



Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo (R) runs towards teammate Zinedine Zidane after scoring the winner against Real Betis at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on August 30.

Primera Liga

Ronaldo ensures winning start



AP, Madrid

David Beckham took just two minutes to score a goal in his Spanish league debut Saturday as Real Madrid kicked off its title defense with a hard-earned 2-1 win over Real Betis in the opening league match of the season.

Beckham clipped home a low cross from Brazilian superstar Ronaldo from close range to net his second goal in three days and continue a fine start to his Madrid career.

On Wednesday, the star midfielder headed home in Madrid's 3-0 Spanish Supercup win over Mallorca on his first appearance for the Spanish powerhouse at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Then, the pass came from Ronaldo.

"It's probably the quickest goal I've ever scored," Beckham said. "So it's nice to do it here and on the first day of the season. Hopefully, Ronaldo will keep doing it for me and I'll keep doing it for him."

Ronaldo netted Madrid's game-winning goal in the 61st minute from a move begun by Beckham after Betis had drawn level through international defender Juanito Gutierrez during the first half.

Meanwhile, FC Barcelona, struggling to rebuild under a new president after a dismal season last year, beat Athletic Bilbao 1-0. New acquisition Ronaldinho showed flashes of good play but did not score.

And Valencia, another traditional

Spanish powerhouse seeking to fight back from a disappointing season, managed only a 1-1 draw against lowly Valladolid after trailing for much of the game.

Despite the boost of Beckham's third goal in his eight games for his new club, Madrid gave an uneven display as it successfully began its campaign to lift the title for a record 30th time.

"We suffered and it was all our fault," Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz said. "We had some fantastic moments and then we threw them away."

Queiroz said Beckham played in what he called two phases. "In the first half he was very good at helping to construct the team's moves. In the second half he made more sacrifices. He played more in the center of the field and helped to organize the team. He did well at this, too."

Beckham also implied that his final stages at Manchester United, who sold him to Madrid in June, were not ideal.

"This is the happiest I've been at this point in time for a year-and-a-half to two years," he said. "Now I'm glad. You have your ups and downs in life, but I'm glad to be over the worst."

On Saturday, Beckham was more involved than in his two previous games for Madrid in Spain. He also hit the crossbar and drew applause from the 65,000 spectators in the stadium with his swerving crosses from the right.

But Madrid, which has been seeking a defensive reinforcement before Sunday's transfer deadline, lost the lead Beckham had provided when its back four suddenly lapsed

into slackness. In the 28th minute, the champions allowed Argentine striker Martin Palermo the freedom to meet Brazilian midfielder Marcos Assuncao's floated free kick with his head. Fortunately for the home team, Palermo, who arrived from Villarreal last week, headed onto the bar.

Six minutes later, Madrid was not so lucky as Juanito beat Argentine midfielder Esteban Cambiasso to the ball and nodded home the equalizer from Assuncao's corner.

After a quiet spell, Beckham burst back into life in the 52nd minute by unleashing a fierce shot from outside the area which rattled the Betis crossbar. Following up, French midfielder Zinedine Zidane hit the post.

The action spurred Madrid into life and it restored its lead in style nine minutes later. Beckham floated a pass upfield to Zidane, who was lurking on the left, and the Frenchman delivered a swift cross for Ronaldo to power the ball home with a volley.

Betis battled back in a vain search of an equalizer, with Madrid's outstanding goalkeeper Iker Casillas forced to make two saves from Spanish international winger Joaquin Sanchez.

In Bilbao, FC Barcelona's Phillip Cocu headed in a pass from Giovanni van Bronckhorst, transferred on loan this week from Arsenal, in the 12th minute to win 1-0 against Athletic Bilbao. But Barcelona played rather poorly and the Basque side missed a lot of scoring opportunities.

Valencia fell behind in the 24th minute as Valladolid's Francisco

David Sousa outran several defenders and dodged goalkeeper Santi Canizares to make it 1-0.

Valencia equalized in the 77th minute on a goal by Pablo Aimar as keeper Albano Bizzari dove and only managed to deflect a ball he could have stopped. After the game some Valencia fans whistled in disgust with their team.

Espanyol fought to a 1-1 draw with Real Sociedad -- the dark horse which led the Spanish league for much of last year only to lose the title on the last day of the season.

Playing in Barcelona, Espanyol's Pierre Wome struck first in the 22nd minute with a free kick that deflected off a defender.

Sociedad's Darko Kovacevic equalized in the 61st as South Korea's Lee Chun-soo arched a soft pass over a defender and the Serbian tapped the ball in as he slid into goalkeeper Erwin Lemmens.

Malaga and Villarreal played to a scoreless draw in which both sides ended with 10 men. Villarreal's Fabricio Colocini was expelled in the 53rd minute after drawing two yellow cards and Malaga's Vicente Valcarlos was ejected in the 61st, also after drawing two yellow cards.

Albacete, which was promoted to the first division after spending seven years in the second, lost to Osasuna 2-0. Valmiro Lopes Rocha, a Valdo, knocked in a centering pass from close range in the 42nd minute and Francisco Punal converted a penalty in injury time.

Rain holds

FROM PAGE 13

Martin was reprising his glory days with a 6-7, 7-6, 6-4, 6-4 third-round victory over young American pretender Robby Ginepri.

It meant twice Grand Slam finalist Martin had secured his best run at a major since Wimbledon 2001.

Earlier, Capriati powered into the fourth round, blasting France's Emilie Loit 6-2, 2-6, 6-2 in a sometimes erratic performance.

"I hate playing in those kind of conditions," said the sixth-seeded American, adding that she felt like she was racing to finish before the rain.

In the absence of the Williams sisters Venus and Serena, 27-year-old Capriati is looking a good bet to provide the US Open with a home champion.

Along with Wimbledon, the Open is one of the two Grand Slams she is yet to win and she may never have a better chance.

Eleventh seed Elena Dementieva now stands in her path after the Russian did enough to edge past Amy Frazier of the US 7-6, 7-6.

Pierce continued to build confidence, form and momentum. The twice Grand Slam champion was a 6-4, 6-1 winner over Japan's Shinobu Asagoe.

Fighting back to fitness after two injury-plagued seasons, the unseeded Frenchwoman has begun to show glimpses of the power game that helped her to claim victory at the Australian and French Opens.

Pierce can equal her best effort at Flushing Meadows if she wins her next match against Russian seventh seed Anastasia Myskina.

Back in the men's draw, sixth seed Hewitt was given an easy passage into the last 16 when his Czech opponent Radek Stepanek retired injured while trailing 6-1, 3-0.

Stepanek pulled out with back trouble during the fourth game of the second set and Hewitt, champion at Flushing Meadows in 2001, next faces Thai Paradorn Srichaphan for a place in the quarterfinals.

"It's funny, you want to get some time on court under your belt but I won't complain," the Australian said. Paradorn, the 11th seed, had earlier wasted no time ousting Spain's Fernando Verdasco 6-3, 6-4, 6-3.

Moses making

FROM PAGE 13

realistically I can't believe it will but just to be there would serve as an inspiration," Moses said on the sidelines of the World Championships which end here on Sunday.

"Without doing 50.55 seconds you don't get to the Olympic trials. If you don't get in the first three places you don't go to Athens.

"I'm not going to sit here and tell you I'm going to Athens to look like a jerk."

Fifteen years have passed since his last competitive race, in the 1988 Olympic final in Seoul where he won the bronze medal, but Moses said he was "in good shape" and "on the same diet I was on when I was competing."

"A lot of my friends who were athletes at my time are now coaching top-class athletes and they have encouraged me to return," he said.

The man who at his peak went unbeaten for 122 races over nine years insisted he would not fail spectacularly like multiple Olympic swimming gold medalist Mark Spitz, who flopped in his attempted comeback for the 1992 Olympics.

"I'll be running faster than 53 seconds, so the girls won't beat me."

"I think Spitz started too late, I don't know if he was serious or not. But for me I'm using it as a motivating force for others."

He rejected suggestions that his comeback was financially motivated.

"I have no money problems," he said before joking about his travel arrangements to get to his training track. "I have a bicycle so it's no problem to get there."

"Anyway, in 1976 my school had no track I learned by jumping fences."

The man who is 22 years older than the recently crowned world champion Felix Sanchez said he was now free of the disc problems that forced him to retire in 1988.

"I have the power mentally to succeed, the question is physical. It is the mind that drives the body," he said.

"Sanchez will make me look what I used to make others look. I will be rooting for him. Not from the viewpoint of looking at his backside but from the sidelines," Moses added.

He will face intense competition to fill one of the US team places for Athens.

Despite the fact no-one has approached the world record set by Kevin Young in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics of 46.78sec - breaking Moses's mark - the Americans have youngsters like Bershawn Jackson coming through while veteran Joey Woody took silver behind Sanchez in the World Championships.

Brazil U-17 kings



AFP, Helsinki

Brazil beat Spain 1-0 to win the under-17 football World Championship in Helsinki on Saturday, taking home their third title after victories in 1997 and 1999 and reclaiming the trophy from defending champions France.

Spain came out strong at the start but could not stop Brazilian defender Leonardo scoring the game's only goal in the seventh minute and the South Americans never looked back.

Leonardo, a 17-year-old, scored three of Brazil's 15 goals in six games. His winning goal came after Joao's curling free kick hit the post. Leonardo slammed the rebound past Spain goalkeeper Mandaluniz.

"In the South American qualifiers we were the best team, but we

finished second," Brazil coach Paqueta said. "Today, the result was the most important thing."

Brazil easily outplayed and outpaced their European challengers for most of the match. When Brazil's attack found its rhythm, the Spanish defence looked rattled and disorganized, but when Spain attacked Brazil was able to coolly pull together its well-coordinated back line.

Brazil had other chances on goal, including Abuda's shot in the 15th minute which hit the post, and with Brazil's dominating play the sole goal made the match appear to be more of a thriller than it really was for the crowd at Helsinki's Toeloe stadium.

Throughout the first half the Brazilians played as if they had a five-goal lead, showing off fancy footwork and individual talents instead of playing as a team, and leaving the Spanish squad looking like extras on a movie set.

Spain played a smarter game but failed to break through Brazil's defence and remained goalless, with Jurado taking two shots that both just missed the mark and Xisco testing Brazil's keeper Bruno with a header from close range.

In the second half, Spain dominated the pitch and had several chances, but none that made it past Bruno as he impressed by letting in only one goal throughout the entire tournament, in Brazil's first match.

Cesc, Spain's 16-year-old star, received the Golden Shoe award as the tournament's top goal scorer with five goals, tied with Carlos Hidalgo of Colombia, and the Golden Ball as the best player.

"In Cesc, we have discovered a great talent for Spain," Spain coach Juan Santisteban said.

In the third-place playoff, Argentina beat Colombia 5-4 in a dramatic penalty shootout after a 1-1 draw at the end of normal time.

Serie A Sampdoria's fighting return

AFP, Reggio Calabria, Italy

Newly-promoted Sampdoria battled back from being two goals down to earn a 2-2 draw away to Reggina on Saturday, the first match of the new Italian season.

The home side appeared to be in control after goals from Francesco Cozza and David Di Michele had given the Calabrians a commanding half-time lead.

But Fabio Bazzani and Aimo Diana struck for Sampdoria in a nine-minute purple patch in the second half to snatch a point for the hard-working Genoans.

Maradona to return to Italy

AP, Rome

Italian viewers will be able to watch Maradona again this season.

Not as a player, but as a commentator on a soccer talk show.

The Argentine great, who led Napoli to league titles in 1987 and 1990, will be a featured commentator on the show that will be broadcast each Friday night during the soccer season on Italian channel La7.

Maradona will participate via satellite from his home in Cuba most weeks, although he will also make several appearances in Italy, the show's main host Aldo Biscardi was quoted as saying in news reports Thursday.

Maradona will analyze midweek European play and size up Italian league matches for the weekend.

"He'll have an open slate," Biscardi told Gazzetta dello Sport. "For a champion like him, it's right to leave him the reigns."

"We've been friends for years and Diego accepted right away, with enthusiasm," La Repubblica quoted Biscardi as saying.

Maradona, who is said to be suffering from financial problems, will reportedly earn about euro5,000 (US\$5,400) per episode.

"I thank Aldo because he's giving me the chance to work," the former player told La Repubblica.

Biscardi has hosted a popular soccer talk show on Monday nights for years.

Animal attacked wife!

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

The wife of Brazilian footballer Edmundo has made a complaint to police that he physically attacked her, the country's press reported on Saturday.

Adriana Sorrentino Borges de Souza reported the Vasco da Gama striker, nicknamed "The Animal" for his often untamed lifestyle, to a police station in Rio de Janeiro suburb Barra de Tijuca.

She has requested a restraining order on her husband, barring him from the marital home.

The 32-year-old Edmundo, who could receive up to a year in prison if found guilty, refused to comment. He is already serving a four-and-a-half year sentence, though he only spends nights in prison, for manslaughter after a road accident in 1995 which left three dead.



LEARNING IT YOUNG: The Brazilian squad celebrates winning the FIFA Under-17 World Championship in Helsinki on August 30.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and clues for words.