

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.

Bu 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 make-shift 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 heartache 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 (1500GMT)

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