

Beckham still sidelined

AFP, Los Angeles

David Beckham's sore ankle meant the Los Angeles Galaxy's new star could again only watch Saturday as they fell 2-1 to Chivas Guadalajara in a SuperLiga tournament group match.

Second-half goals from Francisco Rodriguez and Omar Bravo gave the Mexican club the victory, with Landon Donovan grabbing a late consolation for the Galaxy.

Beckham was a surprise inclusion in the Galaxy squad, having been categorically ruled out with a nagging ankle injury on Friday by Galaxy coach Frank Yallop.

He had failed to train all week following a 78th-minute substitute's appearance for his Galaxy debut against Chelsea the previous Saturday.

He missed last Tuesday's SuperLiga opening victory against CF Pachuca, the Galaxy's first win in five games.

Yallop had even cast doubts as to the England star's availability for this Tuesday night's final SuperLiga group game in Texas against FC Dallas.

Yet Beckham was named as one of the Galaxy substitutes for the match against the Mexican club, whose fans greatly outnumbered the Major League Soccer club's at the Los Angeles Coliseum.

VfL Wolfsburg's Brazilian midfielder Marcelinho insisted on Sunday he will be a bigger success for his Bundesliga club this season than French star Franck Ribery at Bayern Munich.

"Ribery is a good player, but I am better than him," the confident attacking midfielder told Sunday's edition of German newspaper Bild.

"I bet that I will score more goals and will make better passes than him," said Marcelinho, who arrived in Wolfsburg last January.

Wolfsburg will be a force this season, according to Marcelinho, under new coach and former Bayern boss Felix Magath who joined in July and is known for his tough, no-nonsense approach.

"We have a great team with a great coach," said Marcelinho, who scored 69 goals in 172 appearances for Hertha Berlin.

Ribery became the most expensive player in Bundesliga history when Bayern paid French side Marseille 26 million euros for the attacking midfielder this summer.

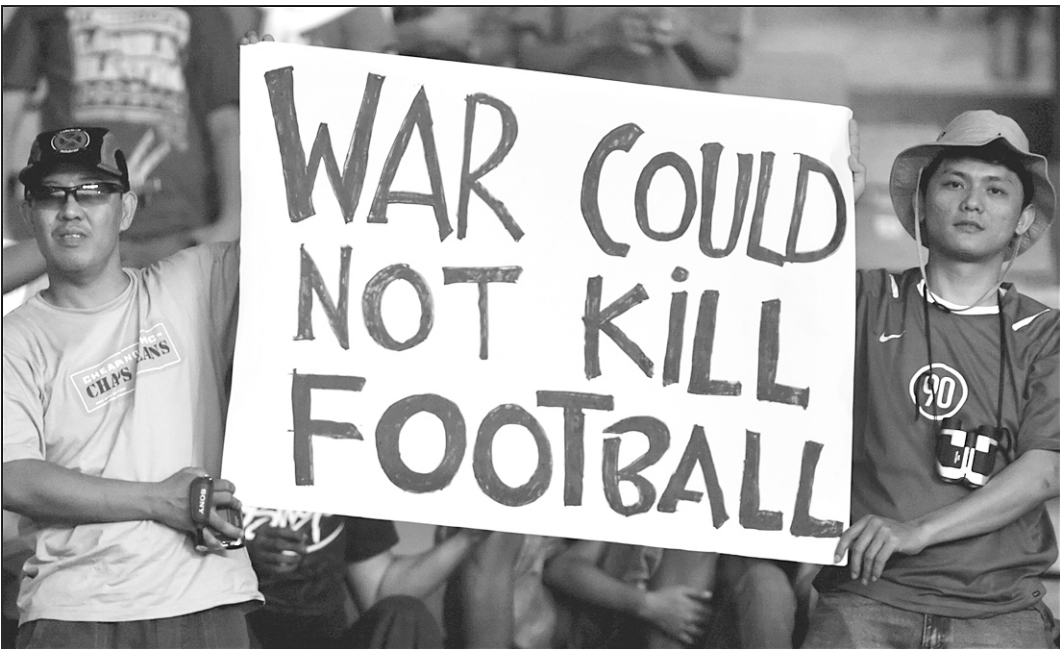


PHOTO: AFP

Iraqi fans hold up a banner saying "War could not kill Football" ahead of their Asian Cup final against Saudi Arabia in Jakarta on Sunday.

Rangers humble Chelsea

Football

INTERNET, undated

Nacho Novo and Filip Sebo hit late goals to sink Chelsea and set up Rangers perfectly for their Champions League second-round qualifier against FK Zeta.

Novo opened the scoring after 86 minutes but it was Sebo's strike 60 seconds later which captured the imagination of the home fans.

Rangers will no doubt take plenty of positives from the performance against the Premier League giants, with their European campaign about to begin in earnest.

The trip to Glasgow marked the penultimate game in Chelsea's own pre-season preparations.

They face Denmark's Brondby on Tuesday night before tackling Manchester United, the team who denied them the English title, in the Community Shield on August 5.

John Terry, fresh from signing a new five-year deal which reportedly makes him England's highest-paid player on £130,000 a week, recovered from a toe injury in time to lead out the Stamford Bridge side at Ibrox.

Summer signings Florent Malouda, Steve Sidwell and Tal Ben Haim were also named in the starting line-up.

Arjen Robben's absence from the squad was the result of a knee injury rather than speculation of an imminent move to Real Madrid for the Dutch winger.

Rangers hassled and harried

their glamorous visitors from the first whistle.

Jean-Claude Darcheville, the man dubbed 'The Rocket', left Terry in his wake when he exploded down the flank and left the side-netting shuddering from the impact of his right-footed effort.

Sasa Papac then sliced a diagonal ball into the path of Kris Boyd but Petr Cech, the Chelsea goalkeeper racing off his line to smother before the striker had the chance to pull the trigger, easily read the move.

'Jose, thanks for Seville' proclaimed a banner among the near-capacity crowd, referencing Mourinho's triumph as Porto manager over Rangers' bitter rivals Celtic in the 2003 UEFA Cup final.

But, on the pitch at least, the love-in was about to come to an end.

Acynical Barry Ferguson foul on Malouda earned the Rangers captain a quiet word in his ear from referee Stuart Dougal, as well as a sneaky push from Didier Drogba. Malouda then made a scything tackle on Ferguson minutes later.

The former Lyon man then turned his focus back to the football, fighting a cross onto the head of Drogba, whose header flashed across the face of goal and past the upright. Malouda also tried his luck before the break, his long-range strike whistling past the static Allan McGregor and harmlessly wide.

Half time prompted a flood of substitutions, Chelsea making four changes and Rangers making six,

handing a home debut to former Manchester United and West Ham goalkeeper Roy Carroll.

Chelsea's Ashley Cole then made his first appearance since undergoing an ankle operation in the summer when he replaced Glen Johnson early in the second half.

Terry picked up the first booking of the game for tangling with Sebo before the striker, famous for his failings at Rangers last season, somehow managed to mis-kick in front of goal from eight yards after being released by Nacho Novo.

At the other end, Carlos Cuellar was in the right place at the right time to block a point-blank shot from Claudio Pizarro on the line before the new Chelsea recruit tested Carroll with a stinging effort seconds later.

It was Rangers who found the back of the net as the game raced towards its conclusion. A surging Chris Burke run preceded Novo's strike, which he smashed home off the inside of the post, before Sebo sent Ibrox into raptures a minute later with a thunderous effort, albeit one which took a big deflection.

The flashes of brilliance widely expected from Chelsea's superstars failed to illuminate the match as much as the luminous yellow strips they wore.

It was hard to think anything other than they were biding their time until it really matters.

As for Rangers, the hard work starts now.

Arsenal trump PSG

Football

INTERNET, undated

Arsenal secured a win in their first Emirates Cup match after beating PSG 2-1 at the Emirates Stadium in London on Saturday evening.

The Gunners started the match very slowly and should really have been trailing at half-time, if only their French opponents converted the numerous chances that they had.

But goals from Mathieu Flamini and Nicklas Bendtner ensured that even a late strike from Peguy Luyindula wasn't enough to spoil Arsenal's day in their own ground.

The North London side struggled to create any decent chances even with Gael Clichy zipping up the left wing and Francesc Fabregas trying to pick out key passes. Yet it was the visitors who looked the more likely to score first.

Paris Saint Germain came close to breaking the deadlock on 15 minutes when Pierre-Alain Frau hit a first-time shot towards the Arsenal goal but keeper Manuel Almunia was alert to the danger.

Almunia was called into action again when Peguy Luyindula broke

through the centre of the defence, but his shot skipped past the outside of the post. Then minutes later Pauleta attempted to catch the Spanish keeper off guard with an angled effort that failed to trouble him.

PSG were in control as the time ticked down towards the half-time break, but a precise pass into Nicklas Bendtner led to the ball falling in front of the on-rushing Mathieu Flamini who struck the ball into the back of the net to give the home side an undeserved lead.

Arsenal made some changes at half-time and came out in the second half playing much better football. With Denilson and Abou Diaby in the centre of midfield, the Gunners were a match for their tough opponents.

On 64 minutes Bendtner got in behind the defence after Clichy slid through a clever pass, but the Danish hit-man put his effort wide.

However, the young striker made amends just minutes later when he put Arsenal two up. After rising highest in the box to meet a Denilson corner, he was quickest to slot in a rebound as panic set in amongst the PSG defenders.

Paul Le Guen's side did manage to score one though when Luyindula finished off a sweeping counter attack

with a neat flick. It was just reward for the French club's efforts, but came too late for them to mount a comeback.

Arsenal could have wrapped the game up completely when Alexander Hleb was fouled in the box and a penalty was rewarded, but Bendtner's tame effort didn't make it past Mickael Landreau in the PSG goal.

It was a match that Arsenal will be pleased to have won as they look to step up their preparations for the new Premiership season.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, who has seen Thierry Henry move to Barcelona and Freddie Ljungberg switch to West Ham in the close season, has not ruled out making signings before the new Premiership season starts on August 11.

"We have the potential to do it. If I find the right player, I will take him. If I

find two, I will do it. But it is not compulsory," said Wenger.

"If we do not get them, we do not get them. We have enough quality. That will not be an excuse if I do not get a player, not to compete with the top teams."

Wenger also dismissed reports linking him with a move for former Gunner Nicolas Anelka.

"At the moment I have not made any offer for Anelka. I felt we had the strikers we needed, and also I wanted a player like Eduardo, who can play on the flanks and with Adebayor, or with van Persie," said the manager.

"That is why we have gone for Eduardo. It was more a question of choice rather than the quality of Anelka, because I rate him very very highly. It was just we have Adebayor, Bendtner and Eduardo who play in the same position."

Bent makes bright start

Football

AFP, Pretoria

Club record signing Darren Bent scored twice as English Premiership club Tottenham brushed aside Orlando Pirates of South Africa 3-0 to lift the Vodacom Challenge Saturday.

Bulgarian striker Dimitar Berbatov was also on target for Spurs, who swept into a three-goal lead after 22 minutes at Loftus Stadium before comfortably containing second-half pressure from the Buccaneers.

Bent joined Tottenham from relegated Charlton Athletic in a 16.5 million pounds close-season deal and has not taken long to start repaying the large fee.

His first pre-season goal came against English non-league club Stevenage and he was also on target in a 2-1 win over Pirates last Tuesday in Cape Town when Tottenham took much longer to subdue the South Africans.

Pirates had to play again Thursday, beating arch domestic rivals Kaizer Chiefs to qualify for the final, and they looked tired and

disorganised as Tottenham created numerous early openings on a cool, sunny afternoon.

The South Africans had the first chance to break the deadlock after 10 minutes only for international defender Lucky Lekgwathi to fire over from an acute angle with only goalkeeper Paul Robinson to beat.

A minute later and Bent showed how it should be done, pouncing on a weak clearance from the first corner to fire an unstoppable shot past goalkeeper Francis Chansa into the roof of the net.

Spurs defender Pascal Chimponda headed over from another corner before clinical finisher Berbatov burst between two defenders to tap in a low cross from Bent.

Bent claimed his second goal with a low shot after the ball was pulled back to him and narrowly missed completing a hat-trick soon after when a chip over Chansa trickled across the goalmouth before being cleared.

Tottenham will begin their Premiership campaign on August 11 away to newly promoted Sunderland.



PHOTO: AFP

Brazilian defender Roberto Carlos runs with the ball during his debut for new club Fenerbahce in a friendly match against Shakhtar Donetsk at the Sukru Saracoglu stadium in Istanbul on Saturday.

9x3

9x2

9x3