



GERMAN CUP Kahn saves Bayern

Football

AFP, Berlin

German striker Miroslav Klose saved Bayern Munich's blushes on Monday with an equaliser at minnows Wacker Burghausen as his side made the German Cup's second round after a 4-3 win on penalties.

Striker Thomas Neubert had earlier written himself into Burghausen folklore when he gave the third-division side a 62nd-minute lead after his header beat Bayern keeper Oliver Kahn to delight the home fans in the 11,582-strong crowd.

But Klose struck on 79 minutes, much to Bayern's relief and although extra-time could not separate the sides, the game was settled on penalties and Bayern survived a mighty scare.

Having produced a superb performance, well above his years, Burghausen's 18-year-old goalkeeper Manuel Riemann saved a penalty and scored one, but Bayern's defender Christian Lehl hit the winning penalty to shatter the home side's dreams.

"We have seen a good game, both sides created their chances and it could have gone either way,"

said Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld. "Sometimes we lacked a bit of luck and Manuel Riemann was immense for them in goal. Full compliments to Burghausen."

"They grew in stature as the game went on and performed well against my side."

"This game had everything you could want in a cup match."

But it was also a shock for a full-strength Bayern side containing several of their big summer signings from their 69 million euro spending spree ahead of Saturday's Bundesliga opener against Hansa Rostock.

Defender Marcell Jansen had recovered from an ankle strain to take his place, while French midfielder Franck Ribery played just behind lone striker Klose.

The home side nearly drew first blood when midfielder Levente Schultz unleashed a superb shot which forced Kahn into a full-length dive and concede a corner.

Burghausen captain Bjoern Hertl earned himself a yellow card in the seventh minute with a heavy tackle, but the home defence worked extremely hard during every Bayern attack to keep their illustrious rivals at bay.

Ribery, Jansen and Klose all went close just before the half-time break as Riemann earned his

money with a string of fine saves against Bayern's international attack, but some poor finishing helped the minnows.

But Neubert's goal just after the hour mark changed the game's tempo as Bayern moved up a gear to force the equaliser and Burghausen battled to defend their slender lead.

The immense Bayern pressure finally told in the 79th minute when a Ribery corner was met by Klose who drove his header past Riemann who was finally beaten.

In extra-time, Burghausen's replacement midfielder David Solga tested Kahn twice and Bayern's Belgian defender Daniel van Buyten squandered two easy chances with time running out.

At the weekend, Bundesliga sides Bayer Leverkusen and Energie Cottbus were the victims of first-round giantkillers and are the only big names missing from Sunday's second-round draw.

Schalke 04's 9-0 demolition of fourth-division side Eintracht Trier on Sunday was the biggest win of the first round.

Bayern begin their Bundesliga campaign at home to newly promoted Hansa Rostock on Saturday.

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn dives to stop a penalty in the shoot-out during their German Cup first round tie against Wacker Burghausen in Burghausen on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bizarre injury for Lita

AFP, Reading

Injuries are an occupational hazard for footballers but, while most players suffer knocks during matches or training, Reading striker Leroy Lita managed to crock himself without leaving the comfort of his own bed.

Lita could miss his side's Premiership opener against Manchester United on Sunday after damaging a leg muscle while stretching in bed.

The bizarre injury has left the England Under-21 international struggling to walk and he faces a race to recover in time for the Old Trafford clash.

Royals manager Steve Coppell said: "Leroy is in a great deal of pain. He woke up and stretched while in bed and he has done something to his leg."

"It is not an injury that should be ridiculed or made light of. It looks to be a problem with a nerve. Maybe he has displaced one, but he could hardly walk yesterday and had to sit out training."

Eriksson begins clear-out

AFP, London

Manchester City manager Sven Goran Eriksson has told Ousmane Dabo, Danny Mills and Paul Dickov they can leave the Premiership club.

Eriksson will listen to offers for Scottish striker Dickov, England defender Mills and French midfielder Dabo as he tries to trim his squad after signing eight new players since taking charge at Eastlands in July.

Dabo will feel particularly aggrieved at being told he is no longer wanted. He was at the centre of an alleged training ground incident with Joey Barton, who has since joined Newcastle, and he now has to look for a new club.

Eriksson hasn't finished spending yet and Australian midfielder Mark Bresciano is reported to be close to signing for three million pounds from Palermo.

Nistelrooy close to int'l recall

INTERNET, undated

Former Manchester United striker Ruud van Nistelrooy took a step closer towards a Holland return today.

The Real Madrid forward was named by Oranje coaches Marco van Basten and John van't Schip in a 33-man provisional squad for the friendly against Switzerland on August 22.

Van Nistelrooy, 31, is included for the first time since the 2006 World Cup after coming out of international retirement at the end of May after making his peace with Van Basten.

United goalkeeper Edwin Van der Sar, defenders Wilfred Bouma (Aston Villa), Mario Melchiot (Wigan) and Andre Ooijer (Blackburn), midfielders Denny Landzaat (Wigan) and Arjen Robben (Chelsea) and strikers Dirk Kuyt (Liverpool), Ryan Babel (Liverpool), Robin Van Persie (Arsenal) and Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (Celtic) are the other British players named in the provisional squad.

The final squad will be announced on August 17.

Lamps backs resilience

Football

AFP, London

Frank Lampard insists Chelsea will shrug off the injury crisis that threatens to wreck the start of their season.

Jose Mourinho's side are likely to be without a host of stars including John Terry, Didier Drogba, Michael Ballack and Arjen Robben when Birmingham visit Stamford Bridge for the Premiership opener on Sunday.

Lampard admits the loss of so many key players on the eve of the season is far from ideal, but when the England midfielder looks around the changing room he sees enough strong characters to give him confidence that the Blues will be able to cope.

"In terms of injuries, we are not in the best of shape," Lampard said. "There are quite a few people in the treatment room, which is not ideal."

"But we are calling on a bit of character early and have got a very

strong group.

"We have got a strong team with a lot of personalities and have a lot of experience from years gone by. The players we have brought in also have experience, so we can go into the season with confidence."

Lampard takes heart from Chelsea's resilient display against Manchester United in Sunday's Community Shield.

Mourinho's men were able to match United for long periods despite playing without a striker and were only beaten thanks to Edwin van der Sar's penalty shoot-out heroics.

Lampard said: "We put in a good performance against United without a recognised frontman for most of the game and without the captain (Terry) who pulled out on Saturday."

"We lost on penalties, but they can go either way and we can still look to next weekend with confidence."

"We were pretty pleased with the performance as a whole. We can get

better and will get better."

Lampard, who captained Chelsea in Terry's absence, has been playing through the pain barrier for the last three weeks after a breaking a toe on the club's pre-season tour to America.

But he is willing to put his body on the line to ensure Chelsea get off to a good start. "I feel okay, and have had to play through a bit of pain, but that is not a big deal," he said. "I feel ready to go and have another week to get that bit more sharp."

"I enjoyed captaining the side when John has been away and I tried to influence them as much as I can."

"Hopefully we will not miss John that much until he can be fit. Hopefully, that will not be too long because it is quite a small injury in terms of his knee."

"The strength John has got in himself, I am sure he will be back out there in a couple of weeks."

Panel to settle Heinze row

AFP, London

Gabriel Heinze has told Manchester United he wants his transfer dispute to be settled by a Premier League arbitration panel next week.

Argentina defender Heinze has asked for a three-man panel to decide whether United gave the player permission to leave the club for an agreed fee, according to a Premier League spokesman.

The three-man panel will be made up of a judge or lawyer, a Premier League representative and a third person experienced in football administration.

Liverpool made a 6.8 million pounds offer for Heinze several weeks ago, but United refused to sell him to their arch rivals despite the player claiming he has a letter from United allowing him to leave for that price.

Heinze is keen to leave Old Trafford and has hired Liverpool's lawyers to help him.

The 29-year-old arrived back in England last weekend after being given time to recover from the Copa America and met United manager Sir Alex Ferguson on Monday to discuss his future.

He insists he will be totally professional while he remains with the champions.

"I've fulfilled my duties by returning for training and I will now carry on like a professional," Heinze told the Daily Mail on Tuesday.

"I will keep on coming to training and see what happens. I have a

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Robben's dad hopeful of move

INTERNET, undated

Arjen Robben's dad is hopeful a move to Real Madrid will be sealed by Wednesday.

The Dutch winger has long been linked with a transfer to the Santiago Bernabeu.

Club president Ramon Calderon had the capture of Robben as one of his prime objectives when he was elected to the post last summer.

And now it appears that he will finally get his man.

Reports in Tuesday's English papers are claiming that Chelsea have upped their asking price for the talented former PSV star to a whopping £27 million.

But the latest reports coming out of Spain suggest that a move to the capital is imminent for Robben.

His father Hans told Spanish daily AS that he was hoping the deal would be completed on Monday, but is still banking on it going through in the next 48 hours.

He said on Monday night: "We hope that the agreement between Real Madrid and the Chelsea can be closed tomorrow. Between now and Wednesday we think that everything can be solved."

Robben Sr added that negotiations are still at a delicate stage, saying: "My son cannot make any sort of declaration or grant any interview until the agreement between Madrid and Chelsea is reached."

Football

AFP, Yokohama

Spanish powerhouse Barcelona made it two wins out of two on their Asian tour Tuesday with a 1-0 win over Japan's former J-League champions Yokohama in Tokyo.

Mexican striker Giovanni Dos Santos secured the win in the 75th minute, beating Yokohama keeper Tetsuya Enomoto after a pass from Cameroon's Samuel Eto'o.

The teenager had nearly put the Spanish ahead just moments before, missing a golden chance from close range.

"It was physically difficult because of a long trip and jetlag, but we overcame it. We tried to

put pressure with our aggressive attackers and we won," said Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard.

"Previously we drew with Yokohama 1-1 and 3-3. Today, my players had a strong feeling to win this time. I think we played better than we did in Beijing."

Barcelona lined up with new French striker Thierry Henry, Eto'o and Brazilian star Ronaldinho in the first 45 minutes of the friendly.

"Henry played really well with a rhythm despite a long trip. I'm very satisfied with his play," Rijkaard said.

Ronaldinho said: "It feels great to play with wonderful players like Henry and Eto'o. But all the Barcelona players are great."

Hopefully, we can start the new season in style."

Man-of-the-match winner Dos

Santos said: "I don't know why I won the... award ahead of Ronaldinho, Henry and Eto'o. But I was able to play well because of them. They are great players and it's difficult to catch up with their level."

"I want Barcelona to win as many titles as possible this season. I'll do my best to help the team to win. My career has just started and I believe I can do more," added Dos Santos, who also scored a goal in Beijing at the weekend.

Barcelona beat China Super League side Beijing Guoan 3-0 on Sunday to open their brief Asian swing.

They wind up the tour in Hong Kong on Friday against Mission Hills Invitation XI, made up of players from Kitchee FC and Happy Valley FC.



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona forward Giovanni dos Santos celebrates his goal against Japanese side Yokohama F. Marinos in Yokohama on Tuesday.

Ballack swayed by Chelsea faith

Football

THE TIMES

With his players seemingly dropping like flies, Jose Mourinho could do with every man he can lay his hands on, so the manager will have been relieved yesterday to hear Michael Ballack commit his future to Chelsea.

The Germany midfielder player has attracted strong interest from Real Madrid, with Spanish sources making the outlandish claim over the weekend that he had agreed to accept a pay cut to move to the Bernabeu, although Ballack insists that he wants to stay.

Ballack is recovering from the ankle operation that brought a premature end to a disappointing first season at Chelsea, but he is determined to prove himself to his

critics. The 30-year-old sought reassurances from Mourinho and Peter Kenyon, the chief executive, that he was wanted by the Chelsea hierarchy over the weekend and with his confidence restored yesterday, decided to go public.

"I am totally committed to Chelsea," Ballack said. "I came here to win trophies, to be successful in English football and I want to assure the Chelsea fans of that. I am very happy in London professionally, and for my family. The speculation about me leaving is not true. I have had no contact with Real Madrid whatsoever. I am frustrated by my injury, but I am working hard to be fit and hope to be back very soon to join my teammates."

Ballack's words will come as a serious blow to Real, who identified him as their main summer transfer target after missing out on Kaká, the

AC Milan and Brazil midfielder player, and even claimed that a five-year deal was in place. The Spanish club's attempt to unsettle Ballack has served only to antagonise Chelsea, with whom they are still negotiating over the transfer of Arjen Robben. The Holland winger's move is likely to go through before the end of the month, but Chelsea are determined to hold out for a fee of £25 million.

Ballack will be of little use to Mourinho in the short term, with his ankle problem showing few signs of improvement. The Portuguese has 13 first-team players receiving treatment for a variety of ailments, although at least five of them should be fit to play in the club's Barclays Premier League opener at home to Birmingham City on Sunday.



FRANCK RIBERY