

# SE25

OFFICIAL CLUB MAGAZINE // WINTER '09

## STEPPING OUT OF THE SHADOWS

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
Julian Speroni talks to SE25  
about becoming one of  
the best goalkeepers in the  
Championship

ISSUE 17 WINTER 2009 / £2.50



**1000 AND COUNTING NEIL WARNOCK** HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE ALAN LEE  
FORMER STARS RETURN MARK BRIGHT AND JOHN SALAKO **EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW...FREDDIE SEARS**

# PALACE'S OTHER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

*Palace USA ace Shintaro on fish 'n' chips, defensive lines and living with Alassane*

Words By: Andrew McSteen



Our Argentine custodian may get all the plaudits here in SE25 but across the pond our stateside cousins Crystal Palace USA have their own star man who has been training with the Eagles at Beckenham this season.

Japanese defensive midfielder Shintaro Harada has only missed one league game for the Baltimore-based team since their formation back in 2007, and has appeared twice in the United Soccer League Division 2 (USL-2) Team of the Year.

'Shin' as he is known, started his professional career as a 19-year-old for Yokohama F-Marininos when their then manager Ossie Ardiles handed him his debut. Shin continued in the team that season, playing against international legends such as Bebeto and helped guide his team to their first League Championship (Stage 1).

After successful spells at other J-League clubs Shin decided to move abroad in 2007 and entered the open trials for the newly-formed Palace USA team, arriving with a little bit of English and his boots.

"I was 26 and wanted to change my life and challenge myself," said the 29-year-old who was born in Tokorozawa City, Saitama, 20 miles west of Tokyo. "I knew about Palace USA and their connections to the UK team, and my family really encouraged me. It was a good challenge, especially as the Beckham transfer to LA Galaxy had just been announced"

"I remember arriving at those trials and it being so cold - about -20! - but I knew I had to perform. When Jim [Cherneski] and Pete [Medd] (Palace USA Joint Managers) saw me they signed me on the spot."

Fast forward three seasons to 2009 and Shin's performances have seen interest from Major League Soccer (MLS) sides Chicago Fire, New England Revolution and current MLS Champions Real Salt Lake.

With the American season ending in August, Shin was looking to continue training and playing, so through Jim Cherneski's relationship with Mick Jones, Shin paid his own way to come and live in London and train with the First Team as his passport wouldn't allow him to play officially

Shin trained daily at Beckenham with the First Team, Reserves and youth squads, following in the footsteps of previous Palace USA players Brian Rowland and Val Texeira, and also played in behind-closed-door friendlies including the 7-1 demolition at the hands of Tottenham.



"I was so nervous before my first training session at Beckenham. I knew some of the players and they knew me from when we played each other, which made it easier. It was such a great feeling to train with them and such a good experience to learn and improve myself."

Despite living in different locations during his time in London, it was his time living with Alassane N'Diaye that stands out.

Alassane showed me around the local area - he's a very good lad.

"Before he joined Palace he was living in digs like I was and knows what it's like to be living away from home. When I asked him where to stay he said just come over and stay at his - his place was much cheaper than a hotel, although I had to do the washing up!"

Shin was a regular visitor at Selhurst Park for Palace games and even travelled to West London for the derby against QPR in his thirst for knowledge and personal development.

"I haven't missed a Palace home game since I've been here," said Shin who looked up to (current Barcelona coach) Pep Guardiola when he was learning his trade.

"I have learnt so much watching Palace, especially how high their defensive line is compared to those in the US.

"Palace are a good team in the Championship, and the teams they are playing against are very good - I support them and really want them to make the Premier League, but I don't think

**"I HAVE LEARNT SO MUCH WATCHING PALACE, ESPECIALLY HOW HIGH THEIR DEFENSIVE LINE IS COMPARED TO THOSE IN THE US."**

the Championship would be the second division in most other countries.

"After the matches I always talk to the players about the game, especially the defenders and the centre midfielders because I have a lot to learn from them. I have learnt so much; technically, tactically, physically and the speed! As a player I have had to adapt myself and it has taken a long time with English football.

"Some Palace players here in the UK are interested in coming to Baltimore to visit on holiday and some of them are thinking to go to America to retire there with their families."

Away from his club commitments Shin dreams of playing for his national side, having played alongside Japanese national hero and former Celtic player Shunsuke Nakamura, who started his career at Yokohoma like Shintaro.

"I really want to get a chance to show the Japanese FA what I can do. We have qualified for the South Africa World Cup next year and I would love to be part of it."

Shintaro will take his UK experience

back to Baltimore for the 2010 season and to a new 'soccer-specific' stadium in a new league - the North American Soccer League (NASL).

"The new stadium and league is great for us as a team as it presents a new challenge. It will be great to have a stadium just for football which is right in the city and next to the Baltimore Ravens (NFL American Football team) stadium, so we can attract more fans."

"My experience both here in England and in Baltimore has taught me a lot, not only about football but about different nationalities and cultural traditions.

"The people here in England and at Palace have been helping me all the time. I will go back a better player; physically, technically and mentally - I have learnt the proper English slide tackle which will be very useful in the US.

"I feel like I know London and have been almost everywhere; Hyde Park, The British Museum, Trafalgar Square, The London Eye, Emirates Stadium, Buckingham Palace - I have taken a couple of thousand pictures!

"The food has been good, I like fish 'n' chips but can't eat so much because I am playing, but I do like them with lots of salt, vinegar and tomato ketchup!"

TOP LEFT: Shintaro at the Crystal Palace Beckenham training ground.

TOP RIGHT: Shintaro in pre season action against Crystal Palace. Alassane N'Diaye runs on whom he got