Stubborn Seaman

Football

INTERNET, London

Under-fire England goalkeeper David Seaman insists there is "no way" he is ready to give up international football.

And the Arsenal veteran hopes it is a "long, long time" before he decides to end his England career.

The 39-year-old was guilty of a major blunder in the recent 2-2 draw against Macedonia, allowing Artim Sakiri to score direct from a corner.

That error, coming after a glaring gaffe against Brazil in the World Cup, led to renewed calls for him to stand down from the international scene.

But Seaman, who has also been criticised for recent performances for Arsenal, has comprehensively rejected the suggestion.

Asked if he was tempted to quit after the tide of recent criticism, Seaman told the BBC: "No way. I am not tempted at all. That is the way I

"Things like that don't bother me that much to make a decision like

Arsene Wenger reckons Arsenal are

The north London club's chief

putting the fun back into football -

believes fans throughout the coun-

try are finding it amusing to see the

double-winners going through a

on Sunday hoping to avoid their fifth

boring Arsenal again just be being

turned over in succession by

Everton, Auxerre, Blackburn and

Borussia Dortmund. Yet Wenger is

confident his team's nightmare run

is only a blip and they will soon turn

Arsenal could go the season

unbeaten, said: "We have at least

losing games rather than winning

to be a star rather than him? Nobody.

Michael Schumacher in Formula

One, everyone wants someone else

to win a race because it's more

work for Arsenal and we want to win

Wenger has no plans to spend when

the transfer window reopens in

strength of the squad and will not go

things. But this team has been the

strongest team in England until now

"I can understand that, But I

There is no panic, of course, and

He said: "I'm happy with the

"You look where you can change

"We have the mental resources,

made-the country happy.

Wenger, who infamously claimed

"At the moment, we are boring in

"But who wants their neighbour

"When you are dominating like

They face Fulham at Loftus Road

The club has become boring,

Football

INTERNET, London

by losing.

rough patch.

defeat in a row.

the corner.

interesting.

every game."

January.

out and buy anybody.

and I believe we still are.

Seaman won his 75th cap against Macedonia, a month into his 40th

DAVID SEAMAN

Championships come round he will

be 41, but does not envisage step-

know when the time is right," he

added. "Hopefully that time is a

by the seemingly incessant criticism

show again. I'm not worried at all

Arsenal's run is currently their

Eight in Japan, he suffered defeat in 100.

were bottom of the league. But we things."

worst for 19 years, though Wenger

has experienced a similar one

his opening five games before going

He added: "That was a very

different situation. The team had

lost 14 matches before I arrived and

about the future of this team.'

long, long way away - who knows?"

"Everybody says you always

Seaman insists he is not affected

as we have shown in the past and will improved eventually.

After taking charge of Grampus again, we would win 98 times out of

ping down in the near future.

aimed in his direction.

Arsenal still best

before.

unbeaten for 14.

By the time the 2004 European Seaman also stepped into the

recent racism row that blighted England's Euro 2004 qualifier in Slovakia.

"All I can do is just get on with it

and play my game," he added. "It is

not the end of the world. When I

finish football I go home to a happy

The keeper witnessed England team-mates Ashley Cole and Emile Heskey receiving abuse and believes police should clamp down harder on the culprits.

"It is getting worse," Seaman said. "It was quite bad 10 or 15 years ago and it seemed to be sorted out at home and abroad.

"But I notice it is coming back and we have got to do something about it.

"It is the same with hooliganism. Police would go and get certain people out and people watching would think, 'I am not going to do

"That has got to be the start of it singling these people out. The bigger picture is national identity

"This Arsenal team has the char-

"No one's head has dropped. We

'If we played those matches

"The criticism does hurt. Like

"But we're in a public job and the

against Everton and Blackburn

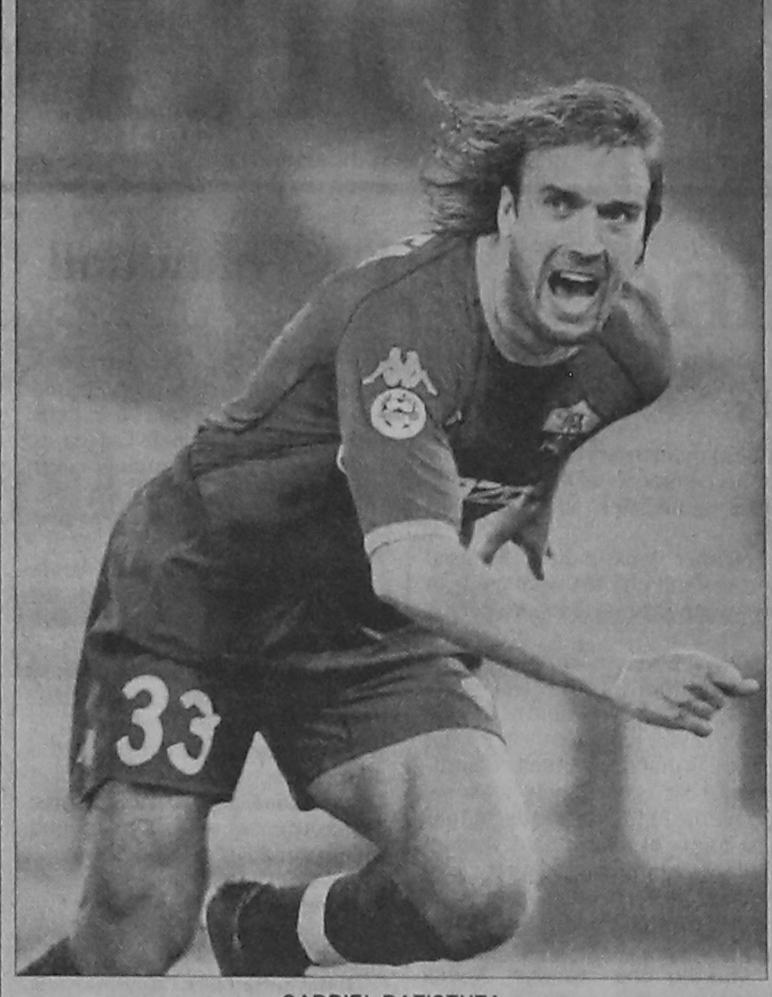
everybody, we prefer not to have it.

players don't need the criticism to

question themselves and change

acter to bounce back immediately.

have lost all four games narrowly.



GABRIEL BATISTUTA

Watch out for Batigol

Football

INTERNET, Rome

Gabriel Batistuta on Friday night revealed that he would be playing in the Premiership next season.

The Argentine superstar dropped the flag on a transfer race between Manchester United, Tottenham, Chelsea and Fulham as he said he will quit Roma and wants to move here on a free transfer next

summer. The 33-year-old striker revealed he had spoken to Manchester United's Juan Sebastian Veron before deciding to take the Premiership plunge. Batistuta said: "I am fascinated by English football and I decided I wanted to experience it for myself. I have spoken at

length with Veron and he has confirmed that in England they talk about the match over the weekend but don't turn games into a weeklong affair like they do in Italy.

"When I am playing at Roma there is no room for my private life. Things are even more exaggerated in this city because there is a constant switch from exultation to depres-

"I know that will not be the case in England and that is why I want to go there and will do next summer." Batistuta, who has been plagued

by an Achilles injury over recent seasons but is now fully fit, has said that he wants to move to London.

As a free agent his likely wage demands of around 45,000 poundsa-week will be within the budget of Spurs and Chelsea and also Mohammed Al Fayed's Fulham's

Keane against appeal

Football

REUTERS, London

Manchester United captain Roy Keane has not appealed to the Football Association over a fivematch ban and a record fine of 150,000 pounds, the FA has announced.

Keane, who was found guilty on two charges of disrepute by the FA last month, had 14 days to appeal against the decision but Friday's deadline passed without the Irish midfielder contacting the organisa-

"Keane had 14 days in which to respond from Friday 18th October, the date on which he was sent official notification of the hearing findings," the FA said in a statement

on Friday. Keane's ban is due to start on Monday. He faced disrepute charges over a claim in his autobiography that he deliberately set out to hurt Manchester City midfielder Alf Inge Haaland in a game in April 2001.

The first charge related to the tackle itself which earned Keane a red card, while the second addressed the question of the Irishman publishing an account of the incident for financial reward.

Keane had hoped the joint representation of his solicitor Michael Kennedy and lawyer Maurice Watkins would sway the verdict his way during the seven-hour hearing

at Bolton's Reebok Stadium. United manager Alex Ferguson also turned up for the hearing, but the three-man committee decided to accept the FA's case, which was led by top barrister Jim Sturman

Keane, who will be available to return for United's premier league match against title rivals Arsenal on December 7, has not played because of a hip injury since being sent off against Sunderland on August 31 for elbowing his former Ireland international teammate Jason McAteer.

Costa Rica in state of shock

AFP, San Jose

Costa Rican football was in a state of shock Friday after the suicide of 25year-old goalkeeper Lester Morgan.

Police here said Morgan's body was found in San Rafael de Heredia, 15km north of here, on Friday morn-

Police spokesman William Charpantier confirmed press reports that Morgan had left letters to his family and the authorities which suggested financial problems hadled him to take his own life. However his teammates at Sport

Club Herediano said he had appeared in good spirits and had begun training again after injury. "It's a very sad day," said his

side's vice-president Federico Zamora.



ROY KEANE

Kaiser sees ray of hope

Football

AFP, Munich

German football legend and Bayern Munich honorary president Franz Beckenbauer predicted Friday that the shock elimination of the Bundesliga giants from the Champions League will allow the team to develop home grown talent.

Four-time champions Bayern slumped to a 2-1 midweek defeat at the hands of Spanish side Deportivo La Coruna which dumped them out of Europe's premier competition in the first round for the first time in their history. But the man known as 'The

Kaizer', who as a player inspired Bayern to domestic and European glory, believes there could be a silver lining to the cloud of disappointment for the Bundesligaleaders.

Beckenbauer.

"Every year we spend millions of euros on new players. That can be different next year. As a coach I find it a great challenge to train a young player and to bring him into the first team. It's too easy to say I want this or that player."

Bayern spent 25 million euros this season to acquire Michael Ballack, Ze Roberto and Sebastian Deisler but the team has been regularly criticised for failing to nurture home grown talent.

Apart from German internationals Dietmar Hamann and Markus Babbel, now both at Liverpool, and Anglo-Canadian midfielder Owen Hargreaves, who has played regurlarly for the team over the past two years, no young player has succeeded in making it into the Bavarian first team from youth training.

Beckenbauer said that there were too many world class players at the "There is now an opportunity to club and hinted that there could be a focus on their own training," said clearout in the coming months.

"It's possible that during the winter break the contracts of some will be broken if they want to leave us," said Beckenbauer.

There has been speculation in the press about the future of midfielder Thorsten Fink, 35, who has been blocked this season by the arrival of Ballack, striker Alexander Zickler, 28, and defenders Pablo Thiam, 28, and 31-year-old Nino

And Beckenbauer criticised the club's management for compla-

Kovac.

"I saw this coming for several weeks. It began during that semblance of a match against La Coruna (Bayern's 3-2 defeat in the first leg in Munich)," said Beckenbauer.

"It was blamed on a lack of luck. But you can create your chances when you work relentlessly. We didn't do that. We slipped up. We should have moved heaven and earth. We contented ourselves with a

Houllier's prediction

Football

REUTERS, Liverpool

Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier believes the club's long wait for their first title since 1990 will soon be over.

The Frenchman, whose side are four points clear at the top of the table, is cautious of openly trumpeting what would be Liverpool's 19th championship victory -- but is confident that success is just around

"God knows what will happen, but there is a belief that this is going to be a special year," he said as his side prepared for Saturday's home match against West Ham United.

"Being four points clear at the top is a fresh challenge for us and a lot of teams would dream of being in the position we find ourselves.

"Liverpool has never won the premier league title, so it is a dream and naturally you want that dream to come true.

"But we will stay quiet until the end of the season and, if we go to Chelsea for the final game with a seven-point lead, then I will say we have a good chance of winning the title," he joked.

Houllier has presided over a steady transformation since taking over at Anfield in 1998, helping the side to improving final positions each season in the premier league.

"It will be nearly four years since I took charge and we have finished seventh, fourth, third and second," he said. "We will take the next step and it

is simply a matter of when we do it. The players want to keep improving the league position and that desire is the driving force." Houllier has been named man-

ager of the month for steering his side to the top of the table, but he insisted the honour had to be shared with everyone who had contributed



GERARD HOULLIER

to the club's recent success. The recognition goes to the

manager, but it is an award I want to share with my staff and my players," he said. Liverpool could extend their lead

at the top to seven points with a victory over West Ham at Anfield on Saturday as second-placed Arsenal do not play Fulham until Sunday.

But Houllier warned: "West Ham have a very good away record. They are a good side and I am not surprised that they have picked up points on their travels.

"They were the first side to beat Chelsea away and the first to beat Fulham away, so we have to be wary.

"The table says we are the best team at the moment, but we are still a team going through a good period of progress and we must keep that

Liverpool have won their last five league matches, while West Ham have won their last three away games and will be keen to avoid a losing double to Merseyside after being beaten 1-0 at home by Everton last Sunday.

Quiet Reds engine

Football

INTERNET, Liverpool

They always say that German engineering is understated, and that certainly applies to Dietmar

The Liverpool midfielder is a World Cup finalist, and a crucial element of the revival at Anfield - yet you would hardly know he was a Premiership player for all the recognition he gets in England.

Hamann is that rare breed, a player who cares nothing for the flashy, self- promoting football that seems to be the stock of most players these days.

He is a throwback to the old days when footballers did their job with a minimum of fuss, happy to get the job done without personal praise or

It is only when he is missing that you notice his importance, or when he has a rare bad game, as he did against Valencia in midweek.

Without Didi on song that night, Liverpool were always second best.

Hamann will be hoping that it is business as usual when West Ham visit Anfield, with the Merseyside club planning to maintain their impressive run of form in the Premiership, which has earned Gerard Houllier the manager of the month award and a four-point gap at the top of the table. Last season, Liverpool made a similar start, and even enjoyed a seven-point lead at one stage.

But a poor period around Christmas that coincided with a Hamann absence through injury put paid to their title chances. This time the German is con-

vinced that his team will not fold so easily. "We have progressed and anywhere either, because you have matured from last season. We have learned things, because we are a young developing side," he said.

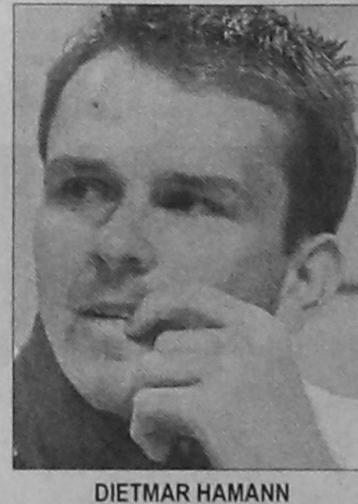
"I think we have got more experience in some important areas. "For instance, we know now that

we have to keep the ball better and use it better. We have learned from playing teams like Valencia that, at the top, you have to keep it.

"We are still a very young side and still learning, as we saw in midweek, but that maturity is coming, and I think there is no doubt that it makes us a better team.

equipped to stay at the top this Hamann is a typically low-key

speaker, rather like his play on the field, but he doesn't lack confidence in his or Liverpool's ability. He may



not shout it from the rooftops, but he has a definite sense that this could be Liverpool's year, if not in Europe then certainly in the club's pursuit to bring the title back to Anfield.

While sides like Arsenal continue to amass the plaudits, Liverpool amass the points and the German insists that he knows which he would rather have.

"Look, fashion doesn't win you points. Flashy play doesn't get you to have an end product. Sometimes, you have to keep grinding out results," he said.

"We know that people don't give us credit at Liverpool at times, that they prefer other styles of football,

but what does that matter if we are winning games and the others aren't? Of course we want to play well and play good football, but that is impossible to do all the time, and most of all we want to win.

"There is a strength about our side and a sense of togetherness that maybe some of the others lack. And "I think we are much better that is important." Hamann, slowly but surely, has

finally been offered some recognition for the part he has played in Liverpool's remorseless climb to the top of the table. And he believes that is all part of

the growing maturity his young

team is beginning to enjoy - a quality that he believes can take Liverpool to a higher level this season. "Our main target is to win the league because whoever does that

over 38 games is clearly the best side," Hamann said. "I think we can do it. We have a young side, but we are growing, we are getting stronger and we have more experience now, which is

important. "It helps me because we are holding the ball better, passing better, and that allows me to get

forward more. "When we know we can keep the

ball it allows the midfielders to take a few more chances. "I can take a risk on getting forward and that allows me to have

more shots, to be involved in the attacking play more. That means, of course, that people notice me more. "It is nice when you get recog-

nised, nice to get praise, but it isn't important. "The only thing that matters at all is what the manager thinks - and I wouldn't know about that, because

he never says anything to me!"

With Arsenal suddenly vulnerable, and Manchester United weaker than they have been for some time. Liverpool could end seven points clear at the top of the Premiership. If so, then Hamann might just

hearfrom his manager. "Hamann has made more passes and attempted more tackles than any Premiership player this season."

Presidential praise for Ronaldo Football solidarity," said the former factory

Ronaldo said he had been heart-

"I'm putting myself at the dis-

posal of the president to offer my

help so that the lives of many

Brazilians is as dignified as possi-

social policy in his government's

first year is to tackle the hunger

(2006) each Brazilian is able to eat

three times a day then I'll have

said the day after his sweeping

Sunderland manager Howard

"It's always a big blow to lose

Wilkinson, who has only been in

achieved my life's ambition," he

time in Los Angeles.

Lula has said his number one

"If at the end of my mandate

ened to hear of Lula's initiative to set

Emergency.

AFP, Sao Paulo Brazil's new president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has warmly welcomed

Ronaldo's offer to help his government fight hunger in Brazil. The Real Madrid player sent a message Thursday to the landslide winner of last Sunday's election saying he wanted to help in his campaign to improve the living

standards of his countrymen. "That would be an extraordinary contribution," was Lula's enthusiastic reaction in an interview with the Record television station.

"We need to refind the sense of electoral triumph.

Bolton Wanderers on Monday and

Friday.

Football

Reyna ruled out

charge for two matches, tried to put REUTERS, Sunderland a brave face on the loss of one of his most important players. United States captain Claudio Reyna

faces six months out of action after it good players but unfortunately was confirmed that the midfielder that's life, "said Wilkinson. had ruptured a cruciate knee liga-"Claudio's problem is someone ment playing for his English club else's opportunity. His credentials Sunderland. are there for all to see but for the Reyna was injured in the 1-1 immediate and mid-term future he English Premier League draw at will not be available, and that's a

the damage was diagnosed by United States national team medic Due to injury, Wilkinson is Mandel Boum on Thursday, already without goalkeepers Sunderland website reported on Thomas Sorensen and Thomas Myhre and midfielders Jason Reyna will wait until the swelling McAteer and Julio Arca for Sunday's has gone down before undergoing trip to fellow strugglers Charlton an operation in two or three weeks'

tribute

those who died in the earthquake up a Department of Social

Uruguay's national players are considering taking legal action against their football federation in a bid to obtain 2 million dollars they claim they are owed in World Cup prize money, their lawyer said

"We are studying the matter and we will try to reach an agreement with all the parties involved,

ment we could take some sort of legal action." Balbi said the Uruguayan Football Association (AUF) had blamed its failure to pay up on the

He said the money related to the team's successful attempt to qualify for their first World Cup finals since

THIS IS SERIOUS ... Wenger wants a smile on his face

The Italian Football Association (FIGC) said Friday there will be a minute's silence before all Serie A matches this weekend in memory of

which hit southern Italy. Twenty-eight people, mostly children, died when a school in the medieval hilltop village of San Giuliano di Puglia collapsed after the quake struck the Campobasso region on Thursday morning.

Uruguayans want their money

REUTERS, Montevideo

Alejandro Balbi told Reuters. "Obviously, if there's no agree-

recession which has hit the country during the last four years.

Uruguay finished fifth in the South American qualifying group but beat Australia in a two-leg play-

Serie A's silent AFP, Rome