



Suarez fires Uruguay

REUTERS, La Plata



Luis Suarez struck twice in three minutes as Uruguay beat Peru 2-0 in an enthralling encounter on Tuesday to reach the Copa America final and remain on course for a record 15th title.

Uruguay, fourth at last year's World Cup, go into the final at the Monumental in Buenos Aires against either Paraguay or Venezuela who clash in Wednesday's semifinal in Mendoza.

Uruguay went ahead eight minutes into the second half when Diego Forlan, the 2010 World Cup's best player, shot left-footed from outside the box forcing Raul Fernandez into a diving save and the ever alert Suarez nipped in to net the rebound from a tight angle on the right.

Suarez scored again three minutes later when Alvaro Pereira passed between two defenders from the left and the striker beat the offside trap, rounded Fernandez on the edge of the box and steered the ball gently home.

Peru captain Juan Vargas was then sent off in the 69th minute for elbowing Uruguay defender Sebastian Coates in the face.

"Today was a match in which we had to go out and attack, to play, and luckily it worked out well," Suarez, comparing it with a more defensive performance

against hosts Argentina in Uruguay's quarterfinal win on penalties, said in a televised interview.

"I think that to play the final in Argentina is great. Now we have to enjoy (the moment), the important thing is we reached the final which was our objective."

The first clear chance fell to Uruguayan midfielder Pereira in the 16th minute from a throw-in on the right but his shot from point-blank range was smothered by Fernandez.

Eight minutes later Peru had a chance when Vargas sent a low ball in from the left touchline across the face of goal but forwards Paolo Guerrero and Luis Advincula could not get a touch.

Peru central defender Wilmer Acasiete then had to be alert to cut across from the left to make a last-ditch clearance from Suarez in the 35th minute as Uruguay pushed for the opener.

Uruguay thought they had taken the lead when they had the ball in the net from a Forlan freekick in the 42nd but Pereira's effort was ruled offside.

In the second half, despite falling two behind and being a man down, Peru continued to press and defender Walter Vilchez had a header from a corner saved on the line by Fernando Muslera in the 73rd minute.

Guerrero then struck a swerving shot that deceived the Uruguay goalkeeper, who could only palm the ball before goalwards before diving to prevent it going over his line.

PHOTO: AFP

TAKING LA CELESTE TO THE FINAL: Uruguay's star striker Luis Suarez (L) points to the heavens as he celebrates one of his two goals during their Copa America semifinal against Peru at the Ciudad de La Plata Stadium on Tuesday.

IN brief

Diab says sorry

AFP, Dubai

A repentant Awana Diab will feature for the United Arab Emirates in an Olympic qualifier against India this weekend despite the furore surrounding a back-heeled penalty he scored against Lebanon.

The Bani Yas midfielder has become an internet sensation with clips of his outrageous penalty on video-sharing site YouTube attracting millions of views.

Awana scored the penalty with his team already 6-2 up in Sunday's friendly against Lebanon, nonchalantly jogging towards the ball, but then spinning 180 degrees at the last minute and scoring with a back-heeled kick.

The 21-year-old was shown a yellow card by referee Ali Hassan for his antics and a furious UAE coach Srecko Katanec hauled him straight off the pitch, despite Awana having only come on as a substitute 10 minutes earlier.

"I apologise to the UAE and Lebanese players and fans, and I am so sorry if they regarded my penalty kick as a gesture of disrespect."

Goal-line tech for EPL

AFP, London

Goal-line technology could be introduced to the English Premier League in time for the 2012/2013 season, chief executive Richard Scudamore said Wednesday.

Writing in a review of the Premier League season to be distributed to British lawmakers later Wednesday, Scudamore expressed hope that controversies over goal-line decisions could soon be a distant memory.

"The whole point of the game is about scoring goals. Players strain every sinew to either create or deny them, fans shout themselves hoarse exhorting their teams to score them, managers' and players' careers can be defined by them," Scudamore writes.

"The technology is available, it is the fairness that is important and the Premier League would introduce it tomorrow if it could. Now FIFA is constructively engaged we are hopeful the 2012-13 season is a realistic aim."

FIFA president Sepp Blatter had been a long-time opponent of goal-line technology, but softened his stance following controversies which included the infamous "goal" by Frank Lampard which was disallowed during England's 2010 World Cup clash with Germany.

Galatasaray snap up Muslera

REUTERS, Istanbul

Galatasaray have signed Uruguay goalkeeper Fernando Muslera from Lazio in a five-year deal, the Turkish club said on Wednesday.

Muslera, who will receive two million euros (\$2.8 million) annually from the Turkish side, is currently representing his country at the Copa America in Argentina. On Saturday he saved a penalty from Argentine striker Carlos Tevez to knock the hosts out of the tournament and on Tuesday the 25-year-old helped Uruguay beat Peru 2-0 to reach the final where they will play either Paraguay or Venezuela.

Xavi backs Messi

REUTERS, Barcelona

Criticism of Lionel Messi following Argentina's Copa America exit is "totally exaggerated" and having decent pitches would have helped him play better, his Barcelona team mate Xavi said on Wednesday.

"Leo is the best footballer in the world and unfortunately for him when things are not going well (for Argentina) criticism is directed his way," Xavi told a news conference.

"The criticism is totally exaggerated as he had a fantastic Copa America despite the setback of Argentina's elimination," the Spain playmaker added.

Argentina, who last won the Copa in 1993 and are hosting the current tournament, were slammed in the media after falling to Uruguay in a penalty shootout in the quarterfinals.

Xavi said some of the pitches at the Copa were "not at all in good condition" and

Fergie praises Berba

AFP, London

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has heaped praise on Dimitar Berbatov's approach to pre-season training following the agony of missing out on a place in May's Champions League final.

Many observers predicted Berbatov had played his last game for the club after being left out of United's squad for the match with Barcelona, with the Bulgarian refusing to watch the game from the stands as a result.

Ferguson said he would have sympathised with Berbatov had he sought a move during the close season - but said the striker had shown a renewed determination during pre-season training.

"What I have to say though is he (Berbatov) has been brilliant, first class," Ferguson told The Guardian.

"His training has been terrific. Missing out on the final was not easy, but there were seven or eight players disappointed at not being involved in it."

Asked if he would understand if Berbatov had attempted to force a move, Ferguson replied: "Yes, I'd understand that."

"But you could say that about them all. I don't pick the same team every week, do I? I've only done that once in the last three years."

"Yes, players will be disappointed they are not playing some weeks. But at the end of the day, it will help [the team]. By the time we get to the end of May next season, we will have done well."

Ferguson said the decision to favour Javier Hernandez over Berbatov for the Wembley final had been a no-brainer.

"It was straightforward, as far as I'm concerned. Chicharito (Javier Hernandez) hit such good form that you had to put him in for every game because he added so much in terms of threatening defenders all the time," he said.

"It was just unfortunate for Berbatov. It didn't make him a bad player, he was just an unlucky player in that this lad came in and did so well. But he will be all right."

Diego spits fire

AFP, Buenos Aires



Diego Maradona said on Tuesday that were he Argentina coach Sergio Batista he would quit following the side's early Copa America exit.

The Argentine Football Association says it will keep Batista on as coach despite their quarterfinal loss on penalties to Uruguay - he only succeeded Maradona after last summer's World Cup quarters loss to Germany.

But Maradona says that decision is wrong-headed.

"If I had only beaten Costa Rica, (Argentina's sole Copa success) I would have gone of my own accord," Maradona told Radio Belgrano.

"What is happening right now is not the fault of the players. Julio Grondona is doing just what he likes," Maradona asserted, in allusion to the AFA president, with whom he was in regular conflict during his ill-fated stint as coach.

Maradona and Batista were teammates in the side which won the 1986 World Cup but the two have been at loggerheads since Batista took over after the former was forced out.

Tevez deal collapses

Football

GUARDIAN, Undated

Carlos Tevez faces the possibility of having to return to Manchester City against his wishes, after his proposed £40m move to Corinthians disintegrated because of the financial implications for the Brazilian club.

Tevez is now running out of potential new employers following the official announcement from Corinthians that it was "impossible" for them to conclude what would have been by far the biggest transfer in the history of Brazilian football before Wednesday night's transfer deadline.

"While acknowledging the efforts of Manchester City, and everyone involved in the negotiations, there wasn't enough time for the transfer to be completed," a Corinthians statement said. "We are aware our fans wanted Tevez to join our club again and we hope we can have the player with us in the future"

City had accepted Corinthians' valuation of the player, with another £4m in potential add-ons, but the deal first ran into trouble because they could not agree a payment schedule that was acceptable to both parties.

City had made certain allowances to help facilitate the move, not least lowering their original £50m asking price, but their suspi-

Just as the Copa started, Maradona asserted Batista should not complain about being in the spotlight and if he didn't like the accompanying pressure should "cross the border to Uruguay, where nobody would recognise him," unlike his predecessor, who is instantly recognised worldwide.

"I can't speak much as I don't see the games," admitted Maradona, who agreed to coach Emirates side al Wasl and who has been preoccupied in recent weeks with his mother's deteriorating health.

Those commitments aside, he finds watching too painful.

"When the players come onto the pitch it's like a knife being twisted inside me," he revealed.

Maradona had blasted Batista before the Copa after the latter drew up a preliminary squad which included neither crowd favourite Carlos Tevez nor the former coach's son-in-law Sergio Aguero.

Tevez flopped, being dropped after two games before missing the crucial penalty against Uruguay which finished Argentina off.

Aguero did do well, scoring three goals. With Batista confirmed for now at the helm Argentina's next scheduled match is a friendly on August 10 against Romania in Bucharest.



Tevez to Internazionale in exchange for Wesley Sneijder. That, however, is not something that has got off the ground yet, and instead the collapse of the Corinthians deal leaves Tevez with the other scenario of being required to return to City for the start of the new season and resuming life in Manchester, the city he has openly admitted disliking.

As for Aguero, the chances of that move happening have been strengthened by Atletico's capture of the Deportivo La Coruna striker Adrian Lopez to take the Argentine's place.

Lahm defends Neuer

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich captain Philipp Lahm told SportBild on Wednesday of the "incomprehension" among his teammates at the negative reaction from fans to the signing of Manuel Neuer.

"Nobody within the squad can understand the reasons behind the hostile protests against Manuel Neuer," said the German international full-back.

Booing opponents may be part and parcel of the game but as Lahm pointed out, "the fans should offer their unconditional support to their own players".

"By protesting against Manuel Neuer they are really protesting against the team as a whole."

Lahm also hit out at the five supporters' groups who issued Neuer with a code of conduct following his arrival from rivals Schalke 04 earlier this summer.

SportBild revealed that the code of conduct banned Neuer from starting chants with the supporters, and also prevented him from approaching the fencing at the front of the Allianz Arena's south stand, where the hostile fan groups stand during matches.

In addition, the code prohibits Neuer from kissing the Bayern badge on his shirt.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Does Stuart Law give you hope?

Visit the sports page of

www.thedailystar.net to cast your vote

Follow The Daily Star Sport on

twitter

www.twitter.com/dssport



STAR Cricket

England v India

First Test, Day 1

Live from 4:00pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News