

McClaren to visit Beckham

Football

AFP, London

England coach Steve McClaren is to meet up with David Beckham in Washington on Thursday in a bid to check up on the midfielder's fitness.

Beckham, formerly of Real Madrid, is yet to make his Major League Soccer debut for Los Angeles Galaxy after failing to shrug off the ankle injury he aggravated on his England comeback in June.

The 32-year-old is likely to miss

Barca launch site in Chinese

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona has launched a Chinese-language version of its official website and will soon unveil editions in Arabic and Korean, the Spanish giants said Monday.

The club, currently on a three-game tour of China and Japan, had up until now made its internet site available in Spanish, Catalan, English and Japanese.

Barcelona set up an experimental version of its website in Chinese three years ago which contained only the translation of a few items.

The new site offers all the news and historical information regarding the storied Catalan club available in the other languages as well as specific information directed at the Chinese market, Barcelona said on its website.

The Arabic language site "will be launched in a few week's time and will bring the club into contact with the huge market in the Arabic speaking world," it said. The Korean version of the site will come later, it added.

Barcelona said last week that it had over 100 million fans in Asia. The number of its supporters in China went up six-fold in the last three years in China and seven-fold in the same period in Japan, it said.

Manchester United and Chelsea are among leading British clubs who have spearheaded moves into Asia, where they profit from major merchandising opportunities.

Barcelona defeated Beijing Guoan 3-0 on Sunday in the first exhibition match of its Asian tour.

The club will face Yokohama in Japan on Wednesday and Mission Hills Invitation XI, a squad made up of players from Kitchee FC and Happy Valley FC, in Hong Kong on Friday before returning to Spain.

Thursday's encounter with DC United and is doubtful for England's friendly with Germany on August 22.

McClaren, speaking to reporters in London on Monday, said: "I know David has been struggling with injury and has not played yet but I intend to go over and have a chat with him to see how he is."

"I definitely need to speak with his coach (Frank Yallop) and the director of football (Alexei Lalas) as well, but I also need to watch an MLS game in the flesh and have a look at the standard."

"A lot of people have been writing things about the standard of football over there. But I need to see it myself and make that judgement rather than other people."

After he returns from the United States, McClaren plans to see four games in the first five days of the

new English Premier League season.

Starting at West Ham on Saturday, McClaren will then head to Manchester United, Tottenham and Portsmouth, casting his eye over as many potential squad members as he can before announcing his squad to face Germany a week on Friday.

"The good thing is I can make the trip to see David without missing anything back here," he added. "I will be back for the opening games on Saturday and I will also be at matches on Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday."

"This week was the best chance I had to get over. So, while I hope David will be involved, at least I will get a chance to speak with him."

Bayern confirm Larrauri arrival

AFP, Burghausen

Bayern Munich's manager Uli Hoeness confirmed on Monday night that 13-year-old Peruvian child prodigy Pier Larrauri will join the German giants, but insisted no contract had been signed.

"The story was exaggerated: he will simply come to us and play for one of our youth sides this season, that is all," Hoeness told German television channel ARD at half-time in Bayern's German Cup tie at Burghausen.

"We did not sign a contract and no money has been exchanged."

"We will see at the end of this year if he is good enough to continue at Bayern," said Hoeness.

The teenager prodigy has been compared to Argentinian Lionel Messi and came into contact with Bayern via Peruvian international Claudio Pizarro who left Munich this summer for Chelsea.

Carragher return 'unlikely'

INTERNET, undated

Danny Murphy believes former Liverpool teammate Jamie Carragher will stick to his guns and keep himself out of the international reckoning despite England manager Steve McClaren's attempts to persuade him to return.

Carragher quit the national team because he felt McClaren was overlooking him and Murphy, now with Tottenham but a former Reds teammate of Carragher, does not expect him to change his mind.

Murphy told talkSPORT: "I'd be surprised to be honest. I've spoken to him a couple of times recently. I'm personally in agreement with what he's done for lots of different reasons, mostly the one's he's given."

"In terms of now, is he going to be used because there's a crisis or an emergency? I think as a player it would maybe make him feel, or would make me feel if I was in that situation, a bit like, 'Oh, you need me because there's nobody else.'"

"Also, if he does go back in and he doesn't play to his normal consistent level, he's leaving himself in for a hell of a battering from people. It's a very difficult one, I feel for him."

England recall for Sol?

Football

AFP, London

England coach Steve McClaren is ready to revive the international careers of Portsmouth duo Sol Campbell and David James.

Campbell, 32, has not played for England since the 2006 World Cup. But a fine debut season for Portsmouth last term led to speculation the central defender might be recalled by McClaren.

It didn't happen last season but the former Middlesbrough manager could yet turn to Campbell with England captain John Terry, Ledley King and Jonathan Woodgate all injured as he contemplates his side for the August 22 friendly against Germany.

Campbell can take heart from McClaren's treatment of David Beckham. Despite dropping the former captain in one of his first acts as England coach, McClaren insisted the midfielder's international career was not at an end.

To prove the point, he recalled the midfielder for the June friendly with Brazil and Euro 2008 qualifying win in Estonia.

Now, with England facing five key Euro 2008 qualifiers over the next three months, Campbell and James, routinely described by Pompey boss Harry Redknapp as the best goalkeeper in the Premiership although Tottenham's Paul Robinson is England No 1 at the moment, could play at the highest level once again.

McClaren is set to see both of them in action at Fratton Park when champions Manchester United arrive for a league fixture at south coast club Portsmouth's home ground on August 15 - two days before the England coach names his squad for the Germany match.

"You can't close the door on anyone in this job," McClaren told reporters during a youth football tournament at Wembley on Monday. "It would be silly and foolish of me to dismiss either Sol or David."

"Last season was a very good one for Sol and with (goalkeeper) Ben Foster being injured as well, I will certainly be going to watch Portsmouth."

"I have brought players back in the past and as long as players want to be involved with England, that is great."

Campbell's chances of an England recall to have been bolstered by the international retirement of Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher, tired of being picked for squads only to miss out on matches.

But McClaren said: "There is no way I want to lose him and keeping Jamie involved is my main aim at present."

England were lacklustre during a draw away to Israel in March and an uninspiring win over minnows Andorra.

Next month Israel and Russia, both currently ahead of England, find themselves fourth in their pool with only the top two sides qualifying for the 2008 finals in Austria and Switzerland.

Next month Israel and Russia, both currently ahead of England, come to Wembley for two qualification matches in the space of four days.

"I think things are looking positive," said McClaren. "The most important thing now is to get our best players on the pitch, fill the stadium, get the fans behind us and make Wembley a fortress."



PHOTO: AFP

A David Beckham fan displays her Beckham tattoo as she continues to wait for the England star to make his long awaited debut for Los Angeles Galaxy. Beckham sat out Galaxy's latest game against Toronto at the BMO field on Sunday.

Magpies keep buying

Football

AFP, Newcastle

Newcastle signed Spanish left-back Jose Enrique from Villarreal for 6.3 million pounds on Monday.

The 21-year-old, who has signed a five-year deal with the Premier League club, became Sam Allardyce's seventh pre-season signing.

Enrique, who will wear the number three shirt at St James' Park, said: "I believe very much in the manager at Newcastle United and I believe they are going to be one of the top teams."

He also told Newcastle's official website: "I met Sam for dinner and I was very happy to listen to his plans."

"He treated me very well and he understands me. He knows I have to get used to a lot of new things, like changes in culture and language, but he says he is going to

help me adapt to that."

"I know Newcastle already have players with a lot of character and players who are used to winning many things and playing in Europe like Michael Owen, Mark Viduka, Alan Smith and Obafemi Martins."

"It will also help me to have people like Nolberto Solano and Albert Luque to speak to. Albert says he is going to take care of me at Newcastle."

Enrique joined Viduka, Joey Barton, David Rozehnal, Geremi, Smith and Claudio Cacapa as a player at north-east side Newcastle.

Meanwhile Kieron Dyer could yet move to West Ham even though the east London club say they will not move from their 6 million pounds valuation of the England defender.

Dyer had been on the point after the clubs agreed a fee of 5 million pounds up front plus a further 1 million pounds depending on appearances.

Newcastle then decided they had under-valued the player and demanded a further 2 million pounds causing West Ham to pull out.

But the Hammers may be willing to pay 6 million pounds up front to revive the deal.

"In the end, we decided he was under-valued," said Allardyce of Dyer.

"We escalated the valuation to what we thought was realistic and West Ham did not want to roll with it. Kieron is back with us, a top player with a squad who are growing."

"Will it be difficult for Kieron? It's life, isn't it? He has got a contract. You sign it. The length of the contract means you are employed by an employer, something happens, it doesn't work, you come back and get on with it," he added.

"If anything else happens in terms of West Ham increasing their offer, then great. If they don't then clearly they don't value him as highly as we do."

Hammers hurt by Tevez saga

INTERNET, undated

West Ham chairman Eggert Magnusson worries that the club's reputation has been unfairly damaged by the Carlos Tevez transfer saga.

The club escaped with a £5.5million fine from the Premier League in April for breaching rules on third-party ownership in relation to Tevez and fellow Argentinian Javier Mascherano, and Tevez then scored the goals which helped keep the Hammers in the top flight at Sheffield United's expense.

Magnusson and his club have since managed to negotiate a settlement with Tevez's representative Kia Joorabchian to release the player's registration to enable him to sign for Manchester United, avoiding the prospect of a lengthy court battle.

Many observers felt the Hammers had been lucky to escape with a fine rather than a points deduction over their signing of Tevez, and Magnusson accepts that rightly or wrongly there is bad feeling towards his club.

He told The Guardian: "It does hurt me because the club has been dragged into this in a negative way by some of my colleagues. West Ham has been dragged down and I don't think this is correct."

"This hurts me most, because what a few people decide should not be a burden to the whole club."

Magnusson also regrets the impact the whole affair has had on Tevez himself.

"The other sad thing is that Tevez got caught in the middle. He's a great lad, so enthusiastic about football and success, and I would have loved to see him (again) in a West Ham shirt. I really tried to make that possible but, as a great player, he had ambitions to play in the Champions League."

Meanwhile, England manager Steve McClaren has hailed Tevez's impact on the English game since joining the Hammers in a shock deal on August 31 last year.

"I like Tevez. I have always admired him. I remember coming across him in Geneva (where England played Argentina in a friendly in November 2005). He impressed me then. He has adapted to English football very well because he is an English type of player. He was certainly a big part in them staying up."

"There are a lot of players who could have a big say in the title. Only time will tell with regard to Tevez moving to Manchester United."

10x3

4x2

10x3

6x2