

EUROPEAN SUPER CUP MU take on Zenit

Football

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United midfielder Owen Hargreaves wants to use Friday's European Super Cup clash against Zenit St Petersburg to kick-start this season.

Hargreaves, 27, has been struggling with tendonitis and hasn't made a first team appearance for United since helping Sir Alex Ferguson's side win the Champions League in May.

But the England international is finally back in training and Ferguson expects him to play against Zenit in Monaco.

Hargreaves is desperate to get back in action after an injury-ravaged beginning to his spell at Old Trafford.

The former Bayern Munich star made only 21 starts last season and he knows he could fade from the picture if he doesn't make a positive impact soon.

The Scot has no intention of

"I've got a big season ahead with United and England, and I want to be fit," Hargreaves said.

"I've felt the injury on and off for 16 months. Sometimes more, sometimes less - it's something I've had to cope with."

"The staff and I have worked very hard so that I'm fit and when I play I don't miss out."

"They've done a really good job. I think we've got it under control."

"Hopefully I'll be back soon and fit for the remainder of the season. I'm improving everyday."

While Hargreaves focuses on his fitness, United manager Sir Alex Ferguson will be motivated by the bitter memories of his last Super Cup appearance when he sends his team out for Friday's match against West Ham last season.

Ferguson's desire for victory can't be questioned but he might be distracted by off-the-field activities as United try to sign Tottenham striker Dimitar Berbatov before the transfer window shuts on Monday.

"I want to win. I remember the last time we went there I only played half a team because we had a Monday league game against Newcastle," Ferguson said.

"When I saw Lazio celebrating at the end, it was like they had won the World Cup. I was not too pleased. I thought: 'That will not happen again'."

"We'll view the Super Cup as a one-off and we want to win it but we are expecting a very tough game."

With that in mind, Ferguson has pledged to send out a strong team and England defender Gary Neville should feature after an ankle injury.

Ryan Giggs is back from a hamstring problem, while Nani is available after completing a three-match ban for his dismissal against West Ham last season.

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Liverpool forward Dirk Kuyt (2nd from R) scores the all-important goal against Standard Liege in the extra-time of their Champions League qualifying round second leg at Anfield on Wednesday.

Senderos joins Milan

AFP, London

Defender Philippe Senderos has left Arsenal for AC Milan on a one-year loan deal, the Premiership club said on Wednesday.

The 23-year-old central defender had his medical in Milan on Tuesday and has now completed the move to the San Siro with Milan hosting Bologna on Sunday in their first league match of the season.

Senderos moved to Arsenal from Servette Geneva five years ago. In his time in north London, the Swiss international won the FA Cup in 2005 and was part of the backline that kept a record 10 Champions League clean sheets in the 2005/06 season.

He has made 115 appearances for Arsenal, scoring four goals.

Robinho a Blue soon?

INTERNET, undated

Real Madrid forward Robinho should complete his 36 million Euros (£28.7m) transfer to Chelsea in time to make his debut in the home derby with Tottenham Hotspur, according to his agent Wagner Ribeiro.

Ribeiro said on Wednesday night that he expects his client to be a Chelsea player 'by either tomorrow or Friday,' adding in the The Daily Telegraph, 'he should be available to [Luiz Felipe] Scolari for this weekend'.

Robinho, along with Deco, who

has already made the switch from Spain to Stamford Bridge, were selected as Scolari's main transfer targets when he became manager of the Blues in the summer.

Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon shares Scolari's desire to lure Robinho to London and believes the Brazilian international can take the club to the 'next level'.

'He's the right age and he comes from Madrid so he understands what a big club is all about,' Kenyon said.

'What we're doing is supporting Scolari. He wants to change and move the style a bit [and] is confident about the player's ability and mentality and that he will fit in and

make an impact.'

Chelsea had two bids for the 24-year-old rejected by Madrid earlier in the transfer window but the La Liga club's desire to use Robinho as a make-weight during their pursuit of Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo has unsettled the player and he now wants to quit the Santiago Bernabeu.

'The best striker in Europe will remain at Valencia,' the club's president, Vicente Soriano announced.

The Internet site of sports newspaper Marca said Valencia would make the 26-year-old the best paid player in their history, with an annual salary of more than three million euros.

Villa's contract was extended by one season from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014.

'I am grateful to Valencia for this gesture and for all that (the club) has given me and to Vicente Soriano for the effort he has made,' Villa said.

The news is a further blow to Real Madrid, who were looking for a possible replacement for Brazilian striker Robinho who has said he wants to join Chelsea.

Shevchenko, who cost Chelsea a club record 30 million pounds (37 million euros) in 2006, returned to AC Milan this week after two dismal seasons at Stamford Bridge.

The 31-year-old scored just nine goals but Kenyon is adamant Shevchenko was not a failure.

'I get fed up because it's not right,' he said. 'I'm not giving a lesson on accountancy, but you do write money off over the term of a contract.'

'What we pay is in an investment. During that period you have a player who is doing a job and in this industry you buy and sell players.'

'You have to look at these things pragmatically, sometimes these things don't work as well as you want them to.'

'Remember, we got Deco for eight million pounds and that looks to be the buy of the season.'

'You have got to counter these things and we are happy with where we are.'

Villa staying at Valencia

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid target David Villa, the top scorer at Euro 2008, has ended speculation about his future by extending his contract with Valencia until 2014, the Spanish first division club said Wednesday.

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Liverpool leave it late

AFP, London

Five-times champion Liverpool, who were staring at Champions League elimination, scored the sole goal of the tie late on to oust Standard Liege and qualify for the lucrative group stages on Wednesday.

Dirk Kuyt's goal with three minutes to go in extra time propelled the Reds into the hat for Thursday's 32-team draw along with Arsenal who thrashed Steve McClaren's FC Twente 4-0 at home for a 6-0 aggregate scoreline.

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