

Jeunechamp  
to appeal  
ban

AFP, Paris

Montpellier defender Cyril Jeunechamp is to appeal his one year ban for striking a journalist at the end of a league match last month, his club announced on Monday.

The 37-year-old received his suspension last Thursday for the incident on November 17.

Jeunechamp accosted the journalist in the corridors of Valenciennes' Stade Hainaut and struck him on the face in protest against an article written about him.

In a statement Montpellier condemned "the gesture which wasn't acceptable irrespective of the context" but noted that Jeunechamp's on-pitch behaviour in the club's colours had always been "exemplary".

Owen anxious  
to break duck

AFP, London

Michael Owen is desperate to break his scoring duck against former club Liverpool on Wednesday and end an eight-year wait.

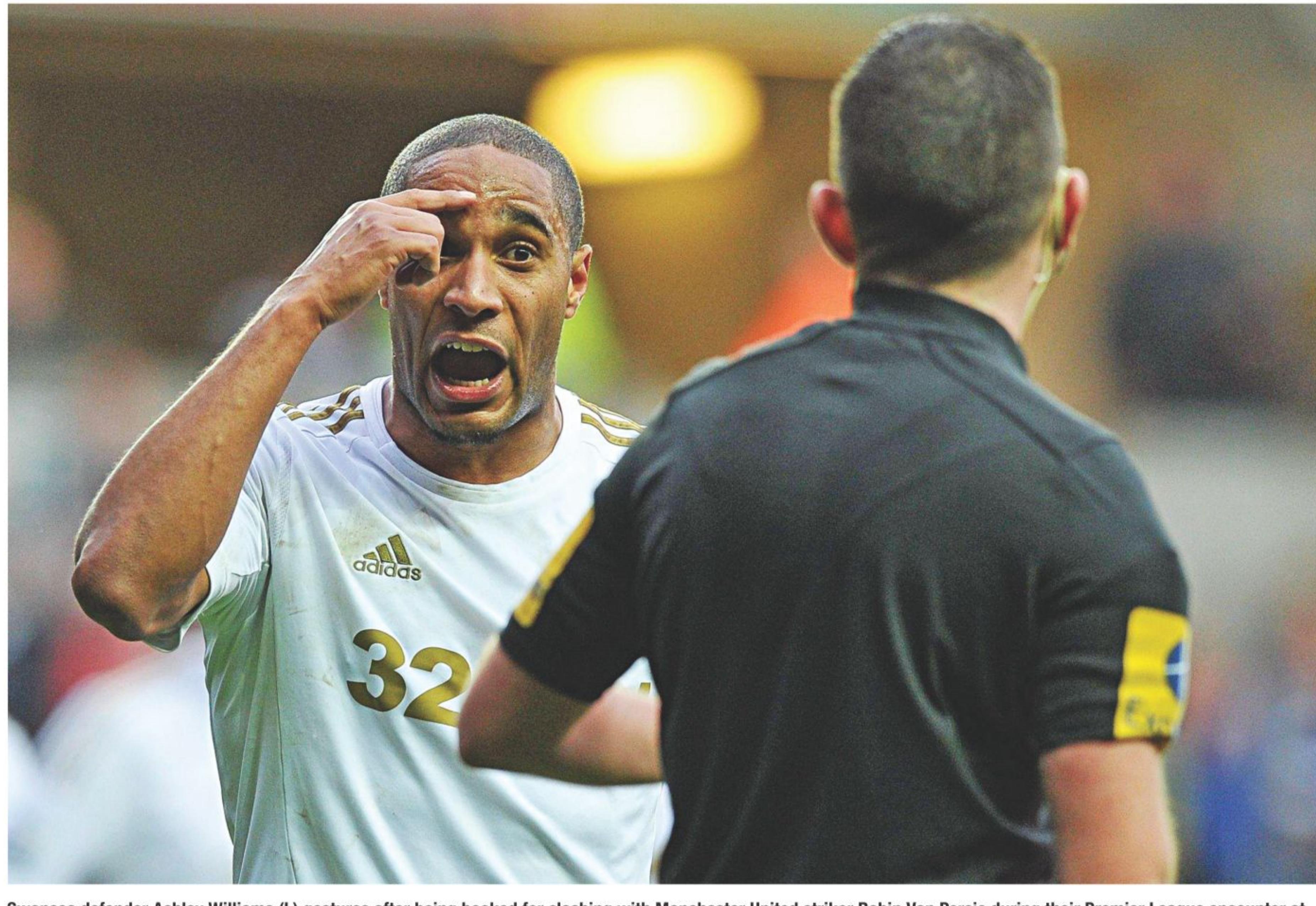
The 33-year-old hit 118 goals during his prolific Anfield career but since leaving for Real Madrid in 2004, he has not been able to break through.

"It is a strange feeling really playing against your old club, especially one where you were for around 15 years," Stoke striker Owen told Independent Sports News.

"Liverpool are a big part of my life and career and I had some of the best times of my life at the club."

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Man United v Newcastle  
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Aston Villa v Tottenham  
Live from 11:30pm  
Stoke City v Liverpool



Swansea defender Ashley Williams (L) gestures after being booked for clashing with Manchester United striker Robin Van Persie during their Premier League encounter at the Liberty Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Ashley escapes action

AP, London



Swansea defender Ashley Williams will not face a Football Association charge after Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson slammed the Wales star for kicking the ball into Robin van Persie's head.

Williams earned a stinging rebuke from Ferguson after Sunday's 1-1 draw at the Liberty Stadium following the second half clash with van Persie.

The United forward was lying prone on the turf following a foul when Williams kicked the ball into the back of the Dutchman's head.

Ferguson called on the Football Association to ban the Swansea centre-back, who was booked for the incident by referee Michael Oliver.

"He (van Persie) could have been killed. Williams should be banned for a long time, Ferguson said.

"It was absolutely deliberate. The whistle has gone, the game has stopped and he has done that right in front of the referee. It was a disgraceful act."

But it is believed the FA will not instigate disciplinary procedures against the 18-year-old, who denied malicious intent.

Meanwhile, Williams was backed by Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers, who was his boss at Swansea until the end

of last season.

"I think more has been made of it than what it actually was," Rodgers said.

"When you slow it down and look at it 20 times it does not look good for Ashley.

"But I know the player well and it is just that split-second when you can see he is trying to clear the ball and unfortunately hits van Persie right on the back of his head."

"Of course, it looks dangerous but knowing Ashley he won't have meant it, knowing his character that won't have been intentional."

Wigan manager Roberto Martinez, who signed Williams for Swansea in 2008, admitted he could understand Ferguson's reaction but did not believe the player acted out of malicious intent.

"If you see one of your players with a bang on the back of the head it is really dangerous and it can have bad consequences. You can understand that," Martinez said.

"I signed Ashley Williams for Swansea and I know his character inside out. I can guarantee you without even looking at the incident that he is not a nasty footballer."

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