



Liverpool striker Mario Balotelli shoots past Tottenham Hotspur goalkeeper Hugo Lloris only to miss the target during their English Premier League match at White Hart Lane on Sunday. The Italian failed to find the net on his Liverpool debut but his side ran out comfortable 3-0 winners. PHOTO: AFP

Kramer's lost memory

AFP, Berlin

Germany midfielder Christoph Kramer has admitted he will probably never regain his memory of the time he spent on the field before coming off with concussion during the World Cup final.

"The doctors are certain that my memories of that part of the World Cup final will not come back," the Borussia Moenchengladbach player said in an interview with the weekly magazine Focus.

Kramer, 23, was brought into Germany's starting line-up to play Argentina at the Maracana at the last minute to replace the injured Sami Khedira but lasted just 31 minutes before a violent collision with the shoulder of Ezequiel Garay left him concussed. He had to come off and was left with no recollection of the first half hour.

The match referee, Italy's Nicola Rizzoli, told media after the final -- which Germany won 1-0 -- that Kramer had come to see him after the incident and asked him: "Referee, is this final?"

Kramer was immediately replaced by Andre Schuerle.

Dunga picks Robinho

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

New Brazil coach Dunga has called up former Real Madrid, Manchester City and AC Milan forward Robinho in place of injured Hulk for upcoming friendlies with Colombia and Ecuador, the Brazilian Football Confederation said Sunday.

Dunga, who unveiled his first squad since embarking on a second spell in charge after succeeding Luiz Felipe Scolari following the World Cup, brought in the 30-year-old who has won 92 caps for the Selecao but whom Scolari left off his World Cup roster.

Robinho has just returned to his homeland to play for Santos, where he began his career, after AC Milan loaned him out for a year.

Dunga, who coached Brazil at the 2010 World Cup before being fired, heads for Friday's game against the Colombians in Miami with just nine of the players who featured at this year's tournament, which ended for the hosts in a 7-1 semi-final thrashing by Germany.

After meeting the Colombians, Brazil take on Ecuador at East Rutherford, New Jersey, on September 9.

Milan beat Lazio

REUTERS, Milan

Goalkeeper Diego Lopez made an inspired debut for AC Milan as he helped them beat Lazio 3-1 in their first competitive game under new coach Filippo Inzaghi on Sunday.

Milan raced into a 3-0 lead in little more than an hour with goals from Keisuke Honda, Sulley Muntari and a Jeremy Menez penalty.

But Lazio, who had more chances throughout the game, came back strongly after defender Alex, making his debut after a move from Paris St Germain, put through his own goal.

Lopez saved a stoppage-time penalty from Antonio Candreva as the former Real Madrid goalkeeper kept the lead intact.

Former Italy and Milan forward Inzaghi became the latest to occupy the hot seat after Massimiliano Allegri and Clarence Seedorf were both fired last season.

Milan completed the signing of Fernando Torres from Chelsea shortly before kickoff but their finishing was efficient enough without him.

Mourinho lauds 'complete' Costa

AFP, Liverpool

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho hailed Diego Costa as the complete striker after his side's 6-3 Premier League win over Everton but is concerned opponents will try to get the Spain international sent off.

Brazil-born Costa scored twice in a thrilling match at Goodison Park to take his tally to four goals in three games, and maintained Chelsea's winning start to the season.

Mourinho bought Costa for £32 million (\$53.1 million, 40.4 million euros) from Atletico Madrid during the close season to add more firepower to a Chelsea side that managed 71 goals last season.

That figure was way behind champions Manchester City (102) and runners-up Liverpool (101) in the last campaign, but Mourinho expects more with a lethal finisher in his side.

"It was the complete performance of a striker," Mourinho said. "The perfect performance in every aspect."

"In the first half he was tackling, he recovers balls, he holds the ball, and his movement was quality. Everything was really good."

"Diego had three chances and he scored two goals. He is a good finisher and he gives us a lot. In the end we are killers in attack."

Mourinho was, however, disappointed with the manner in which Everton's players attempted to provoke Costa during the game which earned him a booking.

"I was not happy with the way some Everton players tried to create problems with Diego," added Mourinho.

"I don't think it is in keeping with the Everton team, because they are positive in every aspect, to be chasing cards for a player who was here to play football."

"At the end of the story, Diego is maybe the best player in the opening Premier League matches. But he has two yellow cards. That is disappointing."

Everton manager Roberto Martinez responded to Mourinho's criticism, adamant that Costa must learn to adjust to the different sporting ethos of the Premier League.

"I am disappointed if a manager is complaining about the attitude of the players," Martinez added.

"I think certain foreign players when they come to the Premier League need to understand the ethics and the culture."

"That's something he (Costa) will learn about. There is a professionalism in this league which he needs to understand."

Mourinho criticised his side's defensive frailties after they allowed Everton to reduce the deficit on three occasions before they found the extra bit of quality required.

He added: "In training during the week we worked on defensive corners and free-kicks, so imagine how happy I am with the result of our work."

"I may as well have stayed at home with my wife and kids. It's possible to have lots of goals, but we make defensive mistakes."

Barcelona leave it late

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona made it two wins in as many games under new coach Luis Enrique as 19-year-old Sandro Ramirez's debut goal eight minutes from time was enough to hand them a 1-0 win at Villarreal on Sunday.

Sandro had replaced the ineffective Pedro Rodriguez for the final 20 minutes as Barca looked set for a frustrating evening as Villarreal keeper Sergio Asenjo kept them at bay.

However, after Asenjo had again done well to keep out Lionel Messi's low drive, Sandro was left with the simplest of finishes from close range.

Enrique had handed another start to 18-year-old Munir El Haddadi as Neymar was only fit

enough for a place on the bench, while Rafinha was preferred to Xavi Hernandez in the absence of the injured Andres Iniesta.

Barca completely dominated possession in the opening 45 minutes, but failed to create clear-cut chances as Asenjo parried a drive from Pedro before turning a deflected Messi free-kick onto the post.

Villarreal's best opening of the first 45 minutes came when Victor Ruiz bundled the ball over the bar when completely unmarked at the back post.

There was still time for a final scare for Barca as Giovanni dos Santos smashed a volley off the post from a narrow angle, but Enrique's men held on to go top of the embryonic La Liga table.

On Saturday, La Liga champions Atletico Madrid recorded their first victory of the campaign with a hard-fought 2-1 win over newly-promoted Eibar.

First-half headers from Miranda and Mario Mandzukic ultimately proved decisive, but Atletico were given a scare after Abraham's brilliant strike had brought Eibar back into the game.

The visitors had a great chance to level the game three minutes from time, but Angel's effort trickled inches past the far post as Atletico held on.

Diego Simeone's men had been held 0-0 at local rivals Rayo Vallecano in their league opener on Monday, but normal service appeared to have been resumed by two set-piece goals inside the first 25 minutes.

Brazilian defender Miranda put the hosts in front when he met Koke's corner at the near post and the ball flew into the net via the underside of the bar.

Eibar had produced an upset in beating near neighbours Real Sociedad in their first ever

RESULTS

Barcelona 1 (Sandro 82) **Villarreal 0**
Cordoba 1 (Cartabia 59) **Celta Vigo 1** (Orrellana 52)
Athletic Bilbao 3 (Aduriz 32, Iturraspe 51, Munain 76)
Levante 0
Atletico Madrid 2 (Miranda 11, Mandzukic 25) **Eibar 1**
(Abraham 33)
Espanyol 1 (Stuani 61) **Sevilla 2** (Bacca 33, Iborra 56)

Spanish top-flight match last weekend, but they were punished for their defending 15 minutes later when Mandzukic planted a header from Gabi's free-kick into the far corner.

However, the Basques responded in fine style and after Miguel Angel Moyà had beaten Javi Lara's free-kick, they produced a moment of sheer quality to get back into the match.

A flowing move resulted in left-back Abraham curling Mikel Arruabarrena's backheel into the top corner from outside the area with his right foot.

Rodgers salutes Balotelli

AFP, London

Brendan Rodgers revealed Mario Balotelli has already shown signs of a new-found maturity as the eccentric Italian made his Liverpool debut in a 3-0 win at Tottenham on Sunday.

Balotelli played for 61 minutes of the Reds' romp at White Hart Lane following his £16 million (\$26 million) move from AC Milan on Monday and delivered a whole-hearted performance with glimpses of his vast talent.

Rodgers admitted Balotelli had been shocked earlier in the week when he asked the former Manchester City star to mark opposing players at corners, yet he fulfilled the task with gusto.

"He's at an age when he has to show responsibility. I'm giving him that," Rodgers said.

"For the first time in his life he marked at a corner. He's an international with a Premier League title and three Italian league titles, but when we were doing the defensive corner routines in training I told him he had to mark and he said he didn't mark at corners."

"I said you do now. And today he went in there and won a header."

Rodgers is confident he will prove a major asset if he can be kept out of trouble.

"He's a good guy and if you control the background noise, take away some of the situations he has found himself in, you can see he is going to be a real handful for defenders," Rodgers added.

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Reds batter Spurs

AFP, London

Liverpool reasserted their Premier League title credentials with a breezy 3-0 win at Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday, but Arsenal were held to a 1-1 draw at Leicester City.

Raheem Sterling, Steven Gerrard and Alberto Moreno scored the goals for Liverpool at White Hart Lane to give Brendan Rodgers victory in his 100th game as manager and end Tottenham's 100 percent record.

Mario Balotelli made his Liverpool debut after his £16 million (\$26.5 million, 20.1 million euros) move from AC Milan on Monday and he produced an enterprising display before being withdrawn in the 61st minute.

"I thought he was excellent," Rodgers said of the maverick striker.

"He's bought straight into our team ethic. He's trained well and has put all that background noise about him to one side. He's been brilliant."

The result saw Liverpool bounce back from a 3-1 defeat at Manchester City in their previous outing and means they have now scored 12 unanswered goals in their last

three encounters with Spurs.

After former City striker Balotelli had tested Hugo Lloris with an early header, Liverpool went ahead in the eighth minute.

Daniel Sturridge released Jordan Henderson with a ball down the right flank and the England midfielder played a low cross across the box that Sterling tucked away at the far post.

Rodgers doubled the visitors' lead from the penalty spot in the 49th minute after Eric Dier had back Joe Allen and Moreno sealed victory on the hour with a memorable first Liverpool goal.

With Olivier Giroud sidelined by a broken tibia, Yaya Sanogo started up front for Arsenal at promoted Leicester and he played a central role in the visitors' 20th-minute opener.

But Arsenal's lead was to last only two minutes, however, as Jeff Schlupp motored down the left wing before delivering an inviting cross that Leonardo Ulloa powered past Wojciech Szczesny with a firm header.

The result left Arsenal four points below leaders Chelsea in seventh place in the table, while Leicester moved up to 15th.

In the day's other game, Aston Villa won 2-1 at home to Hull City to maintain their unbeaten start to the campaign and climb to third place.



Bayern Munich players, wearing traditional Bavarian outfit, pose for photographs during a beer advertising photo shoot in Munich on Sunday.

Transfer records smashed

AFP, Paris



England and Spain have led a record breaking summer transfer market by Europe's big five leagues worth well over \$2 billion (1.5 billion euros, £1.2 billion), with more big deals looming before the window closes on Monday.

Radamel Falcao and Arturo Vidal are among the big names and Real Madrid and Manchester United in the big clubs touted for major deals on the final day of the transfer window when another \$250 million of business could be done.

"This summer transfer window is one of records," said Dan Jones of the Deloitte consultancy's Sports Business Group.

He highlighted that in the last two summer windows more than 20% of English Premier League clubs' spending occurred on deadline day. "There is

still potential for a significant increase" in the record breaking spending already seen, he said.

FIFA's transfer monitoring system said that Sunday, \$2.09 billion had been spent by top clubs in England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France, breaking last year's record of \$2.02 billion.

It said that England's Premier League accounted for more than 43% of the big five's spending followed by Spain on more than 25% and Germany on about 10%. Italy and France follow, with spending down in both in Serie A and Ligue 1.

According to Deloitte's figures, more than £725 million (\$1.2 billion) had been spent by England's 20 Premier League clubs from June 9 up to Friday. That is already more than £100 million more than last year.

British media said the figure had risen to nearly £750 million by Sunday, helped by Manchester United's £14

million plus purchase of Danny Blind from Ajax Amsterdam.

Manchester United have been Europe's top spenders, laying out more than £140 million (\$240 million) to buy Blind, Angel di Maria from Real Madrid for £59 million, Ander Herrera, Luke Shaw and Marcos Rojo. They have been linked with Vidal and other names before the transfer window closes at 2200 GMT on Monday.

Liverpool have also spent more than £115 million, mainly to buy Mario Balotelli, Adam Lallana and Dejan Lovren. Chelsea have laid out more than £75 (including Cesc Fabregas and Diego Costa) and Arsenal more than £62 million.

English clubs have spent about \$300 million on Spanish players. But, according to FIFA, Spain's current spending is closing on \$600 million and already three times higher than last year's pre-season transfer window.