

Everton thrash United

Four-star Everton pile on the agony for Man United boss Solskjaer



Richarlison acrobatically scores the opening goal for Everton

AFP | London

Olle Gunnar Solskjaer's problems since taking over as permanent Manchester United manager intensified with a humiliating 4-0 loss away to Everton yesterday.

Defeat at Goodison Park -- United's sixth in eight games -- also dealt a huge blow to the Red Devils' hopes of playing in the Champions League next season.

Goals from Richarlison, Gylfi Sigurdsson, Lucas Digne and Theo Walcott inflicted the largest defeat on United since they lost by the same scoreline at Chelsea three years ago.

But, after starting his reign with eight consecutive victo-

ries, the best start ever made by a manager at the club, former United striker Solskjaer is now collecting some other, very unwanted, statistics.

This latest loss means United have now leaked 48 league goals, the most they've conceded in a season, since letting in 63 back in the 42-game 1978/79 campaign.

Yesterday's loss also means United have conceded in 12 consecutive games for the first time since December 1998 while, under Solskjaer, the Reds have lost five consecutive away games for the first time in 38 years.

Second best

United looked second best even before the hosts scored

twice inside the opening half-hour, conceding a succession of corners from which Everton threatened.

It was another type of set-piece, a long throw-in by Digne, from which Everton took the lead after 12 minutes when the full-back launched the ball deep into the United area.

Dominic Calvert-Lewin helped the ball on with the flick of his head and Richarlison sent a spectacular scissor-kick finish flying past David de Gea.

After a humbling 3-0 Champions League exit at Barcelona in midweek, it was not the start Solskjaer had been looking for. Everton soon made the situation worse for the visitors.



Manchester United crashed to a fifth consecutive away defeat

After 27 minutes, Everton cleared a United corner and immediately broke on the counter-attack, with winger Bernard playing a delightful ball inside to Idrissa Gueye.

He, in turn, released Sigurdsson who, with Nemanja Matic

English Premier League

Everton	4	0	Manchester United
Arsenal	2	3	Crystal Palace
Cardiff City	0	2	Liverpool

German Bundesliga

Sport-Club Freiburg	0	4	Borussia Dortmund
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Spanish La Liga

Levante	2	2	Espanyol
Getafe	3	0	Sevilla
Real Madrid	3	0	Athletic Club

French Ligue 1

Nantes	3	2	Amiens
Toulouse	0	0	Lille
Reims	0	2	St Etienne

*Scores as of closing

backing off, unleashed a magnificent 25-yard shot which bounced just in front of the diving de Gea on its way into the bottom corner.

Richarlison might have given Everton the lead even earlier. His 10th minute shot drew an amazing reaction save from de Gea. From the rebound United hurried his follow-up effort wide.

Brilliantly timed

With the recalled Romelu Lukaku booed every time he touched the ball by his former fans at Everton, United had little response to an impressive effort from the home side.

In between the goals, United star Paul Pogba's long diagonal pass freed Marcus Rashford who could only poke his effort over from a tight angle.

Everton effectively killed the game in the 56th minute. De Gea punched clear a Sigurdsson corner to the unmarked Digne who sent a superb, first-time volley flying back past the United keep-

er from 20 yards.

Three minutes later, and from the same left wing, another Sigurdsson corner almost crept in at de Gea's near post before the Spaniard stuck out a boot to clear off his line.

Even though Richarlison had limped off through injury, the agony was not over for United with the Brazilian's replacement Walcott continuing the rout in the 64th minute.

Sigurdsson again carved out the opening with a brilliantly-timed through ball which allowed the former England international the space to sprint into the area and beat the advancing de Gea.

Not until the 86th minute, and a comfortably saved Anthony Martial strike, did United have a shot on target.

Meanwhile Everton, who had not beaten a 'big six' rival in 25 attempts before last month, have now won consecutive home matches against Chelsea, Arsenal and United while keeping three clean sheets in the process.

Fognini becomes first Italian to win Monte Carlo title in 51 years

AFP | Monte Carlo

Colourful Fabio Fognini defeated Dusan Lajovic 6-3, 6-4 to win the Monte Carlo Masters yesterday, the first Italian to triumph at the clay court showpiece in over half a century.

The 13th seed, based just 20 kilometres over the border in San Remo, followed on from compatriot Nicola Pietrangeli, who watched his record fall from the royal box at the Monte Carlo Country Club.

Pietrangeli won the trophy in the principality in 1961, 1967 and 1968.

He came to the court after the trophy ceremony to pose for pictures with his new tennis heir, who was following up his shock semi-final win over 11-time Monte Carlo champion Rafael Nadal.

"I was born nearby so this is extraordinary," Fognini, 31, said. "I started the season rather badly, so this is unbelievable. I'm very content with this victory, especially with all of the Italians here today."

The 48th-ranked Serb La-



Winner Italy's Fabio Fognini kisses the trophy after winning the final ATP tennis match against Serbia's Dusan Lajovic

ajovic was playing in the first ATP final of his career and got to the title match without the loss of a set.

Fognini looked to be temporarily hampered as he limped momentarily after breaking Lajovic for 3-2 in the second after claiming the opening set in 44 minutes.

During a medical timeout, he was taped on his right thigh and a heel, but carried on without apparent problems as he finished the final on his second match point as Lajovic returned long.

The winner of his first Masters 1000 trophy came to the first major week of the pre-Roland Garros run-up with a 0-4 record on the clay, the surface he grew up on.

Among his victims this week was number three Alexander Zverev, and his stunning stunning 6-4, 6-2 victory over Nadal on Saturday to end the Spanish star's 25-set win streak in the principality.

"This is something just incredible," added Fognini who had been a set and 4-1 down to Andrey Rublev in his tournament opener.

"I'm really tired now, I've been running all week. I prepared for this final as best I could, I knew it would be tough, since Dusan has my ex-coach (Jose Perlas).

He added: "This is a great achievement, but it's tough to beat Rafa and then play a final."

Lajovic was playing his first career ATP final and was far from crushed by defeat. "It was my first time in the finals, so a great experience for me. Today was not easy, there was a lot of wind.

Benzema's treble fires Real past Bilbao

AFP | Madrid

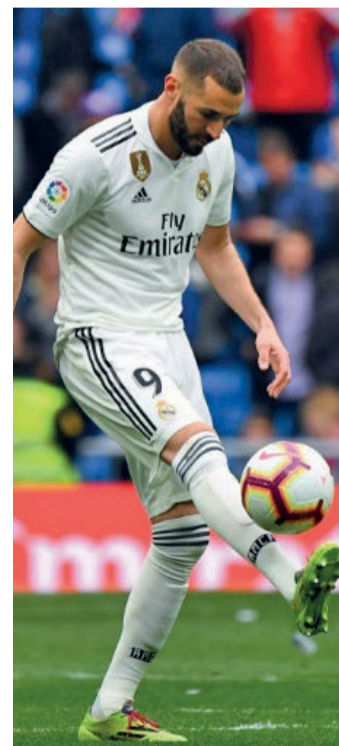
Karim Benzema made it 30 goals for the season yesterday as he led the way again for struggling Real Madrid with a hat-trick that shot his side to a 3-0 win over Athletic Bilbao.

Benzema has been one of the few bright sparks in an otherwise dreary campaign for the European champions and it was his second-half treble that proved the difference at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Victory moves Madrid four points behind Atletico in second, while Bilbao stay seventh, with their chances of sealing a spot in the Europa League dented. However Zinedine Zidane's side stay 13 points behind La Liga leaders Barcelona, who beat Real Sociedad 2-1 on Saturday.

Benzema's advance in the absence of Cristiano Ronaldo and surge since the reappointment of Zidane comes in stark contrast to Gareth Bale, who was whistled when introduced as a substitute here and frequently during his 20 minutes on the pitch.

For all the impatience of the home crowd, it was Bale who won the corner for Benzema's



Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema leaves the pitch with the match ball after scoring a hat trick

second and then teed up his team-mate's third in injury-time.

But his sixth season at Real Madrid will surely be his last, with Zidane saying little in press conference either to ex-

press support or suggest he wants the Welshman to stay beyond the summer.

Bale and Benzema with the gargantuan task of filling the void left by Ronaldo's departure for Juventus last summer and while Bale seems to have shrivelled under the weight of expectation, Benzema has thrived.

The 31-year-old has now claimed all of Madrid's last eight goals in La Liga, a run that includes five matches, while in his last seven games, he has scored 10.

- Benzema saves limp Real - Benzema said at the start of the season he wanted 35 goals in all competitions and, despite his opportunities being reduced by his team's early exit in the Champions League, he is now only five short of his target with the same number of games left to play.

Zidane has already said he expects Benzema to be a Madrid player again at the start of next season and on this evidence it is easy to see why.

The striker's clinical performance aside, the reigning European champions lacked spark in the final third and, the emphatic scoreline flattered them.