



Manchester United Pre-Season 2026: Carrick Eyes Trophy Return After Third-Place Finish

Description

Manchester United are gearing up for what Michael Carrick hopes will be a title-challenging season, with the club's summer rebuild in full swing ahead of the 2026-27 Premier League campaign. Having secured [a third-place finish](#) in Carrick's first full season at Old Trafford – behind Arsenal and Manchester City – the Red Devils are determined to close the gap. And early Manchester United pre-season 2026 signs suggest the manager means business.

The Summer Signings

The headline arrival is Andrey Santos, the Brazilian midfielder who joined from [Chelsea](#) in a £50 million deal. The 22-year-old showed real quality during his time at Stamford Bridge, and Carrick sees him as the combative midfield engine the squad has been missing. Santos brings press-resistant ball-carrying and defensive aggression that the Premier League demands, and United fans will be watching his development with great interest.

Completing the midfield overhaul is Youri Tielemans, who arrives on a free transfer after his contract at Aston Villa expired – a low-risk, high-upside acquisition for a player with Champions League pedigree. In goal, veteran Karl Darlow has been brought in from Leeds as reliable cover, while teenage winger Tynan Thompson makes the exciting move from Tottenham's academy. The most eagerly awaited arrival, however, remains goalkeeper Ederson from Atalanta, with a £38 million deal reportedly at the medical stage. Should that go through, United will have finally resolved a goalkeeping situation that has been a source of frustration for too long.



Andrey Santos completes his move to Manchester United. Photo: manutd.com

Pre-Season: Hard Lessons and Promising Signs

Carrick's side opened their pre-season tour on Finnish soil, taking on Wrexham in Helsinki. United slipped to a 1-0 defeat - a result that, while humbling, served as a useful wake-up call early in proceedings. Four days later, the Reds bounced back emphatically with a 5-0 dismantling of Norwegian side Rosenborg in Trondheim, with the attacking depth looking full of promise once more established names were given extended minutes.

The upcoming fixtures are where things get genuinely exciting. United face Atletico Madrid on 1 August, before taking on [PSG](#) - who have had their own eventful summer - on 8 August. A domestic test against Leeds United follows on 12 August, before a glamour final warm-up against AC Milan on 15 August. Perform well against that calibre of opposition and confidence heading into the new season should be sky-high.

World Cup Returnees and the Rashford Question

One complicating factor this summer has been the staggered return of World Cup players. Matheus Cunha, Noussair Mazraoui, Altay Bayindir, Bruno Fernandes, and Diogo Dalot have all required proper rest before rejoining training, making it harder to build cohesion in the early pre-season weeks. By August, Carrick should have a near-full squad available - and that is when the real work begins.

Then there is the unresolved situation surrounding Marcus Rashford, whose future at the club remains unclear. The England forward has been conspicuously absent from pre-season tour activity, with neither the club nor the player providing public clarification. It is a distraction United could do without as they prepare for what everyone at Old Trafford hopes will be a genuine title challenge.



Andrey Santos speaks to MUTV after completing his move. Photo: manutd.com

Carrick and Dorgu Set the Bar High

Carrick has been clear on MUTV about his ambitions: this squad has depth, attacking intent, and the hunger to challenge for honours rather than simply consolidate a top-four finish. Patrick Dorgu, the dynamic wing-back who has been one of the standout performers in pre-season, echoed the mood in the camp â?? trophies are the target, not just Top Four.

For Singapore fans keeping tabs on the Red Devils, the Manchester United pre-season 2026 schedule against elite European opposition offers a fascinating early litmus test. The pieces are in place â?? Santos in midfield, Tielemans as the experienced operator, and Ederson potentially arriving to shore up the back. The question is whether they can all come together when the real business begins in August.

Date Created

30/07/2026

Author

jadeyeo