

Haaland and Nunez transfers set the tone for an intriguing 2022 summer transfer window



- The window only opened on June 10, but what are likely to be its two biggest signings, by Manchester City and Liverpool, will have a domino effect on other moves among Europe's top clubs

The big boys have, predictably, come storming out of the gates.

The 2022 summer transfer window has been open for only five days but already what is likely to be its two biggest transfers have been announced: Manchester City's long-mooted signing of Erling Haaland from Borussia Dortmund, and Liverpool's capture of Darwin Nunez from Benfica.

The two high-profile transfers are likely to set in motion a series of other moves among Europe's elite clubs before the window closes on Aug. 31.

Although the market is highly dynamic, with rumors and transfers taking place every day, some will capture more attention than others.

I refer mainly to the future of Sadio Mane, Robert Lewandowski, Paul Pogba, Romelu Lukaku and, surprisingly, Christian Eriksen.

Even Mohamed Salah, who looks to be staying at Liverpool for another season, will be under the spotlight. The Egyptian star will enter the last 12 months of his contract with Liverpool and there is feverish speculation about his near future.

According to reports, as well as sources close to the player, Salah's preference is to stay in the Premier League should he become a free agent next summer if the Reds do not present a better contract offer. Representatives for the player and the club have not met since December, and there appears to be a disparity of interests between the parties. Barcelona have already sent out a message that the Liverpool forward can join their galaxy of stars at Camp Nou next summer with a sizeable signing fee.

I am now convinced that the player and representatives will wait for the summer of 2023 to make their decision.

Of more immediate concern is the case of Sadio Mane. Bayern Munich are favorites to land the Senegalese star, and indeed they are his preferred destination, but the German club has yet to offer the fee that Liverpool are demanding.

The Reds want about \$50 million for the player, well above the amount that Bayern seem willing to spend so far. An agreement, however, is expected to be struck, especially now that his replacement at Anfield, Nunez, has been secured.

Mane's move to Bavaria will pave the way for what seems an inevitable move for Lewandowski away from the Allianz Arena.

He was briefly linked to Liverpool, but it is accepted that both Lewandowski and Barcelona are hoping to strike a deal. It is public knowledge that Barcelona offered €32 million (£27.8 million) to Bayern Munich for the player but this

proposal was short of the German club's expectation. On Friday, June 3, it emerged that the Polish forward was willing to trigger clause 17 of FIFA rules, which allows a player over the age of 28 to pay off the last year of his contract.

Faced with that possibility, the 33-year-old Polish striker will have to pay almost \$23 million to terminate his contract with Bayern, not to mention take a pay cut at his new club.

Lewandowski, the striker who registered 50 goals and six assists in 46 games this season, winning an eighth consecutive Bundesliga title, seems determined to do everything in his power to move to Barcelona.

Pogba on the other hand, is no longer a Manchester United player. Last week, the English club made the 29-year-old Frenchman's departure official and wished him good luck in his future, though some fans will stop short of that after what has been an underwhelming six years at the club.

Juventus and Pogba are very close to signing a four-year agreement for the midfielder to return to the club where he played 178 games between 2012 and 2016, winning the Serie A title four times and Coppa Italia twice.

In my opinion, if the late Mino Raiola was still with us today, it is a transfer that would already have been resolved for one of his closest clients. It now appears that sooner or later this transfer will take place.

Then there is Lukaku, whose return to Stamford Bridge last summer has been nothing short of disastrous, with both player and Chelsea keen on a divorce this summer. His clear preference is a return to Inter Milan, though there has been rumors that a move to Tottenham and Antonio Conte, under whom he had his best season at Inter, could be on the cards too.

Though Conte has shown interest in Lukaku, it is worth remembering that the London team already have, in Harry Kane and Son Heung-min, two of the Premier League's best forwards. Lukaku's arrival would give the team unprecedented attacking firepower.

Add Tottenham's capture of Ivan Perisic from Inter and the imminent transfer of Yves Bissouma from Brighton, among others, and it looks like Conte is conducting one of the best transfer windows of recent years.

Perhaps the most surprising transfer story of the summer is that of Eriksen, who less than a year ago looked to have left football behind after suffering a cardiac arrest at the delayed Euro 2020.

New Manchester United boss Erik Ten Hag is adding the Dane to his revamped squad on free transfer. The Dutch coach is looking for reinforcements in midfield — with several players leaving alongside Pogba — and Eriksen has now emerged as an option for United after a brilliant campaign for Brentford since returning to the Premier League in January. It would be the most heartwarming of endings for a player beloved by all football fans.

There will be many more deals happening from now until the end of August. But no doubt it is the ones taking place at the top of the football food chain that will have the biggest domino effect on the rest of the transfer window.
