

Barca will rebound: Rijkaard

AFP, Yokohama

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard said the European champions would bounce back from their bruising Club World Cup defeat.

The overwhelming favourites dominated the early stages of Sunday's final only to be floored 1-0 by a late sucker-punch from Brazil's Internacional.

"By losing tonight this is going to generate something even better," Rijkaard said.

"We have to really overcome this situation and by doing that we are going to improve."

Barcelona were the last to arrive here after a run of domestic and European matches, and repeatedly complained of jet-lag and lack of conditioning.

Rijkaard admitted the Spanish giants had prepared poorly for the tournament and said they would learn from their defeat.

"As a coach I feel really sorry. All the players did a great job but I would say Inter were better prepared tonight," he said.

It was the second time in two years that European favourites have been shocked in the club final after Sao Paulo's 1-0 win over Liverpool last year.

Rijkaard said he felt bitter about the defeat and hoped Barcelona's fans would understand.

"This isn't a failure from the team, this is my failure," Rijkaard said.

"Of course we wanted to win but it was difficult to keep our motivation high and it's difficult to keep pleasing our fans. Maybe we can learn from this."

Star player Ronaldinho, nominated for a record third consecutive World Player of the Year award late on Monday, said Barcelona would analyse the defeat and learn from their mistakes.

Ronaldinho and Deco ran riot in the 4-0 semi-final against Club America but were frequently crowded off the ball by Internacional.

"Inter played very well defensively and now we have to win the Champions League to come here again," Ronaldinho said.

"They scored with the only chance they had. We're going to analyse the match and we'll try to learn from this."

Inter coach Abel Braga said the South Americans had done their homework on Barca, studying matches against Chelsea, Werder Bremen and Real Madrid.

They restricted Barca's potent attack with diligent marking and scored on the break through substitute Adriano on 82 minutes.

"This is the best moment of my career," Braga said. "Only two things could beat this: winning again next year, and becoming the head coach of Brazil and winning the World Cup."

Inter became the sixth Brazilian intercontinental champions including the former Europe-South America clash played since 1960.

Zambrotta out for a month

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona's Italian international fullback Gianluca Zambrotta will be out of action for around a month after tearing a muscle in his left leg, the Primera Liga side said on Sunday.

Zambrotta sustained the injury during his side's 1-0 defeat to Internacional in the final of the Club World Cup in Yokohama.

"The player will undergo further tests when the team returns to Barcelona, but it is expected he will be sidelined for approximately four weeks," the club said in a statement.

The 29-year-old Italian will be unavailable for Barcelona's final league match of the year when they host Atletico Madrid on Thursday and will also miss their opening match of 2007 against Getafe.

Galliani reveals Milan plans

INTERNET, undated

Milan chief executive Adriano Galliani has revealed his plans for the January transfer window, with Lazio's Massimo Oddo top of his wanted list.

"In January we will sign Oddo and another defender," he said. "If the market allows it we will not stop there."

"However, we will not sign a goalkeeper."

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti had been linked with a move for a shot-stopper as regular number one Dida is injured.

There are two other targets on the Rossoneri's wishlist, Sao Paulo right back Ilisinho - reportedly in line to replace long-serving veteran Cafu - and World Cup champions Internacional's teenage striker Pato Alexandre.

"Ilisinho and Pato? We have a Brazilian spirit here and we will confirm (something more soon)."

Galliani again insisted that the club's star Brazil playmaker would not be leaving the club, nor would the man in charge.

"Kaka will not leave and we have spoken enough about (Chelsea striker Andriy) Shevchenko," he said.

"Ancelotti will remain with us, for better or worse."



PHOTO: AFP

West Ham United midfielder Nigel Reo-Coker (R) races ahead of Manchester United winger Ji-Sung Park in pursuit of the ball during their Premiership encounter at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Hammers blow for United

AFP, London



West Ham captain Nigel Reo-Coker put a dent in Manchester United's title challenge as his second-half strike earned a shock 1-0 win against the Premiership leaders on Sunday.

Reo-Coker scored with 15 minutes remaining at Upton Park to give new West Ham manager Alan Curbishley the perfect start to his reign and end United's 12-match unbeaten run.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side are now just two points ahead of second-placed Chelsea after Jose Mourinho's side staged a dramatic late revival to win at Everton earlier on Sunday.

The disappointment of seeing their title rivals snatch victory after trailing twice at Goodison Park seemed to take the edge off United's usual attacking verve in the early stages.

West Ham's players had plenty to prove to Curbishley, in charge for the first time after replacing Alan Pardew last week, and it showed as they tore into tackles with an urgency missing for most of this season.

Curbishley had never tasted victory over United in 15 years as a manager but he should have been celebrating a goal in the 11th minute as West Ham carved out a glorious chance.

Lee Bowyer swung over a cross from the right and Matthew Etherington found space between

Rio Ferdinand and Nemanja Vidic, but the winger misjudged the flight of the ball and headed well wide.

Marlon Harewood gave United another scare soon after as he turned Vidic on the edge of the penalty area and lashed a ferocious shot just over the bar.

Louis Saha has been one of United's most impressive performers this season and the French striker sparked his side's first serious threat when he cleverly worked room for a shot that forced Robert Green to save low to his left.

West Ham were playing with a vibrancy that belied their dismal recent run of five defeats from six matches and Bobby Zamora should have put them in front in the 32nd minute.

Zamora shrugged off Vidic's weak challenge and found himself with just Edwin van der Sar to beat, but his shot was too near to the Dutch keeper and he was able to parry it to safety.

United gradually came into the game and Cristiano Ronaldo created a half-chance for Wayne Rooney in the 38th minute with a deflected cross that the England striker headed just past the far post.

West Ham showed no signs of slowing down after the interval and Zamora flashed a shot wide after fine approach play by Harewood and Etherington.

But United have too many creative talents to be subdued for long and when Saha fed Ronaldo the Portuguese winger cut in from the left before unleashing a shot that Green superbly tipped around a post.

Ronaldo's quick-thinking set up Giggs when he nipped in to cross from the byline as Jonathan Spector tried to let the ball run out, but the Welsh winger shot wastefully over from 10 yards.

Curbishley made a bold move as he threw on Yossi Benayoun and Teddy Sheringham in a bid to grab a winner.

His gamble paid off in spectacular fashion in the 75th minute. Benayoun's pass picked out Sheringham on the right and the former United striker played a perfectly-weighted pass through Vidic's legs to Harewood, whose cut-back gave Reo-Coker the simple task of finishing from close range.

United poured forward in search of an equaliser but West Ham, who remain third bottom, stood firm and Reo-Coker's heroics will have given Curbishley and his players renewed optimism they can avoid relegation. Elsewhere, City's first home defeat of the season and Tottenham's first away sent the London side up to seventh.

Calum Davenport glanced in a Tom Huddlestone free kick to put Spurs ahead in the 16th minute and Huddlestone then produced a lovely finish to drive in the second eighth minutes later.

City improved in the second half and repaid through Joey Barton in the 64th minute but Spurs held on to win 2-1.

Mannschaft named team of the year

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany's soccer team, who finished an unexpected third at the World Cup, were voted German team of the year on Sunday by the nation's sportswriters.

Juergen Klinsmann's side, who went out after extra time in the semi-final against Italy, were clear winners of the annual award with 4,165 points.

It was the eighth time the national soccer team had won the honour, which was presented at a gala ceremony in Baden-Baden.

"They richly deserved to win this award," said Franz Beckenbauer, head of the World Cup organising committee and a former West Germany coach and captain, in the ceremony broadcast live. "They showed everyone they were the boss at home."

They last won the award in 2002 after reaching the World Cup final before losing to Brazil, and in 1996, when they won the European Championship.

Michael Greis, who won three biathlon gold medals at the Turin Winter Olympics, was voted Germany's sportsman of the year while Kati Wilhelm, who got one gold and two silver medals in biathlon at Turin, was selected as sportswoman of the year.

Greis had 3,126 points and beat Formula One's Michael Schumacher, who was second with 1,645 points. Wilhelm had 3,363 points to beat swimmer Britta Steffen, who had 2,980 points, after winning four European swimming championships in 2006.

Eriksson in line for Marseille

AFP, London

Former England manager Sven Goran Eriksson could take over as coach at French giants Marseille in the New Year, British newspapers reported on Monday.

Eriksson has been on the sidelines since England crashed out of the World Cup quarterfinals losing to Portugal on penalties in July, although he is still paid a substantial salary by the English FA.

His name has been linked with several clubs most recently West Ham United, but press reports said he was being lined up for the job in Marseille, a club which has been lurching from crisis to crisis.

There has been growing speculation in the French press that owner Robert Louis-Dreyfus is eager to sell the club who are languishing 19 points behind runaway French league leaders Lyon. "It's true. We are on our way and it should be completed in the New Year," Eriksson's right-hand man and fellow Swede Tord Grip was quoted by the Sun as saying when asked about the Marseille job.

"In France there is only one team that is really good at the moment and that is Lyon. But Marseille is a football town."

The Guardian on its website said that both Marseille and another troubled French giant Paris St Germain were interested in acquiring Eriksson's services.

It quoted the Swede's agent Athole Still as saying that he expected something to be finalised "quite soon."

French sports daily L'Equipe reported that Eriksson's name had been connected to an unnamed potential buyer of Marseille and that he would come in as manager if that deal went ahead.

The third best club in the world

AFP, Cairo

Tens of thousands of Egyptians were preparing to give a heroes' welcome to Ahly players, after the African champions clinched third place in the Club World Cup in Japan.

A sea of red flags flooded the streets of Cairo Sunday after playmaker Mohamed Aboutrika lifted his team to an unprecedented result for the Egyptian club or any African outfit.

According to Egyptian radio, the team is expected to fly back from Japan in the early hours of Tuesday before a morning parade in the Egyptian metropolis on an open deck bus.

Newspapers were ecstatic Monday, carrying red-letter headlines describing Ahly as "the third best football club in the world" after Sunday's 2-1 defeat of Mexico's Club America.

"We hadn't experienced the international stage in such a way in 16 years," wrote columnist Hassan Mistakawi sports in the top-selling state-owned Al-Ahram daily. "Ahly has given us the hope and the spirit."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak sent a message of congratulations to the players and Kuwaiti billionaire Nasser al-Khoraifi donated one million pounds (175,000 dollars) to the club.

Mourinho salutes players

AFP, Liverpool



Jose Mourinho insisted his players have the character to win the Premiership for the third successive season after Chelsea's stunning 3-2 victory against Everton at Goodison Park on Sunday.

Chelsea, who started the day five points behind leaders Manchester United, were facing defeat when Joseph Yobo headed Everton into a 2-1 lead midway through the second half.

But two spectacular late strikes from Frank Lampard and Didier Drogba eamed Mourinho's outfit a memorable victory and breathed new fire into their season.

"Normal players would have had their heads down when Everton went ahead for the second time," said Mourinho.

"But my team is full of top personalities. We didn't deserve to suffer so much. We kept fighting and scored two amazing goals."

Mourinho is not worried that his side is playing catch-up with United, and insisted there is still a long way to go before the title is decided.

Asked what kind of message his side's late win sent to United, Mourinho said: "For me the message is the same."

"There is still half the season to go. We are now experiencing our difficult moment. But we are not losing many points. We lost two points against Arsenal, we have injuries and some players are not in the best of form."

"But we have a lot of games still to go and we are still picking up points."

Mourinho accused Everton striker Andy Johnson of diving to try and win a first half penalty - a claim which his opposite number David Moyes refuted.

Johnson, who has now gone 12 games for club and country without scoring, went down after a challenge with Khalid Boulahrouz.

"He's dangerous for the opponents because you cannot trust him," added Mourinho.

"I was not happy with that. I wasn't complaining with the officials. I was

complaining with the player. But after that I think he was a bit embarrassed and he behaved very well. He is a good player. After that he was only a danger because he was a good player."

Spanish midfielder Mikel Arteta opened the scoring from the penalty spot after Boulahrouz had bundled Nigerian-born 18-year-old Victor Anichebe over in the box.

Chelsea levelled when Michael Ballack's free-kick went in off the back of keeper Tim Howard after hitting the post before Yobo restored Everton's lead.

Late goal specialist Drogba then smashed a spectacular 87th minute winner to hand Chelsea the points.

Moyes insisted his side did not deserve to lose.

"We didn't deserve to lose," said Moyes.

"I thought we caused Chelsea plenty of problems."

Moyes revealed after the game that Dutch midfielder Andy van der Meide did not play because his house had been burgled.

Bremen 'winter champions'

AFP, Berlin



A late goal from Brazilian defender Naldo helped Werder Bremen secure top spot in the Bundesliga ahead of the six-week winter break following a 2-1 win over VfL Wolfsburg on Sunday.

Bremen picked up the honorific title of 'winter champions' with a victory which edged Schalke 04 from the summit on goal difference.

It was a match-up between the best attack in the league and the meaneast defence but Bremen needed just 17 minutes to breach Wolfsburg's miserly rearguard with Danish midfielder Daniel Jensen

scoring a rare goal.

Brazilian Diego, with eight goals to his name already this season, had the chance to put Bremen further ahead in the 34th minute but his penalty struck the post.

The miss was punished seven minutes later when Isaac Boakye equalised for Wolfsburg.

But after Bremen powered forward, Naldo scored a dramatic 86th minute winner to secure the points, and a significant achievement for the club.

"It is a pity we could not convert our earlier chances but it was great that we managed to win the game at the death," said Bremen coach Thomas Schaaf. "Everything is going Naldo's way at the moment."

The last time Bremen were top at Christmas was in 2004 when they went on to win a league and cup double, so the omens are good.

Indeed in the last 12 seasons the winter champions have gone on to win the German title in May on ten occasions.

While Bremen were delighted with the win Wolfsburg coach Klaus Augenthaler was furious at some of the decisions from the referee and his assistant.



PHOTO: AFP

EARLY CHRISTMAS: Werder Bremen defender Naldo (L) and goalkeeper Tim Wiese dress up as Santa Claus to distribute shirts among supporters following their win over VfL Wolfsburg in their Bundesliga clash at the Weser-Stadion on Sunday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	41 Trap	DOWN	17 Annoy
1 "—	43 Upper House legislator	1 Wading bird	19 Corrupt
Impos-	44 Rock band's need	2 After-bath applica-	22 Opposite of "sans"
ible"	46 Colorado ski mecca	3 H.H. Munro's pseudonym	23 Wooden peg
4 Ms. Moore	50 Roman soldier	4 What's the point of mathematics?	25 Below
8 Comple-	55 Conduc-	5 Cain's mother	26 Beauty spot
ment	de Waart	6 Lavatory sign	27 Surround-
12 Ovine comment	56 Malaria symptom	7 Grooving on and on	ed by
13 Square	57 "It shouldn't happen to —"	8 Show up	28 Cornfield chatter
14 Cheat at hide-and- seek	58 Past	9 Frogs' home	29 Verve
15 Sort	59 Frogs' home	10 Started	30 Houston acronym
16 Crawly creature	60 Sulk	11 — out a living	31 China (Pref.)
18 "Star Trek" genre	61 Author Deighton		35 Old
20 Raw rock			38 Talked on and on
21 "Diary of — House-			40 Mag. staffers
wife"			42 Ostich's kin
24 Vibes			45 Stroller
28 Dollar :			47 Ring out
cents :			48 Advan-
peso : —			49 Midday
32 Leeway			50 Upper limit
33 Miss. neighbor			51 Freudian concept
34 Clark's partner			52 Sister
36 "The Greatest"			53 Altar
37 Nasty stinger			affirma-
39 Focused			54 "Alley —"

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14		
15				16			17			
18			19			20				
			21		22	23		24		25
28	29	30					31		32	
33				34			35		36	
37			38		39			40		
41				42		43				
			44		45		46		47	48
50	51	52			53	54			55	
56					57				58	
59					60				61	

CRYPTOQUIP

PRMC OEHF PRWGDMO BFWCD

CMMBG XE ZM FMJWQQMB.

W QWDM XE XRWCD EJ WX

Y G ZEHFZEC FMCMPYQ.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN YOU MAIL SOME CHECKS TO YOUR SWISS BANK, I'D SAY THAT COULD BE MONEY TO BERN.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals T

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.