



Adriano in dreamland

AFP, Istanbul

Luiz Adriano was in dreamland after spearheading Shakhtar Donetsk's five-man Brazilian attack in Wednesday's 2-1 UEFA Cup final triumph over Werder Bremen.

Adriano fired the Ukrainian outfit into a first half lead before his compatriot Jadson produced the extra time winner after Werder's Naldo snatched the equaliser ten minutes before half-time.

"My goal was one I have always dreamed of," Adriano said.

"It was very important, it showed that we had come to play and to take home the title. It was a landmark for me and my career, as well as for the club and the teammates that helped me reach this level."

Reflecting on the importance of Ukraine's first European trophy since independence he told UEFA's official website: "It's special."

"The club never even reached a UEFA Cup or Champions League final, so I don't know how to describe the great emotions me and my teammates are going through now."

"Five Brazilians play at Shakhtar, so it feels like family, but the Ukrainians are a part of it; the blend has had its reward. It's a huge title and everyone is dancing and enjoying themselves now."

Shakhtar manager Mircea Lucescu paid tribute to the German losers.

"We beat a very worthy adversary which had beaten Italian teams like AC Milan and Udinese to reach the final."

"After they scored the equaliser it became more difficult, we lost a bit of control of the game, but I believe we were the better team, we are the logical winners of this final."

PHOTO: AFP

Shakhtar Donetsk captain Darijo Srna (C) holds aloft the UEFA Cup for the last time after their victory against Werder Bremen at the Sukru Saracoglu Stadium in Istanbul on Wednesday.

Shakhtar's maiden European glory

AFP, Istanbul



An extra-time goal from Brazilian midfielder Jadson earned Shakhtar Donetsk a 2-1 victory over Werder Bremen in the UEFA Cup final here on Wednesday to clinch the Ukrainian side's first European title.

Wiese's 15-yard shot slipped through the grasp of Werder goalkeeper Tim Wiese in the 97th minute after the teams had been locked 1-1 at the end of normal time.

The Ukrainians, inspired by the inter-play of their five-man Brazilian contingent, then went ahead in the 25th minute when Adriano ran onto a loose pass and delicately lifted the ball over the advancing Wiese.

"We weren't able to play our usual football, we didn't put enough pressure on our opponents," said Werder coach Thomas Schaaf.

"We gave them too much space and lost too many balls. I congratulate Shakhtar, they were the best team on the night."

Mircea Lucescu's side settled first at the Sukru Saracoglu stadium and spurned the game's first clear opening when Adriano shot wide after being cleverly picked out on the cusp of the Werder area by Jadson.

The Germans thought they had snatched an equaliser in the last minute of the additional period, only for on-loan Chelsea striker Claudio Pizarro's bundled effort to be ruled out for a foul on Dmytro Chygrynskiy.

Brazilian striker Luiz Adriano had finished coolly to give Shakhtar the lead in the first half, before an error by goalkeeper Andriy Pyatov allowed Werder centre-back Naldo to level.

Shakhtar became the first team from Ukraine to lift a European trophy since the break-up of the Soviet Union,

RECENT WINNERS

2009: Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR)
2008: Zenit Saint-Petersburg (RUS)
2007: FC Sevilla (ESP)
2006: FC Sevilla (ESP)
2005: CSKA Moscow (RUS)
2004: Valencia (ESP)
2003: FC Porto (POR)
2002: Feyenoord (NED)
2001: Liverpool (ENG)
2000: Galatasaray (TUR)

Heynckes plays down title chances

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich's caretaker coach Jupp Heynckes on Wednesday said that he does not think his side can overhaul league leaders Wolfsburg to win the German title.

"I can't see anyone taking the title off Wolfsburg," Heynckes told the *Rheinischen Post* in an article to be published on Thursday.

Going into the final day of the Bundesliga season on Saturday, Bayern are two points behind Wolfsburg in second place.

In order to win what would be their 22nd German title, Bayern must beat third-placed Stuttgart, with whom they are level on points, and hope Wolfsburg lose at home for the first time this season against UEFA Cup finalists Werder Bremen.

Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge on Monday dismissed the likelihood of Wolfsburg being pipped at the post.

"We're working from the principle that the dice have been cast, that Wolfsburg have a 99.9 per cent chance of being champions and that

there will be no huge surprises," he said. "They won't lose this title."

Heynckes echoed his chairman by reiterating that it was more important for Bayern to make sure of second place and thereby secure direction qualification for next season's Champions League.

"Even though Stuttgart are in form at the moment, I'm convinced that we'll beat them," he said.

"The team is working better and better, we've rediscovered the joy of playing and we'll be at our best on Saturday."

Heynckes, 63, was drafted in to replace the sacked Jürgen Klinsmann until the end of the season but said he had no intention to keep him as a coach when his stint at Bayern comes to an end.

"There are some offers, but I don't want to take over another team," he said.

Heynckes also voiced his backing for his successor Louis van Gaal, who was last week confirmed as Bayern's new manager after leaving Dutch champions AZ Alkmaar.

"(Bayern general manager) Uli Hoeneß asked me for my opinion and I told him there could only be one solution: Van Gaal," said Heynckes.

Perez keen on Mourinho

AFP, Rome

Florentino Perez, favourite to win the race to become Real Madrid's next president, is reportedly keen to lure Inter Milan coach Jose Mourinho to the Bernabeu stadium next season.

Perez has singled out the former Chelsea boss as his number one target to take over from Juande Ramos next season should he succeed in winning the June 14 presidential election, according to Thursday's *Gazzetta dello Sport*.

Mourinho, who has repeatedly stated his intention to remain at Inter next season, has already been contacted by Perez's advisors and has notified Inter president Massimo Moratti of the interest from Spain.

According to *La Gazzetta* Mourinho has a five to six million euro get out clause in his contract with his recently crowned Italian champions which runs until 2011.

Rio confident of Barca date

AFP, Manchester

Rio Ferdinand has voiced confidence that he will be ready to play against Barcelona in the Champions League final next week, despite being told he must prove his fitness in Manchester United's final Premier League match.

United boss Sir Alex Ferguson has said Ferdinand will have to be involved in Sunday's match at Hull if he is to be trusted with the task of keeping tabs on Thierry Henry and Samuel Eto'o in Rome.

But the England centre-back is confident he will have fully recovered from a calf injury that has kept him sidelined for the last three weeks.

"I've not thought about not playing in the final," the 30-year-old insisted. "It's as simple as that, no chance."

Ferdinand's chances of being ready for Barca were bolstered by the fact that he returned to full training on Wednesday and it has been suggested that Ferguson was indulging in a bit of kidology by talking up the possibility of his most experienced defender missing the final.

Ferdinand added: "You'll have to ask the manager if I'm playing, but physically I'd be able to do it, no problem."

Argentina down Panama

Football

INTERNET, undated

Argentina defeated Panama 3-1 in an international friendly match at the stadium of Colon de Santa Fe on Wednesday.

Diego Maradona, the coach of Argentina, opted for a home-based side to confront the match, looking ahead to the upcoming World Cup qualifiers next month.

Los Albicelestes started the stronger of the two sides, and they came close to scoring early through Nicolas Otamendi and Jose Sand.

"That's the same motivation I had when I looked at the coaches, that desire to play, for them to put me on," he continued.

"I saw lots of 'Maradonians'. When I was at Napoli and [Carlos] Bilardo would come to visit me, the Italians wouldn't understand anything. But I would get emotional, because the coach from the national team had arrived."

"A similar thing happened with the guys. In their look I noticed that they wanted to play, for me to put them on. That's important."

Maradona was particularly impressed with the performance of Colon midfielder Sebastian Prediger, a player who could well feature in the upcoming World Cup qualifiers.

"If I had to choose one, I think the player to follow carefully is Prediger. But I can't guarantee anybody a place on the list. For that we will have to wait," the coach said.

Argentina will meet Colombia and Ecuador in two vital 2010 World Cup qualifiers next month.

Moscow pain spurs Park on

CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Manchester

Park Ji-Sung has admitted that missing out on last season's Champions League final was more painful than either of the two serious knee injuries he has suffered in his career.

And the Korean ace is desperate to make up for it by ensuring he is on Sir Alex Ferguson's team-sheet for this year's final, against Barcelona in Rome next week.

Ferguson has described the decision to leave Park out of the 18-man matchday squad for last season's final win over Chelsea in Moscow as one of the hardest he has made in more than three decades as a manager.

But Park has continued to perform consistently for United this season and has been regularly involved in key games for the Old Trafford club.

Earlier in the season, Ferguson insisted that Park would be in his starting line-up if United reached the Champions League final again.

And even though Park remains cautious about his prospects of facing Barcelona in Rome, he feels stronger for the misery of being left out last time around.

He said: "Nobody knows until the first whistle so I'm just concentrating on the training and waiting to see how it goes. If I

play I'll do my best."

Reflecting on last season's bitter let down, he recalled: "I was very disappointed because all players want to be involved in games like the Champions League final. If they have a chance and then don't play, it hurts and it's heart-breaking."

"But our team won the title so I'm happy because I'm part of the team but not being in the squad was quite heart-breaking for me."

"That has helped motivate me for this season and after that I believe that Manchester United can reach the final again then I want to be there."

"I've worked hard and believed that and finally I have another chance so this time is different."

"It was probably the biggest disappointment. I also had cruciate ligament injuries but they're two different kinds of things for me."

Park has struck up a close friendship with Carlos Tevez and hopes the Argentina forward remains at Old Trafford for next season.

Tevez's two-year loan deal with United expires at the end of the season and the striker admits he may have to leave.

But Park feels that Tevez has made a major impact for United and would be badly missed.

He added: "It's very difficult for everyone involved at Manchester United because he's the best player we need him."

"It's his decision but hopefully he will stay. This season he's scored a lot of goals,

helped the team and saved the team. He works hard and scores a lot of goals."

Park admits he can not explain his incredible fitness levels but thinks that the likes of Wayne Rooney and Darren Fletcher rival him for work-rate.

He joked: "Maybe it's the Korean food. Some players can run as well as Fletcher or Rooney as well. It's not just me."

The midfielder enjoys a quiet life away from football and accepts that unlike in South Korea, he is not a major star in the Premier League.

But he insists that he is unconcerned that he does not rival Cristiano Ronaldo and Rooney in the celebrity stakes.

He said: "The cultures are different and Asian fans chase me and shout at me and it's different in England. When I go back to Korea then maybe I can't walk in the street."

"I don't want to be a famous or popular guy, I just want to be a good player. I just like to be calm of the pitch."

Park feels he has made major improvements since joining United in 2005.

There has been speculation about a contract extension for the former PSV Eindhoven player and he wants to stay at Old Trafford for as long as possible.

He said: "I'm not sure because no-one knows the future but I want to be here longer and as long as I can."

"The manager is always encouraging me because I can do certain things and even if I don't score a lot he believed in me and he's helped me."