

Fantasy Football

Cardiff's Bamba is worth a look in your defence

The FA Cup third round means there are no points up for grabs this weekend but for fantasy managers looking to get their transfer business done early for game week 22, here are three picks worth considering.

Danny Ings (Southampton)

Since joining from Liverpool, Ings has featured in just 13 of Southampton's Premier League fixtures this season and has completed the full 90 minutes on only four occasions.

Despite this the English striker has managed seven goals – four more than any of his team-mates. With tricky fixtures against Manchester City and Chelsea out of the way, don't be surprised if Ings adds to his tally in the coming weeks. **Cost: £5.6m Points: 67**

Sergio Aguero (Man City)

Before he picked up an injury in game week 13, Aguero was a must-own player, scoring eight goals in 12 appearances.

Since then he has been in and out of a City side that has stuttered in previously unthinkable fashion. Now, however, the Argentine appears to be back to full fitness. **Cost: £11.2m Points: 92**

Sol Bamba (Cardiff City)

Cardiff were overwhelmed by Tottenham's potent attack in game week 21, but the Bluebirds should fare better when they next take on the league's two lowest-scoring teams in Huddersfield and Newcastle.

Take advantage of these timid attacks by recruiting defender Bamba. The Ivorian has played all but one of Cardiff's league fixtures this season and has chipped in with two goals and an assist in the process. **Cost: £4.5m Points: 66**

Finlay Greig

i readers league

	Points
1. Fripp Persson	1394
2. Tony Russell	1385
3. Tremaine Moore	1372
4. Robert Gomm	1355
5. T Boogie	1352
6. Andrea Frostad	1346
7. Clive Hammerson	1345
8. Pete Clifton	1338
9. Billy Grimshaw	1327
10. Stuart Ansell	1323

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FA CUP TRANMERE ROVERS v TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

Eriksen's future may lie away from Tottenham, says Pochettino

By Jonathan Veal

Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino accepts that Christian Eriksen has the right to ponder a future away from the club.

The midfielder has been one of the star players for Spurs over the past few seasons as they have challenged at the top end of the Premier League but the Dane, who joined the club in August 2013, is reported to be stalling on a new deal.

He is out of contract in the summer of 2020 but if he does not sign a new deal by the end of the current season, Spurs might be forced to listen to offers in order to get true value for the Denmark international.

The 26-year-old (right) would not be out of place in any of the top sides in Europe and would be likely to earn a lucrative deal elsewhere.

"I'm not a person that suffers too much in this type of situation because football is dynamic," a relaxed

Pochettino said before tonight's FA Cup third round tie at Tranmere Rovers. "Football is about interests that as managers or head coaches we sometimes cannot manage.

"It depends on many things in this business – different parties that have interests.

"Of course Christian is such an important player for Tottenham and of course as a person or as a professional coach or manager, you would like to have this type of player with you.

"But in the end it's a negotiation and there's different parties that have different interests.

"It will be fantastic if Christian is going to be committed with the club for [the] long term, and if not it's his right to do what he wants to do.

"He is happy here, he is showing his commitment. Then what is going to happen in between him and the club is not only in our hands."

The futures of several other play-

ers at Spurs are likely to come under the microscope this month as a host of exits are expected.

Outcasts Fernando Llorente, Vincent Janssen and Georges-Kevin Nkoudou are likely to leave the club, but established midfielder Mousa Dembélé could also be on his way out.

The Belgian has only six months left on his current deal and with no new one on the horizon, Spurs could listen to offers in the transfer window to get some money for him, rather than lose him for free in the summer.

"There is still no news," Pochettino said. "No news, again like Christian – a different situation – it is not only in our hands.

"In that business there are different parties that are involved, then it is about to negotiate, to talk, and see what the different parties want.

"I don't know [if he could leave on a free in the summer], that is going to be a club decision."



Freescoring Norwood spurred on to impress Kane

Tranmere striker would love to cause a cup shock tonight, he tells **Derren Howard**

James Norwood, the Tranmere Rovers striker, has scored more goals this season than Harry Kane. But as his side welcome Tottenham Hotspur in the third round of the FA Cup tonight, he is in no mood to give the England captain any extra motivation.

Norwood has been in fine form this campaign for the League Two side and has two more league goals to his name than the England skipper.

He is joint-top of the League Two scoring charts with 16 – despite failing to score for his last four matches – and the former England C international captain is keen to test himself against the eight-time FA Cup winners.

"Tottenham have no real weaknesses and they give very little away," said Norwood. "It is a huge task for us but one we and our fans are looking forward to. You see what they are doing to Premier League teams most weeks. With their power and skill levels, they are one of the most complete teams out there. Going forward, Harry Kane and [Heung-min] Son have just been incredible."

Rovers will take inspiration from Newport County's fine FA Cup achievements last season. Last January, the team from south Wales forced a replay against Tottenham after a memorable 1-1 draw at Rodney Parade, before losing out 2-0 in the Wembley replay.

"Newport showed the way. We will have to change what we do slightly and create an environment that will make it difficult for them," he added. "Newport made it extremely tough for them and we have to look



James Norwood still favours pink boots, having made his debut wearing them GETTY

to do the same. The pitch here will not be what they are used to. We have to look for little gains and take advantage where we can."

Since joining Tranmere from Forest Green Rovers in 2016 the former Crystal Palace and Brighton youth striker has scored 68 times in 140 appearances – he has been the ultra-dependable goal-every-two-game type of forward.

Norwood, 28, is out of contract this summer and his chairman Mark Palios, the former FA chief executive, has already said he doesn't want to lose his main striker in the January window. An inspired performance against Spurs would increase his stock further but, the player who made his senior debut as a lightning quick 18-year-old with pink boots for Eastbourne Town

There will be a full house at Prenton Park and hopefully we can deliver a performance to be proud of

in the Ryman League South, says he just wants to concentrate on being part of something special for Tranmere.

"It will be a proud moment," admitted Norwood, who still favours his trademark pink boots. "I remember my time with Eastbourne Town and I learnt a great deal about adult football. To go from there and then to play Tottenham in the Cup is something special.

"There will be a full house at Prenton Park and hopefully we can deliver a performance to be proud of. It would be a great time to get back on the scoresheet but we all know how tough it will be.

"I started the season well but I missed a few good chances against Bury four games ago and I haven't scored since. I had a bit of a sulk but we went through the clips and the manager said he is pleased with the other aspects of my play. It's been very frustrating but all you can do is work hard for the team and get in the right positions.

"I have had messages of support already and a few Tottenham fans have also been in touch wanting tickets and asking me not to injure any of their players!"

Norwood has huge admiration for his opposite number Kane and the possibility of competing against him and a host of international stars is reward for a decade of toil in the lower leagues. "As a striker you have to admire what he has achieved. He seems to get better each season. He is always in the right place and when he gets his chance, he is lethal."

Ever since his days at Eastbourne, Norwood has also had the happy knack of doing just that. Should he get just one sniff of a chance against Spurs, he will need to be just as lethal as Kane.