

SPORT

Paris gets impatient as Lionel Messi struggles to produce the magic of Barca

► Argentina has failed to make the expected impact since moving to France in the summer



Lionel Messi during Paris Saint-Germain's 2-1 win against Lille in Ligue 1. Getty

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Lionel Messi's performances at Paris Saint-Germain are not convincing, and the French are getting impatient.

They thought Messi would arrive and immediately start scoring goals just as he did in his long spell at Barcelona, and that they would get the opportunity to witness those wonderful skills.

But that's not happening and he is slowing.

The Argentine, now 34, is no longer at his peak. So many years at the top have worn him down, and the change of team, country, competition and teammates have negatively influenced his game. Last Friday against Lille he was forced to come off at half time due to physical concerns.

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The French media is questioning what is happening to Messi, who has not scored a single goal in his five Ligue 1 matches.

The statistics are bad. Zero goals and zero assists in five games and the team, with him on the field, has scored every 110 minutes. Without him, it's just 32 minutes.

Messi didn't do pre-season and that makes settling in even tougher to adapt after changing his team and moving to another country.

The other debate is where the Argentine should play when he is alongside two more stars in Neymar and Kylian Mbappe.

Mauricio Pochettino has yet fix to his forward tactics. The manager is concerned with building a balanced team, but catering for an attacking trio that is not interested in defending has been difficult.

The coach has put Messi on the right wing so he can run into the centre, combine with a teammate and receive the last pass to finish a move.

PSG v Lille player ratings



PSG PLAYER RATINGS: Gianluigi Donnarumma – 8. Made a brilliant save to deny Yilmaz within a minute and read balls through well, but could do nothing to stop David's goal. Made superb saves to deny David and Yilmaz in the second half. AFP

But that is not working well. It's not his best position and requires a lot of fitness that, at least so far, Messi hasn't had. It would be better to surround him with players willing to do the work for him.

Messi won many games for Barca while preserving his energy. In France, physical demand is high. It's very vigorous football. Neymar suffered and now Messi is having a similar experience.

The adaptation of a player who only had only known La Liga is proving to be more difficult than expected. Paris wants him to put on a show, and there is neither the time nor the patience to wait.

Messi seems isolated, with less time on the ball. Although slowing, he has to give more, become more comfortable on the field, improve his fitness and have the coach come up with the ideal system to fit in with Neymar and Mbappe.

They are in a hurry in France, but the process takes time and unless he finds the solution and the tact to deal with his three superstars, Pochettino will also start coming under a lot of pressure.

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FOOTBALL LIGUE 1 PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN LIONEL MESSI