

Man Utd to face Villarreal in Europa League final

Edinson Cavani sends Manchester United into final despite Roma scare

● Emery gets revenge on 'devastated' Arsenal as Villarreal reach Europa League final

TDT | Manama

Manchester United had little difficulty in completing the job started with their semi-final first leg thrashing of Roma last week with a 3-2 defeat in Italy securing easy progress to the Europa League final on Thursday.

But it will not be Premier League rivals Arsenal they meet in Poland's Gdansk on May 26, rather Spaniards Villarreal, who are in a first major final after a goalless second leg in London.

The Yellow Submarine, as Villarreal are known, gained revenge for their 2006 Champions League semi-final loss to Arsenal with a 2-1 aggregate triumph while United dominated Roma 8-5.

United's entry to the final means Manchester could claim both of the major European titles this year as neighbours City face Chelsea in the Champions League final three days later.

Only Milan, when AC won the Champions League in 1994 and Inter the then UEFA Cup, has previously managed that feat.

United survived an early



Edinson Cavani scores Manchester United's first goal

scare when their former player Henrikh Mkhitaryan headed wide but Edinson Cavani, with his third chance of the game, smashed in the 39th minute opener to settle their nerves.

He had previously lobbed onto the bar and had a shot saved by keeper Antonio Mirante.

And it was Cavani's simple header from Bruno Fernandes' cross midway through the second half which ultimately put the tie beyond doubt.

"It's a great achievement," United captain Harry Maguire told BT Sport. "Obviously we didn't win the game tonight, which is disappointing, but we did the hard work in the first leg."

Roma, who will be coached by former United boss Jose Mour-

inho next season, deservedly levelled when Edin Dzeko headed in from close range and soon after Bryan Cristante fired in on the hour.

United keeper David de Gea, recalled for Europa League fixtures, made some impressive saves from Pedro and Mkhitaryan when a third goal could have sparked a comeback.

Teenager Nicola Zalewski did grab the winner on the night but his deflected debut goal offered only late consolation.

"We had some great European nights this season, with some big wins," Cristante told UEFA.com. "It's a pity for that second half in Manchester."

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer had lost his previous four semi-finals as United manager but could



finally taste victory.

Villarreal also ended a last-four hoodoo as they had lost all five of their previous semi-finals in various competitions.

Coach Unai Emery, a former Arsenal manager, won three Europa Leagues with Sevilla and is on the brink of glory once more.

They almost repeated their early goal from the first leg but keeper Bernd Leno saved well from Samuel Chukwueze, who was later carried off injured.

Donaire looks to end pandemic 'jinx'



Donaire is shooting for his ninth world title

TDT | Manila

Summer last year, Future Hall of Famer Nonito "The Filipino Flash" Donaire Jr. was supposed to fight reigning World Boxing Council (WBC) bantamweight champion Nordine Oubaali of France, but was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 38-year-old Filipino-American fighter was also all set to take on Puerto Rican Emmanuel Rodriguez for the vacant WBC interim bantamweight belt last December 19 but submitted a "false positive" virus test.

For Donaire, those misfortunes belong to the past.

On May 29 at the Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, California, he will finally box off with Oubaali with a chance to win his ninth world title.

"It has been a very long time from the pandemic to canceling my last fight, and now all that, it's finally happening so I have to be careful so nothing goes bad," said Donaire (40-6 win-loss record with 26 knockouts).

Despite his age and having spent the last two decades fighting in the ring, the pride of Talibon, Bohol said he doesn't feel old and weak.

"I am very, very confident and very, very excited," said Donaire, who have already won titles in four different weight divisions.

Against the 34-year-old Oubaali, the veteran slugger will be facing an unbeaten champion and a two-time Olympian who owns an unblemished 17-0 win-loss record with 12 knockouts.

"I am snatching that WBC (World Boxing Council) belt

come May 2021," Donaire had tweeted.

Donaire, who trains at the Givans Taekwondo Academy in Las Vegas with MMA star Tony Diaz, Michael Bassel and wife Rachel in his corner, said he learned a lot from his fight with International Boxing Federation and World Boxing Association (WBA) bantamweight champion Naoya Inoue in November 2019.

"I am always very, very disciplined. I always stay in the gym," he said.

Donaire - who holds a 40-6 record on top of 26 knockouts - said he lost his killer instinct in the latter rounds of their 118-pound showdown and lost via unanimous decision.

"The more you are here in boxing and you get old, you need to develop your killer instinct. That's what I need to develop more. I just came up short but I am okay with my performance so far," Donaire added. "Now I am doing it for myself only and not for anybody else. No pressure on this one is for me."

Oubaali, who also last fought in November 2019 beating Inoue's brother Takuma via unanimous decision, is unscathed in 17 fights with 12 knockouts. He is four years younger than Donaire at 34.

Olympic slot in the bag for Pagdanganan

TDT | Manila

Filipino pro golfer Bianca Pagdanganan is tantalizingly close to earning an automatic slot in the Tokyo Olympics.

With still a month to go before qualification ends, the 23-year-old Pagdanganan only needs to keep on playing and continue earning points to make it to the prestigious Summer Games.

"Because the qualification is until June 22, she only has to keep on playing, and continue to earn points. But with her current rankings now, I think she is assured of slot," said National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP) Secretary-General Bones Flor.

Pagdanganan is at No. 43 in the Olympic Golf Rankings of the International Golf Federation (IGF). The top 60 players in the world - two per country - in men's and women's will qualify in the Tokyo Olympics.

"Bianca has a super good chance to make it to the Olympics," said Floro.

The qualification deadline is set June 22, or a month before the July 23 to August 8 Olympics in Japan.

Playing for the Philippines in the rescheduled Olympics is something Pagdanganan is keenly eyeing.

"For me, playing for my country is always one of the greatest things that golf has given me or the opportunity that comes to my life," said Pagdanganan.

"It is always been a goal of



Pagdanganan ... excited and motivated

It is always been a goal of mine to play in the Olympics. It's just different when you are playing for something bigger than yourself

BIANCA PAGDANGANAN

mine to play in the Olympics. It's just different when you are playing for something bigger than yourself."

Up for grabs in the Games are gold medals in the men's and women's individual competition.

Pagdanganan competes in the US LPGA, and in last year's Women's PGA Championship in Pennsylvania, she finished tied for ninth to 12th places overall.

Along with another top Filipino-Japanese golfer, Yuka

Saso - who is almost assured also of earning a spot in the Tokyo Olympics - Pagdanganan teamed up for the national team with Lois Kaye Go to win the gold medal in the women's team competition at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia. Saso took the gold medal and Pagdanganan earned a bronze medal in the individual category.

Golf has been re-included in the 2016 Rio Olympics - the first time since the 1904 meet in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. Miguel Tabuena competed in the men's golf in the Rio Olympics.

Pagdanganan is coming off an impressive run in her rookie season on the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Tour in 2020.

She finished in the top 10 in two tournaments she competed in and earned a spot in the US Women's Open in December. She has career earnings of \$203,775 to date.

Angry Solskjaer plans to rotate heavily to cope with fixture pile-up



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

Reuters | London

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is planning sweeping changes during Manchester United's run of four matches in eight days, saying the knock-on effects in the Premier League top-four race is "everyone else's problem".

Last Sunday's clash with Liverpool was called off after fans got onto the pitch at Old Trafford during a protest against American owners the Glazers following the collapse of the European Super League.

The postponed fixture was moved to next Thursday. Before that United, on course to finish second in the Premier League, face Aston Villa on Sunday and then Leicester on Tuesday.

United's three top-flight fixtures in five days come after Thursday's intense Europa League semi-final second leg at Roma, where they lost 3-2 but triumphed 8-5 on aggregate to reach the final against Villarreal.

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