

Premiership Profiles: SOL CAMPBELL & KEVIN CAMPBELL

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Tottenham Hotspur's centre-half Sol Campbell.

In a week when George Graham's sacking by Tottenham Hotspur was a major talking point in English football, two players named Campbell who are both closely associated with the manager were making headlines of their own.

Spurs and England centre-half Sol Campbell was, of course, at the centre of the storm which swept Graham from his post at White Hart Lane. He is out of contract at the end of this season and has consistently declined to enter into early negotiations with Spurs about a new one. The powerfully built defender is coveted by many clubs in the Premiership and abroad, and few would argue that, along with Stephen Carr, he is the jewel in Tottenham's crown.

Graham saw Sol as the foundation of his long-term team-building plans at Spurs, and was anxious that the club should make him the sort of financial offer to stay at White Hart Lane that Campbell would find hard to refuse. Only a week ago ENIC, Tottenham's new owners, were said to be considering offering him around £50,000 a week to remain at the club. Such a salary would put Campbell near the top of money league in England, but the player and his agent know they are in a very strong bargaining position.

Arsene Wenger, manager of Tottenham's biggest rivals Arsenal, added fuel to the fires of speculation by declaring his club's interest in the player during the week. Of course Sol Campbell is of interest. He is a great player: I personally believe that him being free interests all 20 clubs in the Premier League, hopefully minus Tottenham. The richest of those clubs, Manchester United, have consistently been linked with Campbell in the newspapers.

Wenger regards Campbell as one of the few players in Europe who could step into the boots of Tony Adams when Adams eventually retires. But the Arsenal manager is unable to approach Campbell because of League rules which prohibit talks with out-of-contract players from other Premiership clubs until May. In contrast, foreign clubs have been able to contact Campbell since January, and Bayern Munich have made no secret of their interest.

Such speculation made Graham urge Tottenham's new board to move quickly to ensure that Sol committed himself to the club. But his willingness to reveal this and other financial matters to the media at a time when ENIC had just begun sensitive negotiations with Campbell cost Graham his job. Meanwhile Campbell himself remains tight-lipped about his future. The 26-year-old Londoner is, however, thought to want to stay in London. Keeping him at Spurs is the first major challenge facing ENIC; failure to do so would disillusion most Tottenham fans but make another club, somewhere, very happy.

Sol's namesake, Kevin, has no such dilemma about his future. The 31-year-old striker (who was given his first chance in football by George Graham in the late 1980s when both men were at Arsenal) has just signed a new contract that virtually commits him to Everton for the rest of his career.

Everton have given him a four-year deal worth £7.5 million that makes Campbell the highest paid player in their history, underlining the value they place on his services. For his part, Campbell is full of respect and affection

for the club that rescued him from a personal nightmare in Turkey two years ago.

Campbell had moved to Trabzonspor after a successful spell at Nottingham Forest, whom he joined after his Arsenal career, which started so promisingly, went flat. He initially did well in Turkey, but then became the target of some distasteful racist insults by the club president. Disgusted by his treatment Campbell was rescued by Everton, initially on three months loan.

During that period (Spring 1999), his nine goals in eight games effectively secured Everton's Premiership survival, and the club paid £3 million to make the move permanent in the summer. Campbell is eternally grateful.

I'm thrilled to be seeing my contract out at Everton, he said last week. I made it clear from day one I wanted to finish my playing career here. I love the club, I love the fans, and I am delighted we could get it sorted. I want to be a part of Everton. Hopefully this will give me a chance and we can persuade others to join and get a squad together to move up the League.

Everyone needs a bit of luck because it has not been the best of times and we need to turn things around. The honesty of the fans and the manager appeals to me. I came here in difficult circumstances and everyone talked to me immediately and made me feel comfortable and I appreciate that.

Campbell had scored 21 goals in 41 games in all competitions for Everton before this season, and has added a further eight this term despite disruptions caused by injury. When both are fit, he forms a dangerous strike partnership with Francis Jeffers. But whereas Jeffers, 11 years Campbell's junior, has just rejected lucrative new terms offered by Everton, Kevin is fully committed and raring to add to his goals tally for the Merseyside club.



Everton's striker Kevin Campbell.

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