



Manchester United striker Robin Van Persie (L) scores the equalising goal during their Premier League encounter against Fulham at Old Trafford yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Van Persie inspires MU

AFP, London



Robin Van Persie marked his first start for Manchester United with a sublime goal, but his side's 3-2 victory over Fulham was marred by a nasty injury to Wayne Rooney on Saturday.

Van Persie had little chance to contribute during a brief substitute appearance in United's lacklustre defeat at Everton on Monday, but the striker took just 10 minutes to make his mark at Old Trafford with a brilliant volley to cancel out Damien Duff's opener.

Inspired by the £24 million Dutch forward, United went on to secure their first win of the season, but the result was overshadowed by Rooney's injury late in the second half which left the England striker, who was stretched off, with blood streaming from a deep gash in his thigh after he was caught by Hugo Rodallega.

Fulham had stunned United when Irish winger Duff, who retired from international this week, fired home from just inside the penalty area in the third minute.

But that brought a scintillating response from van Persie, who levelled with a blistering volley from Patrice Evra's cross.

Like van Persie, former Borussia Dortmund star Shinji Kagawa was making his first appearance at Old Trafford and he marked the occasion with his maiden United goal, tapping in when Mark Schwarzer parried Tom Cleverley's pass into his path.

RESULTS

Aston Villa 1 (El Ahmadi 74) **Everton 3** (Pienaar 3, Fellaini 31, Jelavic 43)
Manchester United 3 (Van Persie 10, Kagawa 35, R Da Silva 41) Fulham 2 (Duff 3, Vidic 64-og)
Norwich 1 (Jackson 11) QPR 1 (Zamora 19)
Southampton 0 **Wigan 2** (Di Santo 51, Kone 89)
Swansea 3 (Rangel 20, Michu 29, Graham 64) West Ham 0
Tottenham 1 (Assou-Ekotto 74) West Brom 1 (Morrison 90)
Postponed
Sunderland v Reading

Johnson joins Black Cats

AFP, London

Sunderland signed England winger Adam Johnson from champions Manchester City for an undisclosed fee on Friday.

Johnson agreed a four-year contract with the Black Cats and became manager Martin O'Neill's second signing in the space of a few hours after he swooped for Wolves striker Steven Fletcher earlier on Friday.

O'Neill had been tracking Johnson for several weeks and it is reported Sunderland paid around £10 million to beat Tottenham and Everton in the race to secure the former Middlesbrough winger's signature.

The Johnson deal takes O'Neill's Friday spending spree to close to £25 million after he paid a reported £15 million for Fletcher.

"Adding quality players to the squad has been our main aim this summer and Adam certainly fits that bill," O'Neill told Sunderland's website.

"He has terrific ability, great delivery and I'm sure he is a player who will excite our fans."

"I couldn't be more delighted to have him at the football club."

Johnson has won 11 caps for England, with his most recent coming in last week's friendly win over Italy.

But the 25-year-old, who was born not far from Sunderland in County Durham, struggled to hold down a regular first-team place at City after his £7 million move from Middlesbrough in 2010.

A significant amount of 97 City appearances came from the substitutes bench and he has been keen to leave for some while.



STAR Cricket

India v New Zealand

First Test, Day 4

Live from 10:00am

ESPN

English Premiership

Stoke City v Arsenal

Live from 6:25pm

Liverpool v Man City

Live from 8:55pm

STAR Sports

La Liga

Osasuna v Barcelona

Live from 10:55pm

Getafe v Real Madrid

Lyon drop first points

AFP, Paris



Lyon missed the creative spark of injured playmaker Yoann Gourcuff on Friday as they dropped their first points of their new campaign with a 1-1 draw at modest Evian.

Lyon had won their two opening games but fluffed their lines as only a Michel Bastos equaliser 16 minutes from time saved their blushes after Cedric Barbosa had given

Evian the lead on 57 minutes with a neat volley. Bastos had only minutes earlier replaced Lisandro when he pounced with a direct freekick which flew through a poorly organised wall.

Wins over Rennes and Troyes had taken Lyon to the summit on goal difference after thrashing Troyes 4-1 but Gourcuff sustained a knee ligament injury in that game and he faces three months out of action.

Lyon, champions seven years in a row between 2002 and 2008, finished a disappointing fourth last term and have brought in only one new player -- Serbian defender Milan Bisevac, from Paris Saint-Germain -- in the transfer window.

Following the two dropped points Lyon - who earlier announced the six million euros transfer of defender Aly Cissokho to Valencia - could now be overhauled at the weekend by Marseille, Bastia and Bordeaux.

Marseille, champions in 2010, Sunday face reigning titleholders Montpellier with the latter still yet to win having drawn with Toulouse and then lost at Lorient.

The champions have Chilean midfielder Marco Estrada out injured and defensive midfielder Jamel Saihi is suspended but new signing Anthony Mounier could make his first league appearance for the club after missing the opening two matches due to a thigh problem.

Lille, the 2011 champions, and Paris Saint-Germain will hope to get on track with the former struggling to reach the Champions League group stage after losing to FC Copenhagen in their play-off tie on Tuesday.

Cassano slams Galliani

REUTERS, Rome



Self-confessed "free spirit" Antonio Cassano gave a typically eventful first news conference as an Inter Milan player on Saturday, launching an attack on AC Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani.

Italy forward Cassano switched Milan clubs this week in a swap deal with striker Giampaolo Pazzini.

"At Milan it wasn't me who made mistakes, not the players or the coach, but someone above him," explained Cassano before alluding to a contract he said was promised after the team won the Serie A title in 2011 and never materialised.

"Someone promised something and didn't deliver who was all mouth and no trousers. You can say who I'm talking about but I don't even want to name him," he added in a clear reference to Galliani.

"I have to thank the Milan fans who put up a banner at the hospital," said Cassano referring to his minor heart procedure last November, "(president) Silvio Berlusconi who put a whole empire at my disposal and (his daughter) Barbara Berlusconi who was very kind."

"I had a problem with only one person." The outspoken Cassano said he ultimately left Milan because coach Massimiliano Allegri considered him a fringe player.

"Allegri never promised me anything, fine, but at least he made me feel important," the striker added.

"For him I was the fifth, sixth, seventh choice, like I was the weakest hand in the deck. Seeing as he never made me feel important, well then I'm going to leave."

L'pool agree Sahin deal

REUTERS, London

Liverpool have agreed a deal to sign Real Madrid playmaker Nuri Sahin on a season-long loan, the English Premier League club said on Saturday.

The Turkey international joined Real last year after helping Borussia Dortmund win the 2011 Bundesliga title but found opportunities limited because of injury and the form of Mesut Ozil.

Real boss Jose Mourinho was keen for Sahin to go to England to restart his career and Liverpool have swooped after interest from Arsenal cooled.

"The 23-year-old will now undergo a medical on Merseyside," a Liverpool statement said.

Sahin's departure from the Bernabeu is another indication that Tottenham Hotspur's creative midfielder Luka Modric could head to Real, while the future of Kaka remains uncertain.

Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers has hinted that Sahin would be a major first-team player at Anfield despite playing in a similar role to captain Steven Gerrard, who may now be asked to operate wide or as a holding midfielder.

Borussia pip Werder

AFP, Berlin



Defending champions Borussia Dortmund kicked off the 50th season of the Bundesliga on Friday with a 2-1 home win over Werder Bremen thanks to goals from German stars Marco Reus and Mario Goetze.

Dortmund and Bremen contested the first Bundesliga match back in 1963 and it was the same pair who opened the 2012/13 season on Friday night at Borussia's sold-out Signal Iduna Park Stadium in front of 80,645 spectators.

New signings opened the scoring for both clubs as Reus fired home in the first-half for Dortmund, while Bremen's Czech Republic defender Theodor Gebre Selassie headed the equaliser 15 minutes from time.

But Goetze grabbed the winner for the hosts just three minutes after coming off the bench.

"The way it happened didn't impress me or a few others, but the most important thing was to start with the three points," said Dortmund defender Mats Hummels.

Reus said he was just delighted to have made his debut.

"I had goosebumps when I ran out and I am happy that I am now a Dortmund player," said the 23-year-old.

"I think the opening goal was really important for the team."

Dortmund last lost in the league almost a year ago when they suffered a 2-1 defeat at Hanover on September 18, 2011, and this was their 29th game without losing in

the Bundesliga.

They are just seven matches short of Hamburg's record of 36 matches set between 1982 and 1983.

It was 1-0 at the break on Friday with Reus needing only 11 minutes to show his class.

Poland captain Jakub Blaszczykowski flicked the ball through for Reus, who joined from Moenchengladbach at the end of last season, to drill the ball into the far corner.

Reus was brought in to fill the vacant attacking midfielder spot in the wake of Shinji Kagawa's move to Manchester United.

Bremen came back as new signing Dutch striker Eljero Elia was only denied by a fine save from Roman Weidenfeller before Austrian striker Marko Arnautovic slammed a shot against the post.

After the break, Dortmund turned up the pressure as Germany defender Mats Hummels rose highest from a corner, but Bremen goalkeeper Sebastian Mielitz palmed the ball over the bar.

Dortmund were punished from some sloppy defending when Gebre Selassie put in a looping header over Weidenfeller on 75 minutes to give Bremen hope.

But the champions reacted by taking the lead again just six minutes later when Goetze slotted home the winner.

The 20-year-old gratefully accepted a pass from Poland striker Robert Lewandowski and held off the defence to score.

Bayern Munich start their league campaign on Saturday at promoted Greuther Fuerth, who will make their debut in the Bundesliga, while Schalke 04 are at Hanover 96 on Sunday.

Brazil great Felix dies

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

Brazil's 1970 World Cup-winning goalkeeper Felix, nicknamed "Paper" for his slight frame and the way he flew through the air to make spectacular saves, died of complications from emphysema on Friday. He was 74.

Felix Mieli Venerando played in all six of Brazil's matches in the 1970 tournament, making several key saves for a team that many consider the greatest of all time.

Some fans considered him the weak link in the team.

However, his team mates stressed he was a key member of the squad and pointed to a save from England's Francis Lee in Brazil's narrow 1-0 win in the group stage as one of the crucial moments in the tournament.

"We won that game because of the save from Felix," captain Carlos Alberto told Radio ESPN. "Without him we wouldn't have won the competition."

Quiet, unassuming and popular with his team mates, Felix played for Brazil's Juventus Portuguesa and Nacional in Sao Paulo, but he made his name after moving to Fluminense in 1968.



Borussia Dortmund midfielder Mario Goetze (C) is the toast of his teammates after scoring the winning goal against Werder Bremen during their Bundesliga clash in Dortmund on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP