

Arsenal aim to rebound

AFP, London



Arsenal will aim to bounce back from their Old Trafford horror show on Saturday as they make a fresh start to their Premier League campaign against newly promoted Swansea.

A miserable month of August which began with the departure of Cesc Fabregas and Samir Nasri culminated with the club's 8-2 humiliation at Manchester United, the heaviest defeat suffered by the Gunners in 115 years.

Since then Arsene Wenger has bolstered his squad with a slew of signings, including South Korea captain Park Chu-Young, Mikel Arteta from Everton and German international Per Mertesacker.

Whether the arrival of Park, Arteta and Mertesacker, along with the recruitment of Brazilian defender Andre Santos and Yossi Benayoun, will transform Arsenal's season remains to be seen.

But midfielder Aaron Ramsey revealed the Gunners are determined to stop the rot following their traumatic outing in Manchester.

"We want to put things right after our last result," said Ramsey. "Hopefully we put in a really good performance and get back to winning ways."

"We have had a good think about things and it will be a fresh start now."

"We have brought in some quality players, Arteta and Benayoun are two creative midfielders who are really comfortable on the ball and they will be great additions to the squad."

Ramsey however warned his team-mates against complacency, having had first-hand experience of Swansea last season during a loan spell with Cardiff.

"I saw last season, when I played against Swansea for Cardiff, that they are a good footballing team and like to pass the ball," Ramsey said.

"It will be a good footballing game but hopefully we come out on top and get all three points."

While Arsenal are chasing their first league win of the season, leaders United will attempt to maintain their 100 per cent start to the season at Bolton.

United goalkeeper David de Gea is likely to be face another testing afternoon as he

continues to acclimatise to the physicality of the Premier League.

However United manager Sir Alex Ferguson is confident that de Gea, who has already conceded soft goals against Manchester City and West Bromwich Albion this season, has the talent to be a success.

"David made a couple of mistakes in his first games, which we didn't expect and nor did he," Ferguson said.

"There is no doubt we have a player of great potential. Our job at this club is to realise that potential and make sure he becomes a top goalkeeper," Ferguson added.

"He'll do that once he gains experience and adapt to the physical nature of the league."

"It is a different game here compared to Spain - there are more crosses to deal with and there is more contact. Bit by bit, we will get there with him."

United's cross-town rivals Manchester City meanwhile are expected to hand a home debut to new signing Nasri -- exceptional in the club's 5-1 away win at Tottenham -- as they face Wigan at Eastlands.

Wigan manager Roberto Martinez admits City, who like United have maximum points after three games, have the look of potential champions.

"You are always looking at what you are doing rather than the opposition but you look at Manchester City, and you feel it's only a matter of time before they are competing to win the Premier League," Martinez said.

"You just hope that we are playing them at a time when we can disrupt them and not allow them to be themselves."

"They have assembled probably the best squad of 20 footballers anywhere in the world, and that's obviously a fantastic position to be in."

"It's only a matter of time before they click, and they are going to be challenging for the title very soon - there's no two ways about that."

Chelsea meanwhile will welcome back goalkeeper Petr Cech and defender David Luiz from injury for their trip to Sunderland.

Stoke will attempt to extend their unbeaten Premier League record against Liverpool at the Britannia, where new Poters signing Peter Crouch is expected to line up against his former club.

FIXTURES

(1400 GMT unless stated)

Saturday

Arsenal v Swansea, Bolton v Man Utd (1630), Everton v Aston Villa, Man City v Wigan, Stoke v Liverpool, Sunderland v Chelsea, Wolves v Tottenham

Sunday

Norwich v West Brom (1230), Fulham v Blackburn

Monday

Disputes put aside

AFP, Madrid



After a week marred by more off-field disputes surrounding the financial state of football in Spain, the big two resume their battle for domestic supremacy on Saturday.

With La Liga taking a break for the internationals last weekend, attention turned to a meeting in Seville of 12 top-flight clubs desperate for a new television deal to be agreed that will reduce the gaping financial chasm between Real Madrid and Barcelona and the rest.

Meanwhile, radio stations have been at odds with the Spanish league after being told for the first time that they must pay for the rights to broadcast games, making it a difficult few days following hot on the heels of the players' union strike that put paid to the opening weekend last month.

Real Madrid and Barcelona underlined just how uneven the playing field is in Spain now with huge wins when the action did finally kick off a fortnight ago with the capital club trouncing hapless Zaragoza 6-0 away before Pep Guardiola's side thumped Champions League hopefuls Villarreal 5-0.

With the Champions League group stage getting underway next midweek, the giants of the Spanish game are both in action this Saturday, Barcelona visiting Real Sociedad before Real Madrid host neighbours Getafe.

Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo picked up where he left off last season by scoring a hat-trick at La Romareda and the Portuguese winger admits that Jose Mourinho's side have to aim Barcelona's dominance both at home and abroad this time around.

"We have to win one of the major titles this year, the Spanish league or the Champions League, this is how success is measured in football," he said.

Referring to last season Ronaldo said, "On a personal level I was very happy, the club

helped me a lot and the team is the best there is, but collectively we lacked a little at the very end."

Coach Mourinho also insists that last season must go down as a success, even if the Copa del Rey was all Madrid had to show for it.

"Those who say I didn't win the league in my debut season with Madrid are right, but it was still my best-ever campaign," he said.

"It was the season I won most points, most games and scored the most goals... it was a very, very, very good season."

Barcelona have arguably the tougher task as they travel to San Sebastian to face a Real Sociedad side who enjoyed an impressive 2-1 victory away to Sporting Gijon on the opening day.

Meetings between the Basque club and Barca are often thrilling affairs and it was at Anoeta that the Catalans' saw a 31-match unbeaten league run end last season.

Guardiola has an embarrassment of riches and everybody except Gerard Pique fit, but with a Champions League meeting with Milan to come on Tuesday, he may well choose to rotate his squad.

There are two other potential crackers in store on Saturday with Sevilla going to Villarreal before Valencia entertain Atletico Madrid.

Atletico could give debuts to Brazilian playmaker Diego, signed on loan from Wolfsburg, and forward Radamel Falcao, who is finally eligible to play after completing his 40 million euro (\$55.9m) move from Porto.

Both players trained with their new team mates for the first time this week and former Atletico captain Diego Simeone believes Falcao will become a favourite at the Vicente Calderon.

"Atletico fans will fall in love with him," he said. "He is a player who needs service to fully reach his potential as he thrives in space but he will be fit in really well."

The clash at El Madrigal brings together the two most outspoken clubs in the current TV revenue dispute.

FIXTURES

Saturday

R. Sociedad v Barcelona, Villarreal v Sevilla (both 1600 GMT) Real Madrid v Getafe (1800 GMT), Valencia v Atletico Madrid (2000 GMT)

Sunday

Real Betis v Mallorca (1000 GMT), Racing Santander v Levante (1400 GMT), Osasuna v Sporting Gijon, Rayo Vallecano v Zaragoza (both 1600 GMT), Espanyol v Athletic Bilbao (2000 GMT)

Monday

Redknapp keen on Becks

REUTERS, London

Former England captain David Beckham would be welcomed back at Tottenham Hotspur with "open arms" and could this time be registered as a player, the Premier League club's manager Harry Redknapp said on Friday.

Beckham, 36, trained with Spurs earlier this year during the Major League Soccer close season although plans to register him as a player failed to materialise.

Beckham, whose five-year contract with Los Angeles Galaxy ends in November, continues to be linked with a return to the Premier League and has made no secret of wanting to play for Great Britain as an over-age player in next year's London Olympics.

Redknapp on Saturday, told reporters: "He came and trained with us and he has been fantastic around the place, not only as a guy but also as a player."

"I found him to be an absolute top class professional and the type of player you would love to have around the young players who could look up to him as a great role model."

Nerlinger's caution

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich's director of sport Christian Nerlinger has warned his side not to be distracted by next week's Champions League trip to Spain when they face Freiburg in the German league on Saturday.

Bayern are top of the Bundesliga after four matches, but can ill afford another slip up having already lost at home to Borussia Moenchengladbach at the start of the season.

Three consecutive league victories have put the Bayern top of the table and Nerlinger says his side must concentrate if they want to stay there.

With Champions League games against Villarreal, next Wednesday, and Manchester City, on September 27, on the horizon, Bayern have some big games looming.

"You can't underestimate any Bundesliga club," said Nerlinger.

"We slipped up at home to Moenchengladbach, and that mustn't happen again."

"This is the kind of fixture you have to win. We're top of the league now, and three more points would mean we've established ourselves there."

"So the target is clear: we want all three points."

Bayern will be without Dutch winger Arjen Robben, who is still recovering from a

groin strain, but Germany striker Mario Gomez, who scored a hat-trick against Kaiserslautern a fortnight ago in the league, is set to start.

Freiburg have dropped eight points in their opening games, but in Senegal striker Papiss Cisse, who has already scored four goals in four games, they have a deadly finisher.

Borussia Dortmund coach Jurgen Klopp will reshuffle his midfield to cover for banned Germany star Mario Goetze when the champions host Hertha Berlin on Saturday.

FIXTURES

Saturday

Borussia Dortmund v Hertha Berlin, Bayern Munich v Freiburg, Mainz 05 v Hoffenheim, VfB Stuttgart v Hannover 96, Borussia M'gladbach v Kaiserslautern, Werder Bremen v Hamburg

Sunday

Cologne v Nuremberg, VfL

Sunday

Cologne v Nuremberg, VfL

Kuba for short -- who scored in the 2-2 draw with Germany on Tuesday in a friendly in Gdansk.

Dortmund host Premier League side Arsenal in their opening Champions League group match next Tuesday, when Goetze will be available again, but Klopp says his side must stamp their authority on Hertha.

After two wins, a draw and a defeat from their opening four games, Dortmund are sixth in the table and Klopp says his side must raise their game against Berlin.

"It is necessary that we get stuck into the season, but we are well on the way," he said.

Unfortunate Castaignos

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti says the team will learn from the embarrassing mistake that saw them list new striker Diego Forlan in their Champions League squad even though he is ineligible.

Forlan had already represented Atletico Madrid in the qualifying rounds of the Europa League meaning he won't be available for Inter until the New Year at the earliest.

But Inter failed to realise this, listing him in their 25-man squad submitted to UEFA.

That meant there was no space for teenage forward Luc Castaignos on the list and now Inter cannot field either player.

"I'm sorry mostly for Castaignos because otherwise he could have played," said Moratti.

"The Forlan oversight is fairly serious and it's not something we can fix, we have to find a way of avoiding it in the future."

Inter bought Forlan as a replacement for Russia-bound Samuel Eto'o, presuming he would be available in the Champions League.

Now, not only does their forward line look weaker without the Cameroon flyer but they will have limited attacking options in the Champions League group stages.

Moratti says he understands fan frustrations but claims Eto'o's sale was necessary.

"I understand that, it's human. The financial fairplay forces painful decisions to be made to come back within the parameters."

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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Live from 10:30pm

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Stoke City v Liverpool
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