

Former players tear into Man United

REUTERS

Manchester United came in for heavy criticism from former players after they crashed to a chastening 4-0 defeat by Brentford in the Premier League on Saturday, their second loss in as many league games under new boss Erik ten Hag.

The result left United bottom of the table as Dutchman Ten Hag became the first manager since John Chapman in 1921 to lose his opening two games in charge of the club.

BBC pundit Chris Sutton said United had “hit rock bottom” while his former strike partner Alan Shearer put down the debacle to years of mismanagement at Old Trafford.

“It is an absolute mess. Years of failure... there is a lack of leadership and the recruitment has been terrible,” Shearer said on BBC’s Match of the Day.

“It will take time and an unbelievable amount of money to get things right, and a lot of patience from the Manchester United fans. They are miles away from where there want to be.”

Brentford scored four goals within 35 minutes in the first half against a woeful United side, who have now lost seven straight games on the road stretching back to last season.

Former United defender Gary Neville, who has been critical of the owners, the Glazer family, said we were witnessing the “annihilation of the club”.

“I thought United would do better but they have been mauled, bullied, messed about with like you wouldn’t believe, and there’s nowhere to hide,” he said on Sky Sports.

“I have been watching United for 42 years and I can’t think of a moment when I have thought things have been as bad as that in the first half.”

The Sunday Times went with the headline “Rock bottom” while The Sun described it as “Ten Green Bottle Jobs”, referring to the colour of the new third kit that United were sporting.



When it comes to hogging the spotlight, either by performances or controversies, star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan remains in a league of his own. The newly elected T20 captain of Bangladesh, set to lead the side in the upcoming Asia Cup up until the T20 World Cup in Australia, took the field a day after being appointed at the helm and did solo fitness training under humid conditions at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB



‘Running against the wind’

SPORTS REPORTER

With the tension between Shakib Al Hasan and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) coming to an end with the all-rounder handed the T20 captaincy on Saturday, the focus finally turns to preparations for the upcoming Asia Cup tournament, slated to begin from August 27 at the UAE. The newly appointed T20 skipper appeared at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium (SBNCS) in Mirpur yesterday, looking to retrieve some intensity.

Shakib had last played during Bangladesh’s T20I series in the West Indies before he opted to rest during the ODIs and also skipped the entire tour of Zimbabwe. Coming back in, his main focus was on gaining back fitness as he spent a busy day in Mirpur.

He started the routine with a gym session for a couple of hours before undergoing running sessions with a trainer at the SBNCS turf. Having just returned to the country in the early hours of Saturday before he attended a meeting with the BCB president in

the morning, Shakib might have been reeling from jet lag as he looked to regain fitness.

On a few occasions, Shakib had his hand on his knees, apparently catching his breath while undergoing running exercises at the empty stadium. How much toll being out of action can take on a professional athlete was apparent as Shakib struggled through the laps. While the heat and intense workout left an impression on Shakib, former national pacer Anwar Hossain Monir, who oversaw Shakib’s training yesterday, felt the all-rounder was still up to the mark.

“I don’t think he [Shakib] was struggling. It feels like he was only getting tired because he was running against the wind,” Monir told members of the media on Sunday.

“Since he is not coming from any injury, there is no need to worry. He looks physically fine and ready to take the load of international cricket.”

Shakib does not have a rigid routine regarding his practice sessions but has a way of knowing how to prepare

himself in the best way possible. Monir informed the star all-rounder might opt to have a few more sessions in the coming days.

“We are expected to have a similar workout in the next couple of days and if he feels he wants to do some batting or bowling at the nets from tomorrow [Monday], he can always do that,” Monir added.

The all-rounder may be focusing on individual fitness for the time being but with the team for the Asia Cup already announced, Shakib will have to get the Tigers mentally prepared pretty quickly for the upcoming Asia Cup challenge, where they have been pitted against Sri Lanka and Afghanistan in Group B.

The BCB is also gearing up for the upcoming tournament and sources have confirmed the Tigers will have two practice matches on August 20 and 22, respectively. The team will then depart for the UAE on August 23 with their first game of the tournament slated for August 30 against Afghanistan in Sharjah.

Xavi pleads for patience

AGENCIES

Barcelona manager Xavi has urged fans to be patient with his side after their season got off to an underwhelming start with a 0-0 draw at home to Rayo Vallecano.

Robert Lewandowski, Raphinha and Andreas Christensen all started for their new side, while Franck Kessie came off the bench, and although Barcelona were the superior side, they failed to make their chances count and even ended the game with ten men following Sergio Busquets’ late dismissal.

After the game, Xavi took the chance to plead with the Barcelona board to continue to find money to spend in the transfer market.

“I’ve already said we have to keep strengthening and we have time until August 31,” Xavi said in his press conference.

“But I don’t want to use that as an excuse [for the Rayo result]. I understand the disappointment, expectations are really high. We will have to analyse the game, improve and keep believing in the model of play.”

“Rayo defended well. It was harder for us to create than usual. It’s a shame because we wanted to show the fans that we’re on a good path. It’s disappointing, but we ask for patience.”

Xavi, who stressed that right-back is his primary area of concern right now, was determined to remain positive despite a defeatist line of questioning.

When asked whether there has been too much talk of Barcelona as title candidates, he said: “That’s our goal. We have to analyse and improve, but this season, the goal is to win title. This result doesn’t change anything.”

“If we don’t win the title, it will be disappointing for me and for the club. Last year, it was more difficult.”

He continued: “It is a disappointment, obviously. We came with a good feeling from pre-season but we cannot have a defeatist message now because of a draw. We have another war to prepare for on Sunday.”



Neymar continued his outstanding start to the season with a brace while Kylian Mbappe marked his return to the team with a goal but also had a penalty saved as Paris Saint-Germain trounced Montpellier 5-2 in Ligue 1 on Saturday. Neymar rolled in a spot-kick to put PSG 2-0 up at the break on a hot night at the Parc des Princes after Falaye Sacko's own goal had put them ahead. The Brazilian then headed in his second and PSG's third shortly after the interval, taking his tally for the season to five goals already after just three games.

PHOTO: AFP

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