Temperature checks, empty terraces as Union host Bayern

Bayern Munich restored four-point lead after 2-0 win over Union Berlin in yet another match played behind locked doors

Benjamin Pavard of Bayern Munich (Not pictured) scores their second goal

AFP | Berlin

Union Berlin could normally expect their Alten Foersterei ground to be packed for the visit of defending Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich, yet the terraces stood empty for Sunday's 2-0 home defeat.

The Bundesliga returned this weekend after a two-month hiatus due to the coronavirus, but the league's strict hygiene guidelines meant matches were played behind locked doors.

Bayern restablished their four-point lead at the top of the table with goals by Robert Lewandowski and Benjamin Pavard.

With their passionate home fans behind them, Union had twice shocked the previous league leaders this season.

A packed house saw the east Berlin minnows stun Borussia Dortmund 3-1 in August and then turned over Borussia Moenchengladbach with a shock 2-0 win three months later.

Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski scores the opening goal from the penalty spot

Yet Union fans had to stay away for the first league visit of star-studded Bayern to the Berlin club and their team could not rely on their noisy support.

A volunteer wearing a face mask stands next to the entrance to the Alten Foersterei stadium prior to the Bundesliga match between Union Berlin and Bayern Munich

'Unique'

"It's a unique experience in itself," said 37-year-old Union fan Oliver outside the stadium.

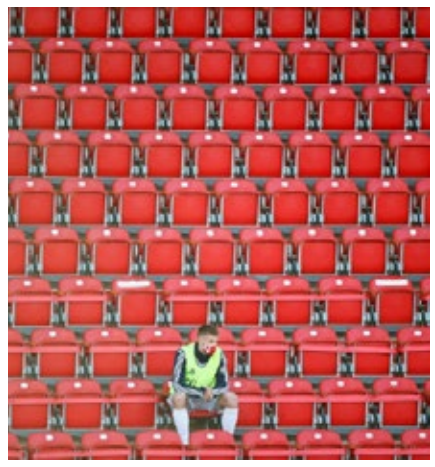
"It touches something in me to see football on television again, but on the other hand there is something missing in terms of ambience and energy."

In the build-up to kick-off, local police broke up a group of a few dozen supporters who gathered outside the Union stadium, hoping for a glimpse of their players.

"We were just at the stadium and the police told us to move along, unless we have a press ID" said Norbert Kuerzner, a middle-aged Union fan walking through the woods behind the Alten Foersterei stadium with his wife.

The nearby Koepenick train station, normally swarming with red-and-white clad Union fans in the build-up to kick-off, was largely empty.

A single fan stood at the entrance



A Bayern Munich substitute keeps his distance during the match

selling match day programmes: one made for the original fixture, which was postponed in March, and one specially produced during lockdown.

"Er.... I had to do something," he said with a shrug.

Otherwise, the streets around the stadium were quiet.

In the woods behind the ground, mounted police patrolled to make sure no fans were gathering.

Team bus consolation

Bayern fan Merita, 42, came to Koepenick with her teenage son in the hope of seeing the Munich team bus.

"We wanted to at least see the (Bayern) bus, if we couldn't see the game live," she said.

"Right now, that's not possible, but I wanted to at least do something to console my son.

"It's good there is football at all, but sad we can't be in the stadium."

The compact Union ground, renovated in 2009 with the help of 2,300 fans who donated their building skills, usually holds 22,000 for a home game.

Noisy fans provide a cauldron-like atmosphere to intimidate visiting teams, yet for Sunday's visit of Bayern only a maximum of 300 people, mainly players, officials and media, were allowed in.

At the Stadium entrance, there were forms to fill out and guidelines to read, with accreditation passes thoroughly checked.

A medical officer was busy taking temperatures and anyone clocking in at over 38 degrees Celsius was to be turned away.

Even the officer himself was supervised by a colleague to ensure the rules were properly applied.

Inside, protective face masks were compulsory.

Unlike at other German grounds this weekend, there were no supporter banners hanging from the empty terraces and no stadium announcements during the game.

"We don't want to simulate normality where there is no normality," said club spokesman Christian Arbeit.

Lampard hopes out-of-contract players sign short-term deals

Reuters | London

Chelsea manager Frank Lampard says he is hopeful players whose contracts expire in June will sign short-term deals and finish the Premier League season disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the novel coronavirus outbreak bringing world soccer to a standstill, global body FIFA last month recommended extending players' contracts that are due to end in June.

The deals of Brazilian midfielder Willian and French forward Olivier Giroud will expire on June 30 and Lampard said

Frank Lampard attends a training session (file photo)

he wants to finish the season with all the resources he began it with as fourth-placed Chelsea look to seal a Champions League spot.

"We have big players in that position so that's obviously something I'm looking at carefully," Lampard told the club's website.

"The ones out of contract here have been great servants ... and have a lot of feeling for the club, but of course they'll be concerned about themselves in terms of how they are now, and if pre-season is rushed they'll want to make sure they're alright.

SUDOKU

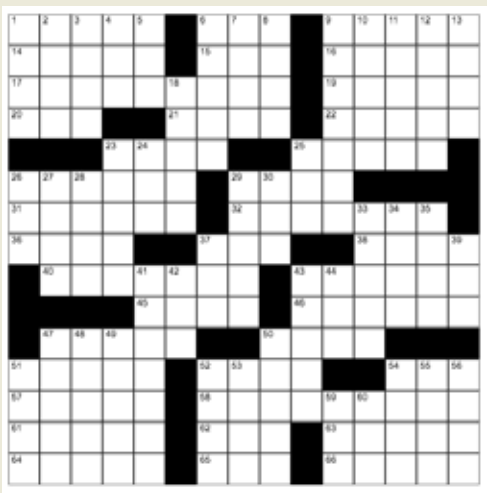
		2						
9		7			4		5	2
3			5	7				6
		1		4			3	
5				6				7
	3			1		5		
8				5	9			1
1	7		8			4		5
						8		

Yesterday's solution

9	3	6	2	8	4	7	1	5
7	8	4	3	1	5	6	2	9
1	5	2	7	6	9	3	4	8
3	9	5	1	2	8	4	6	7
8	6	7	9	4	3	2	5	1
4	2	1	5	7	6	8	9	3
2	7	8	6	5	1	9	3	4
6	1	9	4	3	7	5	8	2
5	4	3	8	9	2	1	7	6

How to play

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.



CROSSWORD

Yesterday's solution

Across

1- Protection; 6- Battery size; 9- Plant firmly; 14- Inventory; 15- Hit on the head; 16- Informative; 17- Ace; 19- Orange container; 20- Break off; 21- Above; 22- Queues; 23- Classic railroad name; 25- Little bits; 26- Buffoons; 29- Old Fords; 31- Religious dissent; 32- Declares positively; 36- Antiquing agent; 37- Point of no return?; 38- "My fault!"; 40- Small bone; 43- Anemic; 45- Collars; 46- Separates metal from ore; 47- Gives a 9.8, say; 50- __ on first?; 51- Juice of the rubber tree; 52- Turkish bigwig; 54- __ kwon do; 57- Florida citrus center; 58- Blooming; 61- Museum piece; 62- Fam. reunion attendee; 63- __ evil...; 64- Establish; 65- Any person; 66- Donkeys;

Down

1- Tennis great Arthur; 2- School founded in 1440; 3- Yellow metallic element; 4- Hot diamonds; 5- Snow runner; 6- Overhead; 7- Bang-up; 8- Copycat; 9- Shut in; 10- Worth; 11- African sir; 12- Politico Kefauver; 13- Turns red, say; 18- Clamorous; 23- Pitchers; 24- "ER" extras; 25- Bartender's requests; 26- When doubled, a dance; 27- Building block brand; 28- Minerals; 29- Shoe ties; 30- Literary monogram; 33- Actor's parts; 34- Damage done; 35- Roasting rod; 37- Long-sleeved linen vestment; 39- Radical '60s grp.; 41- Not precise; 42- __ in Charlie; 43- Balderdash!; 44- Latin I verb; 47- One on track?; 48- __ of Two Cities; 49- Tending to a definite end; 50- Entire; 51- Learning; 52- Bushy hairdo; 53- Singer Campbell; 54- Rail supports; 55- Diarist Frank; 56- Self-images; 59- Conductor __-Pekka Salonen; 60- __ judicata;