Messi set to return after two-month lay off

AFP – Lionel Messi is set to return to action with his club Inter Miami on Saturday after spending over two months out with an ankle injury, Miami coach Gerardo Martino said on Friday.
"Yes, he is fine," Martino said before training Friday. "He trained (Thursday), he is in the plans for the game. After training we will figure out the strategy for him, but he is available," added the Argentine.

Inter Miami, who lead the Eastern Conference and are top of the overall standings, host the Philadelphia Union on Saturday.

Messi injured his right ankle during the final of the Copa America on July 14 when he helped Argentina to victory over Colombia.

Since then he has missed eight MLS games for his club and this month's World Cup qualifiers for his country.

"To get back the best player in the world to our team, which was already on a good run, we are all very happy with this situation," said Martino.

Inter have already booked their place in the MLS Cup playoffs although their seeding will depend on how they finish the regular season which concludes on October 19.

The playoffs begin the following week and conclude with MLS Cup on December 7,

Miami's Finnish winger Robert Taylor concurred said Messi's return to training had given the team a boost.

"We're already confident, but he gives us even more confidence

now that he’s back training and hopefully he’s ready to play soon,” Taylor told the Miami Herald.

“He brings a lot of leadership. The way he’s competitive in training is really, really amazing to watch. He wants to win every little thing we do in training, whether it’s football tennis, rondos, small-sided games, he just wants to win everything. So that boosts everyone to try to match that level,” he said.

Taylor doesn’t expect to see any lasting impact of the injury on the record eight-times Ballon d’Or winner.

“Of course, two months is a long time, for anyone, but he’s the best player there is. So, I don’t think we’ll see much of a different Messi than we’ve seen before,” he added.

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