

Front two are key to the Kop

By Ian Wright



Keane



Torres

JUST 11 days to go and the Premier League goal rush is already shaping up to be the best race in years.

With so much talent on offer, I can see the Big Four scoring bucketloads.

But it'll be the strike partnership serving up the biggest feast that will decide where the league title ends up.

I have been involved in my own fair share of successful strike duos over the years so I know that Liverpool have hit the jackpot this summer.

Rafa Benitez's side have flirted with the title over the last few years. Yet, despite winning the Champions League, they have not had a partnership that could go that extra step and dominate the league. Till now.

In Fernando Torres and Robbie Keane, Liverpool have a strike force capable of bagging at least 40 goals between them. Enough to rival anything from Chelsea, Manchester United or Arsenal.

Keane has consistently scored 15 or 20 goals per season and, following his £20million move from Tottenham, is now desperate to take that to the next level.

Torres oozes world class and should

be worth at least 25 goals — if not more.

Liverpool have always had a strong defence and, with the likes of Steven Gerrard in midfield, they are already a test for anyone.

But if Keane and Torres get things right and click straight away, then it could be their year for glory.

Of course, just sticking two great players together doesn't mean they'll hit it off. If only it was as simple as that.

When I played with Dennis Bergkamp at Arsenal, things clicked between us virtually straightaway.

Then again, Dennis always played like he had 10 eyes in his head! He was so good, you just had to make a run and he'd find you.

Other strike partnerships have taken time and effort.

For example, at Crystal Palace when I played with Mark Bright. We barely broke double figures between us in our first season.

But after learning what made him tick, we were soon one of the best strike forces around.

There are other partnerships that could provide some real fireworks this

season.

Many people thought Wayne Rooney and Carlos Tevez would never be able to play together at United as they are too similar. But boss Alex Ferguson gave them a licence to interchange positions and it left defenders scratching their heads.

At Chelsea, I'll be interested to see if Big Phil Scolari maintains the old system of one up front with Didier Drogba — or if he goes for a more attacking partnership.

Nicolas Anelka has been banging in the goals in pre-season. Yet Drogba likes being the lone targetman and I wonder if having Anelka alongside him will be more of a hindrance than a help. Why change a winning formula?

Arsenal fans will all be glad to see Robin van Persie making a comeback. But I'd urge Arsene Wenger to give Theo Walcott a go alongside Emmanuel Adebayor.

For me, Walcott has never been a wideman. Yet he'd scare the living daylight out of defences with a proven hitman like Adebayor on his shoulder.

Chelsea make their move for Brazil winger Robinho with a £19.7m offer to Real Madrid

Chelsea last night stepped up their efforts to bring Robinho to Stamford Bridge by making an opening offer of £19.7million for the Real Madrid winger.

The clubs have been in talks about the Brazil attacker for weeks but Robinho's future was always thought to have been closely linked to Real's bid to sign Cristiano Ronaldo from

Ronaldo confirmed this week that he will stay at United, at least for the coming season, and Real reacted by trying to negotiate a new deal with Robinho to stay in Madrid when they realised they were losing the fight for the Portugal winger.

Chelsea's response was to march straight through Real's front door with a public offer. They know Robinho is keen to link up with his fellow countryman Luiz Felipe Scolari, Stamford Bridge's new manager, and double his salary of £35,000 a week. The player's representatives have told the Madrid hierarchy he wants to leave.

The 24-year-old has become disillusioned with his role at the Bernabeu since being offered as a makeweight in Real's attempt to land Ronaldo.

He was also upset because they refused him permission to play for Brazil in the Olympic Games. As a player aged over 23, he can play in the Games only with the consent of his club.

Real value Robinho at £35m and Chelsea will have to increase their offer to get a player who would give Scolari an embarrassing wealth of attacking options — they are already struggling to squeeze all their attack-minded midfielders into the team.

'The manager has to choose from a lot of good players,' admitted Joe Cole.



Robinho

Alex Ferguson rubbishes claims that the Premier League restricts England talent

Sir Alex Ferguson has dismissed as "nonsense" claims that the Premier League no longer provides enough footballers capable of playing for England because of the increasing number of foreign players in the top division.

With fewer than 40 per cent of Premier League players eligible for England, manager Fabio Capello must work with an ever-decreasing pool of home-grown talent as he attempts to guide the country to the 2010 World Cup.

But the Manchester United manager has warned that proposals to impose quotas in the Premier League would be a backward step and a knee-jerk reaction to England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008.

Ferguson said: "It is nonsense to say that England does not have players capable of competing on the international stage. But the hysteria surrounding England's non-qualification for Euro 2008 does not create the right atmosphere for good decision-making. It is vital that the game takes a step back and concentrates on making the right choices.

"We have the strongest and the most entertaining league in the world and we should celebrate that, not denigrate it."



Ferguson