



Man Utd resurgent

AFP, London



In only four weeks, new manager Louis van Gaal has revived Manchester United to such an extent that they approach the 2014-15 Premier League season brimming with rediscovered optimism.

Emboldened by his achievements at the World Cup in Brazil, where he steered his native Netherlands to the semi-finals, the straight-talking 63-year-old was quick to make his presence felt at United. From upbraiding the club for organising an arduous pre-season tour of the United States to instilling a new 3-4-1-2 formation, he has wasted little time, and the players have responded with unabashed positivity.

"He's a tough manager, but he's been great since he came in," said striker Wayne Rooney, after United beat Liverpool 3-1 in Miami to win the International Champions Cup friendly tournament.

"He's given us all a different way of look-

ing at football, which we haven't had before. It's been great for us and hopefully that will continue."

United were in the doldrums after finishing the 2013-14 season in seventh place, which was their lowest final placing since 1990 and deprived them of European football for the first time in 25 years.

Van Gaal, who succeeded the sacked David Moyes, said that he had inherited a "broken" squad, but he immediately hit upon a playing system that worked.

The former Ajax, Barcelona and Bayern Munich coach was heralded for his decision-making in Brazil -- such as the brazen move to send on substitute goalkeeper Tim Krul for the penalty shootout win over Costa Rica in the quarter-finals -- and his early calls for United have also proved successful.

He has successfully blended new signings Ander Herrera and Luke Shaw into his starting XI, while previously marginalised players such as Darren Fletcher and, in particular, Ashley Young appear rejuvenated.

Neuer at the Tussauds

AFP, Berlin

Germany's World Cup-winning goalkeeper Manuel Neuer is set to be immortalised in the form of a waxwork model at Madame Tussauds in Berlin, the museum announced Wednesday.

"Manuel Neuer is one of the most popular footballers, and since the World Cup he's been the most requested figure by our visitors," explained museum director Sandra Schmalzried, who expressed regret at being unable to honour the entire Germany squad, adding: "but at 200,000 euros (\$267,921, £160,235) per player, it's not possible".

Neuer's wax likeness will join that of another former Bayern and Germany goalkeeping legend Oliver Kahn as well as those of Mesut Ozil and Jurgen Klinsmann in the Berlin museum.

No laptops at Old Trafford

AFP, London

English Premier League giants Manchester United announced on Wednesday they were banning supporters from bringing laptops and tablets into their Old Trafford stadium over security fears.

The three-time European champions issued a statement on their official website telling supporters that they would not be able to bring in any electronic devices measuring more than 150mm x 100mm (6 inches x 4 inches), including laptops and tablet devices such as iPads and iPad minis.

Martino named Argentina coach

REUTERS, Buenos Aires



Argentina named former Barcelona coach Gerardo Martino as the new manager of the national soccer team on Tuesday following Alejandro Sabella's decision to step aside in the wake of their World Cup final defeat in July.

Martino, who won the Argentine league title with Newell's Old Boys in June 2013 before taking the reins at Barca, will make his debut in a Sept. 3 friendly against Germany in Duesseldorf.

The Germans beat Argentina 1-0 after extra time in the World Cup final at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana on July 13, after which Sabella decided against accepting the offer of a new contract from late AFA President Julio Grondona.

"The Rosario-born coach Gerardo Daniel Martino will take office as the new coach of the national team, succeeding Mr Alejandro Sabella, who completed his contract with the AFA after the end of the World Cup Brazil 2014," the Argentine FA (AFA) said in a statement on its official website (www.afa.org.ar).

Martino was enjoying the early days of a sabbatical after a disappointing season at Barcelona where he took the job left vacant when Tito Vilanova stepped down to undergo cancer treatment. Vilanova died in April at the age of 45.

He got off to a good start at Barca but injuries to key players, including hamstring problems for Lionel Messi, saw the side stutter through the season and he resigned after the club failed to win a major trophy for the first time in six years.

His failure with Barca did not seem to damage his reputation in Argentina, where he is still highly regarded after having a successful club coaching career in Paraguay before returning to Rosario to steer Newell's Old Boys to the league title in 2013.

A disciple of Marcelo Bielsa, who coached him at Newell's Old Boys, Martino preaches a possession game with thrusting midfield play supporting quick forwards.

Martino has previous national team experience having taken Paraguay to the World Cup quarter-finals for the first time in South Africa in 2010 and the Copa America final a year later in his home country.

Martino, whose contract will run until the 2018 World Cup in Russia, will be officially presented to the media on Thursday.



GERARDO MARTINO



Real Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas lifts the UEFA Super Cup trophy along with his jubilant teammates after they beat Sevilla at Cardiff City Stadium in Wales on Tuesday. Two goals from Cristiano Ronaldo sealed the tie for the Madrid giants against their La Liga rivals.

PHOTO: AFP

Ronaldo double seals Super Cup

AFP, Cardiff



Cristiano Ronaldo upstaged new teammates Toni Kroos and James Rodriguez and homecoming hero Gareth Bale as Real Madrid beat Sevilla 2-0 in Cardiff on Tuesday to win the UEFA Super Cup.

World Cup stars Kroos and Rodriguez were making their Madrid debuts, while Bale was returning to his hometown, but it was Ronaldo, characteristically, who hogged the spotlight with a brace in the Welsh capital.

The Portugal captain claimed a 30th-minute opener from Bale's cross and then slammed home a second goal shortly after half-time to earn the European champions what could be the first of six trophies this season.

While 80-million-euro (\$108 million) new recruit Rodriguez had a modest debut, Madrid's new-look attack -- which cost roughly 310 million euros to assemble -- showed ominous flashes of quality.

Victory gave Madrid only their second Super Cup, after a maiden triumph in 2002, and enabled Carlo

Anelotti's side to avenge a costly 2-1 loss at the hands of Europa League winners Sevilla in La Liga last season.

While Anelotti named both Kroos and Rodriguez in his starting XI, Sevilla left-back Alberto Moreno was omitted from his side's match-day squad amid reports he is on the verge of joining Liverpool.

With Germany midfielder Kroos sitting in front of the back four and Colombia star Rodriguez to his left in a 4-3-3 shape, Madrid quickly assumed control of the game at the Cardiff City Stadium.

Bale and then Ronaldo, with a free-kick, saw efforts deflected narrowly off-target, before Bale's outside-of-the-foot volley from a Rodriguez left-wing cross was blocked by a defender.

A misplaced pass by Daniel Carvajal gave Sevilla winger Vitolo a chance to shoot at goal, obliging Iker Casillas to save at his near post, but Madrid were soon back on the front foot.

After Federico Fazio headed a deflected cross from Fabio Coentrao off his own line and Sevilla goalkeeper Beto blocked sharply from Ronaldo, Madrid's lavishly assembled forward line clicked into gear for what their

fans hope will be the first goal of many.

When a Sevilla attack broke down, Ronaldo flashed a pass inside to Rodriguez, who immediately sprayed the ball wide to Bale on the left flank.

The Cardiff-born Welshman took a touch before sending a fine, searching cross towards the back post, where Ronaldo powered in to volley home.

Moments later, a shanked clearance from Rodriguez meant that Casillas had to save from Daniel Carrico, but Madrid were good value for their half-time advantage.

Ronaldo doubled his side's lead, and his personal tally, four minutes into the second period, gathering a pass from Karim Benzema and walloping a left-foot shot past international colleague Beto.

Beto prevented Madrid from extending their lead by clawing away a shot from Benzema and then brilliantly blocking a crisp strike by Rodriguez, who made way for Isco with 18 minutes to play.

Beto also produced a late flying save to thwart Bale, who was unable to crown his return to Cardiff with a goal, but who has now won three titles in his first 12 months at Madrid.

Silva out for 'several weeks'

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint-Germain captain Thiago Silva will be out for "several weeks" with the hamstring injury that forced him off early in Monday's friendly against Napoli, the French champions confirmed on Wednesday.

"Tests undergone by Thiago Silva yesterday (ultrasound and MRI) have confirmed an injury to his right hamstring. He will be unavailable for several weeks," read a statement on PSG's website.

The Brazilian centre-back lasted just 12 minutes of Monday's 2-1 win in Italy before having to come off after back-healing the ball in his own penalty box.

He is now unlikely to return until after the international break at the start of September, meaning he will miss Ligue 1 games against SC Bastia, Evian and Saint-Etienne and probably Brazil's friendlies in the United States next month against Colombia and Ecuador.

Rooney made MU captain

AFP, London

Wayne Rooney became the first captain of Manchester United under new manager Louis van Gaal, it was announced Tuesday.

The 28-year-old England striker succeeds Nemanja Vidic after the Serbia defender left the club at the end of last season to join Inter Milan.

"For me it's always very important the choice of captain," said van Gaal in a club statement issued after United's 2-1 friendly win against Valencia at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

"Wayne has shown a great attitude towards everything he does. I have been very impressed by his professionalism and his attitude to training and to my philosophy."

"He is a great inspiration to the younger members of the team and I believe he will put his heart and soul into his captaincy role."

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