

PREVIEW: PREMIERSHIP

Super Sunday

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea and Arsenal will be looking to strike a significant psychological blow against each other when the two London giants clash at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

Jose Mourinho's champions had the better of the teams' Community Shield encounter two weeks ago as a Didier Drogba double helped the Blues to a 2-1 victory.

Arsenal dominated the ball for long periods of that game though, and have not lost to Chelsea in the league for 10 years.

But young Swiss defender Philippe Senderos will have to find a way to halt the rampaging Cote d'Ivoire striker if Arsenal are to upset the odds and deal an early blow to Chelsea's hopes of retaining the title.

Senderos was led a merry dance by Drogba in Cardiff's Millennium stadium during the Community Shield and was brushed aside like a flimsy twig for both of the former Marseille man's goals.

Chelsea should be boosted by new Ghanaian signing Michael Essien from French champions Lyon but he may have a hard task on his hands just winning a place in the side although Eidur Gudjohnson could be the man to make way in midfield.

But Mourinho is already facing the biggest crisis of his managerial career at Chelsea as the seeds of discontent are starting to grow and flower.

At the end of last season, centre-back William Gallas complained bitterly at being used as a makeshift left back, but having regained his place in the centre of defence at the start of this season, now it is Ricardo Carvalho's turn to speak out against his manager.

Earlier this week, Carvalho told Portuguese newspaper A Bola: "I want to know why I didn't play."

"I don't understand why Mourinho said I have to wait for another opportunity to play this season. "It's incomprehensible that I will become third choice."

That angered manager Mourinho who responded in an interview with Record newspaper, saying: "Ricardo Carvalho seems to have problems understanding things, maybe he should have an IQ test."

"Ricardo has worked with me for four years and I do not understand these quotes, he probably needs to see a doctor."

"We can't have this kind of thing at Chelsea."

With Essien's arrival and the return of Hernan Crespo to the first-team fold, competition for places will get ever tougher and the number of disgruntled reserves is likely to increase as well.

Meanwhile, Arsenal forward Thierry Henry has signalled out fellow French international Claude Makelele as Chelsea's key figure.

Henry said: "I respect the guy and whoever loves Chelsea should respect what Makelele does."

"A lot of people talk about Terry, Lampard, Robben but for me Makelele just edges it a bit."

With the two heavyweights playing each other, the weekend's big winners could be Manchester United if they can overcome Aston Villa at Old Trafford in the Saturday lunch-time game.

United looked like stealing an early march on their rivals last week until Arsenal's late brace against 10-man Newcastle and Crespo's last minute wonder strike against Wigan allowed last year's top two to scrape home with opening day victories.

The Red Devils have opened in the best form of the three major title rivals, already powering past Hungary's Debrecen 3-0 in the Champions League qualifying round and then winning 2-0 at Everton.

With strike pair Ruud Van

Nistelrooy and Wayne Rooney already off the mark in Europe and at home, United look set to avoid the pitfalls of last season where they dropped nine points from their first five games and found themselves already playing catch-up in September.

European Champions Liverpool will be hoping to secure their first win of the season and keep pace with the front-runners as they entertain Sunderland at Anfield.

The Reds have been linked with a move for Bayern Munich's wide man Hasan Salihamidzic this week as well as a loan move for former striker Michael Owen but they will once again rely on the drive of Steven Gerrard to inspire them, along with rejuvenated target man Fernando Morientes who has enjoyed a strong start to the season.

In the weekend's other games, newly-promoted West Ham will be hoping to build on their good start with a trip to Newcastle, Tottenham play Middlesbrough and West Brom will parade new signing Nathan Ellington as they tackle Portsmouth at home.

Fulham travel to Blackburn with both sides looking for their first win, Wigan are at Charlton hoping to make up for their last gasp heart-ache against Chelsea last week, Birmingham take on Manchester City and Everton have a trip to Bolton.

FIXTURES

Saturday (1400 GMT unless stated): Birmingham v Manchester City (1615 GMT), Blackburn v Fulham, Charlton v Wigan, Liverpool v Sunderland, Manchester Utd v Aston Villa (1145 GMT), Newcastle v West Ham, Tottenham v Middlesbrough, West Brom v Portsmouth Sunday: Bolton v Everton (1230 GMT), Chelsea v Arsenal (1500 GMT)



PHOTO: AFP

FUTURE OF MILAN! French kids pose during the "Junior Camp" organised by the Italian giants AC Milan during a week in Lesigny, east of Paris on Thursday. Participants in Milan Junior Camps all over the world can be selected by the technical staff of AC Milan to play football together in the colours of the rossoneri at AC Milan's facilities as well as participate in halftime events at San Siro during an AC Milan match during the "Milan Junior Camp Day".

Ronaldo back for qualifier

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Real Madrid star Ronaldo will make his return to the national team for World Cup qualifiers when he was named by coach Carlos Alberto Parreira on Thursday in his 22-man squad for the September 4 tie against Chile.

Ronaldo was left out of Brazil's 4-1 win over Paraguay and 3-1 defeat to Argentina for having asked to be omitted from the June 15-29 Confederations Cup in Germany for personal reasons.

But he returned to international action during Wednesday's 1-1 friendly draw against Croatia in Split.

Barcelona star Ronaldinho and Bayer Leverkusen defender Roque Junior will both miss the vital qualifier because of suspension.

Parreira has kept faith with midfielder Santos Ricardinho who scored the equaliser in Split, but he expressed concern about Ronaldo and Adriano after Wednesday's match.

"Ronaldo and Adriano weren't at their normal level. The game against Chile is only in a fortnight and I hope that they'll be in better physical condition and more motivated after training for their respective clubs," said the Brazil coach.

The reigning world champions stand second in the South America World Cup qualifying group zone on 27 points, 4 points behind Argentina after 15 of 18 matches.

They need three more points and a win against Chile would see them qualify for next year's finals in Germany.

Chile are sixth, 11 points behind Argentina, with the top four teams qualifying for the finals in Germany and the fifth team going into a playoff against the winner of the Oceania group.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Dida (AC Milan/ITA), Julio Cesar (Inter Milan/ITA) Defenders: Cafu (AC Milan/ITA), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid/ESP), Cincinno (Saul Paulo/BRA), Gustavo Nery (Corinthians), Lucio (Bayern Munich/GER), Juan (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Alex Rodrigo (PSV Eindhoven/NED), Luisao (Benfica/POR). Midfielders: Kaka (Milan AC/ITA), Juninho Pernambucano (Lyon/FRA), Ze Roberto (Bayern Munich/GER), Emerson (Juventus/ITA), Renato (Sevilla/ESP), Gilberto Silva (Arsenal/ENG), Ricardinho (Santos), Julio Baptista (Real Madrid/ESP). Strikers: Ronaldo (Real Madrid/ESP), Adriano (Inter Milan/ITA), Robi

Cairns comes

FROM PAGE 12 national coach after the loss. However, Cairns believed that Zimbabwe would not be stripped of Test status no matter how dismal their performances were.

"The political side of things will mean that they'll retain their Test status, I believe. It's difficult to argue against that because you want the game to live in all corners of the world," said Cairns quoted in a report on stuff.co.nz.

"But when you're getting performances like this, it sort of devalues it a little bit."

Cairns, who has retired from Test cricket, will join New Zealand for the one-day series beginning on August 24. Andre Adams, Craig McMillan and Jeetan Patel, an uncapped off-spinner, will also join the one-day squad.

Warne's new weapon

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Shane Warne has adopted the slogan "finding a way" for Australia's crucial fourth Test at Trent Bridge starting on Thursday. Warne, who is the leading wicket-taker in the series with 20, is desperate to discover a method to sweep past England after they have run over his side in the past two Tests.

Heading into Trent Bridge with the contest at one-all, Warne told the Herald Sun his opponents currently had the form and mental advantage, but Australia could lift.

"You've just got to find a way," he told the paper.

"Find a way to get back in to the game, find a way to build a partnership, find a way to bowling partnerships, find a way to catch a ball, find a way to stop it. All those little things

that add up to putting in a good performance."

Warne said Australia had given England a boost by dropping



SHANE WARNE

catches, mis-fielding and not hitting the same areas when bowling, and

he expects improvement, especially in the first 30 overs of each innings. "You're only as good as your next game," he said.

"You're only one innings away or one game away from being back in form. So in this next Test it takes Gilly to come out and smash a 100, Hayden at the top of the order get 100, one or two of these guys to come out and take 'em on."

On his final Ashes tour, Warne, who split from his wife Simone before the first Test, said his three children were his inspiration.

"They're the ones that I can just feel inside me, they're the ones stirring me on," he said.

"I have some pretty sad and pretty ordinary days and I have to go out there and do my job."

Warne has done magnificently on the field with his wickets coming at an average of 20.90, and he also has 204 runs at 34.00 to be third on Australia's list.

Hewitt, Safin in last eight

AFP, Cincinnati

Lleyton Hewitt and Marat Safin steamed into the quarter-finals of the 2.45-million-dollar ATP Cincinnati Masters here Thursday, with Safin determined to put a recovering knee out of mind on court.

Playing his first event since Wimbledon after undergoing therapy in Italy in place of surgery, the fourth-seeded Russian plans on playing himself into form.

The reigning Australian Open champion got through a difficult opening game before routing Dominik Hrbaty 6-0, 6-3, winning the first eight games before the Slovak had a look-in.

Third seed Hewitt continued to patch up his game after a stomach illness last week, picking up his place at the expense of Croatia's Mario Ancic 6-1, 6-4.

Individuals

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Prince was also touched by Alok Kapali's effort although the batsman could not perform.

"He had some good starts but failed to capitalise on them. But I must say he tried very, very hard but sometimes luck deserts you no matter how hard you work."

Captain Shahriar Nafees Ahmed had a good trip with the bat. He was however not too perturbed with the fact that the A side could not win any of the three-dayers.

"Looking at our results, you might say it was a bad tour but from a cricket education point, this tour had immense value. We learned a lot and should be better players because of the experience. We also realised that we need to work a lot on our second innings batting."

Aussies under

FROM PAGE 12

is an exceptional leg-spinner but not unplayable."

Thorpe, who earned 100 Test caps but never played in a winning Ashes side, retired from international cricket after being left out of the squad for the first Test at Lord's.

And he confirmed that he would not change his decision, even if the current side suffered an injury.

"England have got enough players in their pool -- I have retired now, and that is it. Your life moves on," he said.

Despite the selection of Kevin Pietersen, which prompted his decision, Thorpe insists the selectors have already been vindicated with the South African-born player flourishing in the Test arena.

"The selectors have made their decision and they will be happy with the way things have gone -- you can't argue."

"Players come and go, and the game carries on. I think it's easier when you have had a fulfilling career and when your life is in a good place."

"They will be chuffed with the way the side has responded to the challenge of Australia, and I wish them all well."

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea finally got their man on Friday signing highly-rated Ghana midfielder Michael Essien from French champions Lyon.

The English champions had been chasing the 22-year-old Essien throughout the summer, but Lyon at first refused to allow him to leave.

But once it became clear that he was determined to join up at Stamford Bridge, Lyon relented and it was just a question of completing the relevant paperwork after that.

That was achieved this week with Essien passing a medical and agreeing personal terms. The fee, according to Essien's agent, was 24.4 million pounds (36 million euros).

Coach Jose Mourinho said that he had been looking for a player like Essien to finish off what he said was a "very, very strong squad."

"We believe he is the best we can get for that position. He can play every position in the midfield, but he will have to fight for his place."

"He is young, he has a lot of ambition and he has enjoyed success in France."

"I know the questions will be around the money Chelsea has spent, but that is the reality of modern football."

Essien said that it had been his ambition to play in the English Premiership and that he had been delighted Chelsea had made a move for him.

"I don't think it will be a problem for me to fit in," he said. "I speak the language and also I speak French, so it's going to be easy for me."

"But it's going to be a tough competition for places here and I am ready to fight for my place."

Essien began his career in local club Liberty in his native Ghana and

came to the attention of European scouts when he played in the Under-17 World Cup in 1999 in New Zealand. He transferred to Corsica side Bastia in September 2000.

In 2001 he took part in the World Youth Championship in Argentina, and made his Ghana full team debut in the 2002 African Nations Cup.

Despite interest from Manchester United Essien moved to Lyon in July 2003 in an 11-million-euro deal after failing to get a permit to work in England.

Playing a defensive midfield role he helped Lyon collect their third and fourth consecutive league titles and in the process was named 2005 French league player of the year.

Last month the Ghanaian declared that he would "go on strike" against Lyon because of the club's refusal to trade him to Chelsea.

At Stamford Bridge he will join Jose Mourinho's galaxy of high-profile, big-earning stars that include England stars Frank Lampard, John Terry and another new signing Shaun Wright-Phillips, Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba and French international midfielder Claude Makelele.

Drogba, who joined from Marseille for 24 million pounds (35 million euros) a year ago, had been the club's previous record signing.

Essien will link up in midfield with Lampard and Makelele with Mourinho looking to defend their Premiership crown and add the European Champions League title.

Chelsea surprisingly fell in the semi-finals last year to Liverpool who went on to win the trophy.

Mourinho said it was unlikely that Essien would line up against Arsenal in this weekend's Premiership showdown as his work permit papers had yet to be completed.

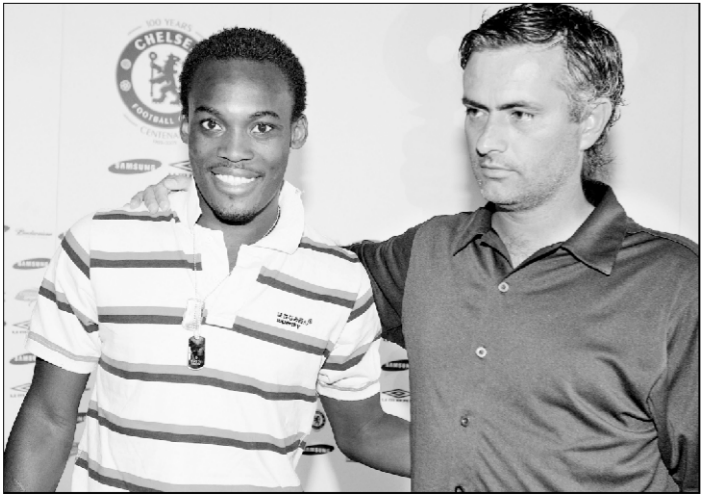


PHOTO: AFP

Ghana's highly-rated midfielder Michael Essien and Chelsea Manager Jose Mourinho (R) pose after a press conference at Cobham, Surrey to officially introduce the 22-year-old player on Friday.



PHOTO: FILE

Michael Owen with wife Louise (L) and daughter Gemma Rose.