

Rooney extends United deal

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney on Saturday signed a two-year contract extension that will keep him at Old Trafford until 2012.

Rooney, 21, was already tied to United until 2010 but the England star's new deal ensures he will remain with Sir Alex Ferguson's side for at least the next six years.

The former Everton player has the chance to celebrate his new deal, which will see him earn around 100,000 pounds a week, by beating title rivals Chelsea at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Rooney, who has scored 40 goals in 105 appearances for United, is determined to help his side end Chelsea's two-year reign as Premiership champions and he told the club's official website: "I am made up after signing a new two year extension, it's something that I have always wanted."

"There is so much that I want to achieve with this club starting hopefully with the Premiership this season."

"It is an exciting time at the moment and I am relishing the challenge that goes with it."

"The team is developing, with a mix of experience and youth, and I am just glad that I can play my part in it."

Rooney's representatives had only started contract negotiations two months ago and Ferguson said he was delighted to have the deal tied up so quickly.

"Obviously I think for everyone at the club it is great news that Wayne has committed his future to Manchester United," Ferguson said.

"It reflects our intention to build a team to stay together. Cristiano (Ronaldo) signed a new contract last year and we have exciting young talent here too."

"We see Wayne and Cristiano emerging as the best players in the world, they have their finest years in front of them and we will all be lucky to witness that."

Deschamps in delight

INTERNET, undated

Juventus boss Didier Deschamps says he's happy with how his youngsters reacted to going a goal down in Saturday's 4-1 win over Lecce.

The Salentini were threatening to become the first side ever to beat the Old Lady in Serie B, until the Bianconeri hit back in sensational fashion.

"We started the game well, but Lecce are a side with quality who always cause problems in attack," noted the Frenchman.

"But once we fell behind, we always believed that we could turn things around. I'm happy with the win and the performance."

Valeri Bojinov was the star of the show as he scored two beauties against his former club to put the Old Lady in control.

"He wasn't happy with how he did in the first half," added Deschamps. "Yet he played really well after the first goal."

"He has a great shot on him, he's only 20 and has excellent qualities even if he needs to improve in the construction of play."

The Bulgarian wasn't the only youngster to shine in the Baby Juventus side as Raffaele Palladino and Paolo De Ceglie also netted.

"The younger players must grow with patience," warned the tactician. "They knew how to take advantage of the space but they must not rush their development."

"To see De Ceglie score and others play with such character makes this squad, with its champions, very competitive."



ONE FOR THE SCRAPBOOK: Barcelona superstar Ronaldinho (R) is airborne as he executes a sensational overhead kick to score against Villarreal during their Primera Liga clash at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Sheer magic

AGENCIES, Madrid



Barcelona forward Ronaldinho turned on the style as he steered his side to an emphatic 4-0 win at home Villarreal that put them four points clear at the top of the Primera Liga on Saturday.

The Brazilian broke the deadlock in what had been an evenly balanced match when he fired home from the penalty spot 10 minutes before the break and completed the rout with a stunning goal to take his tally for the season to 10.

The win left the champions top with 29 points from 12 games, four ahead of Sevilla and six clear of Real Madrid.

Real Sociedad's wretched run of luck continued when defender Ion Ansoategi put the ball into his own net to deny them a first win of the season as they drew 1-1 at Atletico Madrid.

Striker Gari Uranga gave the basement side the lead midway through the first half when he got in between the Atletico centre-backs to send a glancing header past

keeper Leo Franco.

But just when it looked as though they might hang on for the win Ansoategi chested the ball past his own keeper after winger Luciano Galletti hoisted a hopeful ball into the area 13 minutes from time.

Sociedad remain anchored to the bottom level on five points with Gimnastic while Atletico stay in fifth spot on 21.

Barca bought in French defender Lilian Thuram for the injured Rafael Marquez and Brazilian midfielder Edmilson replaced his compatriot Thiago Motta in an otherwise unchanged lineup from the one which defeated Levski Sofia 2-0 in the penultimate Champions League group match on Wednesday.

With Samuel Eto'o, Lionel Messi and Javier Saviola all still missing up front through injury, coach Frank Rijkaard kept faith in his attacking trio of Ronaldinho, Gudjohnsen and Ludovic Giuly.

This combination had little impact early on as Barcelona struggled to find any rhythm in midfield.

The Catalans looked far from their fluent best in the opening half hour at the Nou Camp and were given a couple of early scares by Villarreal striker Diego Forlan.

But they got a crucial breakthrough when Iceland striker Eidur Gudjohnsen manufactured a penalty 10 minutes before the break after he flung himself to the ground when defender Pascal Cygan laid a hand on his arm as he turned into the area.

Ronaldinho did the rest when he fired the resulting spot kick low past keeper Mariano Barbosa and into the corner.

The goal sparked Barca into life and it took some fine keeping from Barbosa to deny Deco, Ronaldinho and Giovanni van Bronckhorst before the break.

Gudjohnsen, though, found a way past the Argentine early in the second half when he nodded in at the far post after Andrea Iniesta floated the ball across the area following a Ronaldinho free-kick.

The stylish Iniesta made it 3-0 with a spectacular finish when he threw himself at a Gianluca Zambrotta cross to volley the ball into the ground and send it skidding into the net.

He was outdone, however, by Ronaldinho who put the icing on the cake with his 10th league goal of the season two minutes from time.

Lurking in the area with his back to goal, the Brazilian controlled a

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A dream realised

REUTERS, Madrid

Ronaldinho said that he fulfilled a childhood dream by wrapping up Barcelona's 4-0 win over Villarreal on Saturday with his spectacular overhead kick three minutes from time.

Lurking in the Villarreal area, the Brazilian controlled a lofted pass from Xavi with his chest, swivelled round with his back to goal and then fired a stunning bicycle kick over the head of keeper Mariano Barbosa and high into the net.

"I didn't really think too much about it because it just happened on the spur of the moment," said the 26-year-old who had scored Barca's opener from the penalty spot.

"When I controlled the ball it stood up just right and everything else worked out perfectly."

"Ever since I was a young boy I've dreamed of scoring a goal like that."

"I'm never going to forget this goal. Now I have to try for my other dream goal which is to score from the halfway line."

The Nou Camp gave Ronaldinho a standing ovation after the goal, while Barca coach Frank Rijkaard admitted had left him gasping in admiration.

"Ronaldinho's second goal was the sort of marvel that provokes strong emotions from Barcelona and Arsenal to a 3-1 defeat on Saturday.

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Anelka sinks Arsenal

AFP, London



Nicolas Anelka's first Premier League goal for Arsenal to a 3-1 defeat on Saturday.

Anelka had scored only once, against Walsall in the League Cup, since his club record eight million pounds transfer from Fenerbahce in August.

But the France striker, who helped Arsenal win the Premiership and FA Cup double in 1998, produced a magnificent 45th-minute strike to put his side two goals ahead after Abdoulaye Faye had opened the scoring for Bolton in the ninth minute.

Gilberto Silva pulled one back for the Gunners moments after Anelka's goal but the former Real Madrid forward scored again in the 76th minute to put another dent in Arsenal's title hopes.

Arsene Wenger's side remain 12 points behind leaders Manchester United and have now lost four of their last five visits to the Reebok Stadium.

Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard broke his Premiership goal-drought with a stunning effort to earn a 1-0 home win against Manchester City.

By his own admission Gerrard has been below his best this season, but he is finally beginning to hit peak form and, after scoring in the midweek Champions League win against PSV Eindhoven, he provided a moment of brilliance to sink City.

With Rafael Benitez's side struggling to break down the visitors, England star Gerrard pounced on a loose ball and surged forward before driving a superb shot past Nicky Weaver in the 67th minute.

Benitez admitted he was delighted to see Gerrard get back on the scoresheet and said: "I think it is good for him because he can score goals for us when he is playing with confidence."

"He has scored in the Champions League and now the Premiership. I hope we will see more goals from him."

Gareth Barry's penalty preserved Aston Villa's unbeaten home record after Malcolm Christie had given Middlesbrough the lead with his first goal for over a year in a 1-1 draw at Villa Park.

Christie opened the scoring in 43rd minute with a close range strike after Yakubu had flicked on Julio Arca's blocked shot.

It was Christie's first appearance for three months and his first goal since February 2005 after an injury-plagued spell at the Riverside

Tevez to be fined

AFP, London

West Ham's Argentina international Carlos Tevez is expected to be fined after he left Upton Park following his substitution in their 1-0 win over Sheffield United.

Following new chairman Eggert Magnusson's first game as owner, Tevez faces disciplinary action and will be asked to explain his actions by manager Alan Pardew.

A goal from Hayden Mullins ended up settling the match after Sheffield missed numerous second-half chances and had a stoppage-time goal disallowed.

Pardew said: "He (Tevez) went straight home after the game and I am very disappointed about that. It has only happened to me once before."

"The first time was when I first arrived at West Ham and I fined the player a week's money because I think it is disrespectful to me, my staff and the players."

"I will have to listen to his excuse -- I'm sure it is just disappointment"

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Deisler glad to be back

AFP, Hamburg

German international midfielder Sebastian Deisler could not hide his joy at his comeback with Bayern Munich on Saturday following a difficult eight months on the sidelines.

The 26-year-old came on as a second half substitute in Bayern's match against SV Hamburg on Saturday and created both goals for the 2-1 comeback win.

"It is a great feeling to be back in the fold again and of course it is nice to win," said Deisler.

Deisler had played about 30 seconds in last week's win over VfB Stuttgart so this was his first real taste of action since sustaining a cruciate ligament injury in March.

The injury caused Deisler, who has been treated for depression on several occasions, to miss the World Cup in his homeland and Bayern coach Felix Magath saluted his determination.

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Milan captain Paolo Maldini (C) is congratulated by teammates after scoring the all-important goal in their Serie A clash against Messina at the San Siro on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Maldini mellows Milan misery

AFP, Rome



AC Milan skipper Paolo Maldini grabbed the only goal of the game as AC Milan beat Messina 1-0 on Saturday to help ease the pressure on underfire coach Carlo Ancelotti.

After collecting just one point from four games, Milan desperately needed a victory.

Maldini delivered the three points on 13 minutes when he headed in Andrea Pirlo's perfectly-weighted free-kick.

"These are three important points which will help us work without anxiousness from now on," said Ancelotti.

"The side still needs to grow. We had a few problems in the first half, but I'm happy with how we ended the game."

Milan went into the game still weighed down by their eight-point

penalty for match-fixing as well as an injury crisis which has seen goalkeeper Nelson Dida ruled out for at least two months after damaging his left knee in Tuesday's Champions League defeat at AEK Athens.

The 33-year-old Brazil international has joined Italian World Cup-winning midfielder Gennaro Gattuso, Georgian defender Kakha Kaladze, Brazilian wingback Serginho and experienced central defender Alessandro Costacurta on the treatment table.

Australian Zeljko Kalac, Milan's second choice keeper whose performances in the Italian Cup recently were far from convincing, deputised for Dida on Saturday.

Milan are now in 14th place in the table but 19 points behind leaders and city rivals Inter.

Earlier, Chievo Verona notched their first league win of the season with Victor Obinna scoring twice in a 2-0 home victory over Udinese.

The 19-year-old Nigerian striker

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Bolton midfielder Abdoulaye Faye (R) mimics cleaning the boots of two-goal hero Nicolas Anelka after the Frenchman scored his second goal during their Premier League match against Arsenal at The Reebok Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: INTERNET