

AMERICANS
IN GERMANY

BUNDESLIGA 1. The American everyone is watching is **Landon Donovan**, the MVP of the 1999 Under-17 World Cup. At 18, he's the youngest player on the Bayer Leverkusen first team. **Tony Sanneh**, who came on as a sub in Hertha Berlin's opener against Bayern Munich, showed enough late in the 1999-2000 season to have his contract renewed. **Frankie Hejduk** doesn't have much of a future at Leverkusen and has been hunting for a new German club.

BUNDESLIGA 2. **Steve Cherundolo**, considered the future right back on the U.S. national team, suffered a major setback when he injured his knee playing at Hannover last spring. **Joe Enochs**, a 28-year-old midfielder, helped tiny Osnabrueck reach the pro level in his fourth season with the club.

REGIONALLIGA. The German Third Division was reduced from four groups to two (North and South), leaving just 38 teams in the league. It attracts dozens of foreigners, most from Eastern Europe and Africa. **David Wagner** is in his second season at Darmstadt. Fellow German-American **Michael Mason** joined Carl Zeiss Jena from Gutersloh. **Brent Goulet**, a veteran of almost a decade of minor-league ball, is one of three Americans at Elversberg, along with **Tim Lawson** and **Grover Gibson**. **John Van Buskirk** starts his second season at Sportfreunde Siegen, where he's joined by **Marek Nowacki**. Former U.S. U-20 star **Taylor Twellman** left Maryland after two seasons to join 1860 Munich's amateur team. U.S. U-18 midfielder **Carlo Espinosa** was signed by former Bundesliga power Karlsruhe out of East Islip (N.Y.) High School. The only Americans in the Regionalliga's South group are 22-year-old striker **Jacob Thomas** (Eintracht Braunschweig) and veteran defender **Gregory Kile** (Lueneburger).

Bayern remains in a class by itself

Leverkusen will have a hard time keeping up after coming so close last season

BY RIDGE MAHONEY

The era of television saturation has finally come to the Bundesliga.

Every one of the 306 league matches will be shown live — but only on pay-per-view. More than 100,000 fans had subscribed to the Premiere Network a few days prior to the Aug. 11 opening game in which ex-European Player of the Year Matthias Sammer made his head coaching debut for old club Borussia Dortmund in a 1-0 win over Hansa Rostock.



2000 PREVIEW

As part of the new TV package, a Saturday night game will be played each week in addition to games on Friday night, Saturday afternoon and Sunday night.

Champion Bayern Munich kicked off the new time slot with a 4-1 win over Hertha Berlin.

Hertha is one of the few clubs given any chance to dethrone Bayern, which captured the title last May in a most thrilling fashion.

Last April, with a month to go in the Bundesliga race, striker Ulf Kirsten of league leader Bayer Leverkusen said for his club, "It's now or never."

Never struck on the final day, when Leverkusen squandered a three-point lead. Needing only a tie to clinch its first title, Bayer fell to Unterhaching and relinquished the Bundesliga shield to Bayern on goal difference when the Munich giant closed the season by beating Werder Bremen.

Leverkusen thus finished second for the third time in the past four seasons and had to endure the irony of losing the title with a defeat at the hands of a small club in the suburbs of Munich on a tiny field located just eight miles from Bayern's Olympic Stadium.

INJURIES HAMPER BAYERN. Early handicapping of the Bundesliga race indicated a season similar to 1998-99, when Bayern cruised home by 15 points, but the fates turned against Bayern in the week prior to the opening weekend.

Midfielders Stefan Effenberg and Jens Jeremies went down with injuries and both are expected to miss at

least the first two months of the season.

The Bavarians were without six starters, but they had little trouble handling Hertha.

Mehmet Scholl was the star, opening the scoring with a penalty kick and setting up big Carsten Jancker with the second goal.

Bayern management spent little during the summer, the only notable additions being French back Willy Sagnol — who some observers believe to be a carbon-copy of left-sided dynamo Bixente Lizarazu — and Swiss international Ciriaco Sforza, who rejoins Bayern after stints with Inter and Kaiserslautern.

Bayern general manager Uli Hoeness has said that there is no point in spending a fortune on a Luis Figo or a Hernan Crespo and said the sums spent by some of Bayern's rivals on the European front were "mad."

LOSSES AT LEVERKUSEN. Kirsten may have been prescient. His club doesn't look as strong this time around.

Leverkusen has lost important midfield cogs: Brazilian Emerson has gone to Roma in the most expensive Bundesliga transfer in history (\$16.67 million), and native Berliner Stefan Beinlich has moved to his hometown club, Hertha.

To keep pace with Bayern's powerful Brazilian duo of Paulo Sergio and Giovane Elber, Leverkusen has added Marquinhos and per-

sueded left-sided virtuoso Ze Roberto to stay.

But Kirsten is 34, and Coach Christoph Daum suspects this last fling with Leverkusen — he takes over the German national team at the end of the season — may not be as tense as last May's heartbreaking finish.

"It has to be the rest of the league against Bayern, otherwise we will all be fighting for second place," said Daum, summing up the general feeling around the Bundesliga.

"What we have to do is plant salads in the Sahara," Daum told *Die Welt*. "We aim at something which is seemingly impossible, but in the end we might end up with a green oasis."

OUTGUNNED AND OUTSPENT. As the Emerson sale price confirms, most German teams are outgunned and outspent by their major European rivals.

"We just can't afford to spend the sort of money some leading European clubs have been putting on the table," Daum says. "The simple fact that the Bundesliga remains competitive with the means it has is something of a miracle."

Hamburg, Hertha Berlin and Borussia Dortmund all can outspend Leverkusen, which plays in the Bay Arena, one of the most beautiful stadiums in Germany but with only 22,500 seats.

Hamburg finished third — its best performance in a decade — but it didn't upgrade itself significantly to be a serious challenger in the Bundesliga or Champions League.

Hertha dropped to sixth after third-place finishes in two of the three previous years, and it welcomes Beinlich from Leverkusen.

Joerg Heinrich and Sunday Oliseh were Sammer's two big signings at Dortmund.

Only Bayern, however, can rival the big clubs in Italy and Spain.

It generates more than \$150 million in revenue each year, and the new TV deal will pump more than \$275 million into the team's coffers per year over the next three seasons.

(Ridge Mahoney is a senior editor at Soccer America.)



KAI PFAFFENBACH/REUTERS

Giant Carsten Jancker towers over Hertha Berlin's Rene Tretschok (No. 23) in Bayern Munich's 4-1 win in the first game of its Bundesliga title defense.