

## Gustavo seals Wolves move

AFP, Berlin

Brazilian international midfielder Luiz Gustavo has completed his transfer from European champions Bayern Munich to their Bundesliga rivals Wolfsburg, the buying club confirmed on Friday.

"We are delighted to have him with us," declared Wolfsburg sporting director Klaus Allofs after making official a transfer that had been announced in German media reports on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old has signed a five-year deal at the Volkswagen Arena as he looks to cement his place in the Brazil squad ahead of next year's World Cup, although no transfer fee has been announced.

He had fallen down the pecking order at Bayern during their run to the treble of Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup last season and the summer arrivals of Mario Goetze and Spain's Thiago Alcantara had even further reduced his chances of making Pep Guardiola's team.

Luiz Gustavo first arrived in Germany with Hoffenheim before moving to Bayern in January 2011.

# The long wait is over

## English Premiership kicks off today

MAIL ONLINE



After a long summer it's finally back. The Barclays Premier League season kicks off this weekend for what promises to be the most exciting campaign in recent years after a months of upheaval and change at a number of Premier League clubs.

For signs of change look no further than the champions, Manchester United. After 27 years and 38 trophies Sir Alex Ferguson stepped down from the top job at Old Trafford to enjoy retirement. David Moyes will be the man to fill his considerable shoes, after the former Everton boss was hand-picked by Fergie to be his successor.

But will United be winners under another Scot? With the future of Wayne Rooney still undecided, and some patchy pre-season form, it hasn't been the smoothest of starts for Moyes.

Across town at Manchester City there has also been change as Roberto Mancini was ousted after his failure to win a trophy and replaced by Manuel Pellegrini.

The squad already has a new look to it, with City bringing in £90million worth of talent in Fernandinho, Alvaro Negredo, Stevan Jovetic and Jesus Navas. The pressure will be on Pellegrini to return the Premier League crown to the Etihad.

Trying to break the Manchester hegemony will be Chelsea, who have seen the return of the 'Special One', Jose Mourinho.



David Moyes



Jose Mourinho



Gareth Bale



Luis Suarez



Wayne Rooney

The Portuguese's return has seen the Blues installed as the bookies' favourites, helped along by investment in Andre Schurrle and Marco van Ginkel. The club are still chasing Rooney and his signature could see a power shift from Manchester to London.

The battle for fourth place appears hotter than ever, with Tottenham investing to bid to close the one point gap to Arsenal and secure that elusive fourth spot. But all the good work of bringing in Paulinho, Nacir Chadli and Roberto Soldado will be undone if key man Gareth Bale decides his future lay elsewhere.

Arsenal fans have again been frustrated by the lack of transfer activity. The free transfer of Yaya Sanogo from Auxerre is their only bit of completed business this summer, despite a high-profile chase for Liverpool's Luis Suarez.

On Suarez, nobody at Anfield seems to have the faintest idea whether he is coming

or going, least of all the player himself, it seems.

Shrewd investment has Norwich City looking at a potential top-half finish, while Aston Villa and Sunderland have made a number of changes as they look to improve on last season's positions.

Swansea will look to improve again as well as make their mark in Europe.

Newly-promoted Cardiff City have made their ambitions clear by smashing their transfer record three times, while Palace also broke the bank to bring in Dwight Gayle from Peterborough. Steve Bruce has made some carefully considered signings that could help Hull City stay up.

Elsewhere, long-serving Stoke City manager Tony Pulis was replaced by Mark Hughes and Roberto Martinez stepped into Moyes' shoes at Everton. Newcastle United finally got Loic Remy after a frustrating

summer of inactivity.

What's going to happen? Who knows. But we can't wait. Roll on the next nine months...

## FIXTURES

### Saturday

(1400GMT unless otherwise stated):

Liverpool v Stoke City (1145GMT), Arsenal v Aston Villa, Norwich City v Everton, Sunderland v Fulham, West Bromwich Albion v Southampton, West Ham United v Cardiff City, Swansea City v Manchester United (1630MT)

### Sunday

Crystal Palace v Tottenham Hotspur (1230GMT), Chelsea v Hull City (1500GMT)

### Monday



(L-R) Barcelona goalkeeper Jose Manuel Pinto and superstar Lionel Messi warm up during a training session at the Sports Center Joan Gamper while Real Madrid midfielder Xabi Alonso heads the ball as coach Carlo Ancelotti looks on at the Valdebebas training ground on Thursday.



PHOTOS: AFP

# Spanish Liga gets underway

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona midfielder Xavi Hernandez believes his side will rekindle their intensity and pressing under the tutelage of new manager Gerardo "Tata" Martino. The Argentine was appointed less than four weeks before Barca kick off the defence of their league title against Levante on Sunday, after Tito Vilanova had to resign due to on-going health problems.

However, Xavi believes the squad are adjusting well to Martino's methods and has backed the new coach to be a success despite his lack of managerial experience in Europe.

"He is a leader, capable, prepared and has experience," the 33-year-old told Barcelona sports daily Sport.

"He is transmitting a lot to us. We are recovering a little of the intensity and rhythm that perhaps we lost for various reasons towards the end of last season. We are pressing very well and working well physically.

"He is adding things that he is influencing a lot. For example, on set-pieces we are working differently. We are adjusting and he is a guy that is very clear about what he wants."

Martino's insistence on pressing high up the field was very evident in his only game at the Camp Nou so far as Barca destroyed Santos 8-0 in a friendly that formed part of the deal to bring Neymar to the Spanish champions.

The Brazilian international will also

make his competitive Barcelona debut against Levante, but World Player of the Year Lionel Messi is a doubt as he continues to recover from the quadriceps injury that forced him to miss Argentina's friendly with Italy on Wednesday.

Captain Carles Puyol will definitely be absent for the Catalans after he underwent knee surgery to remove a cyst last month, but Cesc Fabregas and Pedro Rodriguez should be fit to play despite missing Spain's friendly with Ecuador in midweek due to minor injuries.

Real Madrid also get their league campaign underway on Sunday with a new man in charge as Carlo Ancelotti makes his bow at the Santiago Bernabeu where Real Betis are the visitors.

Los Blancos have enjoyed a superb pre-season that encompassed victories over Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Inter Milan and Ancelotti will have a wealth of midfield options to choose from following the capture of Isco and Asier Illarramendi from Malaga and Real Sociedad respectively.

Arguably the most enticing fixture of the opening weekend though comes at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan where a new-look Sevilla side host Atletico Madrid.

Atletico enjoyed a fantastic campaign last season as they finished third and won the Copa del Rey. As a result they will face Barcelona in the first leg of the Spanish Super Cup next week and have Champions League football to look forward to.

However, coach Diego Simeone has insisted it is important that his team maintain the consistency they showed in the league last season, starting on Sunday.

"We need to continue in the same way, looking for the consistency we had last season. Therefore, we can't look beyond the present and that is Sevilla," he told the club's website.

"We need to start again at zero and not get away from going game by game. We have had a good pre-season, especially physically, and we have been competitive."

New signings David Villa and Leo Baptista are likely to be involved for Atleti as they try to compensate for the loss of Radamel Falcao, who joined Monaco back in June.

However, the transfer activity at Atleti hasn't compared to that at Sevilla and coach Unai Emery could hand debuts to as many as 10 new recruits as the Andalusians have rebuilt following the departures of Jesus Navas, Alvaro Negredo and Gary Medel.

## FIXTURES

### Saturday

Real Sociedad v Getafe (1700 GMT), Valladolid v Athletic Bilbao (1900 GMT), Valencia v Malaga (2100 GMT)

### Sunday

Barcelona v Levante (1700 GMT), Real Madrid v Real Betis, Osasuna v Granada (both 1900 GMT), Sevilla v Atletico Madrid (2100 GMT)

### Monday

## Khedira to stay at Real

AFP, Berlin

Real Madrid midfielder Sami Khedira is set to stay at the Santiago Bernabeu this season after his agent poured cold water on transfer rumours linking the German international with a possible move to England or France.

"Sami (Khedira) will again play at Real this season," Khedira's agent Jorg Neubauer told sports daily Bild on Friday.

"I don't know who amuses themselves by coming up with these rumours and it's all a bit annoying and no help to Sami," continued Neubauer.

The 26-year-old has just returned from international duty where he was involved in the 3-3 draw against Paraguay in midweek.

Reports had linked the player with a move to Chelsea where his former manager Jose Mourinho is now in charge while Paris Saint-Germain were also rumoured to be interested in bringing him to the Parc des Princes.

Khedira, who won his 40th cap against the Copa America finalists, joined Real in 2010 after coming up through the youth system at Stuttgart.

# Goetze set for debut

AFP, Berlin



Arjen Robben has said Mario Goetze's imminent league debut for Bayern Munich can only be a good thing for the defending champions ahead of Saturday's Bundesliga trip to Eintracht Frankfurt.

Goetze, 21, came off the bench and scored twice for Bayern in Sunday's friendly win at Hungarian champions FC Gyor, his first appearance since tearing a hamstring while playing for previous club Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League semi-finals last season.

Having cost Bayern 37 million euros (US\$49.2m), Goetze is another top name coach Pep Guardiola needs to accommodate in his star-studded midfield.

Goetze is an option alongside Spain Under-21 captain Thiago Alcantara in an attacking midfield role, flanked by France winger Franck Ribery and Germany's Thomas Mueller, leaving Dutchman Robben on the bench.

The 29-year-old, who scored Bayern's winning goal in May's Champions League final against Dortmund, only returned to the starting line-up last season after injury to Toni Kroos, but the he said competition for places is a healthy thing in the Bayern ranks.

"It was our strength last season that we never lost our quality, even when players dropped out with injury," Robben told German daily Bild.

"You have to trust yourself and not be afraid of the opposition.

"And with a World Cup at the end of the season, even if you sit out the occasional game, it could be a positive thing at the end

of the day."

With 10 full international midfielders in the Bayern squad, Brazil's Luiz Gustavo is on the verge of a move to VfL Wolfsburg according to reports while Munich travel to a Frankfurt side who are licking their wounds just now.

While Bayern kicked off the season with a 3-1 win over Borussia Moenchengladbach last Friday, Eintracht were hammered 6-1 at promoted Hertha Berlin.

And they could be forgiven for feeling a sense of trepidation ahead of this weekend's game, given that Bayern have not lost in any of their last 19 away matches in the Bundesliga.

Bayern's Spain star Javi Martinez will also be looking to maintain his remarkable Bundesliga record of having yet to lose a German league match after 25 wins and three draws.

Champions League finalists Dortmund host promoted Eintracht Braunschweig on Sunday with Germany midfielder Ilkay Gundogan out for two weeks with a back injury he aggravated playing for his country in Wednesday's 3-3 draw with Paraguay.

## FIXTURES

(kick-offs 1330 unless stated, all times GMT)

### Saturday

VfB Stuttgart v Bayer Leverkusen, VfL Wolfsburg v Schalke 04, Werder Bremen v Augsburg, Freiburg v Mainz 05, Hamburg v Hoffenheim, Eintracht Frankfurt v Bayern Munich, Borussia Moenchengladbach v Hannover 96 (1630)

### Sunday

Nuremberg v Hertha Berlin, Borussia Dortmund v

## Bent joins Fulham

AFP, London

England striker Darren Bent has completed a season-long loan move from Aston Villa to Fulham, where he will link up with his former manager Martin Jol.

Bent was Villa's record signing when he arrived from Sunderland in January 2011 but he slipped behind Christian Benteke in the pecking order at Villa Park last season.

Dutchman Jol signed Bent when he was in charge of Tottenham and is delighted to bring the 29-year-old international to Craven Cottage.

"Darren Bent is a striker I have always admired. He has shown in the Barclays Premier League that he is composed and clinical in front of goal but, even if he is not scoring, he is involved in some good link-up play, creating opportunities for his teammates," Jol said.

"I'm delighted that he has joined us, he gives us pace up front and I am confident that he will add to our goals scored tally this season."

Reports said the deal does not include an option to buy next summer.