



Manchester United forward Carlos Tevez (R) rounds Wigan goalkeeper Chris Kirkland capping a wonderful move to score in their Premiership encounter at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Van Basten includes suspended trio

AFP, Zeist

Marco Van Basten selected a 24-man squad for the Netherlands' Euro 2008 qualifying double header against Romania and Slovenia on October 13 and 17.

Robin van Persie, Wesley Sneijder and Mario Melchiot have all been included in the squad despite being suspended for the Romania match.

Celtic's Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink is injured and has not been included.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Edwin van der Sar (Manchester United/ENG), Maarten Stekelenburg (Ajax), Henk Timmer (Feyenoord)
Defenders: Khalid Boulahrouz (Sevilla/ESP), Wilfred Bouma (Aston Villa/ENG), Andre Ooijer (Blackburn Rovers/ENG), Urby Emanuelson and John Heitinga (Ajax), Kew Jaliens (AZ Alkmaar), Joris Mathijsen (Hamburg/GER), Mario Melchiot (Wigan Athletic/ENG)
Midfielders: Giovanni van Bronckhorst (Feyenoord), Nigel de Jong and Rafael van der Vaart (Hamburg/GER), Hedwiges Maduro (Ajax), Clarence Seedorf (AC Milan/ITA), Wesley Sneijder (Real Madrid/ESP), Demy de Zeeuw (AZ Alkmaar)
Forwards: Ryan Babel and Dirk Kuyt (Liverpool/ENG), Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Ajax), Robin van Persie (Arsenal/ENG), Arjen Robben and Ruud van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid/ESP)

Hitzfeld sings Toni praises

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld praised the ruthlessness of Luca Toni as the Italian goal-scorer struck again as the German giants booked their place in the UEFA Cup's group phase.

Thursday's 2-0 win over Portuguese side Belenenses at the Estadio do Restelo gave Bayern a 3-0 aggregate lead to put them in the cup's group stages which starts later this month.

After a lacklustre first-half, Italian World Cup winner Toni put Bayern ahead with an impressive finish on 59 minutes, his eighth goal of the season, until midfielder Hamit Altintop made the result safe on 76 minutes.

"Luca Toni is unbelievably ruthless," said Hitzfeld on Friday.

"The opening goal relieved the tension, and we played to our potential after that."

"We've done what we had to do, and we're through to the group phase."

"My team had a lot to lose, and that'll always be in the back of the players' minds."

"Apart from Ze Roberto in midfield, none of my players can be proud of the first half."

Toni has been an instant hit since his 11 million euros (15 million dollars) transfer from Fiorentina.

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C.Ron leads MU rout

AFP, Manchester

Cristiano Ronaldo struck twice as Manchester United blew away their goalscoring woes with an emphatic 4-0 victory against Wigan that sent them top of the Premier League on Saturday.

Ronaldo's double, which followed Carlos Tevez's 54th minute opener, made the game safe for United before Wayne Rooney cemented victory with his first league goal of the season in the closing stages at Old Trafford.

United lost striker Louis Saha in the warm-up with a knee injury and the goalscoring problem that has affected them all season continued in the first-half against

Chris Hutchings's team.

Wigan hardly made things easy for United, adopting a rigid 4-5-1 formation that was wholly defensive, but the home side certainly had enough of the ball to make the visitors pay for their negative approach.

Wigan's resilience and two early injuries, suffered by Nemanja Vidic and John O'Shea, made life difficult for United, though. Serbian centre-half Vidic lasted just 20 minutes before walking off the pitch with concussion following two blows to the head in challenges with Marcus Bent and Paul Scharner.

Republic of Ireland international O'Shea then followed him out of the action nine minutes later with a thigh injury that makes him extremely doubtful for his country's forthcoming Euro 2008 qualifier against Germany.

So it was a frustrating first-half for the champions after referee Mike Riley had ignored penalty appeals on five minutes following Michael Brown's clumsy challenge on Ronaldo.

The next chance did not come until the 32nd minute and that fell to Wigan, with Australian midfielder Josip Skoko testing keeper Tomasz Kuszczak with a 30-yard strike.

Ronaldo replied with another long-range effort for United, but they did not break into the penalty area until first-half stoppage time, when Tevez shot over after being released by Ryan Giggs.

The second-half was a totally different story, though, as United finally hit the goal trail after netting just seven goals all season prior to kick-off. After Giggs had struck the

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Messi wary of Agüero

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona winger Lionel Messi believes his side will need to limit the influence of Argentinean compatriot Sergio Agüero when Atletico Madrid visit the Nou Camp on Sunday.

Agüero has been in breathtaking form this season, scoring five goals in Atletico's last four games, and Messi had nothing but praise for the young striker.

"He is unplayable, scoring goals and doing impossible things. He is capable of anything and it will be very difficult to stop him," Messi said.

Messi, who leads the Primera Liga scoring charts alongside his countryman, hopes Barca can cut off the supply line to Agüero.

"We need to work well as a team and try to make sure that he receives the least amount of balls possible," he said.

Messi expects an open and attack-minded clash on Sunday. "Atletico are a great team. They like to play offensively and in that respect they are similar to us. They have very good players in midfield and attack, so it should be a very entertaining match," he said.

Messi will begin on the right-hand side of Barcelona's three-pronged attack, alongside Thierry Henry and Ronaldinho, who is likely to keep his place in the side

despite some off-colour performances of late.

Coach Frank Rijkaard has a bigger dilemma in midfield. Holding midfielder Yaya Toure is sidelined and the Dutch coach appears short of options to replace the Ivory Coast international.

Mexico defender Rafael Marquez has filled the defensive midfield role with aplomb in recent seasons, but has been ruled out for a month after picking up an injury in the Champions League game against Stuttgart on Tuesday.

Brazil's Edmílson, another candidate, is also sidelined and Thiago Motta left the club in the summer to join Atletico.

In the absence of all of these players, Rijkaard will rely on his

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Kaka voted FIFPro's best

Football

INTERNET, undated

Kaka has been voted as the FIFPro World Player of the Year and FC Barcelona have had three of their players included in the FIFPro World XI.

Federation International de Footballers Professionnels (FIFPro) have announced the results after their 57,500 members voted for their favourites from the 2006-07 season.

After Ronaldinho retained the honour last year, his compatriot Kaka has lifted the award this time and as clearly delighted.

"I am humbled to receive such an honour," the AC Milan star told the FIFPro website. "To follow my good friend and such a great player as Ronaldinho makes this a very special award for me."

"To be recognized by my fellow professional players worldwide coming from over 50,000 players is amazing. I would like to thank my teammates and coaches and everyone involved at Milan and the national team, as well as my family and friends for their support."



KAKA

Real still after Drogha

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid are more keen than ever to sign Chelsea's talismanic striker Didier Drogha and will swoop for the Ivory Coast international in the summer, El Mundo said on Friday.

Real bosses have offered a four-year deal to Drogha's agent, said the newspaper.

The 29-year-old openly admitted to being distraught at the departure of charismatic coach Jose Mourinho last month although he also said he was not looking to quit the Londoners, where he is under contract until 2010.

Real's German coach Bernd Schuster told English newspaper the Daily Mirror that he is interested in signing the 'Drog'. "He's a very interesting player, a priority for us. We've been chasing him for a long time," said Schuster.

According to El Mundo, Drogha will play alongside Dutch forward Ruud van Nistelrooy, who Real hope to tie down until 2010.

Kaka admits Dida theatrics

INTERNET, undated

Milan midfield magician Kaka has admitted that the theatrics of goalkeeper Dida in the Champions League clash against Celtic were wrong, but pledged to back his teammate.

After Scott McDonald hit an injury-time winner for the Hoops at Parkhead a celebrating fan ran past Dida and gave him a light slap.

The Brazil goalie ran after him briefly before collapsing to the ground and was carried from the pitch on a stretcher with an ice-pack on his face.

"In Glasgow Dida did not behave well," he told Milan's official website. "It was a difficult moment for him."

"He had just conceded a goal - and then there was the slap from that fan."

"Dida made his choice what he did was wrong."

However, Kaka, who also plays alongside the 33-year-old shot-stopper for his country, added that the Rossoneri players in Milan would stand by him.

"The entire team is close to him. In the past he has given us a lot of satisfaction and it is only fair that we help him."

UEFA will review the matter through their control and disciplinary body on October 11.

The supporter involved has been banned for life by the Glasgow club.

Donovan claims fourth MVP

AFP, Los Angeles

Landon Donovan, who needs one more goal to become the top scorer in US national team history, was named the squad's most valuable player on Friday for an unprecedented fourth time.

The 25-year old Donovan also won the award in 2002, 2003 and 2004. Clint Dempsey won last year and Kasey Keller in 2005.

Donovan finished well ahead of runner-up, Tim Howard in the voting while Carlos Bocanegra was third.

Donovan leads Team USA with nine goals, including a hat-trick against Ecuador and four goals during the CONCACAF Gold Cup tournament this summer.

Donovan's penalty kick against Mexico to win the American's fourth Gold Cup title was his 34th career tally, tying him with Eric Wynalda as the top scorer in the US national team history.

Donovan has 96 caps and is also the all-time assist leader for the United States.

The award is given annually to the top player on the US national football team as chosen by the American media.

UEFA fines Slavia Prague

AFP, Prague

Slavia Prague has been fined 9,000 euros (12,730 dollars) by UEFA after fans invaded the pitch after the 2-1 victory over Dutch team Ajax in the Champions League qualifying rounds, the club said on Friday.

The Czech club was earlier fined 6,100 euros (8,630 dollars) after fans threw objects onto the pitch against Zilina of Slovakia, also during the Champions League qualifying rounds.

Competing for the first time in the Champions League, the Prague club is third in Group H behind Arsenal and Sevilla and ahead of Steaua Bucharest.

Keane can't wait for Gunners

AFP, Sunderland



Roy Keane would love to pull on his boots one last time on Sunday as the Sunderland manager renews his rivalry with Arsenal.

The former Manchester United midfielder will be on the touchline at the Emirates Stadium this weekend as he tries to inflict a first defeat of the season on Arsene Wenger's side.

It will be Keane's first clash with the Gunners as a manager but he has plenty of past experience of scrapping with them as a player. He locked horns with Arsenal throughout his time at United as the clubs battled it out for supremacy in the English game.

Keane was famously caught by television cameras having a furious

row with Patrick Vieira as United and Arsenal waited in the tunnel before a match at Highbury.

But Keane looks back on his duels with the likes of Vieira and Emmanuel Petit as some of the most memorable moments of his career.

"It was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. Usually my preparation for a game on a Saturday if we were playing Arsenal would start on the previous Sunday," Keane said.

"Your body just knew you were going to play Arsenal, just psychologically, your body would get ready for it."

"It was the same for all the players, and I am sure it was the same for the Arsenal players."

"Those games were brilliant, absolutely fantastic, the best. United against Arsenal - if you could go back for one game, then that would be the game."

"Both teams were usually fight-

ing it out for the title - it was fantastic. You would give anything to play in one of those games again."

The prospect of knocking Arsenal off the top of the Premier League was exactly the kind of challenge that would have brought out the ferocious competitor in Keane when he was at United.

But he believes there is less passion between rival clubs now because football is so much more of a business.

"It was a brilliant rivalry, the rivalry between the fans, the players, the managers," he said.

"But stuff like that has gone - those rivalries have gone. They still want to beat each other, but there is not that real intensity that there was then."

"The game is changing. It is probably a lot colder. Football is not the game I knew maybe 10 years ago, and that goes for every club."

Dortmund finally win

INTERNET, undated



Giovanni Federico struck a thunderous winner as 10-man Borussia Dortmund ended a run of three successive Bundesliga defeats with victory over Westphalian rivals Bochum.

Tinga put the hosts in front at the Westfalenstadion only for Marcin Mielcel to equalise before half-time.

Christian Worns was dismissed with more than half-an-hour to go for a second bookable offence to leave Dortmund coach Thomas Doll fearing the worst.

However, Federico converted

after Bochum had failed to deal with a corner 20 minutes from time for the hosts' fourth win of the season.

Ivo Ilievic volleyed high and wide for Bochum from outside the area after six minutes in the only half-chance before Dortmund took the lead in the 17th minute.

Dede's free-kick from a central position 10 yards inside the visitors' half found the head of Worns in a crowded box. Jan Lastuvka made a poor save, palming the ball away to the lurking Tinga, who converted into the roof of the net from the right edge of the six-yard box with a right foot shot.

Bochum levelled on the counter-attack when Stanislav Sestak ran at the defence before laying the ball off for Mielcel, who cut in off the right before firing across goal into the far corner.

Marcel Maltritz had a header cleared off the line by Christopher Nothe from a corner as Bochum went close to taking the lead at the interval.

Worns received his second yellow card for a tackle from behind on Sestak after 57 minutes as the striker was bursting forward towards the Dortmund area.

But rather than Bochum making their numerical advantage tell, it was Dortmund who struck.

The visitors did not deal with an inswinging corner which fell to Federico inside the right edge of the box, and the midfielder hit a powerful shot first time into the far corner.

A resilient Dortmund held on and frustrated Bochum, who struggled to put home goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller under pressure.



Dortmund midfielder Tinga (R) goes airborne as he controls the ball ahead of Bochum midfielder Stanislav Sestak during their Bundesliga clash at the Signal Iduna Park in Dortmund on Friday.

Much to prove for Grant, Lee

AFP, Bolton



Sammy Lee when he takes his Chelsea side to face Bolton this weekend.

Grant has been forced to endure a series of personal attacks and questions about his ability to fill the job ever since he succeeded Jose Mourinho as Blues manager just two weeks ago.

And the Israeli's predicament will strike a chord with Lee who has suffered similar problems after taking over from the successful Sam Allardyce at the end of last season.

Grant, though, needs points, not sympathy, when Chelsea return to the stadium where two years ago Mourinho steered the club to their first title in 50 years.

Last season's runners-up have mustered just one point from two league games under the new regime and are without a win in their last four Premier League outings.

Victory is essential if they are to keep tabs with the early season leaders Arsenal and, while Grant will take heart from the midweek

Champions League win in Valencia, he knows more domestic failure will increase the pressure on his position.

At least the Stamford Bridge manager can take heart from the return to fitness of Frank Lampard who has returned to full training and could be included in the squad to face Bolton.

"Frank trained very hard in the last two weeks and today he made the training session," Grant said.

"We will see after training tomorrow but he looks good. Of course Frank is an important player for us and we will be happy when all the injured come back for us soon."

Without Lampard and Didier Drogha, last season's leading scorers, Chelsea have struggled for goals.

Drogha showed his value with a stunning winner against Valencia but the Ivory Coast forward is once again suspended for the Bolton trip, paving the way for Andriy Shevchenko to press his claims after making way for Drogha in Spain.

"We have a big squad for occasions like this," he added. "Didier on Wednesday did very well and we would have liked him to play on Sunday but I need to get the best from all the players."

"It is good that Frank and Didier score a lot of goals but we

want others to score. Shevchenko is a good player. He was not doing his best in his last game but in football things can change."

"There were other players who were not at their best against Fulham but were good on Wednesday, so I am sure he will be useful to us."

If Grant is feeling beleaguered, Lee's improving status, on the back of Bolton's five-match unbeaten run that includes qualification to the UEFA Cup group stage, will give him hope that he can turn the tide.

"It has taken time for us to get used to the new players and the new tactics, but you always get these changes with a new manager," said Nicolas Anelka, the club's leading scorer. "We are starting to get used to how he wants us to play now, though, and how to win games playing like that."

"But even more importantly, we are learning how not to lose games again. We have had two wins and three draws now, and that is a good way to go into big games against teams like Chelsea."

"You can see that we are starting to play with confidence again. We are starting to look like a good side again, and we hope we can prove that in our next two games against Chelsea and Arsenal."