

Red was wrong: Sony

SPORTS REPORTER



"Sheikh Jamal DC beat two of the Kolkata giants. They will beat us too and take the shield home? No, we could not let this happen," Sanjay Sen, the coach Kolkata Mohammedan Sporting Club told after the enthralling final at the Salt Lake Stadium on Saturday night where his side beat Sheikh Jamal 4-3 (1-1) in tiebreakers to take home the shield after 43 years.

But the way it was done, did not go down well with the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club players and officials. Coach Joseph Afusi was seen fuming against referee Santosh Kumar quite a number of times, especially when his talismanic forward Sony Norde was shown a straight red card for an alleged slap on Mohammedan defender Luciano Sabrosa's face. The Haitian only raised his hand in frustration, but it hardly touched Sabrosa's face. But the referee from Kerala astonishingly showed him a straight red and after realizing the stupidity of his decision, showed a second yellow to Sabrosa for play-acting.

"I still believe it wasn't a red card. The referee made a mistake and his mistake was proved when he showed the other played the red," said Sony in his reaction yesterday.

The Kolkata news dailies also termed the red card as a ridiculous decision by the referee and labeled it as a turning point of the match.

Sheikh Jamal players and officials did not turn up for the prize giving ceremony and official press conference after the match as the Mohammedan supporters had stormed into the pitch and hurled crackers to celebrate their victory. The team management however arranged a press conference yesterday and clarified their position.

"Everyone saw on television what happened in the field. We have nothing to say about refereeing and we have taken things sportingly. We could not attend the ceremony due to crowd trouble as we waited 35 minutes inside the dressing room," said team's acting manager Abdul Gaffer.

Manzur Kader, the president of the club, said they had a great time in Kolkata and they played the best football, but only the final was a disappointment.

"These sorts of incidents (red card) do happen in this part of the world. But we still had the chance to win it when the two teams were down to 10 men. We played well even after that but I couldn't understand the coach's (Afusi's) tactics of bringing in Ali Abdullahi in place of Emeke Darlington, when we needed goals," said Kader, who reportedly let his emotions quite clear at the dressing room after the defeat.

Kader also said that despite the defeat, the team had won over the plaudits of pundits and football lovers of Kolkata.

In fact Sheikh Jamal players have not only won plaudits, some of them have become targets of the Kolkata giants. Mohun Bagan has reportedly made an offer to Sony for 150,000-dollars-a-season and 80,000-dollars-a-season for skipper Mamunul Islam. Sohel Rana, who was arguably the best player of the final, is also reportedly under the radar of Kolkata clubs.

"A Mohun Bagan official was talking to Sony and Mamunul about transfers in front of me. I've heard a few other I League clubs are also interested about them," confirmed team manager Abdul gaffer.

It remains to be seen how much Manzur Kader is willing to up the ante to keep his prized possessions at home.

Meanwhile, the team will return to Dhaka at 10:30am today.



Barcelona's Lionel Messi raises his thumb to the cheering crowd as he breaks the goalscoring record of Alfredo Di Stefano in La Liga against Rayo Vallecano at Camp Nou on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bob Wilson dubs Mou a 'bully'

REUTERS, London



Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho is "disrespectful" and a "bully" for describing Arsene Wenger "a specialist in failure", former Arsenal goalkeeper Bob Wilson said on Sunday.

Mourinho was hitting back at the Arsenal manager's claims that the Portuguese coach was playing down Chelsea's title credentials because of a "fear to fail".

"I think at it's best it's disrespectful, at it's worst despicable," Wilson told BBC Radio 5 Live. "I find him boring in the extreme."

Mourinho, who is in his second spell in charge of Chelsea having in rejoined the club in June, has wound up a number of Premier League managers this season, including West Ham's Sam Allardyce and Manuel Pellegrini of Manchester City.

"I think it's personal," continued Wilson, who made 308 appearances for Arsenal.

"To say West Ham play 19th century football, to give Manuel Pellegrini the abuse he has. This is a weekend when we honour a gent - Tom Finney - I don't like bullies."

Mourinho and Wenger have endured a fractious relationship since the Portuguese coach called Wenger a "voyeur" in 2005 after the Frenchman repeatedly spoke about Chelsea in the media.

Wilson believes that Mourinho should model his behaviour on former Liverpool manager Bill Shankly. "He (Mourinho) is a hugely talented, amazing manager but a self-publicist and it's mainly inaccurate," Wilson said.

"I like people who have within them some humility as well," he added.

"Bill Shankly was, in his day, like Jose Mourinho. He took every opportunity to psyche you out. He would get at you, but in a lovely, sort of competitive way."

City knocks Chelsea out

REUTERS



Manchester City rediscovered their swagger to beat Chelsea 2-0 and move into the FA Cup quarter-finals on Saturday with Manuel Pellegrini winning the battle of tactical wits against Jose Mourinho.

Stevan Jovetic and Samir Nasri scored either side of halftime for City as Pellegrini finally fell upon a winning formula to get one over his managerial rival having lost both Premier League fixtures this season.

The result completed a difficult week for Mourinho, whose side drew with West Bromwich Albion in the league on Tuesday, and returned City to winning ways after their defeat by Chelsea 12 days ago was followed by a draw with Norwich City.

Ben Watson, who grabbed the winner when Wigan shocked Manchester City in last year's final, continued his love affair with the competition by firing the second-tier side to a 2-1 upset victory at Premier League strugglers Cardiff City. Sunderland punished Southampton for taking the competition too lightly and making a raft of changes, with a 1-0 defeat thanks to a stunning strike from Craig Gardner.

The Cup was an opportunity for City and

QUARTERFINAL DRAW

Arsenal or Liverpool v Everton
Brighton and Hove Albion or Hull City v Sunderland
Sheffield United or Nottingham Forest v Sheffield
Wednesday or Charlton Athletic
Manchester City v Wigan Athletic
(Ties to be played on the weekend of March 8-9)

Chelsea to enjoy a break from what is becoming an increasingly fraught title race.

Chelsea's success at the Etihad Stadium 12 days previously was hailed as a piece of inspired tactical manoeuvring from their Portuguese coach and laid down the gauntlet to Pellegrini to come up with a response.

After some tentative probing from both sides, City took the lead with Jovetic making amends for firing over the bar from close range a minute earlier by sliding a precise finish into the corner after being fed by Edin Dzeko.

For Chelsea there were few positives in a poor first half in which they had one shot, a dismal effort from Willian that soared high over the crossbar into the crowd.

Mourinho, so often lauded for his game-changing substitutions, was also outmanoeuvred on that front as Pellegrini brought Nasri off the bench to see him grab a second goal on 66 minutes.

Shaqiri out for Bayern

REUTERS, London

Bayern Munich's Switzerland midfielder Xherdan Shaqiri will miss next week's Champions League, last 16 match at Arsenal with a thigh injury he picked up in the Bundesliga on Saturday, the German champions said.

Shaqiri scored twice for runaway league leaders Bayern in a 4-0 win at home to Freiburg but had to come off just past the hour mark because of the injury.

"A post-match medical showed the player ruptured a muscle in the back of his right thigh (and) will now definitely miss the Champions League round of 16 first leg away to Arsenal on Wednesday and the following Sunday's Bundesliga trip to Hanover."

The injury is a blow for Bayern coach Pep Guardiola who is already without France winger Ribery.

Messi overhauls Di Stefano

REUTERS, Madrid



Lionel Messi overhauled Alfredo Di Stefano's La Liga goals tally as Barcelona and Atletico Madrid warmed up for midweek Champions League action with wins on Saturday that put them three points clear of Real Madrid at the top.

Back to his best after returning from a two-month injury layoff in early January, Messi struck twice in Barca's 6-0 thrashing of Rayo Vallecano at the Nou Camp to take his total in Spain's top flight to 228 goals from 263 matches, one more than Real Madrid great Di Stefano managed in 329 games.

Still only 26, Messi climbed above his Argentine compatriot to joint third on the all-time list behind record marksman Telmo Zarra (251) and Hugo Sanchez (234) and level with Raul.

"I would like to think that Messi has still not completely recovered (from his injury)," Barca coach Gerardo Martino told a news conference.

"If he wants to, he will break all the

records that he likes," added the Argentine, who hails from Messi's home town of Rosario.

Barcelona, who play their Champions League last 16, first leg match at Manchester City on Tuesday, and Atletico, who visit AC Milan in the competition on Wednesday, have 60 points from 24 matches, ahead of Real who play at Getafe on Sunday.

Atletico's Raul Garcia and Diego Costa struck early to set up a 3-0 win over visitors Real Valladolid, while Villarreal's match at home to Celta Vigo was suspended for about half an hour when what appeared to be a teargas canister was thrown on to the pitch with about three minutes remaining.

Celta were leading 1-0 and after play restarted Nolito made it 2-0 with a free kick in the 90th minute meaning Villarreal missed a chance to close to within a point of fourth-placed Athletic Bilbao.

Barca, chasing a fifth La Liga title in six years, totally outclassed Madrid-based Rayo and took the lead in the second minute when fullback Adriano cut inside from the left and his low effort scooted inside the far post.

Messi and Pedro then cracked shots off the frame of the goal before a pin-

point Cesc Fabregas pass sent Messi clear in the 36th minute and he produced a trademark chip over onrushing goalkeeper Ruben.

The four-times World Player of the Year released Alexis on the right to make it 3-0 eight minutes after the break before a moment of inspiration from Andres Iniesta helped create Barca's fourth in the 56th.

The Spain playmaker's backheel put Fabregas through and he squared for Pedro to tap into an empty net as a dominant Barca turned the screw on their hapless visitors.

Messi scored his second with a precise shot from the edge of the area in the 68th and Neymar crowned a near-perfect night for the home side when he came off the bench and netted a fierce long-range drive in the 89th minute.

The Brazil forward has been out injured for a month and his reappearance suggested he could play a role at Manchester City on Tuesday.

Atletico came into the game against Valladolid at their Calderon stadium after resounding losses in both legs of their King's Cup semi-final against city rivals Real either side of a surprise 2-0 La Liga reverse at promoted Almeria.

WC stadium under fire

REUTERS, Sao Paulo



An independent inspector will look into possible structural damage caused by an October fire at a World Cup stadium in western Brazil, following a Reuters report that the blaze was far worse than government officials have previously said.

The inspector, whose visit to the stadium in the city of Cuiabá was already scheduled for Monday, will report his findings back to world soccer body FIFA and Brazilian officials, FIFA spokeswoman Delia Fischer said by telephone on Sunday.

"We're looking into the allegations" that the fire caused structural damage to the stadium, Fischer said.

Reuters reported on Saturday that the Oct. 25 fire at the still-unfinished Arena Pantanal caused structural damage that could "compromise the overall stability of the construction," according to a previously undisclosed report by state prosecutors in Mato Grosso state.

The 18-page document, which was written in December based on an inspection by a local civil engineer, contains photos that it says are of cracked concrete in the stadium's pillars as well as less severe damage to its steel frame.

It is unclear whether the damage described in the report has since been fixed. State government officials overseeing construction of the stadium have continued to describe the fire as minor, saying it caused no structural damage.

Federal prosecutors said last week they were opening their own investigation into the fire based on the state prosecutors' report. FIFA said it was previously "unaware" of any structural damage at the facility.

Arena Pantanal is one of 12 stadiums due to host games when the World Cup kicks off on June 12. The stadium missed a December deadline to complete construction, although state officials say it will be finished next month.

তুমি জাগলেই জাগবে বাংলাদেশ

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