

Chile rally against Mexico

AFP, Buenos Aires



After Brazil and Argentina had served up dull fare in their opening matches, the Copa America finally caught fire Monday as Chile came from behind to edge Mexico and take command of Group C, where fancied Uruguay were held by Peru.

Four draws in five matches, an average of barely a goal per game and sub-zero temperatures had left fans less than impressed and questioning if they would see anything approaching samba-style football from anybody over the coming month, Brazil included.

Chile answered the question emphatically enough - though Arturo Vidal's winner against the Mexicans, a towering header from a corner, had a rather Anglo-Saxon, rather than latino, hallmark to it.

That did not worry the Roja, who had been staring an embarrassing defeat in the face at half-time after Nestor Araujo put a youthful Mexican side into a 40th-minute lead.

The Mexicans elected to rest most of their senior squad having just lifted the CONCACAF Gold Cup to give their youngsters some tournament experience.

But "El Tri", regular special guests at the South American event, eventually gave up the ghost after Esteban Paredes cancelled out Araujo's effort at the Del Bicentenario stadium in San Juan before a 25,000 crowd.

Vidal then bulleted home a header from Matias Fernandez's corner to cheer the large travelling Chilean contingent as they moved to within sight of a place in the quarter-finals.

"The opening match is always a real humdinger so it's great to get off to a winning start," said Vidal.

Alexis Sanchez, who is expected to be one of the stars of the tournament, said Chile had not lost heart after going behind and were rewarded for their tenacity.

"We kept calm and as a result the goals eventually came to enable us to turn things around," he said.

Mexico assistant coach Luis Fernando Tena suggested the Chileans, who came here on the back of five unbeaten friendlies, could potentially go one better than four previous final defeats.

"They have great players, they are a solid and strong team. They know each other well and this team can go a long way at the Copa. I think this is the best team I have seen at the tournament," he said.



Chilean forward Esteban Paredes (C) celebrates his goal with teammates Pablo Contreras and Mauricio Isla (R) during their Copa America encounter at the Estadio del Bicentenario Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Stars yet to shine

AFP, Buenos Aires



The Copa America - the world's oldest international football tournament,

going back to 1916, brings together some of the silkiest talents the global game has to offer.

A continental finishing school for the World Cup, or so the theory goes, the tournament allows perennial Latin American giants Brazil and Argentina a perfect opportunity to blood a new generation before, armed with the experience, they graduate to the senior tournament.

It worked for, among others, the likes of Ronaldo and Ronaldinho in the 1990s - but this year the opening round of action so far has generally hinted at a process in reverse.

In mostly disappointing matches to date, top talents who are already big names have flattered to deceive; the stars and the lights have gone out - or, more accurately, have not yet managed to switch themselves on.

That goes particularly for Argentina's waif-like genius Lionel Messi, who can do no wrong with Barcelona, scoring and making goals at will while calling upon seemingly endless energy reserves.

Brazil, for their part, expected great things from teen starlet Neymar of Santos and clubmate Ganso, who celebrated the end of their domestic campaign with a Copa Libertadores triumph.

But far from unpacking their magical talents at the Copa, all three greeted the ball as a virtual stranger in producing strangely muted performances

against, in Messi's case, Bolivia, and against Venezuela in the case of the two samba stars.

Messi and Neymar were more conspicuous for squaring up respectively to Bolivian skipper Ronald Raldes and Venezuela coach Cesar Farias rather than conjuring any special moves which might with a flash of brilliance have turned dull draws into precious wins, however laboriously achieved.

Both players may point to long - and highly successful - seasons at club level prior to arriving at the Copa.

Yet so much more was expected of them than they have delivered to date on their home continent, where fans are bemused at their sudden loss of form after swapping club colours for the national variant.

Tevez wants out

AFP, London



Argentina striker Carlos Tevez has confirmed Manchester City's worst fears by saying he must leave the club to spend more time with his children, according to an interview with Britain's Daily Mail.

City captain Tevez led the north-west side to FA Cup glory and qualification for the Champions League last season but all the while did so while living apart from his young daughters.

He is currently playing for Argentina in the Copa America but, in a statement published on the Mail's website on Monday, Tevez said: "It is with great regret that I have to inform Manchester City of my wish to leave the club.

"I would like to state that I have great respect for the club, its supporters and the

owner, Sheikh Mansoor, who has been nothing other than respectful to me.

"I hope that the people understand the difficult circumstances I have been living under the past 12 months, in regards to my family.

"Living without my children in Manchester has been incredibly challenging for me. Everything I do, I do for my daughters, Katie and Florencia. I need to be closer to them and to spend more time with them."

Tevez's daughters currently live with their mother, Tevez's estranged partner Vanesa, in Buenos Aires.

"I need them to be happy because my life is about them now. I need to be in a place where they can adapt.

"Being captain of Manchester City, qualifying for the Champions League, winning the FA Cup and finishing as top-scorer last season has made me very proud.



Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez (C) scores against Peru during their Copa America clash at the Estadio del Bicentenario Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Peru hold Uruguay

AFP, San Juan



The Copa America saw its fourth draw in only five games on Monday as Uruguay and Peru parted 1-1 in Group C.

Uruguay, having reached the World Cup semifinals last year with Diego

Forlan voted player of the tournament, pressed hard in the opening period but they were shocked when Peru took the lead through the constantly dangerous Paolo Guerrero.

The Hamburg striker netted in the 23rd minute when he took advantage of some slack defending by the "Charruas," rounded keeper Fernando Muslera and finished off by shooting home.

Brazil boss Mano Menezes had been sufficiently impressed by Uruguay's World Cup showing that he made them a dark horse bet for what would be a record 15th continental title this month.

But despite an attacking trident of Luis Suarez, Forlan and Edinson Cavani they were caught on the back foot by Peru's bright start.

It was Liverpool's Suarez who put the celeste back on terms in the dying moments of the first half when he slid home a neat low finish after a fine through ball by Nicolas Lodeiro.

But Peru, who endured a disastrous World Cup qualifying campaign, stuck to their task and in the second half they could have had further goals at the Estadio Del Bicentenario in San Juan as they thrilled their contingent in the 25,000 crowd who endured the freezing wintry conditions.

Forlan said the draw had been the right result.

"It was a tough match. It was complicated as they sat back. "If you don't take your chances at this level then you don't succeed".

Scholes ridicules Arsenal

AFP, London

Retired Manchester United midfielder Paul Scholes has rubbed salt into Arsenal's wounds, accusing the London club of being all style and no substance.

Speaking ahead of his testimonial at Old Trafford next month, Scholes said United manager Sir Alex Ferguson would never have allowed his team to go six years without a trophy as has been the case at Arsenal.

"They just flatter to deceive," Scholes said.

"They may play the prettiest football, but it doesn't always produce the results they need.

"It doesn't irritate me that people say they're the best footballing team because while they are doing that, we (United) are winning games," he added.

Scholes was often at the heart of United's rivalry with Arsenal over the past decade, and was accused by Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger last season of having a "dark side" to his play.

Scholes, whose last game for United was an appearance in their Champions League final defeat by Barcelona, meanwhile acknowledged that Wenger's side did play attractive football.

"They do play the best football to watch at times, but what is the point of that if you are not winning anything?"

"Not only that, they are potentially going to lose their best players in (Cesc) Fabregas, (Samir) Nasri and (Gael) Clichy," he added, referring to the widely reported speculation concerning Fabregas and Nasri.

Clichy joins City

AFP, London

Gael Clichy on Monday joined Manchester City from Premier League rivals Arsenal on a four-year deal for an undisclosed fee, reportedly in the region of £7million.

The French left-back will now challenge Aleksandar Kolarov for a regular spot in Roberto Mancini's starting side.

Clichy spent nearly eight years at Arsenal and his move to big-spending City is bound to be seen as a comment on the status of the two clubs.

Last season City pipped Arsenal to third place in the league and won the FA Cup as the Gunners trophy drought, which stretches back to 2005, continued.

Now Clichy is the latest Arsenal 'old boy' at Eastlands where his teammates will include Patrick Vieira, Kolo Toure and Emmanuel Adebayor.

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