



New Chelsea signing Florent Malouda (R) shrugs off Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand to score during their FA Community Shield match at Wembley on Sunday.

Barca ease to win

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona ran out comfortable 3-0 winners over Beijing Guoan with goals from Giovani Dos Santos, Andres Iniesta and substitute Ronaldinho, who produced a delightful free-kick to round things up.

Barca kicked off their tour of the Far East with a comfortable victory over Beijing Guoan on Sunday as Frank Rijkaard gave a run-out to almost his entire squad in the humid conditions.

Giovani Dos Santos opened the scoring, before Andres Iniesta added a second and Ronaldinho showed that his ankle was not bothering him by netting a third with a stunning free-kick.

The Chinese hosts were expecting a tough afternoon and looked to pack their defence in order to defy Barca's wealth of attacking talent, but the tactics were quickly exposed.

After just eight minutes Xavi threaded a pass down the right and Dos Santos sped past his marker before clipping the ball into the far corner for the opening goal of the night.

Thierry Henry and Samuel Eto'o played together for the first time, along with the young Mexican, and there was still a slight lack of understanding.

Barca thought they had doubled their lead as Henry watched in bemusement as his marker, Zhang Yonghai, was panicking into releasing the ball and headed it over his own keeper and into the net, only for the linesman to have raised his flag for offside.

The French forward had two chances before the break to register his second goal for the Blaugrana in pre-season, but his first effort was palmed away by the keeper and his second rolled wide of the far post.

Ronaldinho was considered

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Messi's boots fetch 4000 euros

INTERNET, undated

The pair of boots that Lionel Messi wore to the match against Getafe, where he scored a Maradona-like goal, were auctioned at a benefit event to raise money for disabled Chinese children.

The buyer who paid 4000 euros -- is the president of the Chinese TV program "Phoenix TV", which broadcasted the event to all the Asian countries. He also happens to be a former soldier of the Chinese Liberation Army.

Over a spectacular party, attended by three members of the Communist Party, the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Agriculture, a sum near 170,000 euros were raised for disabled children of Western China, the country's poorest zone.

Some of the richest figures of the country made their bids to capture Barcelona's player's "relics". Singer Chen Yufan paid 2,500 euros for the scrunchie Ronaldinho was wearing when he scored his outstanding goal against Villarreal.

The auction's highest bid was 8,000 euros for a reproduction of the ball used at the match played in 1957 at Camp Nou.

Additionally, 2,500 euros was paid for the T-shirt that Thierry Henry was wearing when he was hired by the Spanish club.

MU capture Shield

Football

AFP, London

Edwin van der Sar helped Manchester United strike the first blow in the battle for Premiership supremacy as the champions defeated Chelsea in the Community Shield on Sunday.

The Dutch goalkeeper saved all three of Chelsea's penalties to give Sir Alex Ferguson's side a 3-0 shoot-out win over their bitter rivals after a feisty 1-1 draw at Wembley.

Ryan Giggs had given United a first lead in the annual pre-season friendly, but Florent Malouda equalised and neither side was willing to give an inch after that.

Three Chelsea players and one from United were booked as referee Mark Halsey tried to keep control of a bruising encounter.

As has so often been the case, there was nothing between the Premiership's pre-eminent forces. But van der Sar, who had been criticised for his role in Didier Drogba's FA Cup final winner when the sides last met, was unbeatable in the shoot-out.

The defeat completed a bad day for Jose Mourinho, who had suffered a serious blow on the eve of the match when John Terry sustained reported medial knee ligament damage in training.

The Chelsea captain was forced to watch from the sidelines at Wembley and could be out for up to four weeks.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Didier Drogba and Claude Makelele had also joined Terry, Michael Ballack, Andriy Shevchenko and Wayne Bridge on a growing injury list on Saturday.

Mourinho was left with such a threadbare squad that he started

without a recognised striker and named two goalkeepers, Carlo Cudicini and Hilario, among his substitutes.

Both sides had a point to prove and there was a definite edge to the clash.

United were still smarting from that FA Cup final defeat, while the Blues wanted to show last season's surrendering of the title to United was only a temporary aberration.

United were the more fluent force for much of the game. They had the first sight of goal when Giggs seized on a deflected pass from Cristiano Ronaldo, only for Petr Cech to save well.

Ronaldo's lacklustre Cup final display was a downbeat end to a magnificent season. But he was back to his bewitching best here and helped United take the lead in

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Giants disappoint early

AFP, Paris

France's Champions League contenders Marseille and Toulouse both failed to fire as the 2007-2008 domestic season got underway on Saturday.

Last season's runners-up Marseille were held to a 0-0 draw at newly-promoted Strasbourg while Toulouse, who will face English giants Liverpool in their Champions League qualifier, slumped to a 3-1 defeat at Valenciennes.

Despite having his high-profile summer signings of Gael Givet, Benoit Cheyrou, Boudewijn Zenden, Djibril Cisse and Karim Ziani on the pitch, Emon's Marseille side struggled to break down the home team.

Ziani, who was brought from Sochaux to fill the gap left by Franck Ribery's move to Bayern Munich in mid-season, was the only new recruit to show glimpses of class.

"To be satisfied with an away draw, why not? But we can't be satisfied with the rhythm of the match," said Emon.

"We didn't win good balls in midfield to feed our strikers and up front there was some poor communication, because we didn't get three or four passes between our strikers."

Toulouse were undone by Valenciennes striker Johan Audel who hit the French season's first hat-trick.

Audel opened the scoring in the sixth minute for Valenciennes, who finished 17th last season, just one place above the relegation zone.

Toulouse levelled through midfielder Nicholas Dieuze, but Audel went on to complete his hat-trick.

Meanwhile, Rennes lost 2-0 to Nancy.

Midfielder Marc-Antoine Fortune silenced the home supporters on the 36th minute with Youssouf Hadji doubling the scoreline just four minutes later.

Rennes, who finished fourth in the 2006-2007 season, will hope their performance levels pick up if they are

to mount a serious challenge in the UEFA Cup this season.

Paul le Guen's Paris Saint Germain were dominated throughout their match with French Cup holders Sochaux in an uninspiring 0-0 draw at the Parc des Princes despite striker Pauleta, last season's leading goal scorer, hitting the post on three occasions.

However, it needed goalkeeper Mickael Landreau to put in top form to keep the visitors at bay for a share of the points.

World cup winning defender Laurent Blanc made his managerial debut with Bordeaux and his side beat veteran coach Guy Roux's Lens 1-0.

Former Manchester United and Nice player David Bellion's 30th-minute goal went unanswered as Blanc's Bordeaux, who will compete in this season's UEFA Cup, got their campaign off to an ideal start.

Champions Lyon are in action on Sunday when they kick-start their title defence at home against Auxerre.

Milan for life: Kaka

INTERNET, undated

Brazilian Kaka is ready to commit Milan for life with a deal that will tie him to the San Siro club until 2012.

Real Madrid have been eyeing the midfield ace all summer long with the Rossoneri reacting by preparing a new contract for the player who is widely regarded as the best in the world.

According to Spanish newspaper Mundo Deportivo, the club will offer a contract worth £4m per season until 2012.

"Will I stay a Rossonero for life? It depends on president Silvio Berlusconi and if he says he wants to keep me forever, then I believe him," Kaka told Sky Italia television.

"Besides, we've already had a meeting about this."

The 25-year-old added: "I don't hear the rumours, I think my attitude can be the best answer."

"Everyone talks, talks, but now I am here training with my team and I have future projects with this team, personal objectives."

Speculation that Kaka would sign for Real was fuelled recently when he accidentally got on the Spanish giants' team bus as the two teams arrived in Moscow for a pre-season tournament.

But Kaka insists it was a genuine mistake and that nothing should be read into his gaffe.

"It wasn't just me, the entire team got on that bus," he pointed out. "Carlo Ancelotti made a joke about me being so eager to be part of the Real group."

"At this stage, the whole Real Madrid issue has become one big joke."

GERMAN CUP Bayer, Cottbus crash out

AFP, Berlin

Bundesliga sides Bayer Leverkusen and Energie Cottbus were early casualties in the German Cup at the hands of first-round giant-killers on Saturday.

Midfielder Fabian Boll was the hero for second-division St Pauli as his 87th-minute goal sealed a 1-0 win to dump last season's UEFA Cup quarter-finalists Bayer Leverkusen out of the tournament.

There was another upset when third-division Rot-Weiss Essen beat Energie Cottbus on penalties.

After it finished 2-2 after extra time, Essen striker Vincent Wagner slotted home the winning penalty for a 6-5 win.

Defending Bundesliga champions VfB Stuttgart are into the second round after German midfielder Roberto Hilbert scored two second-half penalties, including one in stoppage time, to seal a 2-1 win over second division Wehen Wiesbaden.

Four red cards were shown as Stuttgart lost defenders Gledson and Fernando Meira for heavy fouls, while Wiesbaden's Adnan Masic and Sandro Schwarz were also dismissed.

Newly-promoted Bundesliga side Hansa Rostock enjoyed an 8-0 rout over fourth-division Rot-Weiss Hasborn with strikers Enrico Kern and Sebastian Haehnge both scoring twice.

Last season's third-placed

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Ribery likes low profile

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich midfielder Franck Ribery is set for an attacking role in Monday's German Cup first-round tie at third-division minnows Wacker Burghausen, but insists he doesn't want to be a superstar.

Bayern's coach Ottmar Hitzfeld will play Ribery just behind Germany's veteran striker Miroslav Klose, as an experiment, in the German giants' final pre-season match before the Bundesliga starts on Friday night.

But having dazzled in Bayern's successful German League Cup campaign, scoring three goals in just two games, the 24-year-old insists he just wants to be part of a successful side - not a superstar in his own right.

In a recent poll, 54 per cent of German sports magazine Kicker's readers believe Ribery will be the Bundesliga's new star, but the former Marseille player has no interest in the lime-light.

"I do not want to be the team's huge superstar," Ribery told Kicker.

"I would like to work hard, settle in my job, have fun and give the fans something to celebrate. And I want a title."

Meanwhile, German international defender Marcel Jansen, who only resumed first team training on Saturday after an arm injury, stretched an ankle tendon and is doubtful for Monday's game.

Bayern open their Bundesliga campaign at the Allianz Arena on Saturday but the race stewards judged that he had acted improperly in delaying Hamilton and denying

Kahn's last hurrah

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich captain Oliver Kahn is relishing the start of his 21st and final Bundesliga season next Saturday as the German giants

their campaign at home against newly-promoted Hansa Rostock on Saturday.

"What I feel is not nostalgia or melancholy, it is more like a feeling of euphoria. I have been doing this job for more than 20 years now, but I am really looking forward to this season," Kahn, 38, told German newspaper Bild.

"Bayern have already lifted the German League Cup in pre-season with Ribery announcing himself as their new star with three goals in two games.

But despite having beaten VfB Stuttgart, Schalke 04 and Werder Bremen (who all finished above them last season), Kahn still expects fierce competition from Bayern's rivals.

"But facing Rostock, Bayern face a challenging start taking on Bremen, Hanover, Hamburg and Schalke, so Kahn is in no doubt Bayern face stiff competition from their main rivals.

"Stuttgart and Bremen will both be much stronger in the Bundesliga than we saw in the League Cup, in terms of aggression and desire, there won't be much to choose from amongst the top sides," added the Bayern goalkeeper, who won 86 caps and captained

Germany.

Kahn says the squad has been rejuvenated by the arrivals of the likes of German defender Marcel Jansen, Schalke midfielder Hamit Altintop and the return of Brazilian forward Ze Roberto.

"New players always bring new energies and everyone wants to be ready to win their place at next year's European Championships and I think that will have a very positive influence on the team," said Kahn.

Kahn has been particularly impressed with 24-year-old Ribery, signed for 26 million euros from Marseille, and set to be one of the stars of this year's Bundesliga.

"He is a player who plays instinctive football, you never know what he is going to do," said the skipper.

"He took over the number seven from Mehmet Scholl and that suits him perfectly, because in the dressing-room he fires people up."

"When I see players like Franck in the side, I know we can do something good this season."

RVN primed for return

AFP, Madrid

Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy said on Saturday he was making good progress as he recovers from a leg injury which has kept him out of the club's pre-season tour of Russia.

The former Manchester United man top scored in his debut La Liga campaign with 26 goals as Real, along with his former Old Trafford colleague David Beckham, snatched the title away from Barcelona.

He had to watch as Real came from

two goals down to beat Lokomotiv Moscow 5-2 on Friday with Guti scoring a brace but told realmadrid.com he was almost ready to return to action.

"I feel good. I feel comfortable around my teammates today, but I still need a little time. This was a complicated injury and it's important to take good care of it," said van Nistelrooy.

"I want to be 100 percent fit before I play," he added. "We cannot be in a hurry because it's a long season and there will be a lot of matches. It's not worth rushing into things only to get injured again."

Next week's friendly with Deportivo La Coruna is the striker's target for a return, at least from the bench, but more realistically van Nistelrooy has his sights on an August

11 Spanish Supercup first leg against Cup winners Seville.

Asked for his opinion on new German coach Bernd Schuster he said: "The coach has great ideas for the team, and that's a good thing for the players. Who doesn't like to play good football?"

"But we also have to win matches. Winning is what always matters most," concluded Van Nistelrooy in a comment which could almost have come from the lips of former coach Fabio Capello, sacked despite the title success as Real's hierarchy complained his team did not play in truly flamboyant "madrileno" style.