

United strike a deal in China

Sign up striker Ighalo on loan from Shanghai Shenhua as Tottenham and Chelsea left frustrated

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
LONDON, FEBRUARY 1

MANCHESTER UNITED'S late swoop for Nigerian international striker Odion Ighalo was the most striking move of a quiet transfer deadline day for Premier League clubs on Friday. United looked set to miss out on cover for the injured Marcus Rashford when interest in Josh King was rebuffed by Bournemouth, but Ighalo, 30, will join on loan for the rest of the season from Chinese side Shanghai Shenhua.

The Red Devils were also responsible for the biggest move of the window with the signing of Portuguese international midfielder Bruno Fernandes for an initial 55 million euros (£47 million, \$61 million) that could rise to 80 million euros in add-ons.

However, deals were difficult to do for even some of the world's richest clubs as Chelsea and Tottenham were frustrated in their search for a striker. Total spending for the month by English clubs was marginally up from last season's £180 million (\$234 million), but well short of the record £430-million outlay in 2018.

The mid-season window is increasingly seen as an undesirable time to do business for clubs wary of overpaying in a seller's market.

"We would need a striker to have a better squad to face the great challenges in front of us in three different competitions," said Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho, who must cope without England captain Harry Kane for most of the remainder of the season.

"But we want to do things not to resolve the problems of today or tomorrow but things that are also good for the future."

Spurs did make one significant signing in Dutch international winger Steven Bergwijn for £27 million from PSV Eindhoven as well as making Giovanni Lo Celso's loan deal from Real Betis into a permanent move to replace Christian Eriksen, who finally departed for Inter Milan.

Lampard denied

Chelsea manager Frank Lampard cut the most frustrated figure as the Blues failed to add a single player despite seeing their transfer ban lifted. "It's clear we wanted to bring players in and I've made that pretty clear over the last weeks but it hasn't happened," said Lampard



Ighalo was the top scorer in the African Cup of Nations last year with five goals in Nigeria's run to third place. Reuters

on Friday. Chelsea's stumbling form has left the door open for United, Tottenham and Wolves to pip them to fourth and a place in next season's Champions League.

Wolves pounced by adding to their Portuguese contingent with the signing of Daniel Podence from Olympiakos.

Liverpool had no such need to dive into the market as they sit serenely 19 points clear at the top of the table and on course for a first league title in 30 years. However, the Reds' leapt on a £725-million buyout clause in Japanese international Takumi Minamoto's contract with Red Bull Salzburg. "The better the season is, the better the squad is, the less you have to do, the more you are happy with the players you have," said manager Jurgen Klopp.

Sheffield United armed their attempt to qualify for Europe for the first time with a club record £22-million signing of Norwegian midfielder Sander Berge from Genk. At the bottom of the table, Aston Villa and West Ham were the most active in trying to preserve their top-flight status. Villa brought in strikers Mbwana

Samatta and Borja Baston and experienced goalkeeper Pepe Reina as cover for long-term injuries suffered by Tom Heaton and Wesley.

West Ham had a busy final few days as they secured the loan signing of Czech international Tomas Soucek and a £20-million move for Hull forward Jarrod Bowen.

Barcelona go for youth

Barcelona signed two young players to join the club after the season and Atlético Madrid announced the return of Yannick Carrasco on Friday, the final day of the transfer window in Spain. Barcelona said it completed deals to bring Portuguese forward Francisco Trincao and Brazilian midfielder Matheus Fernandes into its squad on July 1.

Barcelona said it agreed to pay Portuguese club Braga 31 million euros (\$34 million) to acquire the 20-year-old Trincao after the season ends for five years. Since debuting with Braga in December 2018, Trincao has scored three goals in 29 matches. He has played for Portugal's youth teams and helped it win the Under-19

BIG MONEY TRANSFERS

BRUNO FERNANDES £68 million	Sporting Lisbon → Man United
GIOVANI LO CELSO £30 million	Real Betis → Tottenham
DEJAN KULUSEVSKI £30 million	Parma → Juventus
REINIER £25.6 million	Flamengo → Real Madrid
STEVEN BERGWIJN £25 million	PSV Eindhoven → Tottenham
SANDER BERGE £22 million	Genk → Sheffield United
PACO ALCACER £19.4 million	Dortmund → Villarreal
ERLING HAALAND £19.2 million	Salzburg → Dortmund

European Championship in 2018 as its top scorer with five. Barcelona described him as a "talented and quick player with a good left leg" who can play as a winger on either side of the attack. Barcelona said it paid Brazilian club Palmeiras 7 million euros for Matheus, who will play the remainder of this season on loan at Valladolid. He will then sign five seasons for Barcelona. Atlético will hope to boost its goal production immediately with the return of Carrasco, a Belgium forward who played for the Spanish club from 2015-18 before leaving for China. He returns on a loan deal until the end of the season from Chinese club Dalian Professional.

Carrasco scored 23 goals, including one in the 2016 Champions League final that Atlético lost to Real Madrid. He made 124 appearances in his first stint with Atlético. Villarreal presented striker Paco Alcacer on Friday, a day after securing his move from Borussia Dortmund. Sevilla also presented midfielder Jesús "Suso" Saenz two days after he joined the club on loan from AC Milan for this season and the next.

Liverpool show Saints no mercy, extend lead to 22 pts

REUTERS
LIVERPOOL, FEBRUARY 1

PREMIER LEAGUE leaders Liverpool opened up a 22-point gap at the top of the table with second-half goals from Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Jordan Henderson and a Mohamed Salah brace giving them a 4-0 home win over Southampton on Saturday.

It was Liverpool's 20th successive home win dating back to last season, matching Manchester City's record set between March 2011 and March 2012. It left them miles clear of second-placed champions City, who visit Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday.

Missing the injured Sadio Mane, Liverpool looked disjointed in the first half with goalkeeper Alisson Becker twice denying Danny Ings after Southampton's Alex McCarthy made an excellent double save at the other end.

Oxlade-Chamberlain, who also came close in the first half with a deflected shot, fired the home side ahead in the 47th minute when he cut inside and left McCarthy wrong-footed with a fine low drive from 18 metres.

Henderson doubled the lead on the hour when he drove the ball into the roof of the net from 10 metres out thanks to some good work by Roberto Firmino, who broke down the left flank and squared the ball back to his skipper.

Salah put the icing on the cake with two late goals - a dinked 72nd-minute finish as Henderson turned provider, followed by a scrambled stoppage time effort after he was released by Firmino.

Rudiger rescues Chelsea

A rare double from defender Antonio Rudiger earned Chelsea a point in an entertaining 2-2 draw with third-placed Leicester City at the King Power Stadium in the Premier League on Saturday.

Chelsea manager Frank Lampard sprung a major surprise ahead of kick off by leaving out first choice goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga after some recent poor showings, handing a start to 38-year-old Willy Caballero.

The veteran was called into action to make a smart save to deny Jamie Vardy in a first half otherwise largely dominated by Chelsea, who again struggled to make their chances count in front of goal.

However, it did not take the visitors long after the break to take the lead, as Rudiger headed home his first league goal since



Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah scored a brace in their 4-0 win against Southampton. Reuters

October 2018 just over a minute into the second half.

The lead did not last long though, as Harvey Barnes found the net eight minutes later via a huge deflection, before the turnaround was complete in the 64th minute as Ben Chilwell slotted home to give Leicester the lead.

Rudiger had the final say, however, looping a header over Leicester goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel in the 71st minute to snatch a draw that means Leicester remain eight points clear of Lampard's side in fourth, who have won just four of their last 13 league games.

"Not many people gave us the top four slot and I understand why, and it's probably the same now," Lampard said. "We've come to Leicester, who everyone's raving about, quite rightly, and we've got a point. We move on."

Chelsea almost struck first with just five minutes on the clock, with Callum Hudson-Odoi missing his kick from a good goalscoring position.

Further opportunities came and went for Chelsea before Harvey Barnes blazed Leicester's best chance over later in the half.

With fans still taking their seats after the interval Chelsea found the net through Rudiger, who climbed highest at the back post. But the Blues were immediately pegged back by Barnes, who scored for the third league game in a row.

The King's Speech: LeBron honours his 'brother' Kobe

REUTERS
LOS ANGELES, FEBRUARY 1

LOS ANGELES Lakers forward LeBron James delivered an emotional speech honoring his "brother" Kobe Bryant prior to the first Lakers game since the NBA great, his 13-year-old daughter and seven others died in a helicopter crash on Sunday.

James began by reading the names of all nine victims of the tragedy and then throwing a piece of paper containing his prepared remarks on the court.

"Laker nation, man, I would be selling you all short if I read off this shit so I'm going to go straight from the heart," James said to a raucous applause from the sold-out crowd at Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles.

"I know that at some point we will have a memorial for Kobe, but I look at this as a celebration tonight."

"This is a celebration of the 20 years of the blood, the sweat, the tears, the broken down body, the getting back up -- the determination to be as great as he could be," he said of Bryant, who played 20 seasons with the Lakers, 18 as an all-star, and won five NBA championships.

"Tonight we celebrate the kid who came here at 18 years of age, retired at 38 and became probably the best dad we've seen over the last three years," he said of Bryant, a husband and father to four daughters.

"Kobe is a brother to me... and throughout my career, the one thing we shared was that determination to win and be great."

"Along with my teammates I want to continue his legacy not only for this year but as long as we can play the game of basketball that we love because that's what Kobe Bryant would want."

"So in the words of Kobe Bryant, Mamba out," he said, referring to Bryant's famous sign off after his final game as a Laker in April 2016.



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (right) reacts after a pre-game tribute to Kobe Bryant, who died in a helicopter crash. USA TODAY Sports

Women bosses breach glass ceiling at Super Bowl

REUTERS
MIAMI, FEBRUARY 1

WHEN THE Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers take the field on Sunday, new ground will be broken with this year's Super Bowl being the first to feature two teams with women owners.

With Denise York helping lead the Niners as co-owner and co-chair and Norma Hunt the matriarch of the Chiefs, Super Bowl LIV will represent a small crack in the glass ceiling of the overwhelmingly male-dominated world of pro football.

"We say football is about family, and we have two of the best in sports in this Super Bowl," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell told reporters on Wednesday. "They happen to be led by women - the first match-up of its kind." Chiefs' co-owner Hunt, the so-called "First Lady of Football", is the only woman to have attended every one of the 53 Super Bowls and hopes to see her team lift the Lombardi Trophy for the first time in half a century.

The widow of the late Lamar Hunt, the man who founded the team and coined the term "Super Bowl," Norma told the Kansas City Star in a rare interview that the long wait since the Chiefs' Super Bowl IV triumph in 1970 was testament to the league's competitiveness.

"It just shows how hard it is to get there (to the Super Bowl) and how important it is to take advantage of the opportunities when they come along," said Hunt, whose son Clark co-owns the team and acts as its CEO.

York, a billionaire businesswoman who oversees the Niners alongside husband John and son Jed, had previously served as the president of the NHL's Pittsburgh Penguins.

Another female trailblazer in Sunday's match is San Francisco's offensive assistant Katie Sowers, who will be the first woman to coach in a Super Bowl.

Sarah Axelson, who heads up advocacy at the Women's Sports Foundation, said that the teams' female ownership was a meaningful development on top of the impact that Sowers had made on the coaching side.

"They might, to some, feel like incremental steps but to make progress there need to be steps along the way," said Axelson.

"We're excited to see increased representation of women in football both on the coaching front and on the ownership front."

Kansas City Chiefs' co-owner Norma Hunt, the so-called 'First Lady of Football', is the only woman to have attended every one of the 53 Super Bowls.

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