return to Old Trafford.

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Perhaps the chance of a sixth Champions League title, for a third third club, was likely under Pep Guardiola at City. Even to win the Premier League again. The competitive machine called Ronaldo would have had more to gain by moving to City, but there are no chants for Ronaldo at the Etihad.

A move back to Old Trafford makes perfect sense from a sporting point of view.

The more pertinent question, perhaps, is where will everybody else fit in?

Upon confirmation of Ronaldo's return to United, manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said his former United teammate had evolved as a player, and that "he's more of a centre forward for me at the moment, definitely."

He's right. During the latter years of his career, Ronaldo, 36, has gravitated away from the left wing role he tended to occupy at Real Madrid. The era of Ronaldo the wide forward has gone and been replaced by the era of Ronaldo the penalty-box poacher. He played almost exclusively as a No 9 during his three seasons with Juventus.



Cristiano Ronaldo arrives at Manchester United's Carrington training complex ahead of his first training session since rejoining the club. Reuters

It seems likely that Edinson Cavani will no longer have space on the team and that Solskjaer will surround Ronaldo with the pace of Mason Greenwood, Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho on the flanks, to not only create space and chances for him inside the box, but to do the bulk of his off-the-ball work, too.

Solskjaer will still use Ronaldo's pace in fast transitions, taking advantage of the excellent recent performances of Paul Pogba and Bruno Fernandes in launching fast counterattacks.

Together, Ronaldo and Solskjaer together scored 34 of the United's 123 goals in the 2006/2007 season. Now, they will want to do even more and better, but in different roles.

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