

Dong delivers on MU debut

Football

AFP, Hong Kong

Chinese signing Dong Fangzhuo had a dream debut for Manchester United, with his second half goal giving the Red Devils a 2-0 win over a spirited Hong Kong as they overcame a rusty start in the opening game of their Asian tour.

Dong Fangzhuo put away a gift from Hong Kong goalkeeper Fan Chun-yip to score in the 73rd minute at a packed Hong Kong Football Stadium but the twice European champions were disappointing overall.

Manager Sir Alex Ferguson was often left shaking his head, especially in the first half when only five of 17 shots were on target, none finding the back of the net as the hosts put up a gutsy defence.

Unrated Hong Kong had the best chance of the first half as veteran striker Au Wai-lun, playing his final match, forced a finger-tip save from new keeper Edwin van der Sar with a curling shot from the edge of the box.

Ferguson replaced his whole lineup after half-time as he sought to give as many of his jet-lagged players a run out in the first of their four tour matches.

Hong Kong's stubborn resistance finally gave out in the second half when they failed to clear a Ryan Giggs corner in the 68th minute.

Giuseppe Rossi, an 18-year-old signed from Italian Serie A club last year, weakly chested the ball home unchallenged when the Welshman was allowed a second attempt to cross.

Five minutes later and Dong, only two years older than the Italian, made it two, after the Hong Kong keeper who had pulled off a string of brave saves in the first half, kicked out straight to him.

Dong dribbled past the surprised Hong Kong defence and chipped past Fan to score less than 30 minutes into his United playing career.

Ferguson was full of praise for his young goal-scorers, but said the match was more of a limbering up exercise for his team before the more serious challenge of the

English Premiership and the European Champions League.

The United manager was especially positive about Dong, who has been forced to play on loan for Belgium side Royal Antwerp until his British work permit is secured.

The game began frenetically and for Hong Kong brightly as van der Sar, the Dutch national keeper, was forced to make two saves in the opening minutes, scrabbling the ball away each time.

South Korean international Park Ji-Sung had an energetic outing, and was put through on goal in the 10th minute by Paul Scholes but failed to squeeze the ball past Fan.

An unfazed Ferguson made no

comment on a series of first half misses by Park and Ruud van Nistelrooy among others, saying simply that he aimed to give as many players as possible time on the pitch before the new season in August.

After playing a Beijing side on Tuesday, United will wrap up their tour of with fixtures against Japanese J League sides Kashima Antlers and Urawa Red Diamonds on Thursday and Saturday.

The tour is also a chance for the Red Devils, who have courted Asia assiduously over the years with initiatives including a Chinese-language website, club shops, soccer schools and credit cards, to satisfy their legions of Asian fans.



Manchester United's Ryan Giggs holds the trophy after the 2-0 victory over hosts Hong Kong yesterday.

Inter cancel England trip

REUTERS, Milan

Inter Milan have cancelled a pre-season England tour because of safety fears after the London suicide bombing campaign, the Italian club said on Saturday.

"The club has decided to cancel the team tour in England so as not to further stretch the already severely occupied security services," Inter said in a statement on its website.

"Football takes a step back because of the increasingly serious events which touch the sensitivity of everyone," Inter added in the statement.

Inter were due to play Portsmouth, Leicester, Norwich and Crystal Palace, all in the last week of July.

The only match which would have taken place in London would have been against Crystal Palace.

Mayor Ken Livingstone hit out at Inter's decision, telling Sky News: "I think that it is a very silly thing to do because it is playing the terrorists' game. They want to change the way we live."

He added: "The terrorists, I am sure, will be celebrating their decision. The idea there might not be an attack back home (in Milan), that they are more safe there than here, is a complete illusion."

"The truth is, as we have seen from the horrifying news from Egypt, nowhere in the world is safe."

Four British-born suicide bombers killed 52 people and injured 700 others in attacks on train and a bus in London on July 7. London was struck again this week when another four bombs appeared to have failed to detonate properly.

On Saturday, at least 83 people were killed and 200 injured when car bombs ripped through the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh in the worst attack in Egypt since 1981.

Five bid for Euro 2012

AFP, Paris

Five candidates have bid to stage the 2012 European championships, UEFA said Friday.

Greece, Italy and Turkey have made individual bids while Croatia has made a joint bid with Hungary and Poland is aligned with Ukraine.

UEFA will draw up a short list of three on November 7 and the hosts will be nominated in December 2006.

Euro 2008 will be held in Switzerland and Austria.

Real lose image case

REUTERS, Madrid

A French court has rejected a lawsuit by Real Madrid seeking to stop online betting firms from using its name and images of its soccer players, three of the companies said on Friday.

However, Real Madrid said its lawsuit was still alive and that the Paris court only struck down a preliminary injunction, not the whole case.

Spanish online betting firm Miapuesta and British-based William Hill (WMH.L: Quote, Profile, Research) and Ladbrokes (HG.L: Quote, Profile, Research) said the court threw out the case, which was supported by Real Madrid's top players David Beckham, Raul, Zinedine Zidane and Figo.

Underrated he isn't

Football

MADRID

Ronaldo Luiz Nazario de Lima has been in the international soccer spotlight for more than a decade and during that time he has been called many things: phenomenon, prodigy, the next Pele. But 'underrated' never has been one of them.

Heading into next year's World Cup, however, that's the only word that comes to mind when thinking of Ronaldo.

While Brazilian soccer fans have hyped sensations such as Ronaldinho, Adriano and Robinho (whom Real Madrid signed for \$30 million to push you-know-who for his job), Ronaldo has sat by idly, unfazed by his fading star, unmoved by the attention that has gone to players whom he believes he is still better than. He knows that, in time, they all will be judged by the same barometer that all Brazilian players are judged by in their careers: World Cup trophies, the same golden statuettes that seem to serve as the chapter points in Ronaldo's career.

No one can say truthfully they know what Ronaldo has gone through in his life, because no one has experienced a career full of as many ups and downs that have been chronicled on such a global stage as he has.

He grew up in poverty, playing soccer in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, signed a multimillion-dollar professional contract and won a World Cup at the age of 17; was blamed globally for single-handedly losing the World Cup in 1998 when he played poorly after suffering from a mysterious illness the night before the final; nearly retired from the sport after several knee operations that sidelined him for over two years; and finally redeemed himself by leading Brazil to World Cup glory, winning the Golden Boot award and scoring the final's only two goals.

He has come to terms with the perception that his country no longer needs him to win its sixth World Cup after it won the Confederations Cup without him last month. He knows that's not really the case and plans on holding another gold trophy in his No 9

yellow jersey before retiring from international play 2006.

"It'll be my fourth World Cup and I have to let younger players take their chance," he says.

He is okay with the notion that his best years are behind him and that his three-year stint at the Bernabeu has been a disappointment because he's led Real Madrid to only one league title and no Champions League crowns since coming over in 2002 for 35 million dollars.

"I understand that soccer is all about how well you played in your last game, and I am confident that I'll find success here before I retire here."

He is even at peace with the fact that his personal life -- his marriage

to model Daniela Cicarelli lasted about three months before ending in divorce this year -- often gets more press than his professional accomplishments.

"That's just part of being a recognised soccer player."

He is fine with all that because he doesn't care how people perceive him or care to meet the standards placed upon him by others who don't know him. He is content with where he is in his life, personally and professionally, although there is one frontier that many feel still awaits him: one final tip of the cap to Pele, the man to whom Ronaldo has been linked since childhood, and the player he will likely pass on the World Cup-goals-scored list next year.

While Ronaldo says he plans to play out the final four years of his contract with Real Madrid and retire with the Spanish giants, he's never ruled out the possibility of finishing his career in the States.

It's a decision that makes sense for Ronaldo, who has vacationed in the States the past few summers, enjoying the sun-kissed beaches of Miami and Los Angeles while improving his English. While David Beckham may think he will have a stranglehold on the US soccer scene when he retires from European club play, Ronaldo could have an even larger impact here than the iconic England captain.

Not only is Ronaldo arguably the greatest striker of our generation and one of the biggest heroes in the Latino community, he is the only player who can match Beckham's pop-culture cache in the US.

During the Real Madrid-Galaxy game at the Home Depot Center in Southern California, tennis superstar Maria Sharapova stood and watched the game from a suite above the home goal and fiddled with her cell phone as she eagerly awaited the game's conclusion so she could meet her favourite player.

"I'm here to see Ronaldo," she said, dressed in a tight vintage top and acid-washed jeans. "I've always been a big fan of his no matter what club he's on and I really wanted to meet him."

Although the possibility of seeing Ronaldo play out his career in Los Angeles or New York might seem remote, the possibility of attracting millions of new fans in the States and millions of dollars in new endorsements may be too much to pass up in the twilight of his career.

If Ronaldo ends up winning another World Cup next year and captures a Champions League medal before his Real contract expires, there would be no better way to finish his career than a final victory stint in the US. At the very least, if he plays in the MLS, even at the end of his career, the last thing he'll be known as is 'underrated'. (Internet Source)



RONALDO LUIZ NAZARIO DE LIMA

Hiddink's mission down under

AP, Sydney

Guus Hiddink has steered the Netherlands and South Korea to the last two soccer World Cup semifinals. On Friday, he confirmed he will try to guide Australia's Socceroos to qualification for the World Cup in Germany next year -- a job he described as trying to make the impossible possible.

If successful, he will also take the team to the 2006 finals. But the veteran Dutch coach has no illusions about the task ahead. Australia, a giant in many sports, has reached the World Cup finals just once -- in 1974.

"Coming here now with my past is not a guarantee for success," he told a packed media conference in Sydney.

"The only thing I can contribute with all my efforts is some knowledge, some experience. But at the

end, players they have to do it."

Hiddink will coach the Socceroos at least until November, while continuing to act as technical director with Dutch champion PSV Eindhoven, which reached the Champions League semifinals this year before being narrowly edged for a spot in the final by Italian powerhouse AC Milan.

"He has had a distinguished career, and his record speaks for itself," said Frank Lowy, chairman of the Football Federation of Australia.

"We could not have hoped for a more qualified internationally recognized coach to lead us on the road to Germany."

Hiddink will work with the Socceroos during World Cup regional Oceania playoffs against the Solomon Islands in September -- the first in Sydney on September 3 -- and a last-stage intercontinental playoff against the fifth-ranked South American team in November. "Playing against a South

American team that is experienced, many people will say that's impossible," Hiddink said.

"That, I think, is the challenge to me: to make the impossible possible."

Australia has failed at the last hurdle in the last two World Cup qualifying campaigns, missing out to Iran on aggregate, home-and-away scores under former England coach Terry Venables for France '98, and losing to Uruguay at the same stage before the 2002 Cup in South Korea and Japan.

The Socceroos have been without a coach since Frank Farina quit last month after six years in the job and after Australian slumped to three straight defeats in the Confederations Cup tournament in Germany.

Hiddink coached the Netherlands to the World Cup semifinals in 1998 and pulled off the shock of the 2002 tournament by leading South Korea to the final four.

A French court has rejected a lawsuit by Real Madrid seeking to stop online betting firms from using its name and images of its soccer players, three of the companies said on Friday.

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Robinho deal in danger

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Robinho's move from Santos to Real Madrid was in danger of falling through on Friday when the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said they would not authorise the transfer under current conditions.

The nine-times European champions said on Thursday that they had paid 60 per cent, or £15 million, of the £25 million buy-out clause stipulated in Robinho's contract to buy Santos's share of his rights.

Robinho, who says he is no longer in the right frame of mind to stay in Brazil, has waived the remaining 40 per cent to which he is entitled.

But the CBF's legal director Carlos Eugenio Lopes said that a unilateral breach of contract would require Real Madrid to pay Santos the full £25 million for the 21-year-old Brazil international, one of the world's most exciting young players.

Lopes said Robinho would not be granted the International Transfer Certificate he needs to complete the move.

"We're going to deny the certificate because the transfer does not meet the requirements of the law," Lopes said.

"We can't release him either under Brazilian law or under FIFA rules," said Lopes. "(Brazilian law) requires the payment of the entire amount for there to be a unilateral end to the contract and that is not what Real are proposing."

Lopes said Santos had told the CBF that they did not agree with the transfer.

"Santos will only release him

parties. He's not entitled to anything if he breaks off the contract."

Robinho's contract runs until 2008 and Santos president Marcelo Teixeira has been fiercely trying to hold on to the 21-year-old.

Teixeira has accused Real of approaching Robinho without his club's permission and of trying to use their financial clout to take the player.

Santos's legal director Mario Mello also denied the transfer deal was close to completion.

"We can't accept that they interpret the contract in one way and deposit the amount that they feel is right," he told the sports daily Lance.

Earlier on Thursday, Real vice-president Emilio Butragueno said the deal was yet to be finalised.

"The door has been opened to the signing of Robinho but it still hasn't been finalised, although it is very close," he told Real's official website.

"We've presented a document to the Brazilian federation that guarantees the payment of 60 per cent of the player's rights. We still have to wait but there is no doubt that it is a very important decision."

"We have to remain prudent but we hope that everything will become clear in the next 24 to 48 hours."

Isinbayeva sets new pole vault mark

AFP, London

Russian polevaulter Yelena Isinbayeva polevaulted into the history books at the London Super Grand Prix on Friday when she became the first woman to break the five-metre barrier.

But while the Russian golden girl was setting her sights on going even higher, there was object misery for world 100m record holder Asafa Powell who pulled up injured in his sprint showdown with Olympic champion Justin Gatlin.

The American stormed to victory in 9.89secs while Jamaica's Powell was left collapsed on the Crystal Palace track after just 10 metres.

He was left feeling a groin injury which puts a huge question mark over his participation at the world championships in Helsinki which start in two weeks' time.

Isinbayeva's giant leap came just minutes after she had set another new world record of 4.96m, which had in turn bettered the previous best of 4.95 also set by her at the Super Grand Prix in Madrid on July 16.

The two quickfire leaps - witnessed by men's pole vault world record holder Sergei Bubka - were her 16th and 17th world records of her career.

SL batting sanity

FROM PAGE 12 After Jayasuriya dismissed Narsingh Deonarine (40) with a return catch off the fifth delivery of the day, Vaas trapped Denesh Ramdin leg-before and clean bowled Powell in the next over.

Best, who smashed five boundaries, and Banks ensured the Sri Lankans were kept longer in the field.

It was left to off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan to prevent the tail from wagging further by removing Banks and last man Lawson.

The West Indians are without 10 leading players, including master batsman Brian Lara, who refused to tour Sri Lanka following a sponsorship row with the West Indies Cricket Board.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the second Test between Sri Lanka and the West Indies at the Asgiriya Stadium on Saturday:

SRI LANKA: First innings 150 (Samaraweera 37, Dilshan 36; Powell 5-25, Best 3-50)

WEST INDIES: First innings (overnight 92-5) Marshall c Atapattu b Vaas 4

Ramdas run out 3 Morton b Vaas 1 Chanderpaul lbw b Vaas 13 Joseph c Dilshan b Vaas 18 Deonarine c and b Jayasuriya 40 Ramdin lbw b Vaas 13 Banks c Dilshan b Muralitharan 17 Powell b Vaas 0 Best not out 26 Lawson b Muralitharan 3 Extras: (b-4, lb-2, nb-4) 10

Total: (All out in 58.1 overs) 148

Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-9, 3-12, 4-27, 5-75, 6-97, 7-101, 8-101, 9-122

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows: Vaas, Malinga, Wijekoon, Muralitharan, Herath, Jayasuriya.

SRI LANKA: Second innings Jayasuriya c Morton b Lawson 36

Atapattu c Banks b Powell 19 Sangakkara not out 46 Jayawardena not out 38

Extras: (b-4, nb-3) 7 Total: (For 2 wks in 41.1 overs) 146

Fall of wickets: 1-55, 2-57

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows: Powell, Lawson, Best, Banks, Deonarine, Morton.

SRI LANKA: First innings 150 (Samaraweera 37, Dilshan 36; Powell 5-25, Best 3-50)

WEST INDIES: First innings (overnight 92-5) Marshall c Atapattu b Vaas 4

Ramdas run out 3 Morton b Vaas 1 Chanderpaul lbw b Vaas 13 Joseph c Dilshan b Vaas 18 Deonarine c and b Jayasuriya 40 Ramdin lbw b Vaas 13 Banks c Dilshan b Muralitharan 17 Powell b Vaas 0 Best not out 26 Lawson b Muralitharan 3 Extras: (b-4, lb-2, nb-4) 10

Brothers follow MSC

FROM PAGE 12 off a Masud Alam left-flank cross to equalise the margin.

But any plans of a Wanderers upset were nipped in the bud when Edward struck twice in no time. After receiving a throw pass from Moroccan midfielder Hicham Inanai, the fleet-footed Russian dodged past two opponent defenders before rounding off the advancing Wanderers custodian Nadim in the 22nd minute.

Edward struck again a minute later to complete his first hat-trick in the league. Interestingly it was almost a replay of his second goal but this time Edward started his dash almost from the centre before tapping the ball into an empty net.

The hat-trick helped Edward to join the country's premier marksman Alfaz Ahmed at the top scorer's list with seven goals each.

With a 3-1 cushion Brothers looked reluctant to go for more goals after the break against Wanderers, whom they had thrashed 5-0 in the first-leg.

As Brothers resigned to a casual approach, no-hoppers Wanderers tried to assume the attacking role but failed to create any real chances. The only occasion they came close to scoring came when Henry moved menacingly inside the Brothers box but was denied a fair share of a crack at goal by Liton, who apparently hacked the Nigerian from the back.

But referee Ramkrishna Gosh deemed to be a fair tackle and turned down appeals for penalty.

At the fag end of the match Edward and substitute midfielder Liton were tantalisingly close to scoring but both were thwarted by Nadim.

TEAMS BROTHERS UNION: Tareq, Masud Rana, Jewel Rana, Siraji, Parvez Babu, Inani (Liton), Abul (Tapu), Monwar, Edward, Pranotosh and Emily.

DHAKA WANDERERS: Nadim, Jahangir, Delwar, Narayan, Samir (Patrick), Kabir, Masud, Mulla (Mustafizur), Ashraf, Milon, and Henry.

Tigers start

FROM PAGE 12 Board (BCB) earlier said that he was expected to be back by July 23.

The Faruque Ahmed-led selection committee had earlier announced a 23-member preliminary squad for the three-match one-day and two-match Test series against Sri Lanka but whatmore will get only 13 players as ten cricketers are now touring England with the Bangladesh A team.

In the first week cricketers will take part in the fitness sessions while nets will start at the newly built Mirpur Indoor Stadium from July 31.

The team will fly to Sri Lanka on August 25.

School chess

FROM PAGE 12 The leaders were Mohammad Nazmus Shakib, Reazul Islam Babu, Bitan Banerjee, Masum Hossain and Sharif Hossain.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al Saif and Aniruddh Majumder occupied the top slot in the KG-Class V group with four points each after the fourth round.

In the girl's section, Mehnaz Ahmed Mithila took the solo lead with four points.

Mourinho waits for backlash

SPORTINGLIFE, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has warned his side they have become the Premiership's prized scalp.

The Blues romped to the Premiership title last season, finishing 12 points clear of second-placed Arsenal, as Mourinho enjoyed a stunning first season in charge at Stamford Bridge.

With a little help from their manager's over-confident manner and their vast wealth, Chelsea were already one of the league's most wanted teams.

But Mourinho understands their status as reigning champions has lifted them to the top of their rivals' hit-list with the likes of Manchester United and Liverpool gunning for revenge.

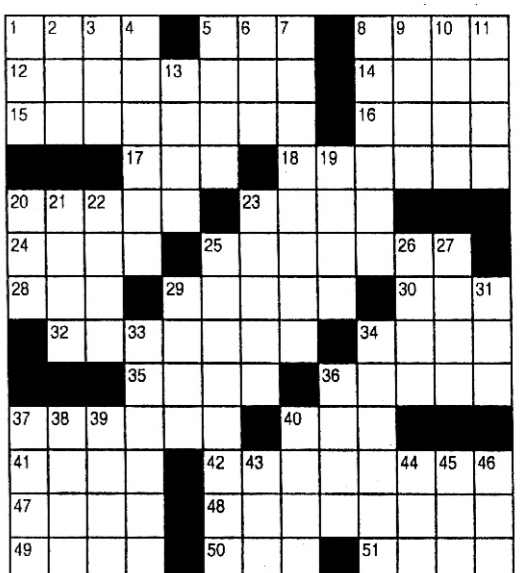
"The other teams are not happy because they lost. They have the quality and conditions to improve and have set new targets. We are the champions and everyone wants to beat us," said the Chelsea manager, who is currently in America preparing his side for Sunday's friendly against AC Milan in Boston.

"For example Sir Alex Ferguson is saying Manchester United cannot lose a game. I've seen quotes from players like Ryan Giggs and Steven Gerrard saying how much they want to win and this makes it difficult for us."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 40 What- ever amount 41 Benefit son 5 Succor 8 Earth 12 Just so-o-o 14 Destroy 15 Despair- ing 16 Nair 18 Straight- ens (up) 20 Constitu- tionals 23 Tower city 24 Black- birds 25 Cloudy 28 Hair applica- tion 29 Bender 30 "Eureka!" 32 Foolish 34 Begged 35 "The Amazing -"

4 Ardent enthusi- asts 5 Partner of role 6 They (Fr.) 7 Pre- ordains 8 Soda- shoppie treat 9 "Dedicat- ed to the -- Love" 10 Nantes call? 11 Billions and 'billions 13 Matter- horn et al. 19 Gilligan's home 20 Comical sort



CRYPTOQUIP Y V K C T H G J F J C S K B G K F X S X J O E Y T G K G O H U E . B J S Z T - K T U - B J S Z T Y I G F B ? Saturday's Cryptoquip: I NEVER LIKED THAT CRAZY OLD LIZARD. HE GAVE ME A CREEPY FEELING RIGHT FROM THE GECKO! Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals I The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.