

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer may have some shortcomings but Manchester United will continue to back him

Manager has done enough to earn support of the Old Trafford boardroom



File photo dated 07-11-2020 of Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. PA Photo. Issue date: Tuesday December 22, 2020. Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer insists his side are desperate to win a trophy having gone three seasons without silverware. See PA story SOCCER Man Utd. Photo credit should read Clive Brunskill/PA Wire.



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The machines printing English newspapers must be tired of the phrase "Ole Gunnar Solskjaer remains under intense pressure while Mauricio Pochettino is available".

Solskjaer remains manager of Manchester United and, despite having been under pressure at times, it is very likely he will be there until the end of his contract in 2022.

No doubt it has been a roller coaster for the Norwegian since he replaced Jose Mourinho, initially provisionally, in December 2018.

Solskjaer inherited an unbalanced squad, which included many who were not living up to expectations.

He had the courage to move on players like Romelu Lukaku, Alexis Sanchez, Marouane Fellaini, Chris Smalling, Ashley Young and Matteo Darmian and gave sustained opportunities to Scott McTominay, Brandon Williams and Mason Greenwood.

Harry Maguire and right back Aaron Wan-Bissaka improved United defensively, while midfielder Bruno Fernandes transformed the attacking creativity.

Remember, Solskjaer oversaw a run of 11 wins in his first 12 games at the helm, he tactically outsmarted Thomas Tuchel at PSG and Julian Nagelsmann at Leipzig in the space of eight days.

However, these good performances - including last weekend's impressive 6-2 win against Leeds United - alternate with mediocrity, sometimes with terrible consequences, like the recent elimination at the Champions League group stage.

With Solskjaer nobody knows which United will turn up, and the fans are not satisfied with that.

The lack of efficiency from executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward and transfer negotiator Matt Judge has been a hindrance. Solskjaer wanted to sign Erling Haaland last December, but failed because Woodward and Judge were unable to seal the transfer.

Also last summer, Solskjaer saw Woodward and Judge miss out on his key targets, such as Dortmund winger Jadon Sancho, Aston Villa midfielder Jack Grealish, Leipzig defender Dayot Upamecano and Birmingham midfielder Jude Bellingham, now at Dortmund.

But here's where some of Solskjaer's weaknesses arise. He doesn't challenge his bosses as openly as Mourinho and Louis Van Gaal did.

A good day for Solskjaer: Manchester United v Leeds



Manchester United's Scott McTominay scores to open the scoring against Leeds at Old Trafford. EPA



Another perceived shortcoming is his natural lack of charisma, very important in modern times, and his inability to act when things go wrong in the course of games.

It is often startling to see Solskjaer on the bench, tucked in his jacket, showing no reaction when things are not going well, with players needing better guidance. A top manager makes changes to positively alter the course of a game. This rarely happens with the Norwegian.

However, despite being out of the Champions League, United are in a better position now than when Solskjaer arrived.

He recently took charge of his 100th game as manager and has a win rate of 55 per cent - better than Alex Ferguson's 48 per cent in his first 100 and Louis van Gaal's 52 per cent.

In the current campaign, United have one game in hand. Win that and they will be just two points off the lead.

For all these reasons the United board has remained behind him and, in my opinion, that will not change.

Pochettino could be waiting a while yet.

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