Tens of thousands to welcome Mbappe to Real Madrid

AFP- The French superstar striker will wear the number 9 shirt (Pierre-Philippe MARCOU)
Still celebrating Spain's Euro 2024 triumph, Real Madrid fans will have even more to cheer Tuesday as French superstar Kylian Mbappe is officially presented to a packed-out Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

With an expected attendance of 85,000, the stadium will be packed to the rafters for Mbappe's first appearance before fans in what should beat the record set 15 years ago by Cristiano Ronaldo.

Although the tickets are free, they were snapped up rapidly with some fans reportedly trying to resell them to take advantage of the hype surrounding the arrival of the world's best striker.

During the morning, Mbappe will sign his new five-season contract with Real president Florentino Perez before entering the stadium at midday (1000 GMT) to greet fans after which he will hold a press conference.

Although his new teammates began training on Monday, the striker, who captained France during the Euros, will have a few more days off before kicking off his season in the Spanish capital.

Club medics will want to examine his nose which was broken during France's 1-0 win over Austria on June 18 during the group stage, although France were later knocked out in the semi-finals by Spain.

For Mbappe and Real Madrid, it is the culmination of a long-awaited liaison.

The 25-year-old – who says he has always been a fan of Los Blancos and of Ronaldo – will wear the number 9 shirt which went on sale last Thursday in Real's shops which are covered with his image.

– 'Excitement and humility' –

Coming from Paris Saint-Germain, who he joined in 2017, Mbappe arrives after a disappointing Euros campaign for him personally where his star image was overshadowed by that of Spain's new teenage sensation Lamine Yamal.

And it comes after a difficult season with PSG following his decision not to renew his contract, with the striker – who was the Paris club's all-time top scorer – admitting he felt "liberated, relieved" by his transfer to Real.

"It's an immense pleasure and a dream come true. This is the club I've always dreamed of being at," he said in June.

"I'm going there with a lot of excitement and a lot of humility."

At Real, he will form part of a new offensive trio alongside England midfielder Jude Bellingham and Brazil attacker Vinicius Junior under the watch of Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti.

And the prospect is already exciting fans of the club who won their 15th Champions League title in June.

Also the current title-holders of Spain's La Liga, Los Blancos begin their campaign with a match against Real Mallorca when the season kicks off on the weekend of August 17-18.

Even so, Mbappe's debut might have to wait until the following week when Real Madrid face Real Valladolid who were recently promoted from the second division.

The club is hoping to offset the costs – a 15-million-euro

salary per season and signing bonus of more than 100 million euros – through sponsorship deals and ticket and merchandise sales, among other things.

And Mbappe is hoping the move will finally see him win a Champions League and the Ballon d’Or, two of his lifelong objectives.

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