

David Beckham seeks Premier League return

David Beckham may return to the Premier League in an effort to prolong his England career under Fabio Capello.



Beckham

Although the former England captain trained with Arsenal in January, that move failed to convince Capello that he should select Beckham for England's friendly against Switzerland in February.

With Beckham's Major League Soccer side, LA Galaxy, facing elimination from the end-of-season play-offs, Beckham's club season could be over in two weeks. Apart from a two-match Galaxy tour to New Zealand and Australia in December, he will play no club football until next April.

Beckham, 33, knows he needs top-class first-team football if he is to add to his 107 England caps.

His advisers are in talks with Arsenal about training again with Arsene Wenger's side ahead of the friendly against Germany in Berlin on Nov 19. If selected, Beckham would equal the 108-cap outfield record of World Cup-winning captain Bobby Moore. He is also interested in joining a Premier League club and is looking to get permission from LA Galaxy.

Beckham, who played a brief role as a substitute in England's 3-1 win over Belarus on Wednesday, has given no indication that he wants to retire from international football. He took time out yesterday to praise the new regime under Capello which has brought England their best start to a World Cup qualifying campaign.

"There's a lot more seriousness around the England team – and it's paying off," Beckham said. "It's not about anything but the football and at past competitions it has been about other things that have surrounded the England team.

"Now it's more about us being successful in a big competition. It's nice to be part of a team that's so confident and doing so well.

"In this England team, we've got players who are some of the best in Europe, even the world."

Emile Heskey: Quitting Liverpool saved my England career



Heskey

Emile Heskey, England's renaissance man, claims leaving Liverpool helped save his career.

The 30-year-old striker returns to Anfield tomorrow with Wigan, transformed from the player who was shunted out the door in one of Gerard Houllier's last acts as manager. Heskey claims his confidence nose-dived in that final season in 2004 because Houllier insisted on playing him out of position on the right, the Kop began to lose faith in him and he went 13 games without scoring.

His international career suffered and a 14-minute cameo in England's defeat to France in Euro 2004 ushered in a three-year spell in the wilderness. "It was a tough year for me, 2004," said Heskey. "I was young and unable to cope with playing out of position. That meant I wasn't playing to the best of my ability.

"The manager played me in different positions as he felt I was capable of doing it. At the time we didn't have other players who could play there so it was an easy option to play me.

"Who knows what might have happened if they had played me up front? I can only go on what's happened to me since and I've had a good career up to now."

Steve Bruce rescued Heskey by taking him to Birmingham, before teaming up again with him at Wigan.

"I needed to refocus and I did that by going to Birmingham and I was able to re-establish myself," he added.

Even though leaving Liverpool has been the death-knell for many careers, Heskey was not scared to say goodbye

to the club he had supported as a kid.

He knew he desperately needed a fresh start and felt joining Bruce at Birmingham in a £6.25million move could help him do that.

"As a player, you've just got to trust in your own ability," he said.

"I knew I had ability, so moving down to a smaller club didn't affect me because I knew I needed to refocus."

Bruce hailed Heskey as an "old-fashioned English centre-forward" and quickly restored his confidence by making him the spearhead of the Blues attack. Heskey still had plenty of work to do and his return to the England fold last season – in one of Steve McClaren's few good calls – was three years in the making.

A broken foot hampered his progress, but Fabio Capello is a huge fan of the industrious and unselfish targetman, considering him a key player.

Heskey was outstanding in England's World Cup qualifying win in Belarus – his 50th cap – and his partnership with Wayne Rooney is a throwback to his days alongside Michael Owen.

He is remarkably laid back about the turnaround in his fortunes and puts his return to form down to maturity.

"Winning 50 caps for England is an honour," he said. "I'm more relaxed with the pressure of playing for England.

"I'm more mature now. I'm also a bit cleverer in terms of being able to see things clearer by bringing players into

play by holding the ball up. You learn to see the bigger picture better with experience.

"Obviously the pressure is on when you're not getting the goals or the results, but the lads have been brilliant so far.

"People have said I'm playing the best football of my career, but I think I played some great football at Liverpool and for Leicester as well. It's just nice getting recognised – brilliant really."

The born-again Heskey has become one of the Premier League's most-coveted strikers and Tottenham and Aston Villa tried to sign him before the transfer deadline.

Martin O'Neill is likely to return in January and Heskey could also cash in on his popularity by leaving Wigan on a free transfer when his current deal expires at the end of the season.

Wigan are desperate to hang on to him and after the unhappy end to his Liverpool days, he is glad to feel wanted again.

"It's been like this for a while, getting linked to different clubs, and it's going to carry on being like this," he said. "It shows you're doing something right. I'm a Wigan player and that's it really. I want to do my best for them."

But he has not lost hope of again playing for one of the top flight's big clubs. He said: "Everyone wants to be playing on these stages and for their club in the Champions League."

The way his career has gone recently you would not bet against it.