

LAMPARD CANCELS OUT TORRES STRIKE Controversy at Anfield

AFP, Liverpool



Fernando Torres marked his first appearance at Anfield with an impressive debut goal for Liverpool but it was not enough to earn his club all three points as referee Rob Styles handed Chelsea a controversial second-half penalty in Sunday's 1-1 draw.

Liverpool's record 26.5 million-pound Spanish striker had made a dream start to his home career but Styles harshly judged that Steve Finnan had pushed over Florent Malouda as he attempted to meet Shaun Wright-Phillips' 61st minute cross.

Frank Lampard needed no second invitation to convincingly equalise from the spot.

To add to Styles' unpopularity, in the eyes of Liverpool fans, he also appeared to book Chelsea midfielder Michael Essien for a second time midway through the second half without brandishing the red card that should have automatically followed.

Under the watchful eye of England manager Steve McClaren, Steven Gerrard made light of the fractured toe that will almost certainly exclude him from playing for his country against Germany in midweek by setting up Torres' debut goal in the 16th minute.

The Liverpool captain gathered Xabi Alonso's tidy header and sent Torres chasing away down the right

with a superb pass.

It still appeared that Chelsea defender Tal Ben-Haim would deal with the danger but the Spaniard showed an electrifying example of his pace and power to surge away from his marker and beat Peter Cech with a perfect right-foot finish.

The game had already been nicely set up by Manchester United's early afternoon defeat at Manchester City, a result greeted pre-match with great enthusiasm by both sets of supporters.

The early goal merely served to add to the intensity of a fixture that has become one of the set-piece occasions in the English football calendar.

After going a goal behind, Chelsea's midfield began to exert a degree of control.

Alonso's foul on Malouda gave Liverpool an anxious moment at the midway point of the first half but Didier Drogba's free-kick was deflected harmlessly behind.

Salomon Kalou appeared to have a superb shooting opportunity but took one touch too many and was halted by Gerrard's superb sliding tackle and Wright-Phillips sped past Alvaro Arbeloa a little too easily for comfort before his cross was headed over by Drogba.

For the third time in as many games this season, Chelsea found themselves a goal down but their spirited fight back raised the temperature of the contest yet further.

Styles did little to endear himself to the Anfield faithful as he yellow-carded Kuyt, Jermaine Pennant and

Gerrard in quick succession, the Liverpool trio joining Essien and, later, Ashley Cole, Lampard and John Terry in the book.

Chelsea's improved play continued after the restart, Lampard's early corner being flicked on by substitute Claudio Pizarro for John Obi Mikel whose far post header flew over the bar before another dangerous right-wing run by Wright-Phillips ended with a centre which Pizarro, reaching at full stretch, could only head wide.

At the other end, Liverpool were slowly stringing together some more promising moves with Pennant reaching the by-line just before the hour and picking out Alonso on the edge of the area only for the Spaniard to send his strike disappointingly off target.

However, the penalty altered the complexion of the game with Chelsea, possibly, content to settle for a valuable away point.

They might not have emerged with that had Riise's spectacular volley, from Pennant's 67th minute pullback, found its mark.

The last chances of an entertaining game fell to Kuyt, who rose to meet Finnan's right-wing cross but steered his effort inches over the crossbar, and substitute Ryan Babel who unleashed a ferocious long-range drive into the side-netting.



Liverpool's Spanish striker Fernando Torres (2nd R) heads the ball in front of Chelsea goal during their high-voltage Premier League clash at Anfield on Sunday.

Raul promises improvement

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid captain Raul says his side can improve after they suffered a disappointing 5-3 loss at home to Sevilla in the second leg of the Spanish Super Cup on Sunday.

"This was our first home game. We know we have to improve and that we can do better for our fans," the 30-year-old told radio Cadena Ser.

"It has been very disappointing to lose in our debut at the stadium this season. We thought we could come back from the adverse score, but we couldn't. It was a complicated match for us," the international midfielder added.

Sevilla's 6-3 aggregate win over the reigning Spanish league champions, with two goals on Sunday from Brazilian midfielder Renato and a hat-trick from Mali striker Frederic Kanoute, has added to doubts over Real's form as the new Liga season nears. Real, who have overhauled their squad under new German coach Bernd Schuster, headed into the game having lost five of their eight pre-season matches.

"Schuster's Madrid does the ridiculous and loses the Super Cup at home," wrote daily newspaper El Mundo, which added the team played without "soul".

"A historical drubbing by Sevilla at Bernabeu stadium," wrote sports daily Marca while rival paper AS said "Sevilla overwhelmed a very tender Madrid who were full of doubts".

Real Madrid will kick off the new Spanish league season on Saturday when they face city rivals Atletico Madrid who have spent millions in the pre-season on new signings.

"We can't be happy with conceding five goals, but we have to move on from this. Our first league match will be very important and I don't think morale will be low," said Schuster after the loss to Sevilla.

"It's very easy to say that our defence was poor, but it wasn't that bad. There were mistakes in general and that helped our opponent, but I am not worried," he added.

Low backs Lehmann

AFP, Frankfurt

Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann was given a resounding vote of confidence by Germany coach Joachim Loew on Monday after his blunder cost his club victory at the weekend.

Loew said Lehmann would be the first choice for Germany in Wednesday's high-profile friendly against England at Wembley despite spilling David Dunn's long-range shot to allow Blackburn to pull level in an English Premiership match which finished 1-1 on Sunday.

"I didn't see the match and only heard about it. But there will be no change, Jens Lehmann will be in goal against England.

"Looking ahead to Euro 2008 he is and remains our number one," Loew told a press conference.

Lehmann, 37, who was chosen ahead of Oliver Kahn to be Germany's first-choice 'keeper for last year's World Cup on home soil, has made a shaky start to the Premiership season.

His mistake allowed Fulham to score in the first minute at the Emirates the previous weekend, although Arsenal went on to win 2-1.

Germany will be severely depleted by injuries in Wednesday's match, with captain Michael Ballack, strikers Miroslav Klose and Mario Gomez and midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger among the main absentees.

Alves dreams of Real

INTERNET, undated

Sevilla full-back Daniel Alves is hoping for a quick resolution to his future after admitting he dreams of playing for Real Madrid.

Alves is looking to quit the Uefa Cup holders and has already been the subject of a failed bid from Chelsea.

Reports suggest Chelsea remain favourites to sign the Brazil international, who has also been linked with Spanish champions Real.

The attack-minded defender, who played against Real in the Super Cup second leg on Sunday, admits he would be tempted by a move to the Bernabeu.

"The player who says that he does not dream of playing for Real Madrid is a liar," Alves told Marca.

"Any footballer would like to play for this club.

"I am no different, but it is a decision that I do not have to take."

Alves also stressed his wish for his future to be sorted swiftly, with the transfer window closing next week.

He added: "It is quite a complicated situation. The sooner it is fixed the better.

"I am worried. The only thing that I want is that it is fixed already. "I have made it clear that I want to continue growing as a footballer and, if that means leaving Sevilla, then I am sorry because it has been a very special club to me."

Kanoute hat-trick routs Real



Football

AFP, Madrid

Frederic Kanoute hammered a hat trick as Sevilla beat league champions Real Madrid 5-3 to clinch the Spanish Super Cup on a 6-3 aggregate Sunday.

The result added to the problems of new Real coach Bernd Schuster just a week ahead of the new league season.

Real had lost the first leg of the Super Cup 1-0 and in five pre-season friendlies they have won just

three with two coming against lower-league opposition.

Sunday's match was a personal nightmare for 30 million-euro defender Pepe with the Brazilian giving away a penalty for hand ball which led to one of the goals and then getting sent-off in the closing stages of the match at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Dutch defender Royston Drenthe scored in the 23rd minute for Real to equalise Renato's opener but Renato restored Sevilla's lead in the 28th minute.

Mali international Kanoute then made it 3-1 on the night from the

penalty spot following Pepe's indiscretion before Italian World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro pulled one back for Real on the stroke of half-time.

Sergio Ramos made it 3-3 on the night in the 79th minute before Kanoute completed his hat trick in the last 10 minutes.

Sevilla, who had defeated AEK Athens 2-0 in a Champions League qualifier in midweek, also managed to ruin the debut of Real's Dutch international Wesley Sneijder with their free-scoring performance.



PHOTO: AFP

Sevilla midfielder Renato (C) celebrates with his teammates after scoring one of his two goals against Real Madrid during their Super Cup final second-leg at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday.

Eriksson not excited yet

AFP, London



Sven-Goran Eriksson has tempered enthusiasm over Manchester City's unbeaten start to the season saying that his new team have "a long way to go" before they can be seriously seen as title contenders.

Eriksson's comments followed the upset 1-0 win over Manchester United in Sunday's derby game which left City two points clear at the top of the table after three games.

The former England manager agreed that he has enjoyed the perfect start to his tenure at City after his summer move, but warned that he was taking nothing for granted.

"We have a long way to go before we are a top team," Eriksson said.

"We are here and we are fighting but there are a lot of things for me to work on. There are a lot of players here who have never played in the Premier League.

"They are not used to the pace and you can see it sometimes." The early signs however in the quickly put-together side are promising for the Swede.

Of his new arrivals, Elano and Vedran Corluka have been particularly impressive, while another, Geovanni, was responsible for yesterday's first-half match-winner.

However, Eriksson would be the first to admit the real jewel in his crown has been inherited from former boss Stuart Pearce in the shape of 19-year old defender Micah Richards.

"It is important to remember this young man is 19," said Eriksson.

"I don't remember having a defender that strong and that quick at any age. That is a combination that is very rare indeed.

"He wins everything in the air and can fight with any centre-forward and then, if he makes a mistake, he has the speed to repair it.

"His pace is incredible. At 19, you just don't see that."

City next take on Arsenal on Saturday looking to consolidate their place at the top of the league.

But, if they do manage to get in front at the Emirates, Eriksson hopes his charges can reach the winning line in a little more style than they managed yesterday.

Maradona taunts the English

THE GUARDIAN

Diego Maradona taunted England over his "hand of God" goal yesterday, on a television show hosted by Venezuela's president, Hugo Chavez. The Argentine footballer told a cheering audience in Caracas, Venezuela's capital, that he cheated in the 1986 World Cup quarterfinal and had urged his teammates to cheer the strike into the English net to fool the referee into awarding the goal.

Peter Shilton, the England goalkeeper, was very tall and Maradona could not reach the ball with his head, he said. "The goalkeeper had the advantage of grabbing with his hands. It was too high for me and I stuck out my fist."

When the ball crossed the line he led his teammates in a display of joy which deceived the referee, he told Mr Chavez, chuckling. England lost the game and Argentina went on to win the World Cup.

In Maradona's chatshow in Buenos Aires last year, he admitted that the goal had been a piece of "mischief", but yesterday's admission was delivered with more glee and tinged with political rhetoric.

Looking healthy after serious illness linked to cocaine addiction, the 46-year-old was a surprise guest of "Hello President", a Sunday talkshow hosted by Mr Chavez which lasts much of the day.

The Venezuelan leader welcomed the footballer as Argentina's "golden boy" and an ally in the fight against imperialism. He invited him to reminisce about the goal which broke English hearts and cheered much of Latin America.

Mr Chavez, a self-described socialist revolutionary, has made no secret of his disdain for Britain's involvement in the Iraq war.

Later in the programme
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Rob Styles red-carded

AFP, London

Referee Rob Styles will not officiate at a match next weekend following his performance in the match between Liverpool and Chelsea, referees' chief Keith Hackett said Monday.

Styles awarded Chelsea a dubious penalty, allowing the visitors to claim a 1-1 draw at Anfield, and caused confusion by appearing to issue a second yellow card to the Blues' Michael Essien.

The official insisted he had instead booked captain John Terry - to whom he had already raised the yellow card in the incident.

Hackett, the general manager of Professional Game Match Officials Limited, told Sky Sports News television: "Accountability exists and we, the PGMOL, do expect referees to get big decisions correct.

"On this occasion it was wrong and therefore Rob will not be officiating next weekend."

Fergie faces uphill task

AFP, Manchester



Manchester United face an uphill battle to recover from their worst start to a season for 15 years admitted manager Sir Alex Ferguson after his side went down 1-0 to their city rivals on Sunday.

A goal by Geovanni saw former England manager Sven Goran Eriksson triumph over Ferguson and leave United in the strange position of just two points from three matches while Manchester City top the table with nine points from three matches.

"We've got ourselves in an uphill fight," confessed Ferguson, whose side dominated the match but fell short in front of goal.

"Ten years ago we could have handled it because we have always

been good in the second half of the season and now we are going to have to again.

"It would take a long time to explain it because we had enough chances but it just wasn't to be our day.

"The chances we had and the possession in the final third of the field should have been made to count but we have been very wasteful in front of goal, that's the nuts and bolts of it.

"I don't think you can even say City have been lucky simply because we had so many chances ourselves. It was our own fault because of our shortcomings in the final third of the pitch."

Ferguson revealed also that his prize capture of the summer from Bayern Munich, Owen Hargreaves, is a doubt for England's friendly with Germany at Wembley this week.

The midfielder reported feeling pain in both knees after making his Manchester United debut.

Hargreaves, signed this summer from Bayern Munich for 18 million pounds, impressed playing in a holding role in front of the United back-four and would almost certainly figure in at least part of Wednesday's clash.

But having been forced to delay the introduction of the player this season while Hargreaves recovered match fitness, Sir Alex Ferguson raised doubts about Hargreaves' ability to face Germany.

"Owen is feeling very painful in his knees," the United manager said.

"It's a result of him playing his first game. He will probably report for the squad but I don't think he is ready to play for England."

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De Rossi sinks Inter



Football

AFP, Milan

Daniele de Rossi's second half penalty gave Roma a 1-0 win over Inter Milan on Sunday in the Italian Super Cup bringing revenge for the defeat they suffered against the same opponents last season.

Twelve months ago, Roma led 3-0 only to lose 4-3 in extra-time.

The only goal of Sunday's game came in the 78th minute when Nicolas Burdisso brought down Francesco Totti in the box and de Rossi stepped up to coolly slot into the corner past keeper Julio Cesar.

"To be here in Milan and win two consecutive finals is of course very satisfying, especially as today we proved that we are a strong and

competitive squad who can challenge anyone," said Roma skipper Totti who also led his team to the Italian Cup at the San Siro in May.

"When I was brought down I felt a twinge in my thigh muscle and didn't feel quite right. There was no point risking it (by taking the penalty) and I knew De Rossi could do a great job."

Cristian Chivu was on the losing side against his former teammates, but insisted that Inter will shrug off the loss.

"It is just a defeat," said the defender. "I know it was the Super Cup, but it was the first official match of the campaign, so we're not all that upset."

Inter had surprisingly left Brazilian striker Adriano out of the team while Douglas Maicon was suspended.

For Roma, Christian Panucci

was a makeshift centre-back due to an injury crisis.

Inter should have take the lead after just six minutes but French international Ludovic Giuly volleyed over an open goal from Max Tonetto's cross.

Roma had a penalty appeal turned down when Totti exchanged passes with Giuly and the Frenchman was fouled by Marco Materazzi while Zlatan Ibrahimovic went close for Inter.

Inter's Suazo saw a drive saved by Doni early in the second half but Roma kept pressing and the champions were forced to take off Olivier Dacourt to be replaced by veteran Luis Figo.

Materazzi was booked for a foul on Totti before Figo almost scored only to be denied by Doni.



PHOTO: AFP

AS Roma striker and captain Francesco Totti (R) is in agony after being tackled from behind by Inter Milan defender Marco Materazzi during their Italian Super Cup final at the San Siro in Milan on Sunday.