

Bayern see off MU

Football

SOCERNET

Manchester United suffered a penalty shoot-out defeat to hosts Bayern Munich after a goalless final of the Audi Cup.

Bayern held their nerve in front of a sell-out crowd of 69,000 at their Allianz Arena after United strikers Wayne Rooney and Michael Owen missed great chances in the second half to win the match.

Bayern enjoyed the better of the first half, in which Mario Gomez and Dimitar Berbatov both hit the woodwork, but United then had the better opportunities after the interval - only for Rooney and Owen to fail to beat Bayern goalkeeper Michael Rensing in one-on-one situations.

Rensing proved to be Bayern's hero as he made saves from Patrice Evra and Jonny Evans in the shoot-out before Daniel van Buyten stroked in the winner.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson changed his entire starting XI from yesterday's 2-1 win against Boca Juniors, with Owen and Berbatov leading the attack and Ryan Giggs given the captaincy.

Bayern coach Louis van Gaal also made wholesale changes with Breno and Martin Demichelis coming into the centre of his defence, Anatoli Tymoshchuk commanding the midfield and Rensing returning in goal.

The changes had not done much to slow the momentum Bayern had built up in their 4-1 win over AC Milan 24 hours earlier.

Gomez went close to breaking the deadlock in the 18th minute when he hammered a 12-yard shot on the stretch against Edwin van der Sar's crossbar.

Thomas Muller, whose double saw off Milan, missed the chance to add to his impressive tally of pre-season goals when he shot straight at Van der Sar after being released by Alexander Baumjohann in the 28th minute.

Five minutes later, Bayern were pleading for a penalty when Muller fell under the challenge of Jonny Evans, but referee Dr Felix Brych waved play on.

The Red Devils had to be patient before creating their first chance of the match five minutes before the interval.

Bayern failed to clear their lines after a Giggs corner had been flicked on to Berbatov by Rio Ferdinand and Owen only just failed to bundle the ball over the line.

The ball then sprang up for Berbatov to try an acrobatic overhead kick which cannoned off Rensing's right-hand post with the Bayern goalkeeper beaten.

United started the second half a lot brighter with Berbatov going close with a header from a Giggs free-kick before Owen had a chance to punish Bayern for losing possession in midfield.

The lively Nani was quick to react when Hamit Altintop lost the ball on the halfway line and he passed on the responsibility to Paul Scholes, who in turn threaded a pass into the path of Owen, but he arrowed his shot straight into the chest of Rensing.

Ferguson brought Wayne Rooney, Anderson and Antonio Valencia on and the fresh legs spurred them forward for one final assault on the Bayern goal.

Rooney should perhaps have grabbed a winner five minutes from time when he was put through by Giggs, but he blazed his angled shot high and wide with just Rensing to beat.

The game had to be decided by a penalty shoot-out, and another dose of England against Germany spot-kick drama.

Rensing made a one-handed save to deny Evra, but Van der Sar responded with a save from Daniel Pranjic.

Rooney scored United's fifth penalty, putting the pressure on Jose Ernesto Sosa, who found the bottom corner to force sudden death.

Evans had his effort saved by Rensing, leaving Van Buyten to score the winning penalty.



PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Michael Rensing dives to his left to save a penalty in the tie-breaker against Manchester United during the Audi Cup final in Munich on Thursday.

Bent in hot water

Football

AFP, London

England striker Darren Bent found himself in hot water after apparently using internet networking site Twitter to blast Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy for failing to rubber-stamp his proposed move to Sunderland.

Bent, 25, went online to hit out at Levy as his move to Sunderland drags on.

A Twitter account in Bent's name on Thursday carried a series of scathing attacks on Levy, who is said to be playing hardball with the Black Cats over the fee for player.

"Seriously getting p***ed off now," read the first message.

Bent then went on to add: "Why can't anything be simple?"

"Sunderland are not the problem in the slightest."

"Do I wanna go Hull City? NO. Do I wanna go Stoke? NO. Do I wanna go Sunderland YES."

It is thought Levy is attempting to recoup the 16.5 million pounds that Tottenham paid to sign Bent from Charlton two years ago, while Sunderland were hoping to pay 14 million pounds.

The move had seemed to be imminent when

Bent was pulled off Tottenham's trip to China just before the club's plane took off on Monday, but little progress has been made since.

On Friday, the account in Bent's name was removed from Twitter. Anyone logging in to the account, db10thetruth, found a message saying 'This page does not exist'.

Sunderland boss Steve Bruce admits the deal is in the balance and he fears another club, possibly Aston Villa, could make a last-ditch bid to snatch Bent.

Someone says Darren has been Twittering," Bruce told the Sunderland Echo. "I don't even know what that is, but I have seen a few things in the papers about it."

"Footballers aren't just objects. There's a human being in this who is obviously caught up in the middle and wants his future sorted out. The situation at the moment is that the clubs are still talking."

"We thought we had a deal done a couple of days ago and it has not quite materialised."

"We're still hopeful that we can agree a fee with Spurs, but at the moment there's a couple of other clubs showing an interest."

"We will do our utmost to get the deal over the line. I would say I was really confident that would happen a couple of days ago, but now I'd say it's 50-50."

Leonardo wants reinforcements

AFP, Rome

AC Milan lost their fifth pre-season match in a row and new coach Leonardo has reiterated his call for new signings at the seven-time European champions.

Milan lost on penalties to Boca Juniors following a 1-1 draw in the Audi Cup in Munich on Thursday evening.

That followed a 4-1 defeat to hosts Bayern Munich the day before and three defeats out of three in the World Football Challenge in the United States against Club America, Chelsea and Inter Milan before that.

Former Brazil star Leonardo remained upbeat despite the defeat but has once again pleaded with his bosses to bring in new players.

"This squad is not sufficient for all the commitments we have, we need to add a couple of players," he said.

Since the end of last season Milan have sold former world player of the year Kaka to Real Madrid for 67 million euros, seen Paolo Maldini retire and sent David Beckham back to Los Angeles and Andrei Shevchenko back to Chelsea after the end of their loan periods.

Coming into the club have been American defender Oguchi Onyewu on a free transfer from Standard Liege, Brazilian centre-back Thiago Silva and former Italy full-back Massimo Oddo, who has returned from a loan spell at Bayern Munich.

But the team have been left looking short in attacking and creative positions.

They have not won Serie A since 2004, since when their only trophy has been the 2007 Champions League.

Eto'o starts with a win

AFP, Monaco

Samuel Eto'o enjoyed a winning start to his Inter Milan career on Thursday when the Italian champions defeated French side Monaco 1-0 in a friendly match.

The Cameroonian striker, who signed a five-year contract on Monday after agreeing a switch from European champions Barcelona, started on the bench but came on at half-time.

Argentine striker Diego Milito grabbed the only goal of the game scoring from a Sulley Muntari pass in the 56th minute.

Eto'o was eventually substituted by coach Jose Mourinho in the 87th minute.

"It was a great night because it was important to win," said the 28-year-old Eto'o.

"On a personal level, I was tired. I have only trained three times. But little by little, I will feel better physically and I will be able to find an understanding with my teammates."

"I will be patient but also confident. Mourinho didn't say anything in particular except to play my normal game, freely and in peace."

"Now our hope is to win the Italian Super Cup. This season we will be playing every match in the championship as if it's a final. That's what we did at Barcelona."

Tribute flows for Robson

Football

AFP, London

English football's leading figures paid tribute to Sir Bobby Robson on Friday after the former England coach lost his long battle with cancer.

Robson passed away aged 76 at his family home on Friday morning and his death brought an immediate out-pouring of love and respect from the football community.

England manager Fabio Capello said: "Sir Bobby was a wonderful man, a real gentleman. "To manage the England national team for so long was a remarkable achievement and we all remember how close he came to leading England to the World Cup Final in Italy."

"His spirit and courage was incredible. To fight cancer so many times really showed the strength of the man."

"All the time we spoke over a cup of coffee with his close family, his passion for football shone through. He loved the game and was extremely proud of his country and the North East region."

"I also recall the tribute dinner hosted for Bobby when he wasn't planning to say more than a few words. In the end he stayed on the stage for a very long time, telling story after story, much to everyone's amusement."

Former England manager Glenn Hoddle, who played under Robson at the 1986 World Cup, told Sky Sports News: "It's devastating. Our feelings and thoughts go out to Bobby's family. Obviously for everybody in the football world it's a very, very sad day."

"He's the closest we've come to winning the World Cup since 1966 - that's how good Bobby was."

"In the 1990 World Cup with a little bit more luck and calmness in the penalty shoot-out, who knows what could have happened? He was right up there behind (1966 World Cup winning manager) Sir Alf Ramsey in that sense."

"You can see how respected he was all around the world. I was absolutely amazed to see, when he went back to Newcastle, the passion he had for continuing at Newcastle when

he'd done most jobs he wanted to."

Former England and Newcastle captain Alan Shearer, like Robson an idol in Newcastle, paid tribute to a "great man".

"He will be sadly missed by everyone, not just by people in the football world but from all walks of life," Shearer said. "It's a very sad day for everyone, especially his family, his close friends and anyone who's ever worked with him."

Former England striker Gary Lineker, who played under Robson at the 1986 and 1990 World Cups, said: "He had a tremendous enthusiasm and passion for football and life and continued to retain this right to the last days of his life."

Former England goalkeeper Ray Clemence, who also played under Robson, said: "He had such honesty and enthusiasm for the game as a player and manager."

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown paid tribute to Robson and said he would be "sorely missed".

"I was extremely saddened to hear of the death of Sir Bobby Robson," Mr Brown said.

"I had the privilege of meeting Bobby on many occasions. He epitomised everything that is great about football in this country."

"His passion, patriotism, dedication and professionalism knew no equal during his time both as a player and a manager."

English Premier League chief executive Richard Scudamore, speaking at the Barclays Asia Trophy tournament in Beijing, said: "Anyone who has spent time in Bobby's company was enriched."

"The great thing about him was that he made you feel you knew him well. He always had time to speak to you and share his passion for the game."

Newcastle managing director Derek Llambias added: "Sir Bobby was one of the game's true footballing legends, a unique, passionate man who gave so much to the game."

Newcastle players and staff, upon hearing the news, held a minute's silence at the training ground on Friday and Newcastle's St James' Park stadium was opened for fans to lay tributes to Robson.

'Robson like a father'

Football

AFP, Beijing

West Ham midfielder Kieron Dyer, a protege of Sir Bobby Robson's at Newcastle, wept during a tribute to the late footballing great at the Barclays Asia Trophy Friday, saying he was like a father to him.

The former England, Newcastle and Barcelona manager died at the age of 76 after a long battle with cancer, and it hit Dyer hard.

"He was a massive influence on my career on and off the pitch. I got told five minutes before kick off and it was quite a shock to the system," he said after West Ham beat Beijing Guoan 2-0.

"The minute silence before the game did overwhelm me. I am going to remember all the good memories he brought to my life, like how he used to get my name wrong and call me Kevin."

"My prayers are with his wife Elsie and his family."

"Hopefully back in England instead of doing a minute's silence at the games, they will do a standing ovation to celebrate his life and start clapping. What he brought to the game of football was just phenomenal."

Dyer said he played his best football under Robson.

"I was like a son to him. There was the Ipswich connection and at Newcastle he made a beeline for me. He was like a father figure to me and I am going to miss him."

Wearing a black arm band, West Ham manager Gianfranco Zola added: "He was a wonderful manager."

"I have many memories of him. He was always positive and always smiling. I think he was a great ambassador for football. He is going to be a big loss for us."

Fergie forced to adapt

Football

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson admits Cristiano Ronaldo's departure to Real Madrid has forced him to change the way Manchester United will play this season.

Ferguson often set up his team with three central midfielders last season to allow Ronaldo a free role.

That allowed Ferguson to get the best out of Ronaldo, while keeping a solid defensive base, and the Portugal winger responded with over 60 goals in the last two seasons.

But after Ronaldo's world record 80 million pounds sale, Ferguson wants more goals from all his players and he has been experimenting with different combinations in midfield and attack.

In an interview in Inside United, posted on manutd.com, Ferguson said: "Obviously Cristiano is a big loss in terms of the goals he gave us."

"But we will just have to find the goals from somewhere else and our tactics will adjust accordingly. Fans will see us playing a slightly different style of football this season."

Ferguson has already used Wayne Rooney more as a central striker, rather than playing him out wide as he did last season.

"Usually you look to score about 100 goals in all competitions, so we are aiming for that again," Ferguson said. "If we are going to win the league again or do well in Europe we certainly need players to step up."

"Going back a few years, we could always guarantee goals from Paul Scholes, Ryan Giggs and David Beckham, who always pitched in with about 10 a season."

"Those goals from midfield have dried up a little in recent years, so we have to address that."

"I will be looking to Park Ji-Sung, Nani, (Luis Antonio) Valencia - even (Danny) Welbeck and (Federico) Macheda - to contribute 40 goals between them. The defenders will contribute a few from set-pieces too."

Parma sign Panucci

AFP, Rome

Parma have signed former Italy international defender Christian Panucci from Serie A rivals AS Roma, the club announced on their website on Friday.

The 36-year-old Panucci formerly played for AC Milan, Inter Milan, Real Madrid and Chelsea among other clubs.

However, he fell out with Roma coach Luciano Spalletti midway through last season and was frozen out of the first team picture until making a humiliating public apology.

Panucci was unhappy at losing his place in the starting line up last season with Philippe Mexes and Juan preferred at centre-back and Marco Motta given the right-back berth.

He played 57 times for his country and has made more than 600 appearances for clubs in four different countries.

Parma were promoted back to Serie A at the first attempt last season after finishing second in Serie B.

Mutu loses Chelsea appeal

AFP, Geneva

The Court of Arbitration for Sport on Friday rejected an appeal by former Chelsea striker Adrian Mutu against a 17.2-million-euro (25.3-million-dollar) damages payment to the London club.

Football's governing body FIFA had ordered Mutu to pay Chelsea the compensation following the striker's positive cocaine test in 2004 while playing for the Premier League club.

"The CAS panel concluded that the appeal brought by the player was to be dismissed and the measure of damages, as awarded by the DRC (FIFA), was to be confirmed," the Lausanne-based court said in a statement.

"Adrian Mutu must therefore pay 17,173,990 euros to Chelsea FC," it added.

Heinze going to Marseille

AFP, Marseille

Marseille have reached agreement with Real Madrid over the transfer of Argentine defender Gabriel Heinze to the French side, the club said on Thursday.

The 31-year-old international, with a reputation for an aggressive style of play, is to join Marseille for three years, once his medical examination and contract details have been completed, a statement on the club's website said.

The former Manchester United and Paris St Germain player had been under contract with Real until next year, but management at the Bernabeu recently made it clear that following this summer's multi-million euro recruitment campaign he was surplus to requirements.

Marseille coach Didier Deschamps put a priority on the signing of the player, who besides Argentine nationality has German and Italian passports.



PHOTO: AFP

Inter Milan striker Samuel Eto'o vies with Monaco's Thomas Mangani (C) during their friendly match at Louis II Stadium in Monaco on Thursday.