

# Premiership

# Joy for Portsmouth

## Sheringham, Berger make their mark

### Football

AFP, London

The summer signings were quick to earn their wages on the opening day of the English Premiership Saturday, as a trio of new boys sealed opening day victories for Portsmouth and Birmingham.

Portsmouth celebrated their return to England's top flight after a 15-year absence in fine style as Teddy Sheringham and Patrik Berger secured a 2-1 home win against Aston Villa.

The early kick-off even left them top of the league for at least a few hours.

Meanwhile at Birmingham, the club's record 5.5 million pound (8.8 million dollar) buy David Dunn proved the difference in their 1-0 home win against Tottenham.

Dunn, a summer acquisition from Blackburn Rovers, had the honour of putting away the very first goal of the Premiership season, slotting home a 24th-minute penalty after Robbie Savage had been fouled.

But the biggest cheers were at Fratton Park, where Portsmouth unveiled five new signings in their Premiership debut.

Aston Villa were left to rue a series of chances – notably Alpay's missed free header from just a few yards out – as Sheringham, discarded by Spurs over the summer, struck.

With just three minutes of the first half remaining, fellow newcomer Patrick Berger fed a pass through to Yacubu Ayegbinaihi.

The Nigerian international wriggled free of the hapless Alpay to shoot, and Thomas Sorensen's parry was volleyed gleefully home by Sheringham.

Then on 42 minutes Berger, the Czech international let go by Liverpool in the close season, picked up the ball on edge of Aston Villa area, slipped past Ronny Johnsen and slipped the ball under Sorensen with a flick of his left boot.

Such fine finishing was the most welcome fillip possible for Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp after last season's top

scorer for the club, Svetoslav Todorov, was ruled out for the season with a freak injury.

The Bulgarian international, who bagged 26 goals as Pompey won the First Division last season, damaged knee ligaments when his studs caught in the turf during training on Thursday.

The south-coast side lived dangerously after Boris Zivkovic fouled Gareth Barry as the Villa star steamed into the penalty box from the right with just seven minutes to go, Barry dispatching the penalty to go.

But Pompey, with their somewhat tatty ground and bargain-basement squad tipped by many pundits to be leading relegation candidates, held on for a win cheered ecstatically by the home crowd.

They were helped by Barry, pushing hard for a recall to the England squad, who earned a straight red card all of two minutes after scoring for dissent to a linesman.

Tottenham's appalling form of late last season continued as they lost out to Birmingham at Saint Andrews.

Dunn was one of a series of summer signings by Birmingham manager Steve Bruce, along with the continued services of French international striker Christophe Dugarry, on loan last season.

Spurs manager Glenn Hoddle is among the bookies' favourites to be the first Premiership sacking this year, and the failure of his new strike force of Portuguese signing Helder Postiga and Robbie Keane to score will only deepen the gloom at White Hart Lane.



PHOTO: INTERNET

David Dunn celebrates scoring Birmingham City's winner against Tottenham Hotspur yesterday.

### He can't hide!

AFP, Valencia

David Beckham has nowhere to hide, according to Valencia midfielder Vicente Rodriguez, who will Sunday go up against the England star in his first match as a Real Madrid player on Spanish soil.

Valencia host the Primera Liga champions in Beckham's first match for Real in Spain following four friendlies in Asia in the Trofeo Naranja (orange trophy), effectively a pre-season tune-up.

But Rodriguez told Spanish media he wouldn't like to be in Beckham's shoes as all the hype surrounding his move meant "he won't be able to leave his house."

"Beckham is the best-known footballer in the world but I think to be under such pressure all the time can't be good - he can't leave his house."

And the Spanish international warned that Sunday's game "is no longer a friendly," insisting he and his teammates would go all out to win as if the match were a league fixture.

Valencia will not be at full strength, however, as club officials revealed keeper Santiago Canizares has a gluteal muscle strain meaning Andres Palop is likely to start, while Argentine playmaker Kily Gonzalez is being rested after an ankle injury.

### Moyes wants Jeffers

AFP, London

Everton manager David Moyes is hoping to boost the Merseysiders' Premiership campaign by attracting Arsenal forward Francis Jeffers back to the club, he said Friday.

Moyes is also in the running to sign Fulham's transfer-listed midfielder Sean Davis -- who is also attracting interest from Middlesbrough.

Francis has in the past been touted to leave Highbury -- where he is not a team regular -- however Moyes knows that financial constraints may prevent the club moving to bring him back.

"Bringing Jeffers back to Everton is something I have been thinking about," said Moyes.

Moyes could well use the occasion to discuss a possible loan deal for Francis with Gunners' manager Arsene Wenger -- however persuading the Everton board to come up with enough money to match the England striker's pay package will be another matter.

Jeffers left Everton two years ago for 20 million pounds (16 million dollars). His departure angered the fans but was vital to the club's financial survival.

# Ronaldo relying on Beckham

### Football

AFP, Madrid

Brazilian World Cup hero Ronaldo believes the arrival of David Beckham will enable him to torment Spanish defences in what the Real Madrid striker hopes will be a vintage campaign for him and the club.

With the start of the Spanish season just days away -- Real meet Real Mallorca in the Super Cup with the first leg on August 24 -- Ronaldo says Beckham will prepare a steady stream of chances for him, regardless of whether the England man plays on his preferred right flank or elsewhere.

On Real's Asian tour last month Ronaldo hinted there was a little rivalry between the two 'galacticos', or superstars, pointing out that he was a world champion even if Beckham was currently more marketable.

But on Saturday, Ronaldo told AS sports daily he was delighted to have Beckham on the side.

"He can play anywhere as far as I am concerned as he has superb vision and his crossing is perfect."

"Behind me, on the right or in the middle -- it's all one to me. Beckham will help us in many ways."

"He just has to concentrate on his football because if he stopped to think about all the hype going on around him he'd go crazy," said the Brazilian.

With Beckham on board Ronaldo has set himself a target of at least 35

goals in all competitions compared with 30 last season.

"Physically, I'm in great shape. I want this season to be a great one for Ronaldo and for Real Madrid."

"This year I will score more than 35 goals," said the star, whose 23 league goals helped fire the club to the league title although six more in the Champions League were not enough to prevent a semi-final exit



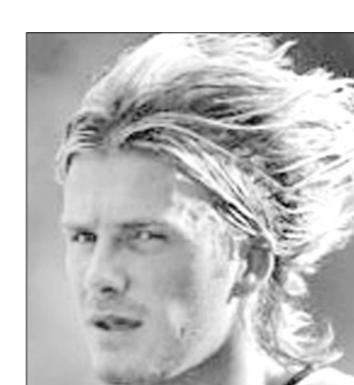
RONALDO

sacked barely two days after the league title win despite two Champions League successes in four years at the helm.

Asked what Queiroz wanted from him personally Ronaldo told AS: "Just that I score more goals than ever!"

He added, however, that the club still has room for improvement.

"We can do much better. With the



DAVID BECKHAM

to Juventus.

"My aim is to score more than the 30 goals I hit last season," said Ronaldo, adding he is over a leg muscle strain which forced him out of the final match of Real's Asian tour.

Ronaldo added that with new coach Carlos Queiroz in charge he and the rest of the squad would be out to impress the man who has replaced Vicente del Bosque,

quality we have in the squad we can up our game."

Ronaldo joined Real a year ago from Inter Milan fresh from scoring both goals in Brazil's World Cup final win over Germany.

And he doesn't regret leaving Italy behind.

"It was the best decision I ever made in my life. I took it at a key moment - and now I feel very happy."

thing on my mind at the moment is doing well for the club and right now that means concentrating on the game against Newcastle United."

Leeds United forward Alan Smith has been forced into a dressing room clearout as they try to fight off their creditors and 22-year-old Smith is one of the few remaining star players at Leeds and is a firm favourite with the Elland Road fans.

Leeds chairman John McKenzie had earlier assured fans that Smith was not for sale.

"I can tell you here and now there's not a chance in a million he is going -- I'd say not a chance in 20 million," McKenzie told Sky Sports News.

"There's absolutely no way Alan Smith is leaving this club. He will be there in September, as he always is, playing for this club."

"He is not going anywhere. He's been a fantastic asset to us and he's absolutely critical to our future plans. He's a symbol of what Leeds United is all about."

Leeds fans have heard similar sentiments before, only to see a string of top players sold to rival teams to alleviate the club's massive debts.

Rio Ferdinand, Robbie Keane, Lee Bowyer, Robbie Fowler, Jonathan Woodgate, Olivier Dacourt and Harry Kewell have all left the club in the past year and Kewell's compatriot Australian Mark Viduka could soon follow suit.

"I am happy here and the only

# Wenger still upbeat

AFP, Paris

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger revealed Saturday he is confident his side can recapture the English Premiership title from Manchester United, despite limited additions to his squad.

While Manchester United have made high-profile signings like Kleberson and Cristiano Ronaldo, Wenger has added just keeper Jens Lehmann and youngsters Gael Clichy and Philippe Senderos.

"We've opted for stability," Wenger told French sports daily L'Equipe. "It's a compromise between the money available and the players who have proved themselves here."

"My players are well prepared and focused, I've got confidence in their abilities."

Wenger is delighted that French stars Patrick Vieira and Robert Pires have signed new long-term contracts, as has Thierry Henry.

"If they hadn't signed, alarm bells would be ringing come Christmas. I consider those three as the best in the country in their positions. Patrick Vieira, for example, we couldn't imagine losing him!"

But despite Manchester United's new signings and Chelsea's free spending, Wenger is confident Arsenal can reclaim the crown they won two seasons ago.

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