

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 Ibsinho – reportedly in line to replace long-serving veteran Cafu – and World Club champions Internazionale's teenage striker Pato Alexandre.

"Ibsinho 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 Andrey Shevchenko)," he said.

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

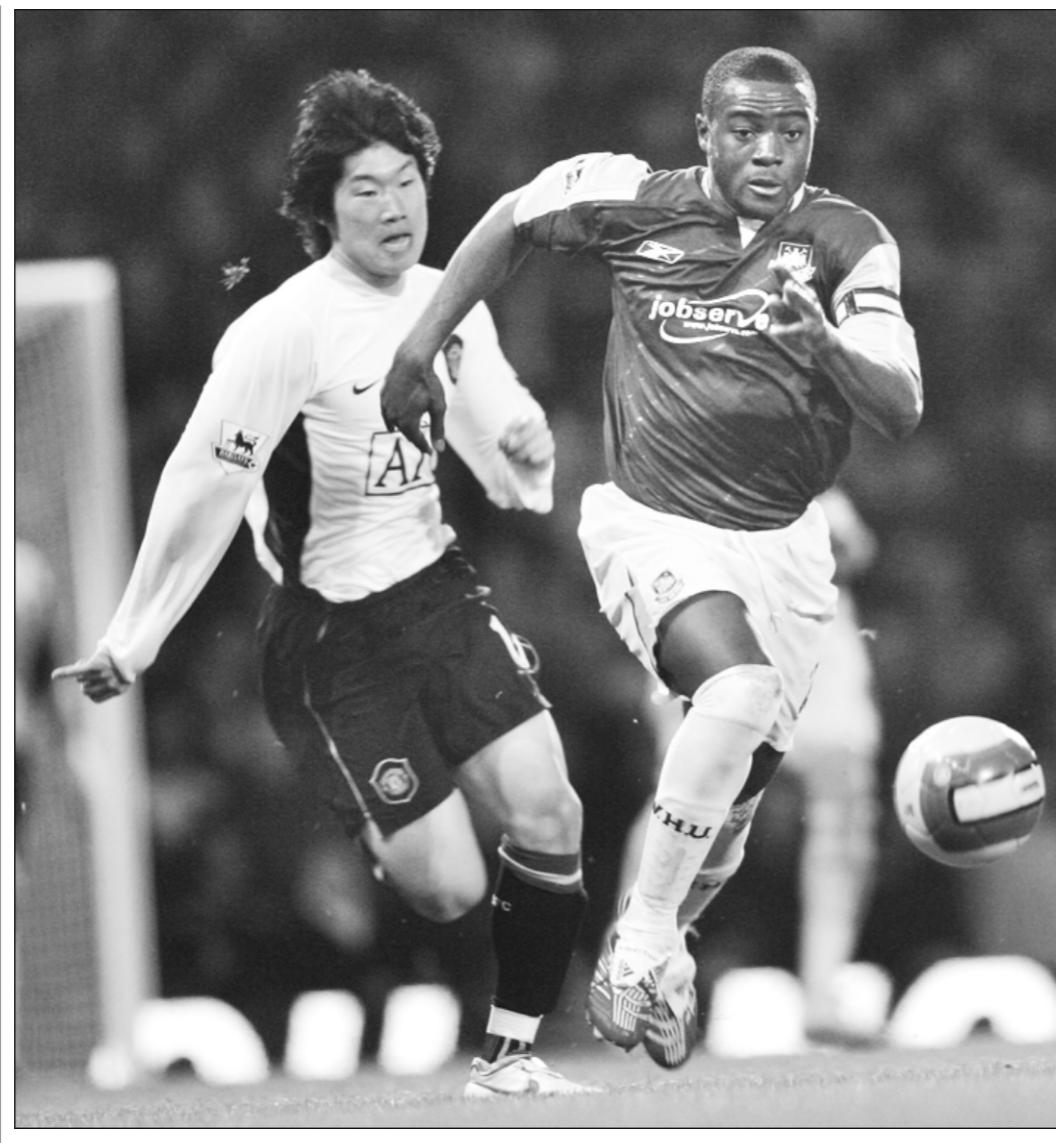


PHOTO: AFP

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.

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 eight minutes later.

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

West Ham showed no signs of slowing down after the interval and Zamora flashed a shot wide after a 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.

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

Ronaldo's quick-thinking set up Giggs when he nipped in to cross 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.

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 eight minutes later.

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

West Ham showed no signs of slowing down after the interval and Zamora flashed a shot wide after a 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.

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

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.

Jürgen 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.

A late goal from 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 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.

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 earned 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 free kick 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 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 Meyde did not play because his house had been burgled.

Bremen 'winter champions'

AFP, Berlin

A late goal from 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.

It was a match-up between the best attack in the league and the meanest 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."

"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.</p