



PHOTO: AFP

A sequence of photos capture Oliver Kahn's moments in the final: 1) Kahn dives to his right to deny Valencia's Pellegrino in the sudden-death tie-breaker. 2) Kahn is absolutely delighted after the save and 3) receives the Man of the Match award from the legendary Pele.

## Kahn-tastic no doubt

### UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Milan

German international 'keeper Oliver Kahn's penalty shoot-out heroics here Wednesday when he saved three Valencia spot-kicks to hand Bayern Munich the Champions League will have surprised nobody least of all the mop-haired

guardian.

Kahn, who will turn 32 next month, has been telling all and sundry who is the finest keeper of them all and it is certainly not Borussia Dortmund's Jens Lehmann, who has claimed he should be Germany's number one.

"It's obvious who Germany's first choice keeper is," he said earlier this season. "My performances have been a class above anyone else's. Let others send in their applications if they dare," he added.

Kahn's bullish self-confidence can be justified - time and again he has stood firm when others around him wavered.

His performances against Manchester United in the Champions League quarter-finals and a truly outstanding series of saves against holders Real Madrid in the first leg at the Bernabeu probably made the difference between more European trauma and the glorious climax reached on Wednesday.

However the German Footballer of the year in

2000, who also kept a Bundesliga record of eight clean sheets in a row back in the 1998-99 campaign, has hinted that he may look for a move abroad after his contract is up in 2003.

"I have achieved almost everything I need to here and as I am not getting any younger I believe that to be really remembered as one of the greats I should taste life abroad and win something with another team," he said, prior to Wednesday's heroics.

One thing is for sure is that Bayern will break

the bank to keep the talismanic 'keeper at the club as person after person stepped forward not to bury him but to praise him.

"We have to thank Oliver Kahn for this victory. He won the German title for us by motivating the players when we conceded the late goal against Hamburg," coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said after Wednesday's win.

"He did it again today."

Bayern legends Franz Beckenbauer and Karl-Heinz Rummenigge also heaped praise on the

blond keeper.

"If there was an outstanding player then it is Oliver Kahn, who pulled off some fantastic saves today as he did against Manchester United in the quarter-final," Beckenbauer said.

Rummenigge said the nerve-jangling ending to the match had been like a Hollywood thriller.

"It was a climax worthy of Hitchcock," he said.

"Kahn's incredible reflexes won us the title."



PHOTO: AFP

DOWN AND OUT: 1) Valencia Custodian Santiago Canizares is beyond consolation after the loss. 2) Crestfallen players shocked by the reality. 3) Captain Mendieta passes by the trophy that could have been Valencia's.

## Cuper lifts the fallen

### UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Milan

Valencia's disciplinarian Argentinian coach Hector Cuper showed his soft side on Wednesday night after the Spanish side's defeat in the Champions League Final at the hands of Germany's Bayern Munich at the San Siro - he gave them two hours to get over it.

Losing 5-4 on penalties after leading in the shoot-out and after

leading in the match itself would be a blow for even the toughest team - especially considering Valencia also lost the year 2000 Final to Real Madrid, albeit in that match they were outclassed 3-0.

But Cuper believed that it represented a test of character for his men.

"Football is like life," philosophised the Latin American. "Sometimes you hit the bottom but you have to find the moral strength to get up again."

"It is indeed a difficult duty. You need time for the pain to dwindle.

We have the moral obligation to stand up again.

"What I told the players in the dressing room is they have done everything possible - we need a couple of hours to reflect then tomorrow when we go home we must lift ourselves up."

It has been widely reported that Cuper will leave Valencia this summer but if that is true then he was keeping it close to his chest Wednesday night.

When asked about his future he said: "It's a bit too complicated to talk about the coming season, we

are talking about pain. But we have been twice in the final, this must mean a promising future for us - we have older players but this is no problem. We can bring in new people."

Cuper believed that the handball by his Italian defender Amedeo Carboni that led to the penalty from which Stefan Effenberg squared the match at 1-1 should not have been awarded as he believed Bayern striker Carsten Jancker had impeded Carboni.

"We thought it was a foul by Jancker," he said.

Cuper was criticised for replacing Argentinian Pablo Aimar with David Albelda at the interval, a defensive ploy which backfired when Bayern equalised, leaving Valencia bereft of Aimar's qualities in attack.

"We were getting overrun in midfield," was Cuper's explanation.

But he had words of comfort for Argentinian defender Mauricio Pellegrino whose final spot kick was saved by Oliver Kahn, clinching victory for the German side.

Cuper revealed he made the choice of penalty takers, saying:

"The first thing is to get people, look them in the eyes, then decide who is in condition and who is not in condition to take them. I think it's great he had the confidence to shoot."

"But this confidence can turn to tragedy when he misses. This is the tragedy we have suffered tonight."

Valencia's defeat completed a miserable sequence for Cuper who lost the 2000 Champions League Final with Valencia and the 1999 Cup Winners Cup Final with Real Mallorca.

## Europe down, world to go

### UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Milan

Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld sounded a new rallying call to his victorious troops after Wednesday's heartstopping Champions League Final victory over Valencia of Spain, urging the Bavarian outfit to raise their sights from European competition and

been a close call.

"We were lucky winners at the end," said Hitzfeld, a journeyman player but now beyond any dispute a coaching great. "It's very bitter when you lose on penalties. Valencia deserved to win too. We were lucky winners. We say thank you to Oliver Kahn."

That was a reference to the Bayern goalkeeper whose penalty saves made the difference between victory and defeat for Bayern who



PHOTO: AFP

HE'S A JOLEY GOOD FELLOW! Coach Ottmar Hitzfeld is lifted by his Bayern Munich charges after the presentation ceremony.

target world domination.

Hitzfeld was not going to rest on his laurels after the 5-4 penalty shoot-out triumph after his team had pulled the score in the match proper back to 1-1 to take the match to extra-time and eventually a shoot-out.

Asked how he would motivate his team after they had in the space of less than a week retained the German Championship and then established continental supremacy for the first time in 25 years, Hitzfeld drew on his experience with Borussia Dortmund whom he led to Champions League success in 1997.

"We (Dortmund) won the World Club Championship," said Hitzfeld. "We did that at Dortmund although by that time I had moved upstairs to become director of sport."

That was a reference to the Intercontinental Cup - the fixture played in Tokyo between the European and South American champions which has traditionally decided the title of world champions and may continue to do so now that FIFA's official World Club Championship seems to be running into trouble.

But Hitzfeld, who emulated Austrian Ernst Happel's feat of taking two different clubs to the continent's top prize, admitted he had

three times had failed at the final hurdle since their three consecutive European Cup triumphs between 1974 and 1976.

In all three of those subsequent defeats they had snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

In 1981-2 they led Portugal's FC Porto 1-0 but lost 2-1 and most famously in 1999 in Barcelona Bayern led England's Manchester United 1-0 deep into injury time but United scored two goals in 95 seconds.

This match also looked as though it may go against them especially when Valencia took an early lead in the penalty shoot-out.

Hitzfeld said: "We had the total desire and the will to win, I'm proud of them and the stamina they showed. Everything victory is something unique. This is no exception."

It was the second remarkable comeback in a week for Bayern after they won the German title last weekend by equalising in the fourth minute of stoppage time after Hamburg SV had scored in the 89th minute.

## REFLECTIONS

### UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Milan

Bayern Munich vice-president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge basked in the glory of his side winning

Wednesday's Champions League and said the 5-4 penalty shoot-out finish was worthy of a thriller directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

The former Bayern Munich and German international striker led a chorus of praise for 'keeper Oliver Kahn, who pulled off three saves in the spot-kick series, one of them a

remarkable save from Amedeo Carboni.

"Kahn's incredible reflexes won us the title," he said.

Kahn, one of the survivors of the traumatic 2-1 defeat by Manchester United in 1999, admitted the pressure was unbearable.

"I hate to think what would have

happened if we had lost," he said. "The pressure was enormous and I don't really know how I did it."

"I guess it's part intuition and part luck," added the 31-year-old.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld, who became only the second man to guide two different teams to the European Cup glory, said he knew exactly how sad the Valencia players were feeling but praised Kahn to the skies.

"All the players did what they had to do but one stood out above the others, that was Oliver Kahn who was fantastic," said Hitzfeld, who also won with Borussia Dortmund in 1997.

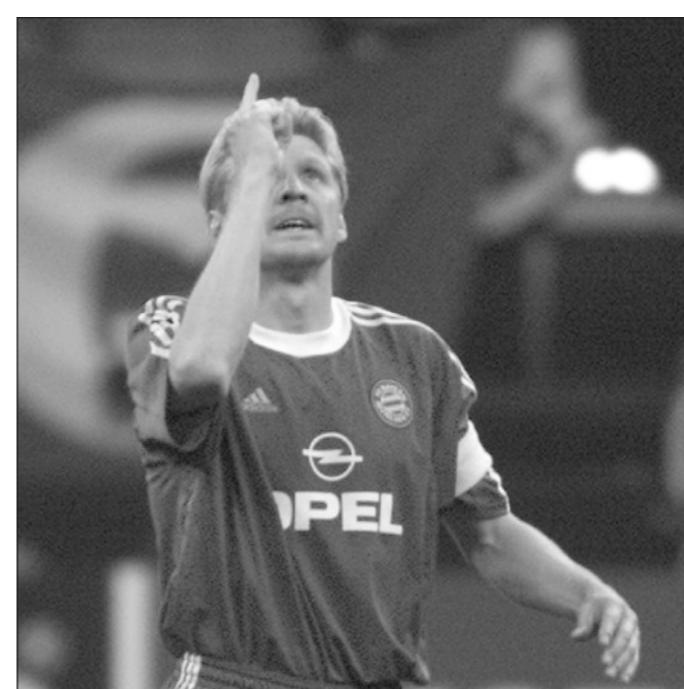
German football legend and Bayern president Franz Beckenbauer compared the feeling to even winning the World Cup both as a player and as a coach in 1974 and 1990 respectively.

"It is one of the best days of my life with a team that deserved to win," he said.

"We missed the title by the smallest margin in 1999, failed in the semi-final last year which shows we have been playing at the highest level for several years and this time we have pulled it off.

"If there is an outstanding player then it is Oliver Kahn, who pulled off some fantastic saves, today as he did against Manchester United in the quarter-final," the man known as the Kaiser added.

For the losers, who were tasting defeat for the second successive year, there was veiled criticism of over-cautious tactics after they had taken a third minute lead through Gaizka Mendieta from the penalty-spot.



Thank you! Steffen Effenberg points to the heavens after scoring in the tie-breaker.

"Bayer played better than us we didn't attack as we should have done," veteran French defender Jocelyn Angloma said.

His comments were echoed by non-playing substitute Didier Deschamps, who would have become the first player to win the European Cup with three different clubs.

"It's difficult to lead a final like that and lose but Bayer were more offensive minded than we were," he said.

PHOTO: AFP

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