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English Premiership Football Week 4 - West Ham United 1:1 Aston Villa

By Steven Cronin

Whisper it quietly, but there are certain members within the Villa Park faithful anticipating great things under Martin O'Neill.

Without wishing to tempt fate, Aston Villa's impressive start to the season is hopefully an indication of things to come under the often eccentric Irishman.

A combination of O'Neill's eye for talent, in tandem with the vast wealth of new American owner Randy Lerner could be the catalyst for success Villa fans everywhere have been dreaming about.

With an almost identical squad that David O'Leary had at his disposal, Martin O'Neill has instigated a quite remarkable turnaround in fortunes.

Playing a formation that incorporates two out and out wingers in local lads Luke Moore and Gabriel Agbonlahor, O'Neill has instilled an attacking instinct in his players and brought about an exciting brand of football.

Villa's fans currently watch their side in a state of disbelief following last season's insipid and colourless mix of football.

The game itself was an entertaining affair with both teams putting emphasise on attack.

Opening exchanges were end to end but it was Villa who opened the scoring as early as the forth minute.

A whipped cross from the left was met with a bullet header from Mellberg on the six yard box.

The point blank header from the Villa defender was superbly saved by Roy Carol only for Liam Ridgwell to bundle the ball over the line from close range.

Villa continued to create chances as the half wore on, the closest being an Angel header that crashed back off the crossbar.

West Ham hit back early in the second half, a corner converted by the in-form Bobby Zamora.

The Hammers sent on new Argentinean striker Tevez, but despite some clever touches he was unable to break a solid looking Villa defence.

Villa debutant Petrov came closest to grabbing a winner with a delicate lob over the goalkeeper that was hooked off the line.

Steven Cronin writes the hottest English Premiership Football news, results and opinion at

http://www.sargas.co.uk/english_premiership_football

I'm A Villa Fan And I'm Scared!

By Steven Cronin

It's fair to say that the past twenty-five years of following Aston Villa Football Club has come with its fair share of ups and downs.

But I can honestly say I have never looked forward to a new football season with such an overwhelming feeling of pessimism.

I was fortunate enough to be born just in time to appreciate the glory years of the early eighties. The team built by Ron Saunders and then nurtured by Tony Barton brought much joy and happiness to at least half the city of Birmingham.

Unfortunately those days now seem an eternity ago and things are much different. I'm still trying to work out how Doug Ellis bought the champions of Europe in the summer of 1982 and then proceeded to guide them to relegation in just five years. That must surely be some kind of record.

These days things are only slightly better. The continual decline under David O'Leary's guidance is causing serious cause for concern amongst the Villa faithful.

The final third of last season produced some of the worst football seen at Villa Park for some time and relegation fears were only dispelled in the final week of the season.

The only team worse than Villa at the end was Sunderland and they finished with the lowest points tally since the Premiership started.

The only highlight of a dreadful season was the derby victories over Birmingham, ultimately crucial in the battle for survival points.

The lack of transfer activity due to the never-ending take-over saga is a serious problem and one that could haunt the club come the end of the season.

But for now, we Villa fans can only cross our fingers and hope. O'Leary's promise that last season's dismal position was a one off has bought him extra time from Ellis, but many fans remain distinctly unconvinced.

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

<http://www.sargas.co.uk>



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