

Messi situation: 5 potential destinations for Argentinian ace Lionel Messi if he decides to LEAVE Barcelona

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Amid rumblings of discontent at the current Quique Setien regime at Camp Nou, reports are suggesting Barcelona's best-ever player, Lionel Messi, could leave when his contract expires. But where would he go?

All things, they say, must pass and the same could be true of Messi's time in Barcelona colors.

The Catalan team's talisman has long been considered by most as the very definition of a "one-club man" but football has proved time and again that there is no place for sentimentality.

Recent Barca legends like Xavi and Andres Iniesta played out the latter part of their careers away from the club at which they forged their reputations, reportedly prompting concerns within the club that Messi could opt for a similar exit strategy upon the completion of his current contract.

But where could he end up? There are but a handful of clubs who can boast the type of financial (or emotional) leverage to tempt Messi away from the Camp Nou, and below are five of the prime candidates:

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PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

If Messi's motives are purely financial, rejoining his one-time strike partner Neymar in the French capital seems like a no-brainer.

The club is among the richest sports teams in the world and appears to be backed by a never-ending stream of funds from owners, Qatar Sports Investments.

The massive investment in PSG has yet to yield the significant results the UEFA Champions League that the club's hierarchy crave, but the addition of Messi could go a long way to changing that.

Furthermore – and this is true of anywhere he would go – the addition of the world's best footballer would represent a marketing man's dream and would soften the blow of the Argentine's gargantuan salary.

MANCHESTER CITY

The blue half of Manchester is currently in mourning after surrendering their English Premier League title to Liverpool this week and, depending on the impact of a potential ban from European football as punishment for transfer irregularities, they could well be tempted to open their checkbook to attract top players to close the gap between themselves and the new English champions.

Could Messi be a potential target? He had a good understanding with Pep Guardiola during his time at Barcelona and could, in theory at least, be persuaded to resume the relationship that brought 14 trophies to Barca in the four seasons they worked together.

REAL MADRID

Admittedly, this one is far less likely, but there is indeed a long history of players switching between the two Spanish giants. Luis Figo has never been fully forgiven by Barca supporters for joining up with his fellow 'Galacticos' at the Santiago Bernebeu, while (Brazilian) Ronaldo is another superstar player who made a similar move.

For Messi to do the same would be unthinkable for the Barcelona following, and one suspects that there isn't a check that Florentino Perez could cut which would prompt Messi to turn his back on the club he has represented since a boy.

Football, though, can offer surprises, and if Messi hits the open market, you can bet Perez and Los Blancos would be willing to do almost anything necessary to snare their current nemesis and turn the tables on their longtime rivals.

CHELSEA

A recent transfer ban, as well as a slew of high profile sales and the promise of more investment from owner Roman Abramovich, has left Frank Lampard with a sizeable transfer budget ahead of the upcoming season.

Ajax's Hakim Ziyech and German star Timo Werner have already been added, with more big money buys like Kai Havertz and Ben Chilwell thought to be in the pipeline. But would the club be interested in adding the Argentinian ace at the end of next season?

Almost certainly yes.

London is a traditionally attractive destination for wealthy footballers, and Messi's millions could be well spent in the English capital. Lampard, though, appears focused on recruiting young players with a high sell-on value and Messi doesn't exactly fit the bill on that front.

We're sure an exception could be made, however.

NEWELL'S OLD BOYS

Messi left his boyhood club at the age of 13 to join Barcelona, and the club remains convinced that their best-ever export could one day return mirroring a similar move made by Diego Maradona when he left European football in 1993.

"I don't know if it's impossible. It's a decision exclusively made by him and his family. We have to have the best possible context to help make a decision," Newell's vice-president Cristian D'Amico said of the situation.

"When [Diego] Maradona came to Newell's, nobody thought that he would come either. I hope that something similar can happen with Leo."

"Obviously we shouldn't be making things up, this is a delicate subject. What Newell's doesn't dream of seeing the world's best player in their team's colours? Time will tell maybe, we have to stay calm."

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