

# Wenger ponders Henry return

Football

AFP, London

Thierry Henry could make a remarkable return to Arsenal with Gunners boss Arsene Wenger considering the possibility of a two-month loan deal for the club's favourite son.

The 34-year-old Frenchman has been training with the Londoners since the close of the MLS season in November and recently had a statue of him unveiled at the Emirates Stadium to underline his legendary status at the club.

Henry will not be required back in the United States until March and Wenger will lose Gervinho and Marouane Chamakh for up to a month at the end of January due to the Africa Cup of Nations, leaving him short of strikers.

For that reason, Wenger is considering the possibility of a potential two-month loan deal for the star.

"I have to think about that," Wenger said.

"Short term is ideal for us, but I haven't made any enquiry yet. Thierry is not here at the moment. It has never come up in conversation.

"January 1 is the vital date for us. We have seven days to make decisions and I will make a decision in the next seven days on players."

Henry is regarded as one of the greatest players to have ever pulled on an Arsenal shirt, winning two league titles and three FA Cups during the Frenchman's hugely successful eight-year spell at the club.

Henry, the club's record all-time scorer, left Arsenal in 2007 for Barcelona before moving to the United States where he currently plays for the New York Bulls.

Robin van Persie equalled Henry's club record of 34 league goals in a calendar year at Aston Villa on Wednesday as the Gunners returned to winning ways with victory over Alex McLeish's side.



Brazil legends Romario (L) and Ronaldo attend a news conference in Rio de Janeiro on Friday. Romario announced that the Brazilian Football Federation is going to donate 32,000 2014 World Cup tickets (500 tickets per match) to the disabled people.

PHOTO: REUTERS



PHOTO: AFP

FC Twente goalkeeper Nikolay Mihaylov poses with the Bulgarian Footballer of the Year award during a ceremony in Sofia on Friday.

## Mihaylov ends Berbatov run

REUTERS, Sofia

Twente Enschede goalkeeper Nikolay Mihaylov emulated his father when he was named Bulgaria's footballer of the year on Friday, breaking the domination of Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov, who won the award four consecutive times since 2007.

The 23-year-old, who garnered 224 points in the annual poll, picked up the prize 25 years after his father and former Bulgaria keeper Borislav Mihaylov, the Bulgarian Football Union's president.

Nikolay's grandfather Biser also kept goal for the national team in the 1970s.

Aston Villa captain Stilian Petrov was second in the vote with 200 points and Berbatov third on 196.

Bulgaria keeper Mihaylov joined Liverpool from Levski Sofia in 2007 but was loaned to Twente after failing to obtain a work permit due to his lack of international appearances. The Dutch club signed him on permanent basis last year.

Berbatov, Bulgaria's all-time time leading scorer with 48 international goals, had won the award seven times in the last nine years with Stilian Petrov in 2003 and Bolton Wanderers winger Martin Petrov in 2006 the other winners in that time.

## Mancini wants away wins

REUTERS, London



Invincible at home this year, Premier League leaders Manchester City face consecutive away games over Christmas with manager Roberto Mancini wary of offering up unexpected gifts at West Bromwich Albion and Sunderland.

City, who lead the table at Christmas for the first time since 1929, drew 1-1 at Liverpool, then lost 2-1 at Chelsea in their last two away league games and Mancini wants a return to winning ways on the road, starting at West Brom on Boxing Day.

"We still have Chelsea, United, Tottenham and Liverpool to come to the Etihad Stadium, but we need to win away games as well, and we have only one point from our last two," Mancini, who is about to experience his third Christmas campaign as City manager, told the club's website (www.mcfc.co.uk)

"I have a lot of respect for West Bromwich, and I have a lot of respect for (manager) Roy Hodgson - he is one of the best managers in Europe.

"I think it will be very hard because they play good football. They have had some problems but they have won their last two away games and seem to be in good form, it will be a hard match," added Mancini, whose side lead champions Manchester United by two points.

City have few injury worries ahead of a spell of three games in little more than a week and should have swash-buckling full back Micah Richards available after injury.

While Mancini can boast an embarrassment of riches, United and the rest of the pursuing pack are feeling the

pinch a little with injuries and suspensions testing their squads.

United have home games against Wigan Athletic and Blackburn Rovers before concluding their holiday fixtures away at Newcastle United and manager Alex Ferguson, preparing for his 26th Christmas in the Old Trafford hot seat, knows how vital the jam-packed holiday programme can be.

He was boosted by the news that Phil Jones suffered no break to his jaw in the dazzling 5-0 win at Fulham on Wednesday, although winger Ashley Young is sidelined for the clash with Wigan, a fixture United have never dropped a point from.

Despite the statistics, however, Ferguson is a big fan of Wigan boss Roberto Martinez, whose third-from-bottom side will arrive in good heart after morale-boosting home draws with Chelsea and Liverpool.

"I watched Wigan versus Chelsea the other day and I thought Wigan were terrific," he told United's website (www.manutd.com)

"It says a lot for Roberto Martinez, he continues to play good football irrespective of what position they're in. We have a good record against Wigan but we won't take anything for granted. We need to keep our foot on the pedal."

Injury-hit Tottenham, in third place with 35 points face a trip to Norwich City on Tuesday before a New Year's Eve clash with another of the promoted sides, Swansea City.

They will be without Rafael van der Vaart and winger Aaron Lennon while striker Jermain Defoe is another struck by a hamstring curse afflicting the north London club as they mount a creditable top-four challenge.

Fourth-placed Chelsea (33 points) are low on defensive options as they prepare for the Dec. 26 derby at home to close neighbours Fulham.

Manager Andre Villas-Boas, who has worries over Branislav Ivanovic and John Obi Mikel after they limped off in the 1-1 draw against Tottenham Hotspur on Thursday, said he would try to buy a centre back in January.

Until then, however, the Portuguese, like his Tottenham counterpart Redknapp and even United's Ferguson, must juggle his squad and hope to keep City in his sights.

"They have the squad for sure," Redknapp said of City's strength in depth. "They are the favourites but Man United won't be far behind them. But anything can happen still, it's very close in the top four."

Fifth-placed Arsenal (32 points) will not have to travel out of the capital over the holidays, hosting Wolverhampton Wanderers on Tuesday before London derbies with Queen's Park Rangers and Fulham.

Liverpool will hope to put the controversy surrounding their support of Luis Suarez, found guilty of racial abuse, behind them with home games against bottom club Blackburn Rovers and Newcastle United before their trip to City.

Manager Kenny Dalglish said he had some sympathy for Rovers, the club he took to the league title in 1995, and their beleaguered manager Steve Kean who faced vociferous criticism during his side's defeat by Bolton Wanderers this week.

"The frustration is understandable in many ways but I don't think it's helpful and it's sad really it has come to that, but that's the way it is," Dalglish said.

## City behaviour puzzles Bridge

AFP, London

Out of favour Manchester City defender Wayne Bridge says he has no idea why coach Roberto Mancini has frozen him out of his first team calculations.

The 31-year-old has made just one appearance for the Premier League leaders who are looking to sell him in the January transfer window.

The former Chelsea left-back, who collects a reported £90,000 weekly salary which other clubs are unwilling to match, spoke out in Saturday's Daily Mail.

He told the paper: "When I was at Chelsea I was playing for a team where Ashley Cole was the best in the world and I still got games."

"It won't happen at City. There has never been an explanation, but it's obvious they don't want me."

"Mancini doesn't really speak to me, he doesn't really speak to any of the players. The only time I've known a player isolated like this was Winston Bogarde at Chelsea. Usually you still train with the first team, even when they want you out."

Bridge added: "I've never caused trouble, I'm not that kind of character."

"There will be days when I'm frustrated - not depressed, but down. Training helps take my mind off the fact that I don't play."

"If I kicked up a fuss I might have got out easier."

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#### STAR Cricket

Australia v India

First Test, Day 1



#### Fed Cup Football

Victoria v Air Force

Time: 2:30pm

Uttar Baridhara v Agrani Bank

Time: 5:15pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National

আবে, এটা কি মাছে বাজার পাইছছ, কি কইবার লাগছছ, আমাশো খাইকা ভালো নাম কেটা দিবার পারবে।

সাম্প্রদায়ের ঠেঠা মি আই তের মাতা মিহিম কাটাই, আই হুতাই কাটিলে।

কিতারে সোনা আমার নামটা দিতা নানি।

হাের সেরে কোশা! মুই বিস্ত কইলাম, সেরে নামজাই সেকৈ আইবে।

আমার খুলনার নামভা দিতি হবে, তা নালি কিন্তু সব বাদ।

আমার মনের কোঁ, হামরা কি বাদে কইলা আইলেছি। হামার নামটা দিলা না কেনে বে?

## নামদাও ব্যাংকক যাও!

বাংলাদেশে প্রথম বারের মতো শুরু হতে যাচ্ছে বিপিএল টি-টুয়েন্টি ক্রিকেট টুর্নামেন্ট বাংলাদেশ প্রিমিয়ার লিগ (বিপিএল)।

অংশগ্রহণকারী ঢাকা (DHK), চট্টগ্রাম (CTG), রাজশাহী (RAJ), খুলনা (KHL), সিলেট (SYL), বরিশাল (BRS) বিভাগীয় দলের যত খুশী নাম দিয়ে জিতে নাও ঢাকা-ব্যাংকক-ঢাকা দুই রাত তিন দিন ভ্রমণের সুযোগ।

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\*একটি SMS -এ একটি দলের নাম পাঠাতে হবে

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