



Chelsea striker Didier Drogba (R) unleashes a shot on goal as Manchester United defender Nemanja Vidic looks to block during their FA Cup final at Wembley on Saturday.

Blue is the colour

AGENCIES, London



Chelsea striker Didier Drogba scored a goal deep into injury time to settle the FA Cup final against Manchester United at Wembley on Saturday.

Both sides were locked goalless at the end of full time and a scrappy match was decided by a moment of brilliance from the Ivorian forward, who has been the stalwart for the Blues this season.

Drogba combined beautifully with midfielder Frank Lampard who lifted a pass over the defence for the front-man to pock past the advancing Van der Sar to score in the 26th minute of extra-time.

Chelsea then held on for the last few minutes despite some nervy moments to win the first final in the new Wembley.

With the Premiership champions close to full strength and Chelsea obliged to do without the injured trio of Ricardo Carvalho, Michael Ballack and Andriy Shevchenko, United's line-up appeared, on paper at least, to carry the greater attacking threat.

In practice, it was Chelsea, with Joe Cole and Shaun Wright-Phillips swirling either side of Didier Drogba, who displayed the greater attacking initiative in an opening half that never really sparked into life.

Wayne Bridge's dipping cross from the left offered Didier Drogba the opportunity to give Chelsea the lead as early as the third minute but Gabriel Heinze's close attention served to unbalance the Ivory Coast striker and his header sailed

comfortably over the bar. Cole's delivery from the opposite flank proved equally unsettling with Wes Brown's weak clearance landing at the feet of Wright-Phillips, whose shot was charged down by Rio Ferdinand.

Jose Mourinho's pre-match insistence that his side would play the match in the correct spirit was hardly reflected in Cole's late, two-footed lunge at Wes Brown, for which the England midfielder was fortunate to escape a yellow card.

Referee Steve Bennett was equally indulgent when Heinze chopped Wright-Phillips to the newly-laid turf but those proved to be isolated incidents.

United's first sniff of an opening came after quarter of an hour when Darren Fletcher's header left Rooney with only Petr Cech to beat. Ten minutes later, Scholes picked out Giggs at the back post with an angled cross from the inside right channel. The Welsh winger met the immaculate delivery with a volley but his strike was a foot too high to cause Cech any real concern.

Drogba went closer with a free-kick from the corner of the box that he curled onto the outside of van der Sar's near post -- although the United keeper appeared to have the danger covered.

At the other end, Drogba sent a long-range effort looping wide before Paulo Ferreira's surge into the box generated Chelsea's best chance of the opening period.

Having cut inside Heinze, the Portuguese right-back slipped the ball to Lampard on the corner of the six-yard box and the midfielder was able to squeeze a shot on the turn through Rio Ferdinand's legs, forcing Edwin van der Sar to get down smartly to his right.

But clear chances were extremely thin on the ground with a Ronaldo shot that found the netting the closest either side came to breaking the deadlock before extra-time.

Italy still on top

AFP, Paris

World champions Italy maintained their lead at the top of the official FIFA world rankings.

There was a notable change just below, though, with Argentina ceding second place to South American arch-rivals Brazil.

There were no other changes in the top 10 but Scotland rose five places to a highest ever 14th.

1. Italy	1606 pts
2. Brazil	1538 (+1)
3. Argentina	1520 (-1)
4. France	1507
5. Germany	1390
6. Netherlands	1309
7. Portugal	1300
8. England	1278
9. Spain	1238
10. Czech Republic	1170
11. Ukraine	1040
12. Croatia	1011
13. Cameroon	968
14. Scotland	953 (+5)
15. Romania	930 (-1)
16. Greece	915 (-1)
17. Russia	908 (-1)
18. Poland	902 (+3)
19. Turkey	896 (-2)
20. Mexico	891 (-2)

Barca back in for Henry?

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona are in talks to sign Arsenal's star French forward Thierry Henry according to Spanish newspaper Mundo Deportivo on Friday.

The Catalan newspaper quoted

Revenge on Milan's mind

AFP, Rome

"I have seen bits of it, but not the whole match. It's something I just can't bring myself to do."

Gattuso's memories contrast starkly with those of Liverpool's attack-minded defender John Arne Riise.

"The final in 2005 was the best night ever for me personally and to win that trophy was just unbelievable," said the 26-year-old Norwegian.

"I remember everything from start to finish, and the celebrations afterwards were just amazing."

"All our heads were down at half-time, but the manager was very quiet and calm and explained what we were going to do."

"He said if we got a goal anything can happen. That is what we did and in the end, everything turned out okay."

"Once Steven Gerrard scored with the header (to pull it back to 3-1), you could see the change in the faces of the players. We all seemed to get extra energy and the fans were lifted as well. We knew we had a chance."

"But the thoughts and feelings of what happened that night can stimulate us. I believe it has given us strength and can motivate us even more."

"So painful is the memory of that final, Gattuso has not been able to watch the video of the match."

"There is little to choose between the two teams, but we are in better shape coming into the final than we were two years ago."

AC Milan captain Paolo

Maldini, who is expected to play in the final despite still being troubled by a left knee injury, played down talk of revenge.

"The fact that we are playing Liverpool again could be seen as our vendetta, but we have nothing personal against them," said the 38-year-old former Italy international who has lifted the European Cup four times.

"Rather than thinking about them we must concentrate on ourselves and our game."

Liverpool goalkeeper Jose Reina has fully recovered from a shoulder injury and will line up against the Italians, while Harry Kewell's bid to make the starting line-up has been boosted by an injury to Bolo Zenden.

Dutch midfielder Zenden turned his ankle during a training session in Spain and is doubtful for the match.

AC Milan have opted to wear their all-white strip for the final.

Milan were drawn as the home side for the final and could have worn their famous red and black striped shirts.

But just as in the 2005 final, Milan have chosen their second strip, allowing Liverpool to wear their traditional red kit.

Milan's white strip had proved lucky before they lost the Istanbul final two years ago. Before that the Serie A giants had won four European Cups wearing white, in 1963, 1990, 1989 and 2003.

Tevez targets summer exit

INTERNET, undated

West Ham striker Carlos Tevez has set his sights on signing for 'one of Europe's biggest clubs' in the summer.

The Argentina forward has loomed large over the Hammers' season, proving instrumental in keeping the club in the Premier League with his outstanding end-of-season form but also causing controversy.

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Kaka seeks history

AFP, Rome

our team, and that tells me that I have their total respect.

"But I always say that one player alone cannot win a match, everyone is important."

Kaka said AC Milan captain Paolo Maldini was the player he

admired the most.

Maldini is always the first to arrive at training and the last to leave, and he sets the example for

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I want to write my name in AC Milan's history," said the immensely talented Brazilian who played in the heartbreaking 2005 final defeat to the Merseysiders when Milan threw away a 3-0 lead to draw 3-3 at the end of normal time, before losing on penalties.

"It's been my ambition since I arrived here. I want to be remembered alongside all those players who have made this club great.

"We are in the final and one game away from becoming European champions. Let's hope this is different to 2005."

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With Liverpool's defence one of the meanest around, much is resting on Kaka's shoulders to open up the Premiership club's watertight backline.

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But the softly-spoken 25-year-old, a devout evangelical Christian, welcomes the responsibility.

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"My teammates have great faith in me and I consider that an honour," said the player whose full name is Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite.

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"I am happy to hear that they regard me as the decisive player in

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the final."

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Kaka

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minutes.

With Schalke 04 winning 2-0 at that moment, the defeat would have sent the title to Gelsenkirchen, but Stuttgart settled and German international Thomas Hitzlsperger equalised on 27 minutes to swing the title back their way.

But it was midfielder Khedira whose 63rd minute goal had Stuttgart's fans celebrating the win which gave them a two-point margin at the top of the league.

The win keeps alive their dream of doing a league and cup double for the first time when they contest the German cup final at Berlin's Olympic Stadium next weekend against Nuremberg.

Stuttgart's win made second-placed Schalke's 2-1 victory over Arminia Bielefeld irrelevant, even though they had a dream start to go 2-0 up after just 19 minutes and they finished runners-up.

Brazilian midfielder Lincoln smashed his shot past diving Bielefeld goalkeeper Mathias Hain on 11 minutes before Turkish striker Halil Altintop added a second eight minutes later, but it was

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(From L-R) Stuttgart goalkeeper Timo Hildebrand is ecstatic after his team get the lead in their home game against Cottbus while Schalke 04 midfielder Lincoln walks back to the center circle with the ball after scoring in their final day Bundesliga clash against Bielefeld on Saturday. The Bundesliga final day is set for a climactic finish with either of Stuttgart or Schalke being able to grab the title.