

# Seaman in retirement land

Football

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger paid tribute to England goalkeeper David Seaman after the Highbury great announced his retirement from football on Tuesday.

Seaman, 40, decided to quit after suffering a recurrence of his longstanding shoulder injury while playing for Manchester City in their 4-2 defeat away to Portsmouth on Saturday.

Wenger, who oversaw the second half of Seaman's 13-year stint at Arsenal before letting him leave on a free transfer to City in June, said: "I feel personally a big loss. It was a fantastic career."

"But I think it came to the point where he (Seaman) realised if he were to go on, he'd damage his health," the Frenchman told Sky Sports.

"I would personally like to thank him for what he has done for English football. He was not just a great keeper he had a great attitude."

Seaman retired on the day City signed current England number one keeper David James from West Ham, a deal encouraged by Seaman.

In a statement issued on the City website Seaman, who won the last of his 75 caps against Macedonia in October 2002, said: "I have reached this difficult decision after much discussion with my family and those in the game whose views I respect."

"It has become clear to me that this type of injury will not quickly disappear and I think now would be a good time to hang up my boots, rather than at the end of the season as planned."

James will make his debut for struggling City against Blackburn at home on Saturday.

Meanwhile Seaman, who made 26 City appearances, said: "I believe I have had a fantastic career playing at the highest level."

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have stood by me and supported my career, especially during the tough times, the players who I will miss for their professionalism and friendship and the fans who have inspired my enthusiasm for the game."

City manager Kevin Keegan, England coach for part of Seaman's international career, said: "This has been a difficult decision for David but I fully respect it."

"It says a lot about the man that he has been incredibly helpful to

us as a club in finding a successor at such a testing personal time for him."

"His record is incredible and his achievements unbelievable but most importantly I will remember him as an ultimate professional who cared about others," Keegan, whose side are hovering above the relegation zone after failing to win in their last 14 matches, added.

In his last international against Macedonia, Seaman was criticised for the corner Artim Sakiri curled straight into the net during the 2-2 Euro 2004 qualifying draw at Southampton's St Mary's Stadium.

It was one of a series of high-profile errors in recent seasons which obscured an otherwise impressive career that saw him win league, FA Cup and European Cup Winners Cup medals at Arsenal.

In the Gunners' victorious FA Cup campaign last season Seaman made important saves in both the semi-final against Sheffield United and the final against Southampton.

But for many fans their abiding image of the pony-tailed keeper is likely to be the sight of him left stranded by Ronaldinho's 40-metre lob as Brazil beat England 2-1 in the 2002 World Cup quarter-finals in Japan.



DAVID SEAMAN

# A hero after all

Football

AFP, London

Britain's press Wednesday saluted David Seaman after the former England goalkeeper announced his retirement from all football but there was widespread agreement that he had played on too long.

Seaman, 40, quit Tuesday after suffering a recurrence of his longstanding shoulder injury just 12 minutes into Manchester City's 4-2 Premiership defeat away to Portsmouth last weekend.

"For David Seaman these last six months have unfortunately proved an undistinguished curtain call to a previously distinguished career," said the tabloid Daily Express.

It argued that Seaman, Arsenal goalkeeper for 13 years, should have stayed at Highbury as goalkeeping coach rather than left on a free transfer in June to have one final season with City.

The Daily Telegraph, recalled the merits of the mustachioed and pony-tailed Seaman, saying that "for many years, his command of the penalty area and ability to reduce the target for oncoming attackers set Seaman apart as an outstanding keeper."

Even so, he did concede some amazing goals.

Topping the list, because it happened at the 2002 World Cup, was the near 40-year free-kick from

Ronaldinho that sailed over Seaman's head and gave eventual champions Brazil victory in a 2-1 quarter-final win in Japan.

Under the headline "Forget The Gaffes, Remember The Genius," the tabloid Daily Mirror said: "I wonder if he wishes he had called it quits at the end of last season when he captained Arsenal to victory in the FA Cup final."

In that match, against Southampton, Seaman made a vital save just as he had done in the semi-final to deny Sheffield United.

Meanwhile broadsheet The Times said that his habit of signing autographs 'Safe Hands', a nickname that became popular during the 1996 European Championships in England where Seaman excelled in helping the hosts into the semi-finals, was "never a good idea for a goalie".

But it added: "He wasn't one of those goalies who made 14 impossible saves and then let one through his legs. With Seaman you got competence at the highest possible level."

## SEAMAN FACTS

AFP, London

Factfile on former England goalkeeper David Seaman who announced his retirement from all football on Tuesday:

**DAVID ANDREW SEAMAN**

**Birthdate:** September 19, 1963

**Birthplace:** Rotherham, England

**Height:** 6ft 4"

**Weight:** 14st 10lbs

**Club Honours:** First Division title 1990-91; Premiership title 1997-98, 2001-02; FA Cup 1993, 1998, 2002, 2003; League Cup: 1993; European Cup Winners' Cup: 1994

**International honours:** 75 England caps

**Other honours:** MBE

**Clubs:** Leeds United (from apprentice, joining on September 22 1981)

Peterborough United (4,000 pounds, on August 13, 1982), 106 appearances

Birmingham City (100,000 pounds, on October 5, 1984), 84 apps

Queens Park Rangers (225,000 pounds, on August 7, 1986), 175 apps

Arsenal (1.3 million pounds, on May 18, 1990), 564 apps

Manchester City (free transfer, on June 4, 2003) 26 apps

# Senegal lions' incentive

Football

AFP, Dakar

Senegal's magical ride at the 2002 World Cup means the country's foreign legion of stars will command around 70,000 dollars each should they win the African Nations Cup for the first time.

With a budget for the championship of around three million dollars, the country's football chiefs are determined to give their players, quarter-finalists at the last World Cup and with a famous win against holders France to boast of, as many incentives as possible.

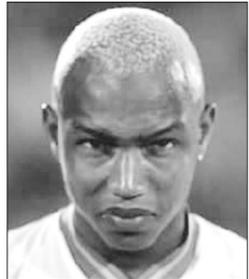
But national coach Guy Stephan, who succeeded World Cup hero Bruno Metsu, is determined to keep his players' feet on the ground.

"Everyone in Europe has the impression that Senegal is a strong football country but this is not true," said Stephan.

"The country has around 10 million people. The pool of players of a high level is not unlimited here and in 23 Nations Cup tournaments, Senegal has played in just nine of them with a final appearance in 2002 and a semi-final in

1990 to show for it."

Stephan's caution is understandable - 2002 was a benchmark year for Senegal, their performance at the World Cup matching the previous best for an African side when Cameroon reached the last



EL HADJI DIOUF

eight in 1990.

They had also lost to the Indomitable Lions in the African Nations Cup final earlier that year in Mali via a penalty shoot-out.

Those successes led to a mass emigration of leading players to Europe; of the 22 for this year's

finals in Tunisia, 20 play in Europe.

"When I am in Senegal, I watch the satellite channels so I can watch the matches that concern me," said the Frenchman.

"In Europe, I try to see as many matches as possible. I would like to see the players more often."

If he can't see them play, he makes sure he telephones them at least once a month.

"That bothers me. It is impossible to review a match before the next meeting. Once a game has finished, the players go back to their clubs."

Senegal are in Group B in Tunisia and face Mali, Burkina Faso and Kenya in the first stage.

They start as tournament favourites along with Cameroon and Nigeria and can call on a wealth of talent, deployed largely in England and France, to see them through - in particular, the likes of Henri Camara (Wolves), El Hadji Diouf (Liverpool) and Lamine Sakho (Leeds) who are all plying their trade in the English Premiership.

"This team is capable of winning something - it's up to us to prove it," said midfielder Aliou Cisse.

# Italian Cup Inter plan for home

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan are well placed to secure a place in the last four of the Italian Cup after grinding out a 0-0 draw at Udinese in the first leg of their quarter-final on Tuesday.

Chances were few and far between in a dull first half but Udinese should have taken the lead two minutes after the break.

Ali Sulley Muntari was put through with just Inter goalkeeper Alberto Fontana to beat, but the Ghanaian international blasted high over the bar from eight yards with the goal at his mercy.

Inter, who last won the cup in 1982, came close to sneaking a precious away goal moments later when Obafemi Martins' rasping shot was superbly blocked by Udinese's Belgian goalkeeper Oliver Renard.

Inter dominated the closing stages without breaking the deadlock, but they will fancy their chances of clinching a semi-final place in front of their own fans in the second leg next week at the San Siro.

On Wednesday, Lazio host crisis club Parma at the Olympic stadium, while cup holders AC Milan entertain Serie A leaders Roma in a repeat of last year's final.

On Thursday, Italian champions Juventus play away to Perugia.

# Fulham deny Saha rumour

AFP, London

Fulham have denied claims by Louis Saha that the French striker will sign for Manchester United after a 9.8 million pound (18 million dollar) deal had been agreed.

"There has been no fresh bid, so no bid has been accepted and the player does not have permission to hold talks," a Fulham spokesman told the BBC Sport website.

Fulham rejected an 8 million pound (14.7 million dollar) offer last week.

But Saha told the Daily Mail: "I am very happy now that we are about to complete the deal."

Fulham manager Chris Coleman had even been linked with a move for Celtic's John Hartson as a potential replacement.

Saha, who hopes a move will attract the attention of the France coach Jacques Santini, said: "I have wanted to go to United for a month and now I must prove I can play in the team there."

"This is a big step up in my career and I know that I will have to show that I'm good enough."

Coleman and Fulham owner Mohamed al Fayed have insisted they would not be forced into selling the forward who has inspired Fulham to the brink of a Champions League place this season.

"You just get that feeling that we're being bullied into selling one of our players, but I don't like bullies and I don't like to be bullied so that's why we're so determined to hang on to Louis Saha," said Coleman.

Saha, who joined Fulham from Metz for 2.1 million pounds (3.8 million dollars) three years ago, scored his 15th goal of the season when he converted a penalty in the 2-1 win over Everton on Saturday.

Metz would earn one million pounds (1.8 million dollars) from Saha's transfer to Old Trafford under a sell-on clause in the deal that saw him come to London.

# Spanish King's Cup Ronaldo, Figo carry Real

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Second-half goals from Ronaldo and Luis Figo earned Real Madrid a 2-0 win at home to second division Eibar on Tuesday and a place in the quarter-finals of the King's Cup.

After a 1-1 draw in the first leg, Real were under pressure for much of the return until Ronaldo broke the deadlock in the 58th minute.

Eibar continued to threaten, but a Figo free kick 10 minutes later settled the contest, giving Real a 3-1 aggregate win.

Apart from the injured David Beckham and Raul, Real fielded their strongest line-up, including Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane, Roberto Carlos and Figo, but it was Eibar who made the better start.

The visitors created three good chances inside the first three minutes, the best of which saw midfielder Francisco Corredoira crack a half-volley over the bar.

Gaizka Saizar was then put through but failed to get behind his shot and Real keeper Iker Casillas was able to clear.

At the other end the Eibar defence did an expert job in stifling Ronaldo and Real only threatened from set pieces, keeper Garikoitz Basauri reacting sharply to turn successive Zidane free kicks around the post.

Eibar should have taken the lead in the 57th minute when Roberto Cuevas found himself free at the far post only to hoist the ball over from two metres out.

A minute later Real went ahead. Roberto Carlos beat the offside trap with a run down the left and curled in a precise pass for Ronaldo to guide in unopposed.

Real made sure of the victory 10 minutes later when Figo curled a free kick around the wall and in at the keeper's near post.

Meanwhile, superstar Ronaldo was fined by Real for making an unauthorised trip to London, the club's sporting director Jorge Valdano confirmed on Tuesday.

"Ronaldo made the trip without the permission of the club and the appropriate sanction was applied," Valdano told Telemadrid Radio.

The player said last week that

he did not think he should be punished for the visit, explaining that he had gone to London to fulfil publicity obligations with the sportswear firm Nike and had missed training on his return because of difficulties with his flight.

"I don't think I will be fined because I have done nothing wrong," he said at the time.

"The plane couldn't land at the airport on time because of fog and that's why I arrived late for training. I'm fully aware of my obligations and want to fulfil all of

them."

Valdano said that reports that the club had intervened to prevent him attending Chelsea's match against Liverpool on Wednesday were not true.

"It is not correct that we rang him to stop him going to see Chelsea because we didn't even know he was in England at that time."

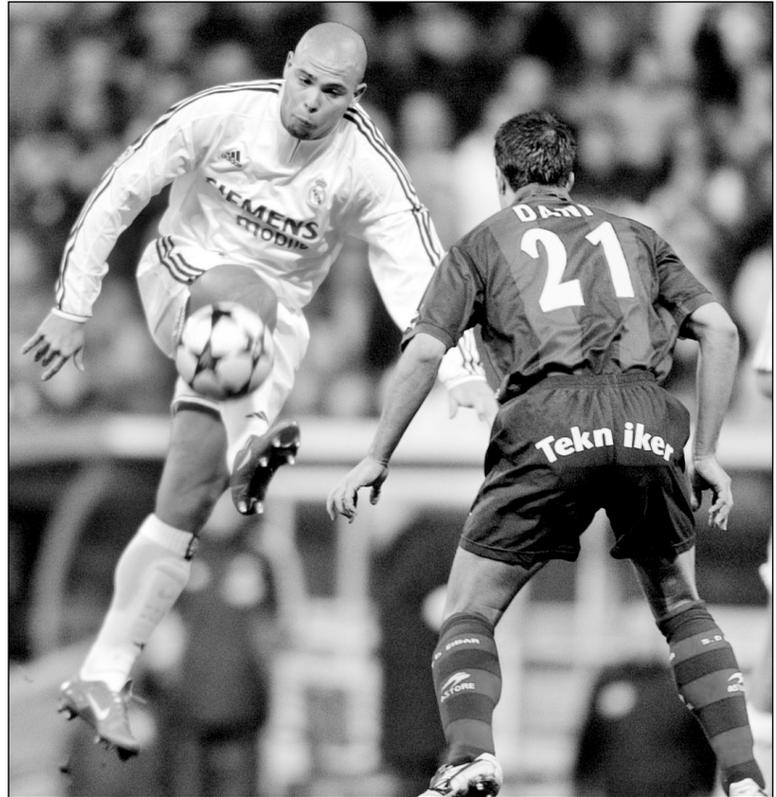
"I received a call that evening that informed me he was in London and the next day the player explained the problem he had with the fog and was fined.

The problem is now forgotten."

Ronaldo is Real's leading scorer this season, notching 14 goals in 19 league matches.

Barcelona, 1-0 down after a first leg away to Levante, will also have a tough task on their hands when they play the second division promotion candidates at the Nou Camp on Wednesday.

League leaders Valencia, who drew 2-2 at home to Osasuna, will also have plenty to do in another of Wednesday's second leg games.



FLYING PHENOMENON! Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo (L) is airborne as he controls the ball in front of Eibar defender Dani at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on January 13.

# FIFA world rankings No catching Brazil

AFP, Paris

World champions Brazil remain top of the first FIFA World Rankings for 2004.

## TOP 20 RANKINGS

Rank	Country	Points
1.	Brazil	848pts
2.	France	826
3.	Spain	798
4.	Holland	752
5.	Argentina	744
6.	Czech Rep.	742
7.	Mexico	740
8.	England	738
	Turkey	738
10.	Italy	733
11.	USA	732
12.	Germany	729
13.	Denmark	714
14.	Cameroon	712
15.	Ireland	712
16.	Belgium	696

# Hotel workers threaten strike

AFP, Lisbon

Portuguese hotel workers have threatened to go on strike during the Euro 2004 football finals unless their demands for higher wages are met.

"If employers do not start showing a more serious attitude at the negotiating table, we will develop ways to fight for our demands, including a strike which could take place during Euro 2004," a spokesman for their FESAHT union, Joaquim Pires, told the Lusa news agency.

The union is demanding pay rises of five percent as well as a gradual reduction in the work week to 35 hours from the current 40.

Pires said the pay rise demand was reasonable if the huge rise in prices for hotel rooms during the championship is taken into account.

Last week Portugal's hotel association AHP said prices for rooms during the three-week football finals, which begin on June 12, had risen by an average of 25 percent.

Up to three million people are expected to travel to Portugal this year because of Euro 2004, the largest sporting event ever held in the country.

# Crespo woes for Chelsea

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea's injury crisis has worsened with the news that Hernan Crespo may be sidelined for another six weeks.

The Argentine striker limped out of last week's 1-0 defeat to Liverpool with a recurrence of a calf injury and he has not responded well to treatment.

Juan Veron, Emmanuel Petit and Damien Duff are also out and the lengthy injury list has increased the likelihood that Chelsea will strengthen their squad during the transfer window.

Petit and Duff, however, have both returned to training but Veron could be forced to have an operation on his back problem.

Manager Claudio Ranieri said: "Crespo is having treatment and he could be out for a month or six weeks. Duff and Petit will be back soon but Veron will be out a little longer. He may need an operation."

Ranieri has threatened to make more changes for Wednesday night's FA Cup third-round replay against Watford.

The Italian made six changes to his starting line-up for Sunday's 4-0 win at Leicester and has vowed to carry on tinkering.

"I'm always watching my players and make changes because I believe in this way," he said.



PHOTO: AFP

NOW WE CAN SHARE THE BURDEN! Barcelona's Brazilian playmaker Ronaldinho (R) chats with Dutch international midfielder Edgar Davids during Davids' first training session for the club on January 13. Davids was presented to the media by Barcelona on January 12 after the struggling Spanish giants agreed to take the midfielder popularly known as 'Pitbull' on loan from Juventus for the rest of the season.