

# The end is near?

## Football

INTERNET SOURCE, London

Victoria 'Posh' Beckham and David Beckham could be heading for a marriage split despite the former Spice Girl being pregnant with couple's third child.

And according to the News of the World tabloid, friends fear that England captain Beckham and Posh are headed for a trial separation.

The warring couple are being torn apart by explosive rowseven though their third child is on the way with Victoria branding her husband a "vain, arrogant yob".

"She hates his looks, hates the tattoos all over his body and hates the way he swears and rants all the time," said a source close to the couple on Saturday, the popular weekly publication's lead report revealed.

"Victoria considers herself more high-bred than him and has been going around telling everyone, 'I've married an Essex yob. He's lost the plot.'"

Friends are also worried about the England captain's increasingly bizarre and aggressive behaviour, and that the strain of his failing marriage might cause him to crack up.

"He's angry all the time," said a pal of the 29-year-old Real Madrid star. "And he blames everybody but himself."

Victoria apparently fights with Becks constantly on the phone because they're hardly together any more.

She flees from Madrid whenever she can because she can't bear to be around him; She taunts him, claiming that he's "lost it" as a husband.

Beckham's fury spilled over into a finger-pointing shouting match with an FA boss after last Wednesday's World Cup qualifier against Poland.

A source told the News of the World how Posh and Becks' phone calls frequently end up with them screaming at each other.

In one huge phone bust-up she told David she couldn't bear to be near him.

"It's got so bad they've started talking about a trial separation so they can take stock of their marriage," said the source.

"David rowed with Victoria last Monday on the phone. He was shouting, 'I can't stand it any more. You're all ruining my life, just leave me alone'. She says she will never

forgive him for cheating on her with Rebecca Loos. She told him, 'I've never cheated on you. You made a laughing stock of me and now I'm going to do what I want'.

"Most of their rows are on the phone nowadays because they're hardly together any more. The only time they are together is publicly when they want to promote something."

The pair were snapped together at the Hard Rock Cafe in Madrid two weeks ago just before Victoria, 30, announced that she was pregnant, with the baby expected in March.



NO SMILES! David and Victoria Beckham pictured recently.

The couple have been putting on a brave face to mask the problems in their five-year marriage.

But friends and family are worried about the effect their private battles are having on themselves and their boys Brooklyn, five and two-year-old Romeo.

Victoria's friends are also worried about her physical and emotional stability in her vulnerable state of pregnancy.

"She's been warned about the amount of flying she's been doing

between London and Madrid which doctors say isn't safe at this early stage of her pregnancy," said the source. "But she says she can't stand to be near David for long and has to get away from him to her family back home."

"She says he's become arrogant and vain. The word she uses most about him is 'yob'. She says he even walks with a football yob's swagger nowadays and she hates his tattoos which just add to it all."

"The tension between them, the constant screaming and crying is so stressful she loses her breath and

pletely off the rails when she said that and the row ended in Victoria crying so much that she started saying she has to get away from David for ever.

"She wasn't even watching him in the World Cup game against Austria. Instead she was at a restaurant in London."

The Beckhams' marriage has been getting increasingly shaky since David's £25million transfer from Manchester United to Real Madrid last summer.

In September last year, News of the World revealed how the cracks were beginning to appear with Beckham living in Spain and Victoria staying behind in England to try to revive her pop career.

At the time, Becks told a close pal: "I love her more than anything but things are ropery at the moment. It's as if we're living separate lives."

A week later, Becks was pictured cuddling up to his PA Rebecca Loos at an exclusive Madrid nightclub. Later that night he bedded the brunette for the first time. At Christmas, The Real Beckhams TV fly-on-the-wall documentary had to be censored to stop the public seeing their persistent fighting.

In April, the News of the World exposed Beckham's secret affair with Loos. We also revealed how Becks had a fling with barrister's daughter Sarah Marbeck, 29 while still at Manchester United.

Since then, although the Beckhams have tried to present a united front in public, their relationship has gone downhill fast as their public image.

Pop svengali Simon Fuller who gave the Spice Girls their launchpad to glory believes the troubled marriage is reflecting badly on the rest of his clients, including pop stars Will Young and Rachel Stevens.

A Fuller insider said: "Simon is concerned that the Beckham brand has far from worked and hasn't spoken to Posh for months. He thinks it's damaging his company as it shows him in a bad light."

Posh also shares his worries about their image.

"Money is her big drive and because of their expenditure she's admitted she is not worth as much as is made out. Which is why she and David will go on trying to convince the public that the relationship is just as perfect as the day they got married."

"But the charade might not go on for much longer if they decide to go ahead with a trial separation."

"Apparently David went com-



BALLET! Real Madrid's French superstar Zinedine Zidane controls the ball while he is suspended in the air against Numancia at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on September 11.

## Primera Liga

# Real thank Beckham

## Football

REUTERS, Madrid

A classy free kick from Real Madrid's David Beckham and smart goals from Barcelona new boys Ludovic Giuly and Henrik Larsson allowed both teams to maintain their 100 percent records in the Primera Liga on Saturday.

The England captain sent the ball sailing over the wall and then dipping sharply into the far corner from 23 metres to give Real a 1-0 win over promoted Numancia at the Bernabeu.

French midfielder Giuly paved the way for Barca's authoritative 2-0 victory over Sevilla at a rain-soaked Nou Camp with his second goal in two games when his sharp close-range shot deflected off the keeper and into the goal 10 minutes before halftime.

Former Celtic striker Larsson opened his account for the Catalans with a well-taken second, bursting into the area to volley home a fine cross from Portugal midfielder Deco midway through the second half.

Barca, who were without influential Brazilian forward Ronaldinho who was rested, had a host of further chances to extend their lead but African Player of the Year Samuel Eto'o was unable to provide the finishing touches to several slick attacking moves.

Earlier, champions Valencia relied on substitute Miguel Angel Angulo to spark a fight-back that lifted them from two goals down at the break to claim a 2-2 draw at Athletic Bilbao.

Barca lead the fledgling table on goal difference from Real with six points each from two games, while Valencia follow in third two points behind.

Real, who lost their last four league matches at the Bernabeu at the end of last season, made a confident start against their modest opponents and were only denied an early lead by some sharp saves from Numancia keeper Alvaro Nunez.

But Beckham, playing his 50th official game for Real, broke the deadlock with his outstanding 17th minute free kick, his fifth goal from a set-piece since joining the club last season.

Real still appeared to be suffering from many of the same problems that resulted in such a disappointing campaign last season as they settled on their lead and let Numancia back into the match after the break.

Raul continued his miserable run of form when he tripped over his own feet after being put in the clear by Ronaldo in the first half and then missed a close-range chance after good work by the lively Luis Figo.

The Real skipper was substituted by Michael Owen 18 minutes from time, but the former Liverpool striker also missed a great chance

when he was set up by Figo and ended up firing the ball straight at the keeper.

Valencia appeared to have one eye on next week's Champions League opener against Anderlecht as they gave Bilbao a two-goal lead at San Mames, striker Ismael Urzaiz finishing off a slick counter-attack in the 15th minute and defender Andoni Iraola adding another from the penalty spot.

Claudio Ranieri's side eventually came to life in the second half and pulled a goal back when Italy striker Marco Di Vaio rifled home after appearing to control a clever long pass from Angulo with his arm.

Angulo then grabbed one for himself when he drilled home 11 minutes later after a neat headed assist from Argentine midfielder Pablo Aimar to earn his side a valuable away point.

TOP SIX						
Standings in the Spanish League after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):						
Barcelona	2	2	0	4	0	6
Real Madrid	2	2	0	2	0	6
Valencia	2	1	1	0	4	3
Real Zaragoza	1	1	0	3	1	3
Athletic Madrid	1	1	0	2	0	3
Sevilla	2	1	0	1	2	3

## Serie A

# Draw opening for Milan giants

## Football

REUTERS, Milan

Italian champions AC Milan and title challengers Inter Milan were both held to 2-2 draws against unfancied opponents as the Serie A season got off to a surprising start on Saturday.

Milan, who played with 10 men after their Brazilian goalkeeper Dida was sent off in the seventh minute, drew at home to promoted Livorno.

The visitors, playing their first game in the top flight for 55 years, twice came from behind with Cristiano Lucarelli's pair cancelling out two goals from Milan's Clarence Seedorf.

Inter Milan needed a second half equaliser from Brazilian Adriano to get a 2-2 draw at Chievo Verona.

Milan dominated last season and set off the new campaign in perfect style when Dutchman Seedorf put them ahead in just the third minute.

But any hopes of an easy three points quickly vanished when four minutes after the goal Dida brought down Luca Vigiani inside the area and referee Tiziano Pieri awarded a penalty and dismissed the Milan keeper.

Livorno-born Lucarelli converted the penalty to bring the promoted side level.

Milan continued to dominate though and Portuguese midfielder Rui Costa forced a great save out of Livorno keeper Marco Amelia just before the break.

Two minutes after the restart Seedorf struck again, providing a cool finish after Brazilian Kaka had burst through from the half-way line.

Despite being their numerical disadvantage the champions looked well set for a win but the impressive Lucarelli grabbed a well-earned point for the new boys with a 67th minute free-kick through the wall.

Lucarelli, who has won the hearts

of the Livorno fans by his refusal to accept lucrative offers from elsewhere, thought he had a hat-trick and a winner but his header in the 87th minute was disallowed as the ball had gone out of play.

Adriano's powerful drive saved new Inter coach Roberto Mancini from an embarrassing start but he will still be disappointed not to have taken the full three points.

Inter, featuring new signings Edgar Davids and Juan Veron in midfield, went ahead in the 15th minute when Dejan Stankovic took advantage of a mistake by Chievo's Brazilian defender Cesar.

Cesar's attempted chest back to his keeper Luca Marchegiani was easily intercepted by Stankovic who slotted past the Chievo goalkeeper with confidence.

Christian Vieri then went close to doubling the lead when he volleyed just wide after being picked out by the lively Adriano.

But in the 28th minute Franco Semioli brought Chievo level, chesting home a cross from Daniele Franceschini.

Nine minutes later Sergio Pellissier provided a clinical finish to a flowing move to put the Verona team in front.

Vieri then missed a great chance for Inter shortly before the interval when, unchallenged, he headed a Ze Maria cross over the bar from just six metres.

Adriano's 20-metre strike, after a smart exchange with Vieri, put Inter back on level terms three minutes after the re-start.

He pushed the ball inside to Vieri who laid it off for the Brazilian who gave Marchegiani no chance.

The rest of Serie A gets underway on Sunday with Fiorentina making their return to the top flight at Roma.



AC Milan players (L-R) Kaka, Cafu, Clarence Seedorf and Andriy Shevchenko celebrate one of Seedorf's two goals against Livorno at the San Siro Stadium in Milan on September 11.

## Bundesliga

# Stuttgart surge ahead

## Football

AFP, Berlin

VfB Stuttgart are the new Bundesliga leaders after a nervy 2-0 win over SV Hamburg moved them into pole position while Bayer Leverkusen and Werder Bremen succumbed to surprise defeats.

A Silvio Meissner goal on 16 minutes and a late strike from substitute Imre Szabics helped Matthias Sammer's Stuttgart to reach the top rung of the Bundesliga ladder - although they need only remember last season to ward off any complacency.

Under Felix Magath Stuttgart went 15 games unbeaten at the start

of the last campaign but slumped late in the season to finish fourth and outside of the Champions League spots.

While Leverkusen and Bremen slipped up Magath's new club Bayern Munich climbed to fifth with a 1-0 victory over Arminia Bielefeld.

It was Bayern's first home win of the season with Dutch international Roy Makaay banking his second goal of the season on 26 minutes.

Makaay produced a cheeky nutmeg before rifling a low shot into the bottom corner.

Leverkusen face the mighty Real Madrid in the Champions League on Wednesday but their preparations took a turn for the worse as little Mainz scored a 2-0 win.

shadow of the team that won the German title last season crashing a 3-1 defeat at Borussia Monchengladbach which will have their Champions League opponents Inter Milan purring at the thought of exposing their defensive weaknesses.

Elsewhere Borussia Dortmund and VfL Bochum halted the spoils in a 2-2 topsy-turvy derby draw at the Ruhr Stadium.

Schalke 04's nightmare start to the 2004/05 season continued with a 3-0 reverse at VfL Wolfsburg.

After signing Marcelo Bordon, Miladen Krstajic and Ailton, suspended for the next four matches, in the close season Schalke were tipped as dark horses for the title.

lost three out of their first four matches and languish fourth from bottom.

In contrast Wolfsburg have reached the dizzy heights of second with an impressive nine point haul.

TOP SIX						
German football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):						
Stuttgart	4	3	1	0	10	5
Wolfsburg	4	3	0	1	7	3
Leverkusen	4	2	1	1	8	6
Mainz 05	4	2	1	1	7	6
Bayern	4	2	1	1	5	7
Bremen	4	2	0	2	7	5

## Premiership

# Gunners go on and on

## Football

REUTERS, London

Champions Arsenal extended their record unbeaten Premier League run to 45 games with a 3-0 win at Fulham on Saturday but title rivals Chelsea were held 0-0 at Aston Villa and Manchester United scraped a 2-2 draw at Bolton Wanderers.

Arsenal lived dangerously in the first half but floored Fulham with a three-goal blast in 10 minutes, courtesy of Fredrik Ljungberg, a Zat Knight own goal and one from Spanish substitute Jose Antonio Reyes.

Victory left Arsenal two points clear at the top after Chelsea lost their 100 percent record, with boss Jose Mourinho furious at referee Rob Styles for refusing his team a penalty and booking his Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba for diving.

Liverpool cruised to a 3-0 win over West Bromwich Albion, while skipper Alan Shearer scored once as Newcastle United beat Blackburn Rovers 3-0 and Middlesbrough were 2-1 winners over Birmingham City.

Arsenal rode their luck in the first half at Craven Cottage, with Fulham having a penalty denied for an Ashley Cole challenge on Andy Cole and a goal disallowed for Collins John.

The champions, who also had a spot-kick appeal turned down for Moritz Volz's challenge on striker Thierry Henry, continued to live dangerously after the break.

But Ljungberg settled nerves with one goal and pressing Knight into another before Reyes maintained his record of scoring in every game, making it six goals in six appearances.

Victory gave Arsene Wenger's side 15 points from five games and an ideal lift before opening their Champions League campaign against PSV Eindhoven at Highbury on Tuesday.

By contrast, Mourinho was seething after Chelsea stayed second on 13 points due to a controversial decision by Styles, who booked Drogba after what appeared a clear trip by Ecuador defender Ulises De la Cruz in the 80th minute.

Asked if Chelsea thought his team should have had a spot-kick, Mourinho told Sky Sports: "Yes, and the three points. "A big, big, penalty in the country of football is not a penalty... it's ridiculous," said Mourinho.

Villa boss David O'Leary backed a spot-kick, saying: "Take the penalty away, and it was a fair result for both sides."

Ninth in the table, Manchester United are nine points adrift of the champions just five games into the season.

New Argentine defender Gabriel Heinze scored on his debut, having missed the start of the season on Olympic duty in Greece, putting Alex Ferguson's men in front just before the break.

Midfielder Kevin Nolan levelled for Bolton just after the re-start and Ferdinand looked to have got the points until United grabbed their equaliser in the second minute of stoppage time.

The draw meant Bolton stay third on 10 points, ahead of both Middlesbrough and Everton, who won 1-0 at Manchester City, on goal difference. Everton scorer Tim Cahill was sent off for over-celebrating his goal on the hour.

TOP SIX						
English Premiership table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):						
Arsenal	5	5	0	0	19	5
Chelsea	5	4	1	0	6	13
Bolton	5	3	1	1	9	10
Middlesbrough	5	3	1	1	11	9
Everton	5	3	1	1	7	10
Tottenham	4	2	2	0	4	8

## Maradona in hospital

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona was taken to hospital for a time on Saturday with breathing problems, but was then sent back to a drug treatment center and his life was not in immediate danger, a family member said.

"From what I know, he's fine. They did some tests because he was having some trouble breathing but that's it," Damian Lopez, Maradona's nephew, told local radio.

The 43-year-old former Argentine captain was rushed into intensive care in April with heart problems and in May his family forced him to enter a psychiatric clinic.

Maradona had looked somewhat healthier in recent interviews, but photographs taken this week appeared to show that his weight has ballooned again as he awaits authorisation to leave Argentina and continue treatment in Cuba.

A court has given Maradona the go-ahead but his family has not yet signed documents allowing him to leave.

"It can't be said that his life is at risk," Carlos Naset, one of Maradona's psychiatrists, told local radio. "But his weight has gone up again, and that puts his heart at risk."

Maradona has made Cuba his second home in recent years, saying the island offers a respite from the media and fan frenzy in Europe and South America.

Maradona is regarded as one of the most gifted players in the history of soccer and led Argentina to victory at the 1986 World Cup finals.

He says he has been fighting drug addiction for much of the last 20 years.

## Ligue 1 PSG jinx continues

REUTERS, Paris

Paris St Germain failed again to secure their first win of the season ahead of their Champions League opener against Chelsea while unsung Toulouse move to the top of Ligue 1 on Saturday.

Olympique Lyon and Monaco, who will host Manchester United and host Liverpool respectively in their opening Champions League group stage matches next week, registered morale-boosting wins over Stade Rennes and Racing Strasbourg.

Champions Lyon won 2-1 at Rennes and Monaco, losing European Cup finalists in May, beat Strasbourg 3-1, while PSG came from behind to draw 1-1 at modest Istres.

Toulouse beat AC Ajaccio 3-1 at home to move into the lead on goal difference from Metz, held 0-0 at home by 10-man Girondins Bordeaux. Toulouse, Metz, Bastia, who beat AJ Auxerre 1-0, and Lyon all have 11 points from five matches. Fifth-placed Monaco have 10.

After five games, PSG are 14th on three points, only two ahead of bottom-placed Ajaccio.

Monaco were clinical in their win over Racing Strasbourg. They opened the scoring after only five minutes through Emmanuel Adebayor.

Strasbourg striker Mickael Pagis sidestepped the defence and slipped the ball inside the left post with a low shot from the right to equalise but Mohamed Kallon restored Monaco's lead when he slotted home a penalty in the 58th minute.

Argentine striker Javier Saviola sealed victory four minutes from time, scoring his first goal for Monaco since joining them on loan from Barcelona just before the closure of the transfer window.

TOP SIX						
French league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):						
Toulouse	5	3	2	0	11	5
Metz	5	3	2	0	7	3
Bastia	5	3	2	0	6	3
Lyon	5	3	2	0	6	3
Monaco	5	3	1	1	7	4
Auxerre	5	3	0	2	6	9

## Europe's elite give thumbs up to FIFA plan

REUTERS, London

Europe's top clubs have withdrawn their opposition to FIFA's new-look Club World Championship and agreed to play in the six-club tournament.

World soccer's governing body announced early this year that the annual championship would start in December 2005 with all six confederations sending their champion club to Tokyo.

The G-14 group of top European clubs immediately announced their strong opposition to the idea which, it said, ran against the clubs' policy of trying to ease the workload on players.

UEFA, European soccer's ruling body, said on Friday that its 102-strong European Club Forum had agreed to the championship although the team concerned would not necessarily be the winners of the Champions League.