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Beckham Quits As England Captain

By Steven Cronin

David Beckham has stood down as England captain following the Three Lions World Cup quarter-final defeat to Portugal.

Beckham was first given the captancy by then England caretaker boss Peter Taylor in 2000 and continued in the role under the five year management of Sven-Goran Eriksson.

It was Beckham's leadership in the final 2002 World Cup qualifying game at home to Greece at Old Trafford that will be most fondly remembered.

At the peak of his talent, Beckham single-handedly dragged England over the finishing line to qualify for Japan and Korea, a sensational last minute free kick earning England a draw and automatic qualification.

As Beckham spoke of his intention to step down as captain with immediate effect, tears began to well in his eyes, a decision made even more heartbreaking following England's exit.

An emotional Beckham said "It has been an honour and a privilege to have captained our country and I want to stress that I wish to continue to play for England and look forward to helping both the new captain and Steve McClaren in any way I can.

"This decision has been the most difficult of my career to date. But after discussing it with my family and those closest to me I feel the time is right.

"Finally, I have lived the dream, I am extremely proud to have worn the armband and been captain of England and for that I will always be grateful."

Beckham grew up in the East End of London and always harboured a wish to play for his boyhood heroes Manchester United.

Beckham Quits As England Captain

Alex Ferguson gave him his chance at first team action at United and Beckham never looked back, soon becoming a national and world icon.

A rift between Ferguson and Beckham led to the ex-England captain's transfer to Real Madrid in the summer of 2003, though he is still waiting for his first major honour with the Madrid club.

Steven Cronin owns the City Breaks website featuring city break special offers from luxury hotels to budget accommodations. For more information please visit

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England's World Cup Dream Over

By Steven Cronin

Once again England's remarkable inability from spot kicks has cost them a place in the semi-finals of the World Cup.

The 3-1 shoot out defeat to Portugal was a repeat of the European Championship exit two years earlier when the Portuguese were on home soil.

Owen Hargreaves was the only Englishman to convert his penalty as the England curse continued.

England have now lost six of the seven penalty shootouts they have been involved in.

Contrast this to Germany, who since defeat to Czechoslovakia in the 1976 European Championships have won every shootout they have been involved in.

That record becomes even more incredible when you consider they have also scored every individual penalty within the shootout.

But England's demise could have been avoided had Sven-Goran Eriksson employed better use of the players at his disposal.

His decision to stick with David Beckham when the England captain is clearly past his best has caused frustration for many fans.

This was compounded by the performance of Aaron Lennon when he finally got his chance in place of Beckham during the second half of the quarterfinal.

His pace and dribbling caused panic in the Portuguese defence, something Beckham rarely achieved, and fans can only wonder how England would have fared had he been used earlier.

England's chances were further inhibited when their one genuine world class star Wayne Rooney was played out of his best position and employed as a lone front man.

Beckham Quits As England Captain

Rooney is at his devastating best playing behind a main striker and running at defences from thirty yards out.

England's tactics of hitting him with long balls was a complete waste of his talents and a let off for the Portuguese defence.

But with Eriksson now departed, the reigns of the England manager's job are passed on to Steve McClaren, Eriksson's assistant for the past five years.

Fans can only hope McClaren introduces a new attacking brand of football to excite the supporters and break with more defensive instincts of Eriksson.

We await with baited breath.

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