



Manchester United star Wayne Rooney (top) curls the ball beyond the tackle of a Liga de Quito defender and into the back of the net to score the only goal of the game in the World Club Cup final at Yokohama in Tokyo yesterday. Rooney's goal separated the sides as the Red Devils were crowned World Club Champions.

## MU on top of the world

### Football

AFP, Yokohama

Wayne Rooney came to the rescue as Manchester United beat South American champions Liga de Quito 1-0 Sunday to win the Club World Cup and lift one of the few trophies to have eluded them.

The England striker pounced in the 73rd minute after being set up by Cristiano Ronaldo, with United rallying to victory after Nemanja Vidic was needlessly sent off for a deliberate elbow early in the second half.

His goal gave them an unprecedented treble this year, with the English and European champions now able to call themselves world champions, helping silence those who have criticised the long trip here.

Sir Alex Ferguson's men also became the first British team to win the tournament, putting them alongside Italy's AC Milan and Brazil's Internacional and Sao Paulo.

"The collective spirit of the team won

the day," said Ferguson.

"With 10 men we played with great expression and tried to win the match, which is a measure of the ambition of the players we have."

Rooney was overjoyed at scoring the winner.

"To be crowned the best in the world is a great achievement," he said.

On a windy night, Ronaldo was clearly a marked man and was heavily tackled twice in the opening minutes as the Ecuadorians made their intentions clear.

It was Liga who created the first chance, almost taking the lead on four minutes when Jairo Campos beat the offside trap from a freekick but fluffed his shot.

United though soon found their feet and Rooney chested down a through ball from Vidic just inside the box on 10 minutes and unleashed a fierce shot that goalkeeper Jose Cevallos did well to punch away.

He tested Cevallos again minutes later when he sent another powerful drive towards goal which the keeper deflected

for a corner.

Ronaldo was putting on a show for the 68,000 fans, employing his full bag of tricks, and it was the Portuguese winger who whipped in a cross to Carlos Tevez on 19 minutes, with his shot forcing a spectacular save.

United got off to the worst possible start in the second half when Vidic was given a straight red card on 49 minutes for elbowing Claudio Bieler.

The Serb gets an automatic one-match UEFA ban which means he will miss United's last 16 Champions League first leg tie against Inter Milan in February.

Despite being down to 10 men United knuckled down, with Ronaldo troubling Cevallos with a long range strike and Rooney getting a header on target.

With the game looking like it could go to extra time, Michael Carrick slipped the ball to Ronaldo who deftly laid it off to Rooney and the 23-year-old made no mistake, side-footing into the right hand corner.

In the third-place playoff, Japan's Gamba Osaka beat Pachuca of Mexico 1-0.

## Holland, Belgium to bid for WC

AFP, The Hague

The Netherlands and Belgium, who are bidding for a joint hosting of the 2018 World Cup, will also be candidates to organise the 2022 event, the Dutch football federation said on Saturday.

The decision came after world football's governing body FIFA said at their Congress in Tokyo that they would allow those bidding for the 2018 World Cup to also try and go for the 2022 tournament too provided they were from a different continent than the 2018 winners.

FIFA also announced it would make a decision on the hosts for both tournaments in December 2010.

A Dutch federation spokesman told Dutch agency KNAV: "We had already foreseen this opportunity. If we possibly do not make it in 2018, we would still have a chance the next time."

## Allardyce plans showdown talks

AFP, Blackburn

Blackburn manager Sam Allardyce is planning showdown talks with Roque Santa Cruz after the Paraguay striker revealed he wants to quit Ewood Park in the January transfer window.

Allardyce had made it clear when he was unveiled as successor to Paul Ince in midweek that he had no intention of selling his best players, so Santa Cruz's admission that he wants to move on drew an angry response from his new boss.

Santa Cruz, who was missing from Allardyce's 3-0 debut win over Stoke at Ewood Park with a calf injury suffered in training, will have to explain himself this week.

"Did it bother me on Saturday? No. Is it going to affect my night out? No. Will it bother me on Monday? Yes," Allardyce said.

"I will sit down and see what the situation is. We will deal with it professionally very quickly."

"I think there is an issue but it is not going to be resolved tonight. It is not going to detract from a night out with a good friend on his 60th birthday."

Allardyce was asked whether he would consider selling the former Bayern Munich striker, valued at 15 million pounds.

"You keep asking me questions I don't want to answer now because I want to have a good night out," he said.

"Roque Santa Cruz is not a key focus for me. The players and their performance and the fact we have got three points on the board and have done very well is the most important thing."

But the former Bolton boss said he would not let it affect his celebrations after ending the club's 11-match winless run.

Ironically, the player who replaced Santa Cruz on Saturday - Benni McCarthy - scored twice and could have had a hat-trick.

## Blackburn's riposte

INTERNET, undated



Sam Allardyce enjoyed the perfect start to his reign as Blackburn Rovers manager when his side beat Stoke City 3-0 in the English Premier League on Saturday. On a day when Aston Villa won 1-0 at West Ham United to go third, Allardyce stole the headlines thanks to two goals from Benni McCarthy and one from Jason Roberts.

Having replaced Paul Ince as manager earlier in the week, the Allardyce effect was instant as his side ended a run of six straight defeats.

The result was not enough to lift Blackburn out of the relegation zone, though, as they remained second from the bottom.

But the three points lifted them to 16 points, two behind Manchester City, who fell into the bottom three after Sunderland moved clear, thanks to a 4-1 win at sixth-placed Hull City.

At Ewood Park, McCarthy

put the home side ahead from the penalty spot on nine minutes after Morten Gamst Pedersen was fouled by Ibrahima Sonko.

Jason Roberts doubled their lead from close range and McCarthy then made it 3-0 before half-time.

Stoke dominated the match in terms of possession but caught three times by Blackburn, much to Allardyce's delight.

"I would have to be pretty nit-picking to say that wasn't as perfect as I would have wanted it," the new manager said. "We have still got a long way to go to get out of trouble, but it is a very nice start. I just tried to give the lads a few pointers, but the big contribution came from the players."

"We showed a lot of quality in and around the box and the victory was built from a clean sheet mentality in the team."

Villa were outplayed for much of their match at Upton Park, but West Ham could not take their chances.

In the end, a deflected strike from James Milner that came off Lucas Neill provided

the winner 12 minutes from the end for Martin O'Neill's side, who climbed above Manchester United into third, four points off the top.

Fulham climbed to eighth after a 3-0 win over Middlesbrough while Bolton are just a point behind them after they saw off Portsmouth 2-1.

Sunderland stand-in manager Ricky Sbragia improved his chances of getting the job full-time when his side won 4-1 at Hull City.

Steed Malbranque smashed them in front and though Nicky Barnby equalized, an own goal by Kamil Zayatte, a Kenwyne Jones header and Djibril Cisse's late strike sealed the win.

"I have not done myself any harm, but we'll see what happens," Sbragia said.

"I'm enjoying it, it's beginning to feel nice, especially the winning. But what's important is that we got out of the bottom three and started winning."

"We have done those things and the players have taken responsibility, they have been fantastic for us."

## BECKHAM TO MILAN

## Nothing for granted

AFP, Rome



David Beckham has admitted he might struggle to get into AC Milan's first team during his loan spell with the Italian giants as he was unveiled to the world's media at the club's training ground.

The former England captain stressed he did not expect to "arrive here and change everything."

"It will be difficult to get in the team as it always is at a big club," said Beckham, whose loan spell runs until March 8 when he rejoins Los Angeles Galaxy for the start of the new Major League Soccer season.

"It is tough at any of the biggest clubs in the world to go straight into the team - it just doesn't happen."

"But right now I'm in better form than was expected of me. I hope to train hard with my new teammates. But I don't want to upset the balance that's already here, I want to help the team."

"There are players such as (Paolo) Maldini, Ronaldinho and others here, players that I have admired and tried to copy. I don't expect to arrive here and change everything. It's a

great opportunity for me and I hope to have fun."

Beckham, 33, is on the verge of equalling Bobby Moore's record of 108 caps for an England outfield player.

But he accepted Fabio Capello, who pointed him in Milan's direction, would not select him if he was playing reserve team football on a day when England's Italian manager said he would not be swayed by sentimental considerations.

The former Manchester United and Real Madrid midfielder was officially presented to the media on Saturday after completing a medical.

He will stay in Milan to watch the club's match against Udinese at the San Siro on Sunday before leaving Italy on Monday.

Beckham will return on December 29 and join his new teammates on the club's winter training camp in Dubai before trying to force his way into the Milan first team, something he admits won't be easy.

Beckham also revealed that he had sought the advice of Capello, whom he played under at Real Madrid.

"He has been and is someone I have a lot of respect for. When I thought about this move I asked him for his advice.

I had said I preferred joining Milan but I wanted to play in Italy because I wanted to play at the top level."

"And Capello asked me to only play at the top level. It's right that he only picks me if I'm playing for my club."

"I've played for the biggest club in England, the biggest club in Spain and now I want to play for the biggest club in Italy."

Capello meanwhile made it clear that Beckham's proximity to 1966 World Cup winning captain Moore's international appearance record would have no bearing at all on his team selection.

"About David Beckham, I put him in the squad when he played with LA - and if he plays for AC Milan it is possible he will be in the squad," said Capello.

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti said Beckham would have to earn his place in the team, despite a long-term injury to key central midfielder Gennaro Gattuso.

"He can play anywhere across the midfield and a lot has been said about his free-kicks but the important things is the way he trains."

"And if he deserves to play, he will play. I'm very happy that he's here."

## FIFA unfazed by meltdown

AFP, Tokyo

World football body FIFA says it has so far remained immune to the financial storm gripping the world, and vowed to help clubs that were struggling.

"Fortunately, our financial situation nowadays is a very comfortable one," said President Sepp Blatter, adding that FIFA had multi-million dollar reserves.

"We can look forward with optimism, but optimism with a little bit of reduction in over-optimism."

The majority of FIFA's revenues come from staging the World Cup every four years and the organisation said in October it had concluded a 650 million dollar (514.6 million euro) insurance package to cover the 2010 and 2014 events.

This is largely designed to protect against any event that might force either a postponement or a move of the tournament to another country.

As for South Africa in 2010, FIFA said 95 per cent of the budget had already been brought under contract and the organisation was on top of projected costs.

But Blatter is concerned that clubs around the world could be feeling the pinch, and said he has told FIFA's executive committee they must help wherever possible.

"We are concerned about the impact of the crisis on clubs. The economic situation is getting worse by the day, and it is hitting those at the bottom end the most," he said.

"Certain leagues are losing their sponsors, then their TV rights. We need to show solidarity in these troubled times."

"Sir Alex Ferguson said recently that the crisis was even worrying Manchester United, and Karl Heinz Rummenigge explained that Bayern Munich would not be able to buy any players this winter."

"Whatever happens, I have told the members of the executive committee that we need to show solidarity in these times of crisis and help out those who need it most."

## Good start for Ramos

AFP, Barcelona



An early goal for Gonzalo Higuain was enough to give Real Madrid a 1-0 victory over Valencia on Saturday and the first win for Juande Ramos as coach.

Real bounced back from the 2-0 defeat in the clasico against Barcelona last weekend to score after just three minutes with Higuain firing home after good work from Arjen Robben.

In Saturday's late game, Atletico Madrid moved to second spot in the table, eight points behind leaders Barcelona, thanks to a 3-2 victory at Espanyol with the help of two goals from Maxi Rodriguez.

For new Madrid coach Ramos, it was a welcome win. "It was very important that we won, we had three points in our hand and if we had only managed a draw in the end it would have been a big prob-

lem," said Ramos.

"Players in these situations are uncertain whether to push for a second or look to hold on to the advantage."

In fact Robben was the key player in the early stages of the match and a constant threat for Valencia, setting up Rafael van de Vaart who hit the post and then he himself saw a shot cleared off the line after he had rounded the keeper.

Valencia though gradually came back into the contest and Iker Casillas made a series of stops from David Villa.

In the second half Real, were hanging on with Casillas parrying a Ruben Baraja strike on a post but the pressure eased mid-way through the half following the expulsion of Carlos Marchena for his second yellow card.

Real had chances to add to their lead but Higuain and Juan Guti in particular missed excellent chances.

Valencia coach Unai Emery refused to discuss the Marchena dismissal but hit out at the style of refereeing. "The players have complained at the

treatment as the referee acted in a threatening way," he said.

Atletico Madrid earned victory at Espanyol in Barcelona but the home side will have considered themselves unlucky.

The visitors went ahead after seven minutes when a Paulo Assuncao shot was blocked and the rebound fell to Maxi Rodriguez who finished clinically.

After a spell of Atletico dominance, Espanyol began to press them back but lacked a finishing edge until the 58th minute when a fine pass from Nicolas Pareja set up Sergio Sanchez to fire home.

The pace and skill posed by Maxi and Sergio Aguiero were a constant danger for the Espanyol back line and having missed a couple of excellent chances, Aguiero finally found the back of the net with a scrappy goal.

There was still time for two late goals in injury time, with an excellent Maxi dribble and shot followed by a consolation from Valdo Lopes for Espanyol.



Real Madrid defender Cristoph Metzelder (R) slides in on Valencia forward David Villa during their Primera Liga match at the Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid on Saturday. Real rode on Gonzalo Higuain's goal to register a first league win for coach Juande Ramos.