
After Beckham US Soccer Hires Brazil's Ronaldo

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The US's modest soccer world is abuzz with rumors that the hiring of English player David Beckham for US\$ 250 million by the Los Angeles Galaxy will be followed soon by the acquisition of a Beckham's team mate at the Real Madrid, Brazilian Ronaldo.

Ronaldo, who in recent past used to be called the Phenomenon, still has the title of all-time top scorer in World Cups.

Rafael Ramos Villagrana, a sports columnist for the Los Angeles Spanish-language daily La Opinión says that the New York soccer team Red Bulls will be signing up Ronaldo Nazário de Lima next week.

His contract, however, will be less than half that of Beckham, but still millionaire: US\$ 119 million for five years. If confirmed this would be a relief for both the striker and Real Madrid, which has already made clear that it wants the player out.

For Ramos, the only thing that might delay the transfer of the Brazilian footballer from Spain to the United States would be the contract he signed with Nike, since the players from the US's MLS (Major League Soccer) wear Adidas.

The MLS has been preparing for some time now for the hiring of big international soccer stars. In November they introduced what is now known as Beckham rule, which says that clubs will pay the extra cost for players who receive more than the maximum salary of US\$ 400,000 per season. Previously, the MLS leadership was responsible for the whole salaries of its member teams.

The Brazilian striker, who was laid-off by Real Madrid's coach Fabio Capello, is said to be also considering a US\$ 26 million a year offer to play at the Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad, the same club where Portuguese star Luiz Figo should be presenting himself starting in August.

In the 80s, the New York Cosmos brought soccer legend Pelé out of retirement to play at the side of German great Franz Beckenbauer. The measure, however, wasn't enough to make soccer a popular sport in the US.

These are other times, however, say analysts. Today, thousands of children, many of them Latinos have soccer flowing in their blood and belong to thriving soccer teams in high school. All that football needs is a little kick from a Beckham and a Ronaldo. Unless both are taking the money and starting early retirement.