



Inter Milan striker Samuel Eto'o (R) scores one of his two goals past Palermo goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu during their Italian Cup final at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Barca dance to Shakira's tune

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona's Europe-conquering players danced on stage with Shakira in a night of wild homecoming celebrations after they won the Champions League.

Defender Gerard Pique, who is Shakira's boyfriend, dragged his teammates to her concert Sunday night after promising to do so in a message on Twitter just after Barca's 3-1 demolition of Manchester United in Wembley.

Along with fellow players including striker David Villa, Pedro Rodriguez, Bojan Krkic and midfielders Sergio Busquets and Xavi Hernandez, they linked arms and danced with Shakira before a huge crowd in the Olympic stadium.

The 24-year-old Pique met the Colombian pop star last year while shooting the video to her song "Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)" - the official track of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, which was won by Spain.

Shakira, a Barca fan and a four-time Grammy award winner, is on a "Sale el sol (The sun is coming out)" tour.

Coppa Italia Inter's FIFA in turmoil

Football

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan beat Palermo 3-1 at the Stadio Olimpico here on Sunday to lift the Italian Cup and rescue an otherwise disappointing season.

It was Inter's fourth Cup success in the last seven years and Palermo's third defeat in as many trips to the Cup final.

Samuel Eto'o was the hero for Inter, scoring a brace and taking his season's tally for the club to 37 goals in all competitions, beating his previous best total at Barcelona by one goal.

"In football the important thing is to win and without the victory my record wouldn't have been as sweet," said the Cameroon captain.

For Inter boss Leonardo it was his first trophy as a coach.

Ezequiel Munoz briefly gave Palermo hope late on, although he was subsequently sent off, before Diego Milito sealed the victory in injury time.

"We can hold our heads up, we played well but they have great players," said Palermo midfielder Giulio Migliaccio.

"But we brought 50,000 fans from Palermo and that's also a reason to be proud."

Palermo had the better start as Abel Hernandez fired into the side-netting in the first minute.

Their best chance came on 18 minutes as Javier Pastore and Josip Illicic played a one-two but the Argentine's touch was too heavy and Inter goalkeeper Julio Cesar came out to smother.

Pastore then shot over but Inter scored from their first attack with a lightning counter-attack after Palermo's Nigerian midfielder Afriyie Acquah lost the ball in midfield under pressure from Thiago Motta.

The ball broke to Wesley Sneijder who quickly played it inside full-back Mattia Cassani and Eto'o latched onto the ball at pace to slide it past Salvatore Sirigu.

That took the sting out of Palermo and Inter came closer to scoring again before the break when Sneijder fired a free-kick over.

However, the Sicilians were back on the front foot after the restart and substitute Fabrizio Miccoli brought a fine save out of Cesar on the hour mark with a flash header from a right-wing cross.

Dejan Stankovic threw himself in front of a Hernandez shot and Inter also survived a frantic goalmouth scramble after Illicic's clever backheel put Cassani behind the backline and his cross caused panic in the box.

Hernandez then turned Andrea Ranocchia inside the box but Cristian Chivu got back to make a goal-saving tackle.

But as they pushed forward for an equaliser, Palermo left themselves vulnerable at the back and another ball lost in midfield, when Sneijder robbed Migliaccio, saw the the Dutchman slip in Eto'o again to fire across Sirigu and settle the game 14 minutes from time.

It could have been worse still for the game Sicilians as Sirigu pulled off a diving save to deny the excellent Sneijder four minutes from time.

But two minutes later Munoz was left totally free at the back post to head home Miccoli's corner without an Inter defender within touching distance to set up a grand-stand finish.

In a crazy finish, Munoz was wrongly sent off after winning the ball against McDonald Mariga, the referee deeming it a foul, and Eto'o crashed the resulting free-kick against the bar.

Then in injury time Goran Pandev teed up Milito to snatch the third.

Football

AFP, Zurich

Embattled FIFA president Sepp Blatter was set to speak out here Monday on the corruption row that has wracked football's governing body and threatened his own stranglehold on the top job in the sport.

Blatter, who was cleared of involvement in an ongoing bribery probe on Sunday, was due to hold a press conference at FIFA headquarters at 6pm local time (1600 GMT) following an executive committee meeting.

It follows a weekend of high drama where Blatter's rival for the FIFA presidency, Asian football chief Mohamed bin Hammam, withdrew from the election just hours before being barred from football activities pending a graft probe.

Blatter however was facing fresh corruption allegations on Monday after FIFA vice-president Jack Warner accused him of giving one regional confederation \$1 million with no questions asked.

Warner, who was also suspended with bin Hammam over claims against both men about alleged vote-buying before Wednesday's poll, unleashed what he called a "football tsunami" aimed at Blatter and FIFA general secretary Jerome Valcke.

In his most serious claim, Warner accused Blatter of giving the North, Central American and Caribbean federations (CONCACAF) "a gift of one million USD... to spend as it deems fit" this month.

He added that Valcke said he would "find the money for Mr. Blatter" even though the payment was not authorized by FIFA's finance committee, and claimed Blatter gave the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) "gifts of laptops and projectors" on May 10.

Warner's allegations are the latest in a spiral of claims whirling around senior FIFA figures, prompting widespread calls for deep reforms at the body which heads the world's most popular sport.

But despite the farcical events of recent days Blatter, who has helmed FIFA since 1998, looks certain to be re-elected unopposed for a fourth term as president on Wednesday.

Bin Hammam, whose stunning surrender in the presidential race came only hours after he passionately denied all charges and said they were trumped up, called his suspension "completely disproportionate".



Colombian pop superstar Shakira enthralled the audience at the Olympic Stadium in Barcelona on Sunday to celebrate Barca's Champions League glory.

PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: AFP

Germany striker Mario Gomez celebrates his opening goal against Uruguay during their international friendly in Sinsheim on Sunday.

Germans warm up well

Football

AFP, Sinsheim

Germany warmed up for their up-coming Euro 2012 qualifiers with a 2-1 friendly win over Uruguay on Sunday in a rematch of last year's World Cup third-place play-off.

First-half goals by Bayern Munich hot-shot Mario Gomez and Mainz's Andre Schuerrle put the hosts 2-0 up at the break before Napoli's Walter Gargano pulled a goal back for the guests in a low-key friendly.

Gomez is coming off his best season and the 25-year-old scored his 16th goal in his 44th international, having scored 28 times for Bayern in the Bundesliga to finish as the German league's top scorer.

Germany now face qualifiers for Euro 2012 against Austria, in Vienna on Friday, and Azerbaijan in Baku on June 7 and Gomez said his side must do more.

"We started well and played with a high tempo in front of goal," said Gomez, with his side unbeaten with five wins at the top of Group A.

"We created two nice goals, but we will have to do more (to win in Vienna)."

Uruguay are preparing for the Copa America which will be held in Argentina from July 1-24 and face Peru in the first game of the south American cup.

Germany coach Joachim Loew fielded an experimental midfield with veteran Simon Rolfes of Leverkusen alongside youngsters Bayern Munich's Toni Kroos and Schuerrle.

After a dull start to the game, the match burst into life in the 20th minute when Gomez robbed Fenerbahce defender Diego Lugano of possession just inside the Uruguay half.

He beat two defenders and drew the goalkeeper before rifling his shot home for a superb individual goal.

The hosts extended their lead when Schuerrle, winning only his third cap, slotted home his first goal for his country on 35 minutes when Real Madrid winger Mesut Ozil found a hole in the guests' defence.

Schuerrle smashed home an unstoppable shot from the edge of the penalty area.

But Uruguay were denied a goal when Germany Manuel Neuer made a hash of a shot by Atletico Madrid's Diego Forlan and spilled the ball into his own net, but luckily the linesman ruled off-side to make it 2-0 at the break.

The South Americans pulled one back when Napoli midfielder Gargano made no mistake directly in front of goal and punished the German defence on 48 minutes to breathe life back into the game.

With Ozil off, Germany's attack struggled to impose themselves while Uruguay had a few chances to equalise as the game wore on.

Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez made just two changes to his side, Loew took the opportunity to experiment, bringing on six replacements, including wunderkind Mario Goetze, who only turns 19 next week.

Goetze had a chance to net Germany's third in the dying stages, but failed to chip his shot over Uruguay goalkeeper Fernando Muslera of Lazio.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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Rahmatganj v Farashganj

Time: 4:15pm

Venue: Bangabandhu

National Stadium