

# Rethinking Mason Greenwood's Return to Manchester United

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Warning: The following content includes explicit language that may be disturbing to some readers.

The predicament facing Manchester United is a persistent one: the incriminating audio remains an undeniable reality. Despite their efforts to sway public sentiment and drape it with layers of PR, that singular recording will always cast a shadow over Mason Greenwood.

The digital realm, as it goes, has a memory that never fades, a fact that doesn't bode well for Greenwood. Particularly, this dynamic seems disadvantageous if one of the paths under consideration by United involves a phased strategy to reintegrate a footballer whom law enforcement sought to charge with attempted rape.

Exhibit A: those covertly captured instances where Greenwood's voice resounds, forcefully demanding his alleged victim to "adjust your legs" – his tone unyielding, resolute, and unwavering in his pursuit.

In response, the woman asserts her unwillingness for sexual activity, and Greenwood's tone turns even more ominous: "I disregard your desires, you insignificant individual."

Despite her protests, he silences her, commanding her to hush. When she attempts to reiterate her refusal, Greenwood retorts with menace, stating she's not permitted to decline intercourse.

One can't help but shudder at the chilling nature of these interactions. They're abhorrent, dark, and stomach-turning. My apologies if the recounting of this dialogue makes you uncomfortable, but it might be worth revisiting this fragment of their conversation (although, regrettably, more of the same theme exists on the

recording). We might need to reassess our perspectives regarding what might qualify as a dismissal-worthy offense for 99% of the population, but might not necessarily hold true for an elite footballer – at least not yet.

Mason Greenwood outside the Minshull Street Crown Court during the inception of his trial in November.

Something moved the young woman to initiate the recording of the unfolding events and later share it on social media, albeit briefly. It almost seemed like a plea for assistance. She also provided photographic evidence showing her face marked with blood and her body adorned with bruises, asserting that this portrayed the authentic Mason Greenwood.

Much like most who've listened to that audio clip, my initial reaction was that Greenwood – who has not denied his presence on the recording – had effectively sealed his fate at Old Trafford.

Whatever may have transpired during the criminal investigation, and however explanations might attempt to mitigate the severity of the situation, it was almost unthinkable that he would be allowed to don the club's jersey again. Especially when the audio had reached the ears of so many, showcased prominently on mainstream news.

Both the police and the Crown Prosecution Service were satisfied that there was substantial grounds for believing Greenwood could be found guilty of sexual misconduct and abuse. Charges included attempted rape, causing bodily harm through assault, and engaging in manipulative and coercive conduct, all centered around the same woman.

In relation to the latter charge, the prosecution contended that Greenwood's actions significantly impacted her, involving threats, derogatory remarks, surveillance of her social media activity, and alteration of her social interactions. A trial in crown court was set for November, but she ultimately chose not to testify.

## Mason Greenwood and the Uncertainty Surrounding His Future at Manchester United

The charges were eventually dropped, with the CPS explaining: "A combination of key witnesses withdrawing their testimonies and the emergence of new evidence made a realistic conviction unlikely."

While we can only connect the dots, the unfortunate reality is that such legal proceedings often unravel in cases involving allegations of sexual assault and psychological manipulation, reflecting poorly on the British legal system.

Consequently, Greenwood will no longer have to hinge his freedom on the judgment of a jury. But here's the crux of the matter: absence of a verdict doesn't necessarily imply absence of guilt. Innocent until proven guilty, perhaps, in the eyes of the law. But it can sometimes be an easy refuge, particularly when the incriminating recording remains accessible.

United retains the option to sever ties with Greenwood, yet the pivotal question becomes: would they even contemplate his reinstatement if he weren't a potential game-changer on the field?

And the answer, regardless of any assertions to the contrary, is likely an emphatic no.

### Could Mason Greenwood's Remarkable Scoring Prowess Sway Manchester United's Decision Regarding His Future?

Had this involved a lesser-known player, one who wouldn't significantly bolster Erik ten Hag's prospects for team triumph, that individual would likely have been ousted, his actions tarnishing both the club's reputation and his own, resulting in dismissal.

Would the outcome differ if a club executive faced such allegations? Or an administrative staff member? A coach, a scout, the kit manager, or a security team

member – we're all acquainted with the anticipated response. Farewell, good riddance, and please exit promptly.

Ten Hag undoubtedly recalls the circumstances at his previous club, Ajax, when their director of football, Marc Overmars, was embroiled in a scandal involving inappropriate messages and unsolicited explicit images sent to female colleagues. Overmars, a valued member of the senior team, faced consequences despite his importance. Leen Meijaard, chairman of Ajax's supervisory board, conceded, "While Marc is likely the best football director Ajax has had, he clearly crossed the line, a realization he acknowledged."

This leads us to question why United appears to be entertaining Greenwood as a unique case, diverging from the anticipated course for an ordinary employee. The answer is straightforward: his potential to score goals.

Greenwood falls into the category of an A-grade footballer, capable of potentially saving United a substantial sum, upwards of £100 million (\$120.4 million), if his ultimate return involves achieving the same performance levels as before. This, in essence, is the crux of the matter; otherwise, he may well have faced expulsion.

We are discussing an extraordinary talent, an England national player whose prowess could have earned him more than a solitary cap, had his behavioral issues not deterred Gareth Southgate, the national team manager, from selecting him.

At just 21, Greenwood could conceivably contribute to United's pursuits over the next decade, playing a significant role in their quest for triumphs.

Consider the multitude of goals he could potentially score and the trophies that could be secured.

The Premier League Player Accused of Sexual Assault – Football's Struggle to Respond

All of this should be taken into account if United proceeds with a gradual reintroduction of Greenwood, potentially including a televised interview, framing

it as an endeavor aligned with his desire to rectify his mistakes and evolve as an individual.

United, it seems, acknowledges the year of career lost by Greenwood, currently teetering in a state of uncertainty. An internal investigation is ongoing, and the prospects of Greenwood's rehabilitation could involve educational programs, counseling sessions, and even engagement with psychologists.

Nevertheless, it remains a quandary whether United's priorities would be well-served by this course of action. They must realize that such a decision will divide opinions, with a considerable number of supporters feeling conflicted, at the very least, about the prospect of endorsing him, celebrating his goals, and overshadowing his past.

How might United's female footballers feel about sharing the same space with a man facing accusations of sexual offenses? Or even his more conscientious teammates? What image does Greenwood project as a role model for the club's academy today?

Natalie Burrell, founder of the Manchester United Women's Supporters' Club, expressed her stance: "I don't think he should play again for Manchester United... It would set our club back in terms of what we're trying to do with our women's team and campaigns like Her Game Too, which are trying to encourage women to play and watch football."

One should hardly be astonished if the opposite decision prevails, given the football industry's often elastic principles.

Recall United's decision to part ways with Roy Keane, driven by his candid critique of fellow teammates on the club's in-house channel, MUTV, following a 4-1 defeat. Keane, then 34 and increasingly prone to injury, prompts speculation: would United have acted similarly during his prime, when Sir Alex Ferguson regarded him as the team's heartbeat?

Reflect on the Derby County incident in 2019, where Tom Lawrence and Mason Bennett faced court proceedings following a car crash that caused serious injury to teammate Richard Keogh. The decision to terminate employment was handed to

Keogh, despite being the injured passenger, while Lawrence and Bennett, the drivers who fled the scene, remained unscathed. It was a stark reminder of football's priorities.

The David Goodwillie case further exemplifies this. Directors of clubs like Raith Rovers and Radcliffe, never fully anticipating the backlash, hired a player found civilly liable for rape in 2017. While both clubs invoked the narrative of rehabilitation, the driving force was Goodwillie's goal-scoring ability – a rare commodity.

In Greenwood's instance, the issue is multifaceted and polarizing, evident through social media responses that often prioritize allegiance over ethical considerations.

While some supporters have rejected Greenwood as a representative of their club, an equally significant number has rallied for his return, portraying him as an absent hero. This dichotomy has intensified, with attitudes hardening against the alleged victim, sparking a disheartening debate.

Erik ten Hag's role adds an intriguing dimension, considering his reputation for integrity and principled stances. Ten Hag's voice holds substantial influence, and his endorsement of Greenwood's rehabilitation could serve United's PR efforts. Fans trust Ten Hag's judgment and might find it easier to accept Greenwood's return if it garners the manager's approval.

Erik ten Hag's support for Mason Greenwood's rehabilitation would hold considerable weight.

Nevertheless, this doesn't necessarily make the scenario any more palatable if Greenwood were to return wearing the number 11 jersey.

Footballers need not embody perfection, nor is it desirable for them to be pristine role models (as evidenced by the book "Red Devils" chronicling the colorful figures of Old Trafford). However, we're not discussing a minor driving infraction, a case of rowdy pub behavior, or tardiness to team meetings.

That audio recording resurfaces: moments where a rising star of the Premier League appears utterly ignorant of and disinterested in the concept of sexual consent. The menacing threats Greenwood voices indicate an obliviousness to being recorded. His fury is palpable.

When questioned about his demands, he retorts, "Because I asked you politely, and you refused. I asked you politely, and you refused. So what else should I do?"

Perhaps I erred in evaluating football through the same lens as other professions, presuming that a club of United's stature would refrain from reinstating an individual embroiled in such circumstances.

But then again, the allure of a remarkable shot, unparalleled first touch, and the ability to score with either foot complicates matters. The central query is whether these attributes will outweigh all else, as United endeavors to reclaim its position as the country's premier team.

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