

Memorable 500th for Paul Scholes

INTERNET, undated

Paul Scholes marked his 500th appearance for the club with a goal as Manchester United ran out 2-0 winners over Liverpool in front of a record Premiership crowd at Old Trafford.

Scholes put United ahead on 39 minutes as he poked Ryan Giggs' ball across the face of goal home at the second attempt.

United were dominant for much of the game, with Liverpool very rarely troubling Edwin van der Sar, and Rio Ferdinand scored a superb second mid-way through the second half.

The England defender took advantage of a poor Jamie Carragher clearance to fire a first-time shot into the top corner from 12 yards and give Sir Alex Ferguson's men a lead they did not relinquish.

The game lived up to its billing right from the off, with both sides allowing for a lively and open affair and chances aplenty at both ends.

John Arne Riise tried to catch out Van der Sar early with a Xabi Alonso-type effort from just inside the Manchester United half, but the ball sailed comfortably over the Dutchman's crossbar.

United were soon into their stride and the Liverpool fans will have had their hearts in their mouths inside 10 minutes as a poor decision from Jose Reina almost let the hosts in for the opener.

Darren Fletcher beat Reina to a loose ball on the right wing but fortunately for the Spanish keeper, The Reds had enough defenders back to bail him out.

Giggs was causing untold problems for the Liverpool defence with his delivery from set pieces but the United attackers could not take advantage.

Liverpool's defence was struggling to cope with set pieces and Reina had to be quick to get down to Louis Saha's snap-shot from the corner of the six-yard box.

The Frenchman was again denied by Reina soon after as his ferocious attempt from 20 yards was kept out by the Liverpool keeper.

Wayne Rooney had a sniff of goal on two occasions just after the half hour mark as first he miscontrolled Michael Carrick's brilliant ball over the top, before being beaten to the ball by Reina after Saha's mis-timed header looked to have put him in.

In between Rooney's two openings, Liverpool created their best chance of the half and Dirk Kuyt should have done better than head straight at Van der Sar when Mark Gonzalez's perfect centre found the Dutch striker at the back post.

Gonzalez then spurned no less than three opportunities to give Liverpool the lead in the final ten minutes of the half as he saw a shot blocked on the break and twice shot wide from good positions.

Liverpool were certainly enjoying their best spell of the half but United made them pay for not taking their chances as Scholes popped up to send the home fans into raptures.

Rooney played in Giggs down the left and his first-time ball cross the six-yard box found an unmarked Scholes who poked home at the second attempt after Reina had saved the midfielder's initial effort

well at his feet.

Saha was superbly denied United's second minutes later when his 25-yard shot looked like finding the bottom corner until Reina tipped the ball around the post.

Alonso went close in stoppage time with a shot from the edge of the area but United were full value for their lead going in at the break.

United started the second 45 in a similar manner to the way they ended the first half, with Saha and Scholes both shooting wide from the edge of the area.

Liverpool were continuing to struggle to trouble Van der Sar, with Luis Garcia's tame header from Steven Gerrard's dinked ball over the top the best they could muster in the early stages of the second half.

United, meanwhile, continued to bear down on Reina's goal and Saha saw a shot blocked before Ferdinand's magical strike doubled the hosts' advantage.

Carragher had earlier taken a knock to his ankle and his poor clearance went straight up in the air in the Liverpool penalty area. Ferdinand took the ball down exquisitely before sending a first-time shot with his left foot into the top right-hand corner of Reina's net for his first goal of the season.

United slowed the tempo after the second but Giggs was clearly keen to get himself on the score-sheet as he rolled back the years with a dazzling run from the left, but the veteran winger could not find the finish the run deserved.

Gerrard headed over and fired wide late on but The Reds' day was summed up when Luis Garcia sent a disappointing effort high and wide in the final embers of the match.



500 REASONS TO CELEBRATE: Manchester United striker Paul Scholes begins celebrating his first goal against Liverpool during their Premiership match at Old Trafford in Manchester on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP



Werder Bremen's Diego celebrates his goal with the fans during the Bundesliga match against Bayern Munich in Bremen on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Diego downs Bayern

AFP, Bremen



Werder Bremen showed they are genuine contenders to end Bayern Munich's dominance of the domestic league after defeating the reigning champions 3-1 on Saturday to stay top of the Bundesliga.

Bremen, champions in 2004, are now three points ahead of Bayern, although Schalke 04 are level with them on 16 points, as they bid to stop the title going to Munich for the third successive season.

"If we carry on playing like this I think it is fair to say we have a good chance of winning the title," said midfielder Torsten Frings.

Goals from Brazilian Diego, Cameroon international Pierre Wome and an own goal from Brazilian World Cup winner Lucio clinched the points for Bremen after Bayern had threatened a comeback when Roy Makaay scored.

"We constantly went forward and tried to create chances against a very good team," said Bremen manager Thomas Schaaf. "We are top of the table but are not relaxing. There is a lot of hard work to do before we can achieve our goals."

League and cup holders Bayern fell to fourth after their third defeat of

the season, the same number they lost in the whole of last season.

"Werder deserved the win for the way they started. We did not put up enough resistance and at 2-0 the game was wide open," explained Bayern coach Felix Magath. "The own goal then decided the match for them and we are all very disappointed."

Schalke leapfrogged Bayern with a 2-1 win over Hannover and are only behind Bremen on goal difference.

Goals from Zlatan Bajramovic (18min) and Levan Kobiaschwili (27) put Schalke in command early on and they held on for the three points.

"We had a shaky period after they scored in the second half but we got the three points and need to keep on going," said Schalke captain Frank Rost.

Hertha Berlin also moved above the champions on goal difference after a 2-1 win over Borussia Monchengladbach.

Bayern kept faith with their adventurous 4-3-3 formation as Lukas Podolski, Claudio Pizarro and Makaay started in a three-man attack.

Bremen were forced to draft Jurica Vranjias in as a late replacement for German international defender Christian Schulz who injured himself in the pre-match warm-up.

The match started at a frantic pace and a goal came after just 11

minutes with Bremen's Brazilian playmaker Diego, a record six million euro signing from FC Porto, hammering an unstoppable shot past Oliver Kahn with the ball crashing in off the underside of the crossbar.

Bayern were firmly on the back-foot and fell further behind in the 34th minute with Wome's swerving free-kick leaving Kahn rooted to the spot.

The champions responded quickly with Dutch forward Makaay volleying in three minutes later for Bayern's 3,000th Bundesliga goal.

Bremen fans feared a comeback but Lucio deflected a Wome cross into his own net just after the hour mark to give Bremen some breathing space.

"The Lucio own goal was unlucky but we made too many mistakes for a game at this level," said Bayern's French international Willy Sagnol.

Elsewhere German football began its campaign to crack down on racism with fans across the country holding up big red cards reading: "show racism the red card".

Racism came to the fore in September when supporters of Hansa Rostock's reserve team directed monkey noises at Schalke's Ghana-born German international Gerald Asamoah during a cup match. Similar incidents followed prompting German football chiefs to take action.

Bench heavy on Becks

AFP, London

Real Madrid midfielder David Beckham has admitted he is sad and frustrated at being left on the sidelines by both club and country.

The 31-year-old midfielder, who has been left out of the England squad since Steve McClaren took over as boss, has found only limited playing time this season.

Beckham is in discussions about a new contract at the Bernabeu but made only his first start for Real in five games last weekend when he was included in the side to face Getafe.

However, after Real were defeated 1-0 in that match to lose their unbeaten start to the league season, Beckham found himself back on the bench for the midweek Champions League clash with Steaua Bucharest.

"Every day I feel sad and very frustrated as a footballer because I am not playing for my country or for my club," Beckham told the Mail on Sunday.

"Two more years on the bench would be very difficult. At the moment it is very difficult for me not playing."

He added: "I am not even thinking about retiring. When my heart and legs give in then that will be the time, but that is not the case now."

Beckham was shown some sympathy and support by Frenchman Thierry Henry on Saturday.

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Helmets good for Lehmann

INTERNET, undated

Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann is considering wearing protective headgear to prevent injury. The German international - shaken by the recent fractured skull sustained by Chelsea's Petr Cech - said he was prepared to don the kind of 'soft' helmet worn by rugby players.

However, the 36-year-old stopped short of calling for such equipment to be made compulsory, saying such a law would be "inappropriate".

"I am thinking about wearing headgear to protect myself," Lehmann told the Sunday Mirror. "It is inappropriate to make it obligatory for goalkeepers to wear headgear. However, if someone wants to wear one, I would understand that."

The paper also reveals that the laws of the game allow any player to use a protective helmet, as long as it was not made of hard or dangerous material.

Jose all praise for Sheva

AFP, London



Jose Mourinho lavished praise on Andriy Shevchenko after the Ukrainian striker finally scored for Chelsea for the first time in two months in Saturday's 2-1 win over Portsmouth at Stamford Bridge.

The 30-million-pound summer signing from AC Milan had not scored since scoring the opener in the 2-1 defeat at Middlesbrough on August 23.

His strike, and another two minutes later by Michael Ballack, was enough to see off Portsmouth, who pulled a goal back through Benjani Mwarurari.

Mourinho's patience may have privately been wearing thin with Shevchenko who looked off the pace in the opening weeks of the season, but publicly he insists it was no more than a matter of time before the player rediscovered his goalscoring touch.

"Finally the goal is there so hopefully he will get confidence," said a relieved Mourinho.

"It was nice for him to score a very important goal."

"He has two goals. He's not far from Didier Drogba. It's not an internal fight. I'll be very happy if one of them scores 15 and the other 14. At the end of the season, he will be there amongst the people with a lot of goals."

"His performance has been improving from match to match but always there was the feeling, unlucky, great save, unlucky, great save. In the first-half, David James made an amazing save and you got the feeling that the goal is never coming."

Following this difficult match, Mourinho hailed his midfielders for their efforts in Saturday's match as well as the midweek win over Barcelona in the Champions League.

"Our three midfield players against Barcelona ran more than 12 kilometres and today again they gave us a big performance," said the manager.

"Ballack is working unbelievably hard and Arjen Robben played very well. He only got 10 minutes against Barcelona so he was fresh."

"He was a big boy on Wednesday by accepting being out of the team. And I felt a bit sorry to take him off today because he was playing very well. But Joe Cole needs some match fitness."

Chelsea found their stride after the break and were worthy of their lead when it came.

Shevchenko was in the right place at the right time as he took Robben's pass and swept the ball past James from eight yards.

Chelsea all but put the game beyond Pompey's reach two minutes later.

Another Robben cross was headed away, and after Drogba headed the ball back into the six yard box, German midfielder Ballack nodded the second past James.

A 69th-minute goalmouth scramble ended when Pompey striker Benjani beat stand-in keeper Henrique Hilario to pull a goal back for Harry Redknapp's team.

The Portsmouth manager reserved special praise for David James, who kept Chelsea at bay several times, and may have enhanced his claim to take over

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Udinese hold Inter

AFP, Rome

Title favourites Inter Milan held on to top spot in Italy's Serie A despite drawing 0-0 at Udinese on Sunday.

Both sides had a chance to claim the three points in the second half.

Udinese keeper Morgan De Sanctis saved Zlatan Ibrahimovic's goalbound shot with his legs, and seconds later Vincenzo Iaquinta rolled an angled shot wide for the home side with just Julio Cesar to beat.

A third draw in their seven league matches played left Inter on 15 points, two ahead of Rome who drew 1-1 at home to Chievo.

Sergio Pelissier put Chievo ahead at the Olympic stadium, before Francesco Totti equalised with his first goal of the season.

Udinese are tied on 12 points with Atalanta, who fought back from two goals down at half time to win 3-2 at home to Sampdoria, and Livorno, held to a 0-0 draw at home to Siena.

Livorno captain Cristiano Lucarelli had a goal ruled out for offside late in the second half. The

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Inter Milan midfielder Dejan Stankovic (L) skips past Udinese's Giampiero Pinzi during their Serie A match at the Friuli Stadium in Udine on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP