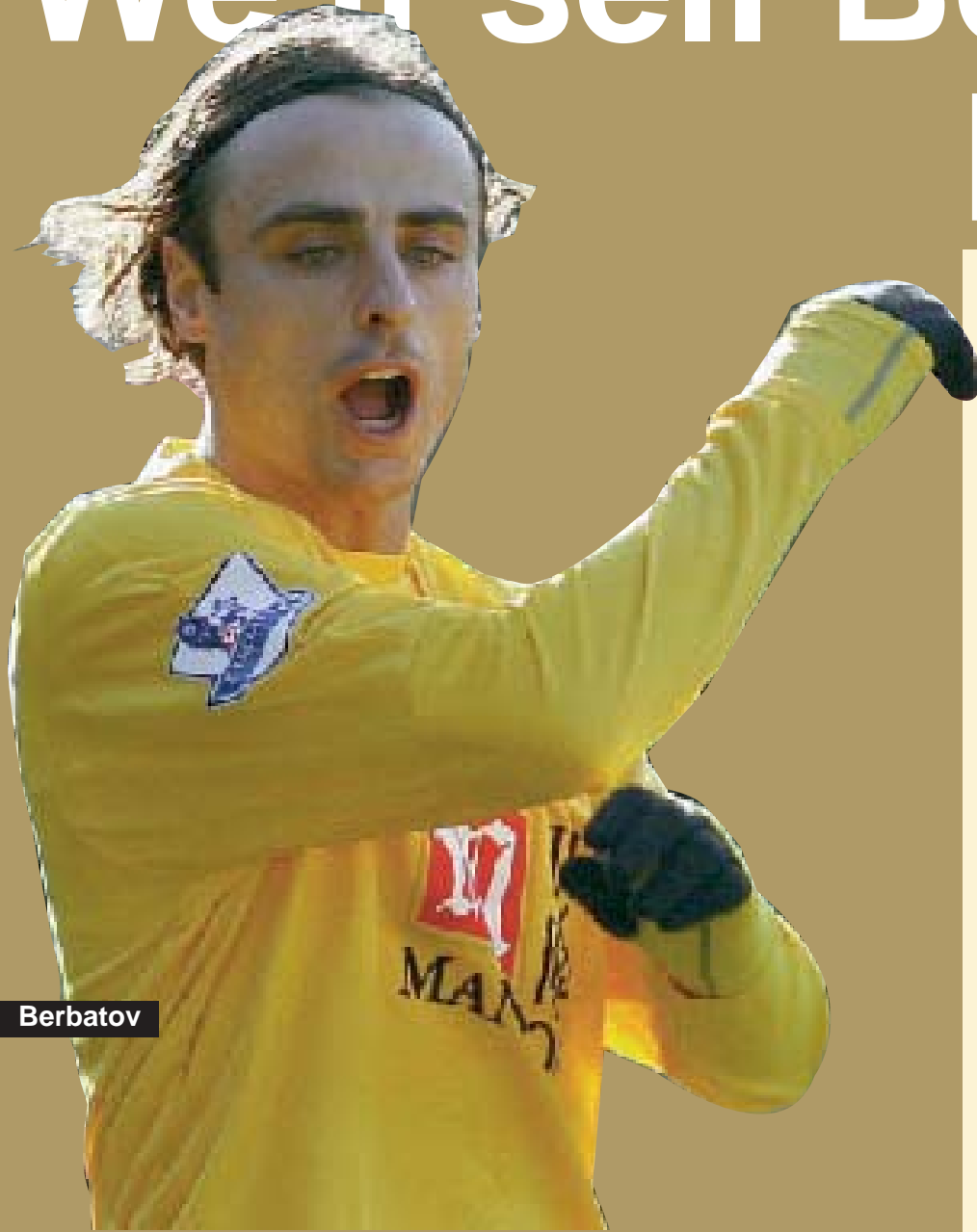


We'll sell Berbatov to Barcelona



Berbatov

TOTTENHAM would rather sell Dimitar Berbatov to Barcelona for a cut-price fee than flog him to Manchester United.

SunSport can reveal the Spanish giants have told Spurs they are ready to make a move for the want-away striker.

United remain favourites to land the Bulgarian — but only if they meet Spurs' £30million asking price.

So far, United have not budged from £25m and, if they do not up their bid, Spurs will listen to Barca.

And they would be far more willing to reach a compromise deal with them, than negotiate with United.

A White Hart Lane insider confirmed: "Barcelona are watching the situation very closely and we know they would love to sign Dimi."

Tottenham remain furious with the way United have handled their interest in Berbatov, 27, even reporting them to the Premier League after comments Alex Ferguson made about wanting the player at Old Trafford.

Spurs boss Juande Ramos made it clear yesterday he still wants to keep the hitman and praised his pre-season performances.

The Spaniard said: "He is an excellent pro and has been working total-

ly independent of anything that is happening outside football.

"Any speculation is handled by his agent and he has been getting on with things in a professional manner.

"He is our player and is at our club. He is a fantastic player and it would be great for him to stay.

"Any manager is always going to want their best players available. Dimitar is no different.

"He is a great professional and is carrying himself superbly throughout this."

Ramos believes Spurs can make a serious challenge on the Big Four — with or without Berbatov.

He said: "Tottenham is already a massive club. We can already be compared with United and the other top four clubs.

"We are very happy with our squad and, with the players at our disposal, we feel we can challenge anybody.

"I have no doubts in my mind that players will choose to stay here over any of the other top clubs. I have the squad how I want it."

Asked if he wanted to sign another top-quality striker, Ramos said: "That's something we are constantly working on. We work without rest to look for players."

Arsenal kids must play dirty

EMMANUEL ADEBAYOR has told Arsenal's kids to play dirty if they want to win silverware this season.

The big Gunners striker is still waiting to collect his first winners' medal after nearly three years at the club.

And he believes Arsene Wenger's young side need to forget the beautiful football and add a bit of steel to their game.

The 6ft 3in Togo ace said: "A lot of people talk about the good football we play at Arsenal but we are all in this game to win trophies and we haven't done that.

"It's difficult because when I signed for Arsenal from Monaco I knew I had the chance to win a lot of things. But I've been here for almost three years and I still haven't won anything.

"So now we have to realise that while it's good to play nice football, there are times when you need to be dirty to win a game."

Adebayor will never forget how Arsenal were booted out of the title race last season after leading the Premier League until March and is determined not to let it happen again.

He added: "We have learned a lot recently. One of the lessons is that sometimes you have to be tough when you are on the pitch — that is part of football. We don't have to be beautiful all the time.

"On Wednesday night, against FC Twente, we didn't play good football, certainly nowhere near our best but we won 2-0 — and that's what it is all about."

Adebayor, 24, has just agreed a new four-year contract with Arsenal after a summer angling for a big-money move abroad.

His antics have not impressed many supporters and now he is under pressure to reproduce



Adebayor

last season's 30-goal efforts.

He opened his account for this season with a late goal in the Champions League qualifier against Steve McClaren's team in Holland.

And he said: "All the summer speculation passed over my head and is already behind me. The most important thing now is to keep scoring for Arsenal.

"I have a four-year contract and I'm very happy here. Now I am fighting with my team-mates to achieve something."

Boss Wenger is already struggling to cope with a smaller squad and was without nine players for the win in Holland.

But new buy Samir Nasri and centre-half Kolo Toure are both expected to be fit for tomorrow's Premier League opener against West Brom after missing the FC Twente game.

Stuff it, Rafa

MMARTIN O'NEILL stuck two fingers up to Rafa Benitez last night by playing Gareth Barry in the UEFA Cup.

Midfielder Barry scored the opener in Aston Villa's 4-1 romp over FH Hafnarfjordur in Iceland.

But it effectively KO'd his dream £18million move to Liverpool as he would now be cup-tied for all the Anfield club's Champions League group games, should they progress past Standard Liege in the qualifying round.

That makes it game, set and match to Villa chief O'Neill in his battle with Kop counterpart Benitez over the Midlands' prize asset.

Yet cautious O'Neill said: "I would not be absolutely sure Gareth is staying until after the transfer window has closed.

"But he played tonight because he is our player and he wanted to play. He thought he was mentally tuned in and that's all that mattered."

Barry was fined £80,000 following public criticism of O'Neill in June.

Villa fans then subjected Barry to chants of 'Judas' when he played in a pre-season friendly at Walsall.

Yet four days later, he was afforded a hero's welcome when he helped Villa qualify for the UEFA Cup by seeing off Odense in the Intertoto Cup.

And when Liverpool then failed to meet a deadline to seal the deal, O'Neill claimed that was the end of the issue and that Barry was staying.

But when the player reiterated his desire to leave, it forced O'Neill to admit Liverpool had 'all the time in the world' to get their man.

However, the call from Anfield never came, leaving Barry in limbo.

In front of England boss Fabio Capello, Barry set Villa on their way in last night's second qualifying round, first leg — stabbing home after just four minutes.



Barry