

Sol can still be top flight star

By Harry Redknapp

SOL CAMPBELL can do at the back what Henrik Larsson did up front for Manchester United two years ago.

Campbell can prove, as Swedish star Larsson did, that he still has the quality to play at the very highest level and I'm not surprised at the reports tipping him for a Premier League return.

Not too many people took to the idea of striker Larsson doing a more than decent job for Alex Ferguson back in January 2007 when he was plucked from Swedish part-timers Helsingborgs.

Sir Alex needed a temporary fix for his squad when he was struggling with injuries to strikers Alan Smith and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

It worked out brilliantly as Larsson scored on his debut against Aston Villa in the FA Cup and then against Watford in the league during his three-month stay.

United went on to win the Premier League title that season, two months after Larsson, now 37, went home to Sweden with Sir Alex full of praise for the way he handled himself.

As a measure of Larsson's contribution, even though he did not play the 10 games needed to gain a champion's medal, United asked for and were granted an extra gong to pass on to him.

With United now having problems with the fitness of key defenders like Jonny Evans, Rio Ferdinand and John O'Shea, it has a familiar ring about the Larsson situation to it.

Sol can still do a job for anyone and probably the biggest mistake he has made in recent years was moving to Notts County.

Not for one minute do I wish to disrespect anyone at Meadow Lane, I know they are honest pros who will do their best for the club.

But one of the hardest things in football - and there are many - is trying to play alongside players who are not on the same level.

That is the situation Campbell found himself in and while I don't know if he will go to Old Trafford, or if Sir Alex is interested, it would make sense.

Larsson was successfully persuaded to come out of retirement and Sol - at 35 a couple of years younger - would



Campbell

In fact, Sir Alex has already turned to one golden oldie and is getting the rewards for backing his judgment in signing Michael Owen when few would touch him.

I reckon Liverpool must be looking at Owen now and wondering why they didn't try to get him back at Anfield - when Fernando Torres is injured who do they have?

If the truth be known, Owen would probably have loved to have gone back to Anfield for a second spell and I can just imagine him running on to passes slid through defences by Steve Gerrard.

For me, it was a no-brainer when Owen became available and his hat-trick for United in Germany against Wolfsburg was a masterclass in finishing and demonstrates that class is permanent, form is temporary.

Owen took a little time to find his feet at Old Trafford and knows he is not going to play a part in every game - this is where his temperament kicks in.

He is mentally tough enough to accept the situation if he is on the bench and accept the challenge on the pitch.

Michael has already played in enough games to get a title medal should United manage to overhaul Chelsea at the top.

You never know, Sol could be getting another title medal of his long career when they are handed out in May.

The Real Madrid rejects (yours for £45m): Sportsmail's guide to who's on offer at the Bernabeu in January



Van Nistelrooy



Gago

The leading English clubs were put on alert as Real Madrid placed eight of their squad on an unofficial transfer list for January.

There are no surprises in a group headed by striker Ruud van Nistelrooy, but their price tags have shock value. It is the season for giving but, after spending £265million in the summer, Real have decided they can't afford to be charitable.

Liverpool, so dependent on Fernando Torres, would be at the front of the queue for Van Nistelrooy but a £4million fee and £75,000-a-week wages are too much for a 33-year-old - even if he guarantees goals as he chases a Holland World Cup place.

Liverpool would jump at a free transfer, as would Tottenham or Roma, but Real are insisting on hard cash for a player they believe can contribute 10 goals and help any side win a trophy.

Despite still figuring in first-team

squads, Guti and Rafael van der Vaart are also on the list. Talented but brattish, Guti has a ridiculous contract at Real. He could be pushed out for a £4m sweetener but stylish midfielder Van der Vaart would cost £8m.

Others at the Real exit door include Argentina midfielder Fernando Gago, the 23-year-old who has been linked with Everton. He had been assured of his future and guaranteed more games by coach Manuel Pellegrini but his outspoken desire to play has pushed the board the other way.

Everton will struggle to find the £7.5m required to buy him - while any loan approaches are being frowned upon.

Gago's compatriot Ezequiel Garay, an accomplished centre half, is also up for sale.

He once caught the eye of Manchester United and, although Sir Alex Ferguson's mind is concentrating elsewhere, Old Trafford's de-

fensive injury crisis may bring the 23-year-old back into sharp focus, especially at around £6m.

More eye-watering could be the £10m Real want for bulldozing midfielder Mahamadou

Diarra, a target for Juventus despite little more than an hour's game time since a serious knee injury, and £6m-rated winger Royston Drenthe, a relative success at Real.

Both would find plenty of suitors in England but only Chelsea, Manchester City, Manchester United, Aston Villa and Sunderland have the cash to splash this window.

Real want at least £30m to hit their financial targets but that may leave many of their 'bargains' on the shelf.

Former Liverpool keeper Jerzy Dudek is maybe a more realistic target for Premier League clubs feeling the pinch. Now 36, he is at least available on a free.

Chelsea and Manchester United don't get as many injuries as Arsenal, says Gunners boss Arsene Wenger

Arsene Wenger admits Arsenal's injury crisis has given their rivals the edge in this year's title race.

With 14 games gone, Wenger's side sit eight points behind Barclays Premier League leaders Chelsea.

The Gunners halted a streak of three straight domestic losses with a 2-0 victory over Stoke at the Emirates Stadium.

The win came at a price though as William Gallas (hamstring), Emmanuel Eboué (muscle), Armand Traore (hamstring), Andrey Arshavin (ankle) and Tomas Rosicky (groin) all picked up injuries during the match.

With Wenger's squad already hit by injuries to the likes of Kieran Gibbs and Robin van Persie, the Frenchman admits Arsenal's rivals have had much more luck than them with injuries this campaign.

'We pick up more injuries than the other big teams, that is true,' Wenger said. 'You cannot say there is not a reason for it but we have not found it yet.'

'It's the worst season for injuries for us. And they are all in the same area - in the offensive

side. Last year it was in the defensive side.'

Czech Republic midfielder Rosicky's injury was a particularly cruel twist to the 29-year-old's season.

Before the season began, the £6.7million signing had spent the previous 18 months sidelined with a series of knee and hamstring injuries.

Rosicky has struggled to regain his fitness and has been a bit-part player in his 13 appearances.

It is likely that Wenger will now have to do without the former Sparta Prague player for up to a month.

'He's devastated and I am as well,' Wenger said. 'It's a vicious circle when you have been out for a long time. Eduardo had not played for 18 months, Tomas has not played for 18 months,' the 60 year old said.

'When you come back, one or two games, your body has to get used to producing the energy levels again and it's difficult. Nobody masters that.'

Arshavin excelled up front in the absence of Van Persie but Wenger admits he may have

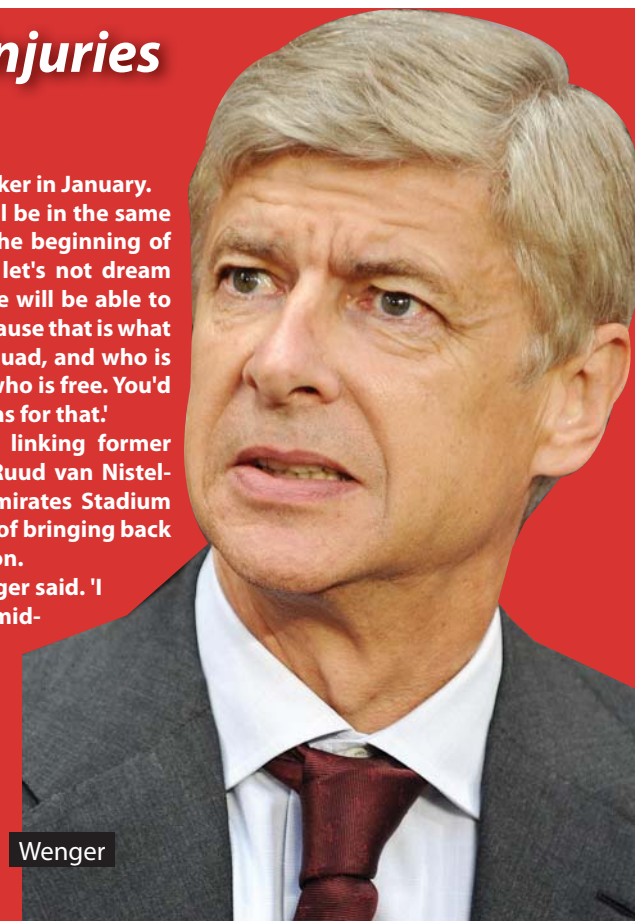
to enter the market for a striker in January.

'I want to see now if we will be in the same position as we are now at the beginning of January,' Wenger said. 'But let's not dream too much that in January we will be able to find a world class player, because that is what is needed to improve our squad, and who is not cup-tied in Europe and who is free. You'd need a good Father Christmas for that.'

Wenger rejected rumours linking former Manchester United striker Ruud van Nistelrooy with a move to the Emirates Stadium and denied he was thinking of bringing back Patrick Vieira to north London.

'Vieira is not a striker,' Wenger said. 'I don't think we suffered in mid-field (on Saturday) and we have (Abou) Diaby who can come back next week.'

'I don't believe we are especially short there, but we are up front.'



Wenger