

Hero Hooijdonk fires Feyenoord



AFP, Rotterdam

Pierre van Hooijdonk struck twice as Dutch side Feyenoord defeated German champions Borussia Dortmund 3-2 to win the UEFA Cup final here Wednesday.

Deadball specialist van Hooijdonk scored two goals in a lethal seven-minute first half burst as Dortmund's hopes of adding the UEFA Cup to their Bundesliga crown were dashed at the De Kuip Stadium.

Though Dortmund's hopes were raised when they fought back to 2-1 early in the second half via a Marcio Amoroso penalty, Feyenoord added

to their tally with a third through Danish international Jon Dahl Tomasson.

A spectacular volleyed goal from Dortmund's Czech striker Jan Koller ensured a nervous finish for Feyenoord - playing on their home ground - but the Dutch were not to be denied.

The win sparked jubilation among the 40,000 fans at the stadium. But it was a miserable farewell for Dortmund's veteran German international defender Jurgen Kohler, playing his final match before retiring.

Kohler was sent off and gave away a penalty in one fell swoop midway through the first half, after being caught in possession by Tomasson, who sped through on goal with only keeper Jens Lehmann to beat.

A late desperate lunge from Kohler sent Tomasson crashing to the ground, leaving Portuguese referee Vitor Melo Manuel Pereira with no option but to award a penalty - and pull out a red card for Kohler.

Despite German protests, van Hooijdonk stepped up to drive a powerful right-foot spot-kick low and wide of the diving Lehmann.

Dortmund had made it clear they had no intention of being intimidated early in the game, defender Christian Worns announcing his presence with several crunching tackles.

One of them almost cost the Germans dear. Worns was penalised for a foul on van Hooijdonk 35 yards out and from the subsequent freekick the Feyenoord deadball specialist curled a fine effort against the post.

That near miss should have served as a warning to Dortmund and keeper Lehmann - but five minutes before halftime they were punished when van Hooijdonk was presented with another freekick from similar range.

This time the former Nottingham Forest striker made no mistake, curling his shot over the Dortmund wall to put Feyenoord comfortably on the road to victory.

But Borussia Dortmund roared back into the game straight after halftime, Brazilian Amoroso scoring from the penalty spot on 47 minutes after being upended by Patrick Paauwe, who was yellow-carded for the foul.

Feyenoord hit back almost

immediately however.

A neat ball from Japanese international Shinji Ono sprung Dortmund's offside trap, leaving Tomasson to race through before crashing an unstoppable shot past Lehmann.

Yet again though Dortmund responded strongly and clawed back a goal in spectacular fashion on 58 minutes with an opportunist strike from Koller.

The towering centre-forward trapped a Feyenoord clearance with his chest on the edge of the area, and volleyed in an unstoppable dipping shot from 25-yards which gave Edwin Zoetbier no chance.

But it was Dortmund's final strike and Feyenoord hung on for victory.

The match had kicked off after a minute's silence in memory of flamboyant far-right Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn, who was shot dead on Monday.

Fortuyn was a popular, high-profile figure in his native Rotterdam, where his anti-immigrant party won 35 percent of the vote in the local council elections in March.



PHOTO: AFP

HAIL HOOIJDONK: Feyenoord striker Pierre van Hooijdonk kisses the UEFA Cup football at the Kuip Stadium in Rotterdam on May 8.

Premiership Gunners' double done



PHOTO: AFP

GUNNERS DANCE! Arsene Wenger, the Arsenal manager (R) joins his charges in celebrating their Premier League championship at Old Trafford on May 8.

Football

AFP, London

Arsenal won the English Premiership title to secure their second league and domestic double in four years after defeating defending champions Manchester United 1-0 at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

Sylvain Wiltord's 57th-minute winner ensured Arsenal went seven points clear at the top of the table and could not be overtaken in this week-end's final round of matches.

Arsenal, who won the FA Cup on Saturday with a 2-0 win over fellow London club Chelsea, went into the match needing only a point to claim the Premiership trophy while United had to win to take the title race to the very end of the campaign.

United's defeat left them without a trophy for the first time in four years - when Arsenal last won the double in 1998.

And United's misery was compounded with the news that Liverpool had leapfrogged them into second place with a 4-3 win over Blackburn.

As well as securing the title, Arsenal's win saw them become the first club in more than a hundred years since Preston North End way back in 1888-89 not to lose an away league game all season in the top flight.

Wiltord's goal also meant Arsenal had maintained their record of scoring in every league match this season.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger was delighted to halt United's domestic domination and prevent United from winning their fourth title in a row.

"It's just fantastic because it's a team you just to beat," said the Frenchman. "They dominated last season and the two seasons before that and for us to bring the championship trophy back to Highbury means a lot."

Man-of-the-match Parlour agreed with Wenger that to win in Manchester was the icing on the cake for Arsenal.

He said: "It's been a long season, full of ups and downs, but we stuck together and to win it at Old Trafford is fantastic."

"It's something special to come to Manchester for any game but to win it (the title) makes it even better."

"The lads found a bit extra tonight and it was so important that we did that."

"We got the important goal and settled down well and it's a great win for us."

The Gunners were ravaged by injuries with leading marksman Thierry Henry and former England captain Tony Adams ruled out due to knee injuries.

To make matters worse for Arsenal, Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp was still struggling with a heel injury and had to make do with a

place on the substitutes' bench. United, meanwhile, started without their leading scorer Ruud van Nistelrooy.

The Dutchman, who has shown a dip in form in recent matches, was named as one of the substitutes and so Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Diego Forlan formed United's attack.

Arsenal almost took the lead in the second minute.

Parlour, who scored the opening goal in Arsenal's Cup final win at the weekend, found space on the right flank and whipped in a cross for Wiltord.

The Frenchman turned sharply and fired in a low drive which was heading for the net until compatriot Laurent Blanc's knee diverted the ball away for a corner.

That chance sparked United into action with Paul Scholes firing inches over the bar after good play from Forlan.

With so much at stake tackles were fierce and it was no surprise to see Scholes, Phil Neville and Roy Keane all yellow-carded in a frenetic first half hour.

Keane tried his luck from distance as United pressed forward looking for the breakthrough before Brazilian Edu became the first Arsenal player to be booked four minutes from the interval.

Twelve minutes after the break Arsenal got the all-important goal. Wiltord cashed in on Mickael Silvestre's error and ran at the heart of the United defence before releasing Freddie Ljungberg, scorer of Arsenal's second goal against Chelsea on Saturday.

Ljungberg's shot was saved by Fabien Barthez but Wiltord followed up to slot the ball past his international team-mate.

Veron was replaced by van Nistelrooy as United went in search of goals but Arsenal's defence, superbly marshalled by Campbell, continued to hold firm.

Keane's far post header four minutes from time came close to levelling the scores and ensuring a nail-biting finale, but Arsenal withstood the late barrage to land the coveted Premiership crown.

Meanwhile, Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier paid tribute to Wenger on a night when both Frenchmen had something to celebrate.

At Anfield, Houllier saw his side hold off a spirited Blackburn for a 4-3 win that saw them leapfrog Manchester United by a single point

into second place. "You have to pay tribute to what Arsene and his boys have done," said Houllier. "Winning the double is not easy in England these days, and they have done a great job."

"I felt Arsenal were capable of winning at Old Trafford, and that's what happened."

"I knew the score from there with about 15 minutes to go, so our fight back to win in the last few minutes like we did was very important considering that we can now finish second and qualify for the Champions League without playing in the qualifying rounds."

Houllier's side will guarantee a French one-two at the top of the English Premiership if they can beat Ipswich at Anfield this Saturday, regardless of what United do in their final game against Charlton.

In front of England coach Sven Goran Eriksson, who names his World Cup squad on Thursday, Liverpool striker Emile Heskey settled a see-saw contest four minutes from time.

It was tough luck on Blackburn, managed by Liverpool great Graeme Souness, who three times came back to equalise and deserved at least a point for their efforts.

Houllier added: "The game was a great advert for the Premier League, in terms of football and excitement."

"Blackburn played freely, and with good expression. They are a great side and I know now why they have won the Worthington (English League) Cup."

"But we showed character, determination and belief. We had outstanding individuals but also great character as a team. Blackburn were great to come back like they did, but we wouldn't give in and deserved our fourth."

England World Cup candidate Danny Murphy gave Liverpool the lead in the 23rd minute when he hooked in a John Arne Riise cross from the left despite falling over.

But Republic of Ireland midfielder Damien Duff levelled for Blackburn five minutes later before Nicolas Anelka put Liverpool in front again in the 39th minute.

Then four minutes after the break Andy Cole headed Rovers back on level terms before Sami Hyypia nodded in at the other end.

England hopeful Matt Jansen made it 3-3 ten minutes from time before Heskey's late winner wrapped up the points for Liverpool.

The Vieira question

AFP, London

The English Premiership and FA Cup are safely in the trophy cabinet - now Arsenal face a fight to hang on to Highbury's footballing crown jewels: Patrick Vieira.

Is he staying or going? That was the question on everyone's lips here Thursday after Vieira had helped Arsenal secure their second double in four years with a 1-0 victory over Manchester United at Old Trafford.

The 25-year-old Senegal-born, French international midfielder is known to be a target of Spanish giants Real Madrid, and reports linking him with a move to the Bernabeu have appeared regularly for close to two years.

Asked in the immediate aftermath of Wednesday's victory whether he would be staying, Vieira immediately fuelled speculation by deftly sidestepping the question.

"At the end of the match I kissed the jersey because the club has given me a lot since I arrived, and I always wanted to give something else in return," Vieira told a television interviewer. "Just let me enjoy this moment."

Many Arsenal fans on television phone-ins and websites interpreted Vieira's gestures to travelling supporters at Old Trafford as an emotional farewell before the formality of a Real Madrid deal is completed.

But Vieira was quoted by the Evening Standard website on Thursday as saying: "I have two years left on my contract. Of course I will be here next season."

His pledge may not be enough, though, because Vieira is still in talks with the Gunners who want him to sign a one-year extension to his existing deal.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger was putting a brave face on the Vieira speculation earlier this week, saying he was not taking rumours of a Madrid deal seriously.

"It's just a joke. We're supposed to have agreed a fee but we haven't spoken to anyone and they would get exactly the same answer," added Wenger, who has already said he expects Vieira to see out the remaining two years of his contract.

Vieira has been sending out mixed messages however. In March he appeared to have settled doubts about his future. "I will be here," he told a television interviewer. "Where do you want me to go?"

"I have two years left on my contract and the only way I will leave is if the club tell me they don't want to stay any more," said Vieira, whose agent was widely reported to have met Real officials in Madrid in January.

With his second set of league and FA Cup winners medals in his collection, Vieira may now feel that the time is ripe for the fresh challenge of a career in Spain.

Several ex-Arsenal players believe money will not be a determining issue in securing a new Highbury deal for Vieira, valued at anywhere between 35 and 50 million pounds.

"In the end it's not going to be money that keeps Pat at Highbury," former Arsenal and England full-back Kenny Sansom said. "If it's just money then Arsenal should pay his demands and settle it quickly," he said.

"I don't think there's a single player in the Arsenal dressing room who would begrudge Patrick his wages, whatever they were, because they know how important he is to the team," Sansom added.

"If he ends up leaving it will be the same story as well. He's been a fantastic servant for Arsenal in the five or six years he's been here and given his heart to the club."

Former Arsenal striker Alan Smith echoed Sansom's comments. "He's been at the club six years and won two doubles. Real Madrid don't come calling every day so it would not surprise me to see him go," Smith said.

"No-one wants to see him leave, but I doubt there'd be any ill-feeling towards him if he did."

Anxious moments for Rivaldo



REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil forward Rivaldo, who doctors say may not last the whole World Cup tournament, is still worried about his problematic right knee just a few weeks from the start of the finals.

Rivaldo says he is still feeling pain in the knee and admitted he was fearful of any possible surgery. Rivaldo missed both legs of Barcelona's recent Champions League semifinal defeat to Real Madrid because of the injury.

He has been passed fit to join Brazil's World Cup squad next week but doubts have been expressed about how well the knee will stand up to the competition itself which begins on May 31.

"I still feel pain when I shoot because the right leg is my support," he told the sports daily Lance. "On Monday, the Barcelona doctors will meet with (Brazil team doctor) Jose Luis Runco and he will decide my training schedule from now on."

"If I continue my recovery, I will play my second World Cup." Rivaldo's fitness has been the subject of intense speculation in Brazil, where the player is also accused of saving his best for his Spanish club.

Rivaldo, who was described by Lance as being "sad" and "with a cold" when he gave the interview

from inside his vehicle in Barcelona's car park, said he had no say as to whether he would play in the finals in Japan and South Korea.

"I don't decide. The doctors do that. It could be that I don't feel any more pain but the doctors, after studying all the exams, think there is a risk I could rupture the ligaments. And if that happens, there's no way out. I'll have to follow their orders."

Asked about possible surgery, he said: "I'm still afraid of this. I'm



RIVALDO

having treatment now because, if I operate, I could damage my career... I could take a long time to recover."

Rivaldo said he had asked to play against Real Madrid but that Barcelona's doctors would not let him and added that he had been working hard to stay in shape.

"One training session is enough for me to be in form. I have not

stopped training. I have been working hard but the club has rested me because of the pain," he said.

He added that his problems had nothing to do with his playing in last month's friendly against Portugal.

"The problem happened in the game against Celta, three days afterwards. Here in Barcelona, they want controversy and they always blame the Brazil team for everything."

"Ronaldo played 45 minutes as well (against Portugal) and there were no problems with Internazionale (Ronaldo's Italian club, Inter Milan)."

On Monday, Barcelona doctor Ricard Pruna said Ronaldo might play in this week's game against Real Zaragoza.

Pruna added: "After this week-end, he'll be joining the Brazilian squad, but we'll also be sending them a note explaining the club's position, given that he's missed the last few games."

"I don't know if he'll be able to play through the whole of the World Cup," he said. "I'd imagine that he'd continue to work on strengthening his leg."

"When he joins up with the Brazilian squad, it's their doctors who'll have to make the decisions about his treatment."

Brazil has been drawn in World Cup group C with Turkey, China and Costa Rica. They play their first game against Turkey on June 3 in Ulsan.

Time for changes

Football

AFP, London

Alex Ferguson promised to make changes at Old Trafford after Arsenal won 1-0 to end Manchester United's three-year reign as Premier League champions on Wednesday.

The United manager said it was time to shake up his squad now they are destined to finish the season empty-handed for only the third time in 13 campaigns.

However, he insisted that his captain Roy Keane would survive the cull.

"I think that we will make some changes," he told MUTV, the club's satellite television channel.

"But when you have people like Roy Keane you can always look forward to something."

"Roy cares, that's the situation, and quite rightly as captain of the club I don't mind him saying what he does because he certainly stands up, no doubt about that, and the others have to follow. He's a great character."

On the eve of the title-decider Keane blasted his United team-mates accusing them of lacking commitment.

Sylvain Wiltord scored the only goal to seal the double for Arsenal and Ferguson admitted the Gunners were worthy champions.

"We've lost six games at home and you can't argue with that," he said. "Arsenal have won their last 12 games and they've not lost away from home."

"That's the championship form and they are worthy champions without question."

"You lose games like we have, three or four 1-0 defeats, and the



ROY KEANE

Derby game. I think that was the killer really."

"I think we were 2-1 up with 10 minutes to go and we gave away a stupid goal."

"We should have won by about six and instead we drew 2-2. Things like that come back to haunt you and they have for us tonight."

"We didn't create enough to win the game, but we had control of the game for an hour."

"But once we lost the goal we were never in it. We had hoped to keep a clean sheet and if we had gone in front I think we would have won the match."

"We never broke them down and I don't think (David) Seaman's made a save."

Phil Neville echoed his manager's sentiments and agreed Arsenal deserved to win the championship.

"I think when you look over the season it was not lost tonight, it was the fact that we lost the nine games," he said.

"Tonight was disappointing. If we had taken charge in the first half and scored a goal I think we would have gone on to win the game."

"But they deserved to come out winners and they deserved to come out champions of the league."

"It's a massive disappointment. It's at Old Trafford and we've let our fans down by the fact they won it here tonight."

"That was the one reason why we didn't want them to win it here and we haven't won anything for our fans this year."

"They've lost three games and we've lost nine games and that's been the story."

Ferguson said he had started Ruud van Nistelrooy on the bench because he has tired after such a demanding season, while Denis Irwin, Ronny Johnsen and Nicky Butt were injured.

ALL WINNERS

UEFA Cup winners 1958-2002.

- 1957/1958 - FC Barcelona (Spain)
- 1959/1960 - FC Barcelona (Spain)
- 1960/1961 - Roma (Italy)
- 1961/1962 - Valencia (Spain)
- 1962/1963 - Valencia (Spain)
- 1963/1964 - Real Zaragoza (Spain)
- 1964/1965 - Ferencvarosi (Hungary)
- 1965/1966 - FC Barcelona (Spain)
- 1966/1967 - NK Dinamo (Zagreb, Yugoslavia)
- 1967/1968 - Leeds United (England)
- 1968/1969 - Newcastle United (England)
- 1969/1970 - Arsenal (England)
- 1970/1971 - Leeds United (England)
- 1971/1972 - Tottenham Hotspur (England)
- 1972/1973 - Liverpool (England)
- 1973/1974 - Feyenoord (Netherlands)
- 1974/1975 - Borussia (Monchengladbach, FRG)
- 1975/1976 - Liverpool (England)
- 1976/1977 - Juventus (Italy)
- 1977/1978 - PSV (Eindhoven, Netherlands)
- 1978/1979 - Borussia (Monchengladbach, FRG)
- 1979/1980 - Eintracht (Frankfurt, FRG)
- 1980/1981 - Ipswich Town (England)
- 1981/1982 - IFK Goteborg (Sweden)
- 1982/1983 - RSC Anderlecht (Belgium)
- 1983/1984 - Tottenham Hotspur (England)
- 1984/1985 - Real (Madrid, Spain)
- 1985/1986 - Real (Madrid, Spain)
- 1986/1987 - IFK Gothenburg (Sweden)
- 1987/1988 - Bayer (Leverkusen, FRG)
- 1988/1989 - SSC Napoli (Italy)
- 1989/1990 - Juventus (Italy)
- 1990/1991 - Internazionale (Italy)
- 1991/1992 - Ajax (Netherlands)
- 1992/1993 - Juventus (Italy)
- 1993/1994 - Internazionale (Italy)
- 1994/1995 - Parma (Italy)
- 1995/1996 - Bayern (Munich, Germany)
- 1996/1997 - Schalke (04) (Germany)
- 1997/1998 - Internazionale (Italy)
- 1998/1999 - Parma (Italy)
- 1999/2000 - Galatasaray (Turkey)
- 2000/2001 - Liverpool (England)
- 2001/2002 - Feyenoord (Netherlands)

Italian clubs have won the most UEFA Cups:

- 10 - Italian
- 9 - English
- 8 - Spanish
- 6 - German
- 4 - Dutch
- 2 - Swedish

Barcelona and Inter Milan have won the UEFA Cup 3 times

- 3 - Barcelona, Inter
- 2 - Real, Liverpool, Tottenham, Borussia Monchengladbach, Feyenoord, Parma, Valencia, Juventus

Italian Cup final preview Juve seek second feather

AFP, Parma

Newly-crowned Italian champions Juventus look to complete the domestic double on Friday when they defend a 2-1 first-leg lead against Parma at the Stadio Ennio Tardini in the second leg of the Italian Cup Final.

The Turin outfit has been boisterously celebrating the Scudetto they snatched from the grasp of Inter Milan last Sunday but coach Marcello Lippi, who has played a second-string side throughout Italy's lesser domestic competition all season, is hungry for more.

Barcelona to play in Thailand

AFP, Bangkok

Thai football fans will celebrate their own World Cup of sorts later this month when they welcome Spain's FC Barcelona for an exhibition match on May 29, authorities said Thursday.

Barca, the first Spanish team ever to visit Thailand, will arrive in the capital May 26 to take on Thai league team BEC TERO, an occasional exhibition vehicle which is expected to be well-stocked with national team members.

Thai Football Association vice president Thawatchai Sajakul said the match would be an important test for Thailand's footballers, who are considered Southeast Asian powers but have never reached the World Cup finals.

"We hope Thai footballers will have a chance to play other Spanish clubs after Barcelona as it will be a great experience for them," Thawatchai told a news conference.