

## **PREMIERSHIP NEWS, GOSSIP & RUMOURS**

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Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier has confirmed that Jerzy Dudek, his new signing from Feyenoord, will be first choice goalkeeper at Anfield. Dudek saw four goals flash past him in a midweek World Cup qualifier for Poland who have already qualified for Japan/Korea 2002 but is widely regarded as one of the leading goalkeepers in Europe. His understudy will be Chris Kirkland, who joined Liverpool from Coventry on the same day as Dudek.

The newcomers have inevitably forced incumbent Sander Westerveld to question his Anfield future. But Houllier says he warned Westerveld whose blunder gave Bolton the winner against Liverpool recently that he would be bringing in at least one new goalkeeper. Houllier told the Dutchman to improve or be replaced because he is determined to win the League.

Southampton travelled to Tottenham for this week-end's Premiership clash against a background of acrimony between the two clubs. Southampton were unhappy about the way Spurs lured manager Glenn Hoddle back to White Hart Lane last March. Spurs have subsequently had to pay the Saints almost £1 million in compensation, but Hoddle has further infuriated Southampton chairman Rupert Lowe with his efforts to tempt centre-back Deabn Richards to follow him to North London.

Southampton have rejected a £4 million bid from Tottenham and insist that they would not accept less than £10 million for the play, who recently signed a lengthy contract and who is regarded as a key figure in the Saints future. Richards was reportedly very unhappy about Lowe's handling of the situation, and complained that he was the victim of a row between the two clubs. However, he has now ironed out his differences with Lowe and committed himself to Southampton.

Meanwhile, Tottenham players are in dispute with their club's owners, ENIC, over a new system of bonus payments. They have threatened to withdraw their commercial services. Another headache for manager Hoddle is that striker Steffen Iversen returned injured from World Cup duty with Norway and will probably be out for some time.

Liverpool's Markus Babbel is another injury victim, while at Sunderland, injuries to first choice goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen and his under-study Jurgen Macho prompted manager Peter Reid to attempt to sign former French international Barnard Lama on a short-term loan. However, Lama decided against signing for one match.

Reid is unimpressed by the comments of departing midfielder Don Hutchison, who left Sunderland to rejoin West Ham United last week. Hutchison claims West Ham have better players than Sunderland, but Reid points out that just a month ago, the Scottish international was more than happy at the club. Reid is in no doubt that the player's agents are responsible for Hutchison's sudden change of heart.

West Ham themselves were linked with Manchester United's Dwight Yorke after it emerged that Yorke had been disciplined by Sir Alex Ferguson for arriving late for training. Ferguson has since expressed support for the player, while West Ham have denied any interest.

Hammers' former manager, Harry Redknapp, currently Director of Football at First Division Portsmouth, has been linked with a move back into management with Premiership club Leicester City. Leicester's manager Peter Taylor is under intense pressure following a poor start to the season, while Redknapp says he misses the day-to-day training ground involvement of being a manager.

Bolton Wanderers, who beat Leicester 5-0 on the opening day of the season, have invited Atletico Madrid's Kiko to the Reebok Stadium with a view to signing the out-of-contract Spanish international striker on a permanent basis. Bolton's manager Sam Allardyce believes now is the ideal time with Wanderers unexpectedly leading the Premiership to strengthen his squad in a bid to maintain their good start. That start has been recognised by Premiership sponsors Barclaycard, who have named Allardyce Manager of the Month for August.

Fulham's Louis Saha collected the Barclaycard Player of the Month award for August, while statisticians Opta rate Arsenal's Robert Pires as August's top player, based on a complex technical scoring system.

Arsenal went into Saturday's London derby with Chelsea without Ray Parlour, Patrick Vieira and Martin Keown, all suspended. Parlour and Vieira are serving one match bans after being sent off for picking up two yellow cards in the Gunners' early games. Keown was retrospectively banned for one game and fined £10,000 following video evidence of Arsenal's match

with Leeds United last May, when the defender is alleged to have elbowed Leeds striker Mark Viduka.

Leeds have announced that they will be leaving Elland Road, their home since 1919. The club canvassed 26,000 of its supporters about a possible move to a new stadium at a green-field site to the south-east of the city, arguing that Elland Road could not be developed in line with the club's growing ambition. There were nearly 20,000 replies, with 87 per cent in favour of the move. Leeds will now set in motion acquisition and development of the site. They hope to be able to move into their new home for the start of the 2004-05 season.

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