

Real, MU finish all square

AFP, Madrid

Danny Welbeck and Cristiano Ronaldo headed a first-half goal apiece as Real Madrid and Manchester United played out a 1-1 draw in the first leg of the last-16 of the Champions League on Wednesday.

Former United star Ronaldo levelled on 30 minutes with his seventh Champions League goal of the season, making him the top-scorer in the competition, after Welbeck had headed home a corner 10 minutes earlier.

Alex Ferguson had promised goals before the match and they came early enough, but then his team put on a battling performance with David De Gea excellent in goal to take a draw into the second leg at Old Trafford on March 5.

Before kick-off all the talk was about the exclusion of a centre-half on either side.

It was expected that Pepe, who has only managed 25 minutes since an ankle operation at the turn of the year, would not be risked in such a big game for Real.

However, the omission for the visitors of Nemanja Vidic was a surprise after the Serb failed to even make the bench after captaining his side in a 2-0 win over Everton on Sunday.

Sami Khedira had the first effort for the home team in the second minute on finding space in the area, but he pulled his shot well wide.

Next it was Angel Di Maria who tried his luck from outside the area before De Gea tipped a goal bound shot from Fabio Coentrao onto the post.

United weathered the early storm and when Welbeck and Shinji Kagawa combined well to win a cor-



KEY STATS	Real Madrid	Man Utd
Shots (on goal)	28(8)	13(6)
Fouls	14	12
Corner kicks	12	9
Time of Possession	61%	39%
Yellow Cards	0	3

Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo (top) hangs in the air to head home the equalising goal during their Champions League round of 16 tie against Manchester United at Bernabeu on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

It's far from finished: Mourinho

Real Madrid boss Jose Mourinho insisted Thursday that the Champions League duel with Manchester United, which will probably decide his fate and legacy in Spain, is far from finished.

Mourinho, already a Champions League-winning coach with Porto and Inter Milan, backed his Real team to score again in Manchester.

"We can definitely score at Old Trafford, many teams have done already this season and they'll know that," said Mourinho.

"Because of the football culture in England I don't think they can play as defensively there.

"It's easy to understand -- if they score first we have to score, if we score first we're in the lead."

It's still 50-50: Ferguson

United manager Alex Ferguson was the happier with his side's performance and the result, picking out goalkeeper David De Gea for special praise.

"I thought De Gea was excellent and made four or five top saves, but he's been performing well all season, he's done well," said Ferguson.

"We would have taken 1-1 before the game. In the first-half I was disappointed at how deep we played, but the away goal is important. It's not finished but it gives us a good chance to go through.

"We had four attacking players in our team so I think we came to win the game.

"We'll play differently at home. They counter-attack very well but we have goals in our team. It's still 50-50 but the team that scores first will have a good chance."

ner on 20 minutes it was Welbeck who eluded the marking of Ramos to head home the opening goal and

his first in the competition this season. Ronaldo hammered wide the

rebound of his own blocked free-kick before grabbing the equaliser 10 minutes later when he leapt above

Patrice Evra to head home a Di Maria cross from the left. Moments later Welbeck was

Sevilla still owe wages

AFP, Madrid

Sevilla president Jose Maria del Nido has revealed that there are wages still outstanding to players from last season.

However, Del Nido claimed that despite their financial problems "90 per cent of Spanish sporting entities" would want to be in Sevilla's position.

"Of the 42 million euros, which is the total figure of the squad's salaries for 2011/12, there remains to be paid 3.25 million which isn't even 8 per cent," he told the club's website.

"The timetable of payments means that all the outstanding money will be paid off by a determined date within the next five months."

Xavi angry at media

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona midfielder Xavi believes that some in the Madrid media are trying to demonise his teammate, the four-time World Player of the Year Lionel Messi.

The Argentine was reported to have clashed with Real Madrid assistant boss Aitor Karanka and defender Alvaro Arbeloa after the pair's 1-1 draw in the first-leg of the Copa del Rey semifinal two weeks ago.

But Xavi has questioned why more attention was not paid to the game itself. "It is rubbish, speak about football. Why do we not speak about football? This has gone on for 100 years in football and it will continue to happen," he told the Barcelona-based sports daily Sport.

"Whoever loses ends the game angry: I don't know if this (the reported clash) happened or not. I didn't see anything, it doesn't interest me and I didn't ask Leo.

"Do they want to present Messi as a bad person, as the bad guy in the film? No, he's

competitive and will continue to be so. What do they want with all this?"

The Spanish international also denied that senior Barca players had run the team in recent weeks as manager Tito Vilanova receives treatment for cancer of the salivary gland.

Xavi instead said that the captains at the club had taken a more prominent role but were still under the guidance of assistant boss Jordi Roura and physical trainer Aureli Altimira.

"Roura has taken the mantle and he speaks every day with Tito. He will return soon and be with us. I don't know when but it is clear that we miss him.

"They are doing a great job. Jordi, Altimira and also those who have been in the dressing room a long time. We are all one.

"The captains are the ones that control a little bit of everything, we speak if there is a problem, but the routine is the same. Everything is done naturally and I think it is what Tito would want."

The 33-year-old accepted though that Barca face a big change if and when Victor Valdes decides to leave the club.

Bayern waiting on Martinez

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich are waiting on the fitness of Spain midfielder Javi Martinez ahead of Tuesday's Champions League last 16, first-leg clash away to Arsenal in London.

The 24-year-old defensive midfielder is definitely out of Bayern's Bundesliga clash against VfL Wolfsburg on Friday, having bruised his toe in Saturday's 4-0 thrashing of Schalke in Munich.

Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes has said the Bavarian giants need to see how the injury heals ahead of the trip to London.

"I hope he makes it but we must see how things develop in the next few days," he added.

Mats secures a draw

AFP, Donetsk



Germany defender Mats Hummels' late header gave Borussia Dortmund a Champions League lifeline with a 2-2 draw at Shakhtar Donetsk in Wednesday's last 16, first-leg, clash.

However, Dortmund's impressive result will be overshadowed by the deaths of five fans and 12 injured when a plane from Odessa, south Ukraine, carrying 45 people crashed while landing at Donetsk airport, just hours before kick-off.

A minute's silence was held as a mark of respect.

Dortmund twice came from behind and were heading towards their first European defeat of the season before centre-back Hummels powered home from a corner, three minutes from time.

Donetsk captain Darijo Srna's free-kick was cancelled out by a first-half equaliser from Dortmund striker Robert Lewandowski before Brazilian Douglas Costa restored Shakhtar's advantage 22 minutes from time.

Hummels' header puts Dortmund in pole position to reach the quarter-finals for the second-leg at Borussia's Signal Iduna Park stadium in a fortnight.

Having beaten Real Madrid, Manchester United and Ajax to win Group D, Dortmund came perilously close to joining current holders Chelsea in suffering defeat at Shakhtar's notoriously tricky Donbass Arena.

Dortmund made a bright start when Hummels clattered the woodwork with a bullet header from a corner with only 17 minutes gone.

Donetsk took the lead when Srna smashed a free-kick over the wall and into the top right-hand corner with Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller grasping at air on 31 minutes.

Borussia responded and equalised ten minutes later when a Mario Goetze cross wrong-footed Lewandowski and the Donetsk defence, but the Poland star responded quickest to slot his shot home.

Donetsk went back into the lead when Costa scored a dream goal on 62 minutes just six minutes after coming off the bench.

What to WATCH

- Channel 9 BPL (RACE TO FINAL) Sylhet Royals v Dhaka Gladiators Live from 6:00pm
- TEN Cricket South Africa v Pakistan Second Test, Day 2 Live from 2:30pm
- STAR Sports Serie A AC Milan v Parma

DAY'S EVENT

- BPL (RACE TO FINAL) Sylhet Royals v Dhaka Gladiators Time: 6:00pm Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur
- Bangladesh Premier League Soccer Club, Feni v Arambagh Time: 3:00pm

Diego becomes 4th time father

AFP, Buenos Aires



Argentine football legend Diego Maradona has become a father for the fourth time, after his former partner gave birth to a son in a private clinic in Buenos Aires, the woman's lawyer said on Thursday.

"Both the baby and Veronica (Ojeda, Maradona's former partner) are in good health, they are doing very well and are accompanied by the mother's sister and her family," lawyer Jorge Auruccio told journalists outside the clinic.

Auruccio said that the baby, named Diego Fernando, was born at 11:57 pm local time on Wednesday (0257 GMT Thursday) and weighed 3.2 kg (7lbs).

"From the nose upwards he looks like Maradona," the lawyer added.

Maradona, who is already a grandfather, currently lives in Dubai where he works as an ambassador for the Dubai Sports Council.

He separated from Ojeda several months ago but she still decided to name the baby after the star of Argentina's 1986 World Cup win.

Diego Fernando is the fourth child of the former footballer, who had girls Dalma and Giannina with his ex-wife Claudia Villafane, and is also the father of another son, Diego Junior, who lives in Italy.



Borussia Dortmund striker Robert Lewandowski (C) celebrates his goal with teammate Marcel Schmelzer during their Champions League second round clash against FC Shakhtar in Donetsk on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

England on the rise

AFP, Paris

Roy Hodgson's England side climbed two places to fourth in the latest FIFA monthly rankings released by world football's governing body on Thursday.

England moved above Euro 2012 finalists Italy and Colombia following their 2-1 win over five-time World Cup winners Brazil last week, with two-time defending European and reigning world champions Spain still top ahead of Germany and Argentina.

TOP TEN
1. Spain
2. Germany
3. Argentina
4. England (+2 places)
5. Italy (-1)
6. Colombia (-1)
7. Portugal (+1)
8. Netherlands
9. Croatia (+1)