

# Curtain raiser today

## Football

AFP, London

Sir Alex Ferguson will sacrifice the chance to land a psychological blow against Chelsea because he believes it is more important that Manchester United are ready for the start of their title defence.

Ferguson will leave out his three new signings and may rest several other stars for Sunday's Community Shield clash at Wembley to avoid any unwanted injuries just a week before the Premiership begins.

Owen Hargreaves and Anderson are still catching up with their new teammates after injury and international commitments respectively, so neither will be risked, while Nani has not been named in the squad for the annual clash between the champions and FA Cup winners.

Carlos Tevez won't feature either despite the resolution of the legal wrangle over his transfer from West Ham because he doesn't officially join until next week.

The bitter memories of last season's FA Cup final defeat at the same venue will provide plenty of motivation for United.

But Ferguson is more concerned that the players who won him a first league title for four years are in prime

condition for the Premiership opener against Reading on August 12.

"It is always difficult to assess the importance of this match because we have to use it as a stepping stone for next week," he said.

"Nevertheless, I don't think you can avoid the fact it will be competitive. That is bound to happen when you are playing against a team you expect to be competing for top honours."

"We all know it is essential to have a good preparation but I just want to get started right now."

"We have a new team, and, including Tevez, we have made four good acquisitions. It is difficult to say how we compare with everyone else but there is no doubt we expect to be better."

The first skirmish of the season between the leading contenders for the Premiership will be something of aphony war as Chelsea also come into the match at less than 100 percent.

Jose Mourinho will be without injured trio Michael Ballack, Wayne Bridge and Salomon Kalou and the Portuguese coach must also decide whether it is worth risking Frank Lampard and John Terry.

The England duo, who both suffered a broken toe in pre-season, are so competitive that both try to persuade Mourinho to let them play through the pain barrier. But it would be foolhardy to expose them to further damage in a

relatively meaningless match.

Mourinho is likely to give a first outing to the 4-3-3 formation that served Chelsea so well in his first two seasons at Stamford Bridge.

The move represents something of a gamble because Didier Drogba, who flourished alongside a strike-partner last season, will now plough a lone furrow up front.

Mourinho hopes new signing Florent Malouda and Joe Cole will supply plenty of ammunition for Drogba.

He would also like to see England left-back Ashley Cole reproduce more of the rampaging attacks that were his trademark at Arsenal.

Cole should play a full part on Sunday and insists he is determined to improve on his first injury-hit campaign with the Blues.

"I came to Chelsea and wanted to prove that I could play," he told the club's website. "I didn't want to let the manager and the players down when I needed an operation right at the start of the season."

"I had restricted movement and could really move the ankle anywhere. I'll never make excuses but in a way it wasn't worth me playing because I couldn't kick a ball."

"But hopefully this season I can prove to people that it was my ankle and not just me."

## Tevez set for friendly bow

## Football

AFP, Manchester

Carlos Tevez could play his first Manchester United match in the humble surroundings of Dunfermline in Scotland next week after his protracted transfer from West Ham was finally settled.

The 23-year-old Argentine striker underwent his medical before United boss Sir Alex Ferguson put him through his paces in training.

Now Ferguson will decide whether to send Tevez to Glentoran in Northern Ireland or Dunfermline on Wednesday for pre-arranged friendlies with a split squad.

"We are delighted," Ferguson told MUTV.

"Carlos trained with us this morning and he did very well. He was very enthusiastic about the situation, so he will train again on Saturday."

"Then, we have a couple of games on Wednesday; in Belfast and Dunfermline. He will be involved in one of those and play the full game."

Tevez's debut will mark the start of a two-year loan period, which gives United the option to complete a permanent transfer at the end.

It will also mark the end of a long-running saga which Ferguson expected to complete a month ago, only to find his hopes stall amid the row over Tevez's third-party owner.

Providing Tevez suffers no adverse reaction to his debut, he should be involved when United open their Premier League title defence against Reading on August 12, his first appearance at Old Trafford since scoring the goal on the final day of last season which kept West Ham up.

The two-year loan deal is likely to cost United around five million pounds a year and a statement from Tevez's representative said: "Carlos is looking forward to being a Manchester United player and his ambition is close to being achieved."

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