

Bentley wants to be new Gazza

DAVID BENTLEY wants to drive the Tottenham fans wild — just like White Hart Lane legend Paul Gascoigne.

The England wideman finally clinched his move from Blackburn yesterday, when Spurs agreed to cough up £17m for his services.

And grinning like a kid in a sweet shop as he showed off his new No 5 shirt, bubbly Bentley admitted Gazza was the idol he used to drool over when he stood on the White Hart Lane terraces with his mates.

He admitted: "Gascoigne was my favourite player growing up. The first football top I ever got was a Tottenham shirt with his name on the back.

"Gazza was great, a footballer who enjoyed his football, enjoyed his life and just played with that freedom. A lot of players looked up to him."

Bentley, 23, will now play his football in the white half of North London, after being groomed for stardom by Arsenal before moving to Ewood Park in January 2006 via a loan spell at Norwich.

And in a real football twist, his earliest memory of Gazza is him scoring against the Gunners on his debut in a 3-2 derby defeat at the Lane in September 1988.

He added: "I can still see Gazza scoring at White Hart Lane with no boot on! He ran through and put the ball in the bottom corner. That's my best memory of him."

Bentley is taking nothing for granted and readily admits he needs to hold down a regular place before he can win over the Tottenham fans.

He declared: "First of all I have to earn my right to be at this football club, a club that is in my heart. My aim is to have fans come and enjoy watching me perform for the team I've dreamed of playing for.

"I'd love to be an entertainer like Gascoigne. I desperately want that. But I know I have to start off by earning the right."

Bentley signed for Arsenal as a schoolboy, even though he lived just 10 minutes from the Spurs training ground, as no one from his favourite club was paying him any attention.

He revealed: "No one from Spurs scouted me at all, though I lived just up the road. All my mates gave me some stick when I went to Arsenal but I have to say it was a great environment to grow up in.

"I was coming through at the time of the Invincible team, which went an entire season unbeaten in 2003-04 and set record after record.

"I just wanted to play regular first-team football. It has never been about money with me.

"No one forced me to leave but Blackburn offered me what I wanted — a real chance to play.

"Once I knew Spurs were in and interested — I'll be honest and admit I thought I'd never end up here — there was only ever going to be one team I'd sign for.

"I was trying my nuts off to get here. Every day I was going through it, on the phone, trying my hardest to come here.

"My friends are all season ticket holders and they were on the phone to me every day. It has been an emotional time for me.

"All my mates, the Tottenham boys, loved it, absolutely loved it when I signed. They all have Tottenham tattoos up their arms and down their legs. They're mad fans.

"They kept phoning to tell me 'You've got to come to Tottenham'. I told them 'I want to but they don't want me'.

"It means the world to come here. My head and all my passion will be channelled into doing well for Tottenham. My mates are buzzing now — just like me."

Spurs boss Juande Ramos admits he was won over by Bentley's skill, as the Spaniard watched the player after settling in as axed Martin Jol's replacement last October.

Ramos said: "I think Bentley had a magnificent season, a great season. I not only noticed him playing well for Blackburn but also for the national team as well.

"As the season came to a close, we were convinced he had the qualities to do very well at this club."

Midfield competition will be tough for Bentley. But he is prepared to slug it out with the likes of Luka Modric as the team's main ball player.

He spent his last two weeks at Blackburn training on his own and now cannot wait to get down to work with his new club.

He said: "I'm excited by our strong midfield. I want to play with top players. Look at Modric and Dos Santos, Jenas and Lennon.

"I feel I can do a job in most places. Last season I played in central midfield, up front and on the left but I played the majority of the time on the right.

"It's whatever is the manager's decision. They've given me the No 5 shirt. I'll play centre-half, too, if they need me!"



Bentley



Ferguson

Ferguson On Chelsea, Ince & Neville

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has spoken about the challenge from Chelsea under new boss Luiz Felipe Scolari, as well as Paul Ince's appointment at Blackburn and having club captain Gary Neville fit again...

Sir Alex Ferguson believes the coming season's battle for silverware with rivals Chelsea will see the Londoners facing a huge challenge, despite the appointment of World Cup-winning manager Luiz Felipe Scolari.

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has told the latest edition of the club's official magazine, United: "The way I look at it is that Jose Mourinho was a good coach and we had to deal with that.

"He had two league successes over us and beat us in the FA Cup.

"If they achieve that again they'll have to be going some. So they have big challenges themselves."

Ferguson also hailed his former midfielder,

Paul Ince, who has succeeded another United old boy in Mark Hughes as manager of Blackburn Rovers.

"He's a great character, Incey. He's not changed one bit. He's still got that bubbly personality and I think he could do quite well.

"The only thing about going to Blackburn is that you hear rumblings of some players wanting to move to another club, or their contracts coming to an end.

"He is going there at a difficult time and they may lose some players. But Incey has a lot of determination about him, so we'll see how he gets on."

United are able to welcome back club captain Gary Neville after a lengthy injury

absence, and Ferguson is looking forward to having him available again.

He told the magazine: "Gary is back and he is looking terrific in training. It's amazing and says a lot about the lad and his determination to come back after such a long lay-off. He's been looking great in training so it's terrific to have those options with the back four, we look really strong there this season.

"He must have been gutted missing out on last season's successes but I was pleased because he still played his part, he was always in with the players encouraging and got involved with everyone around the team. He was a terrific influence, even though he wasn't playing matches."