



Everyone was expecting something special from Lionel Messi and he didn't disappoint. Here Barcelona's Argentine superstar celebrates after scoring the second goal from a gem of a left footer against Manchester United in their Champions League final at Wembley yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Barca immortals land European glory

AFP, London



Manchester United 3-1 at Wembley to claim their second Champions League crown in three years.

Goals from Pedro, Lionel Messi and David Villa secured a deserved victory for the Catalan magicians after England international Wayne Rooney had raised United's hopes with a well-taken first-half equaliser.

The star of an electrifying team performance was Argentinian striker Messi, the 23-year-old maestro whose brilliant effort on 54 minutes

saw him equal Ruud van Nistelrooy's record of 12 goals in a single Champions League campaign.

It also took Messi's tally for the season to an astonishing 56 goals in 62 games for club and country, and propelled Barcelona towards their fourth victory in club football's most prestigious competition.

Sir Alex Ferguson's United had been determined to avoid a repeat of the 2009 final in Rome, where Pep Guardiola's side had struck early before going on to clinch a 2-0 win at the Stadio Olimpico.

Yet despite a bright opening United were ultimately handed a defeat that was just as emphatic as their loss two years ago, with the Spanish champions revelling in the wide open spaces of Wembley.

United, lining up in an aggressive 4-4-2 formation, had harried Barcelona relentlessly in the early exchanges as they sought to prevent the Catalans from settling into their flowing passing rhythm.

But it was not long before Barcelona found their feet and United were to spend much of the opening half an hour, and the match, firmly on the back foot.

Villa shot wide after being picked out by Messi on the edge of the area and moments later Pedro went close after Xavi and Gerard Pique combined menacingly.

A jinking run by Messi set alarm bells jangling in the Manchester United defence before the striker threaded a lovely pass to Pedro only for United skipper Nemanja Vidic to

slide in with an important block.

United had Vidic to thank for another superb piece of defending shortly afterwards, the Serbian judging his tackle brilliantly to deny Messi.

But on 27 minutes, Barcelona's relentless pressure finally reaped its reward. An exquisite pass from Xavi struck with the outside of the boot picked out Pedro and the winger coolly clipped his shot beyond van der Sar.

At that point Ferguson must have been fearing a repeat Rome.

But crucially, United were able to find an equaliser within seven minutes.

Rooney combined passes with Michael Carrick out wide on the

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Chennai stay kings

AFP, Chennai



A clinical Chennai Super Kings clinched their second Indian Premier League (IPL) title in a row with a 58-run thrashing of Royal Challengers Bangalore in a lop-sided final on Saturday.

Opener Murali Vijay cracked 95 runs off just 52 balls to help the defending champions pile up 205-5 before Ravichandran Ashwin removed Bangalore's openers early, ensuring a fine win for the hosts at a packed Chidambaram Stadium.

League-toppers Bangalore, who were seeking their maiden IPL title, folded up at 147-8 off 20 overs.

The home team owed their win to Vijay whose record 159-run stand for the first wicket with Australian Michael Hussey (63) set the platform for a winning total after captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni elected to bat first.

Their stand surpassed the 155-run partnership between Adam Gilchrist and Venkatsai Laxman against Mumbai in the inaugural edition of the IPL in 2008.

Bangalore's chase was derailed early with

off-spinner Ashwin (3-16) getting rid of the dangerous Chris Gayle for a duck in the very first over.

Gayle, who still finished as the highest run-getter with 608 runs from 12 innings, offered an outside edge which was snapped up by Dhoni behind the wickets.

Gayle's dismissal triggered a collapse with Bangalore losing their next six wickets inside 11 overs to be reduced to 70-6, a situation from which they could never really recover.

Saurabh Tiwary offered some resistance with an unbeaten 42 but the other Bangalore batsmen simply caved in under pressure.

Vijay, pointed out as the weak link in the Chennai line-up after an indifferent run with the bat in the tournament, decided to make amends at the big stage, unleashing six sixes and four fours in his blazing knock.

Hussey also impressed, hitting three sixes and as many boundaries in his 45-ball innings before holing out to Abhimanyu Mithun near the boundary ropes off left-arm spinner Syed Mohammad.

Vijay, who seemed to struggle in hot and humid conditions during the later

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MSC election postponed

SPORTS REPORTER

The election for the board of directors of the newly formed limited company of Mohammedan SC was postponed as there was no submission of nomination papers by the deadline yesterday. A total of 17 directors are to be voted by the 213 members of the club in the election. 71 nomination papers were bought but none was submitted till yesterday.

Akhter Hossain Khan, the chief election commissioner for the election said: "Since there was no submission of papers, we had to postpone this election. We have informed the current board of directors about this and they will decide on the next course of action."

The last date of holding

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PHOTO: STAR

MA Muhit (C) arrived at the capital yesterday after becoming the second Bangladeshi to scale Mount Everest. He left Dhaka on April 8 this year and reached the summit of Mount Everest at around 7:00am on May 21.

Eng not far behind

Cricket

AFP, Cardiff

Alastair Cook and Jonathan Trott both made centuries against Sri Lanka in the first Test here on Saturday as they carried on from where they left off in Australia.

Cook was 129 not out and Trott 125 not as England closed on 287 for two in reply to Sri Lanka's first innings 400, a deficit of 113, at stumps on the third day in this opening match of a three-Test series.

Cook's hundred was also his second in as many Test innings following the 189 he made in an innings win against Australia in Sydney in January.

That victory completed a 3-1 Ashes series triumph during which the Essex opener scored a mammoth 766 runs at 127.66.

Meanwhile Cook and Trott's so far unbroken stand of 240 was their fourth century partnership in eight Tests, following 116 against Pakistan at The Oval, 329 in the Ashes opener against Australia at Brisbane and 173 in Adelaide.

Cook, 71 not out at tea, square cut seamer

Suranga Lakmal for four to complete his 17th Test century, at the youthful age of just 26, in just over five hours off 224 balls with eight boundaries.

South Africa-born Trott, who is averaging more than 60 in Tests -- only the legendary Don Bradman with 99.94 has a better mark among batsmen who have played at least 20 innings -- was not far behind in reaching three figures.

The 30-year-old Warwickshire batsman completed a sixth century in just his 19th Test when, after Sri Lanka had taken the new ball, he cover-drove Lakmal for an eighth boundary -- a shot that also raised a stand of 200 with Cook.

England, before play on Saturday, announced James Anderson would not bowl again this match because of a side strain he suffered on Friday, with the swing specialist now doubtful for next week's second Test at Lord's.

However, he was deemed fit enough to resume as nightwatchman when the match got underway again after rain washed out Saturday's morning session.

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