

Jose fuels Chelsea rumours

AFP, Madrid

Jose Mourinho chose his words very carefully after seeing his Real Madrid side fall just short of an amazing comeback in the second-leg of their Champions League semi-final with Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday. Two goals in the final eight minutes from Karim Benzema and Sergio Ramos brought Madrid to the brink of the final after being hammered 4-1 in Dortmund last week, but after going out for a third consecutive season in the last four, whether Mourinho will hang around for a fourth try with the Spanish champions is highly doubtful. "I know that in England I am loved," he replied when asked about his future, "especially at one club".

That club of course being Chelsea with whom he won back-to-back Premier League titles in 2005 and 2006.

"In Spain it is different because some people hate me, many of whom are in this room."

He was referring to large swathes of the Spanish press with whom he has clashed throughout his three-year spell in the capital.

AFC elects new president

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Asian soccer finally got rid of tainted former leader Mohamed Bin Hammam on Thursday, voting in the Qatari's sworn enemy Sheikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa of Bahrain as president in a move that strengthened the hand of FIFA head Sepp Blatter.

Controversial Sheikh Salman made a mockery of predictions that it would be a tight race by sweeping to a landslide victory against Worawi Makudi of Thailand and Yousuf Al Serkal of the United Arab Emirates, both Bin Hammam allies. The victory allowed the AFC to finally move on, the door now firmly closed on the sorry Bin Hammam episode which started almost two years ago when the Qatari attempted to oust Blatter from the role of FIFA president.



Bayern Munich winger Arjen Robben (2nd from R) is the toast of his teammates after scoring the opening goal against Barcelona during their Champions League semifinal at Nou Camp on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

It's an all German final

Bavarians humiliate Barca; Dortmund edge Real

AFP, Barcelona



Bayern Munich cruised into their third Champions League final in four years as a 3-0 win over Barcelona at the Camp Nou on

Wednesday gave them an incredible 7-0 aggregate victory.

The absence of Lionel Messi from the Barca starting line-up almost eradicated any hope of an unlikely comeback before the game had even begun, but Bayern showed their 4-0 first-leg win last week had been no fluke with a display of controlled dominance.

Arjen Robben opened the scoring for the visitors with a trademark left-foot strike just after half-time before a Gerard Pique own-goal and Thomas Mueller's header in the final 20 minutes ensured Bayern booked their place in an all-German final against Borussia Dortmund at Wembley on May 25 in some style.

Already without Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba through injury and suspension respectively, Barca were handed another huge blow before kick-off as the persistence of a hamstring injury suffered in the first leg of the tie against Paris Saint-Germain in the last round forced Messi to start on the bench.

Without their talisman, Barca started tentatively and only a desperate sliding challenge from Pique prevented Robben from having a clear shot on goal after he galloped clear down the left on 11 minutes.

Pique had to be alert again seven minutes later as he again slid in to deny Philipp Lahm at the end of a wonderful Bayern move.

Pedro finally forced Manuel Neuer into a save on 23 minutes with a long-range effort that the German number one

another weak effort from distance by Adriano was the only other effort they managed on goal before the break.

It only took three minutes after the restart for Bayern to completely wipe away any lingering doubts they would be travelling to London for the final when

back, but this time the former Real Madrid man couldn't get the required touch to Franck Ribery's cross and the ball dribbled wide.

A sustained period of possession from the German champions then brought cries of "ole" from the visiting fans, much to the chagrin of the locals as Barca chased shadows in the way they are so accustomed to making their opponents do.

With home coach Tito Vilanova acknowledging the game was up, he then withdrew Xavi and Andres Iniesta, whilst Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes took off Bastian Schweinsteiger to avoid him picking up another yellow card which would see him miss the final.

But further pain was inflicted upon the hosts 18 minutes from time when a beautiful pass from Luis Gustavo played in Ribery down the left and his cross was sliced into his own net by Pique.

And three minutes later it was 3-0 on the night as more terrific play from Ribery saw him burst past Alex Song and dink a lovely ball to the far post for Mueller to head home his third goal of the tie.

"When we heard Messi wouldn't play, we were relieved. He's the best player in the world, he can win a game on his own."

Javi Martinez - Bayern midfielder

Reflecting on "possibly the worst night of my career", he did not believe Messi's absence was the only reason they lost.

"Clearly it isn't the same when you are missing without the best player in the world but I don't think that whether Leo played or not influenced the result."

Gerard Pique - Barcelona defender

turned round the post and Xavi then had the hosts' best chance of the first period as he hooked over on the volley after Cesc Fabregas had chested the ball down inside the area.

However, Barca were still out of sorts with a number of uncharacteristically long balls failing to find their target and

Robben collected a raking crossfield pass from David Alaba, cut inside Adriano onto his favoured left foot and buried a rasping drive past Victor Valdes into the far corner.

Robben ought to have had a second moments later as another quick Bayern break caught Barca outnumbered at the

RESULTS

Barcelona (ESP) 0 **Bayern Munich (GER) 3**
(Robben 49, Pique og-72, Mueller 76)

Bayern win 7-0 on aggregate

Tuesday

Real Madrid (ESP) 2 (Benzema 83, Ramos 88)

Borussia Dortmund (GER) 0

Dortmund won 4-3 on aggregate

End of an era



THE GUARDIAN

Newspapers in Madrid on Thursday morning proclaimed the end of the road for Barcelona's imperious era after Bayern Munich completed a ruthless 7-0 aggregate Champions League semi-final victory at the Camp Nou.

"The tie may already have been resolved after the 4-0 thrashing Bayern handed out in the first leg, but the Barca fans at least hoped for a dignified exit from Europe that in the end was only visible on the impressive mosaic held up by supporters before the game began," AS wrote.

"Barca have reached the end of a path that was glorious. They have lived the best era of their history. They will win the league, they will continue to win titles and their current model should remain, but if what happened on Wednesday was a casting to decide who is and who is not worth keeping for the future, the club will need to hire every removal company in Barcelona to help with the clearance."

Madrid's El Pais is equally brutal: "Barcelona is now an unrecognisable team in victory or defeat. The worst symptom was ultimately not to play Lionel Messi, but Messi knows that

Bayern would have won anyway. The performance yesterday was unforgivable from a club of the greatness of Barcelona."

Only the Barcelona-based Sport, the Camp Nou's closest media ally, attempts to defend the performance: "Barça, martyred by injuries and very, very fair of forces in this final stretch of the season, were not just a little tired at this point. The symptoms of physical and mental exhaustion shown against rivals like Madrid in the Copa del Rey have been shown in a much more stark way against an energetic Bayern."

The verdict on Bayern's performance and what it means for German football is clearly evident. "At Wembley, we will see the first all-German final in Champions League history," Marca said. "Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich have fired Germany back to the top of the European football pyramid."

The German tabloid Hamburger Morgenpost agrees and is in no doubt about the significance of the week's results: "The Spaniards were disenchanted in the semifinals. The two best teams in Europe come from the Bundesliga in its 50th anniversary year—it is a changing of the guard."

REUTERS, Madrid



The manner of the Champions League semifinal exits of Barcelona and Real Madrid have set in motion likely over-

hauls at both clubs, and is forcing La Liga to re-evaluate itself in the face of a resurgent German Bundesliga. Barcelona were humbled 7-0 on aggregate by German champions Bayern Munich on Wednesday, the day after Real almost overturned their shock 4-1 first leg defeat away to outsiders Borussia Dortmund, to go out 4-3 overall.

Like two ageing and distracted prize-fighters, tired after years of slugging it out between themselves for pre-eminence, Real and Barca have suddenly found themselves outclassed by hungrier and more dynamic opponents.

Since the first leg defeats, which prompted headlines of 'Germany 8 Spain 1' there has been much talk of a power-shift eastwards to the Bundesliga in European football.

The quality of football played by both the German teams has caught the eye, with their players appearing

fitter and stronger.

Spanish media have also noted Bundesliga's strict rules on club finances, greater fan-involvement, lower ticket pricing and the marvellous atmosphere in their stadiums.

One player ideally placed to make a comparison is Bayern Munich's Javi Martinez, a Spanish international who Barca were keen to sign last summer, but who chose instead to head to Bavaria.

"I don't know for sure but you can say they are doing a lot of things very well," the 24-year-old midfielder told Spanish broadcaster Canal Plus, when asked if the Bundesliga was better than La Liga. "The stadiums are always full, all the games at the Allianz Arena are in front of a full crowd. I don't know if it is the best, but it is one of the best two or three."

Not only has one of Spain's most talented young players headed to Germany, the architect of Barca's recent success Pep Guardiola is also lined up to replace Jupp Heynckes at Bayern for next season.

The new president of the Spanish football league (LFP) Javier Tebas has come into the post promising to make changes in La Liga targeting

tighter controls on club finances, and to tackle the threat of match-fixing.

He is also going to tackle the redistribution of TV revenues in Spain where Barca and Real rake in the lion's share leaving many of their rivals on the brink of bankruptcy.

"I believe we have to aspire for a league that is healthy economically, like the Bundesliga, and to try and sell our league like they sell theirs," Tebas told Spanish daily El Pais last weekend.

"We have to try and fill the stadiums. At the halfway point of the season attendances were down 3.4 per cent, which isn't much. But I am reminding the clubs: we can't maintain prices as they are."

Spanish sport daily As acknowledged Bundesliga's superiority in their Thursday editorial. "Germany are on the up. Barca will win the league and Real could yet win the King's Cup but neither will be happy. Now they need to go back to the drawing board," it said.

"It is clearer for Madrid, who will end the (Jose) Mourinho project. It is harder for Barca. Is Tito (Vilanova) up for this or not?"



Dortmund GM couldn't bear it

INTERNET, Undated

In the final ten minutes of Borussia Dortmund's Champions League visit to the Bernabeu on Tuesday evening, the Bundesliga side were perilously close to surrendering the 4-1 lead they held from the first leg. As Real Madrid scored two late goals and pushed forward to score a third that would secure a place in the final, the tension was almost unbearable for followers of the German side.

For BVB's general manager Hans-Joachim Watzke, there was only one way to deal with the situation: lock yourself in the can, put your fingers in your ears and wait until it's all over.

The 53-year-old explained his time in a Bernabeu bathroom to German newspaper Bild.

"It seems like we only can do it with drama."

"For the first time in my life I had to give up due to heart problems."

"I went to the toilet for the last minutes, locked myself in, covered my ears and looked at my watch."

"I had all kinds of thoughts going through my head."



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Maasranga TV & TEN Cricket

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe

First ODI

Live from 1:30pm

SET Max

Indian Premier League

Kolkata v Rajasthan

Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live from 8:30pm



DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League

Team BJMC v Arambagh

Time: 5:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium