

Rashford sends Man Utd into Premier League top four

Manchester United snatch victory over West Ham after Marcus Rashford's late winner

● Ralf Rangnick's side claim huge win in race for Champions League berth

AFP | London

Marcus Rashford struck with virtually the last kick of the game to take Manchester United into the Premier League top four at West Ham's expense with a 1-0 win yesterday.

United were inipid as an attacking force for 93 minutes at Old Trafford, but found the breakthrough at the death as all three of Ralf Rangnick's substitutes combined when Anthony Martial and Edinson Cavani teed up Rashford for a tap in at the back post.

Victory lifts United a point above the Hammers and sees the Red Devils leapfrog Tottenham and Arsenal in the battle for Champions League football



Marcus Rashford shoots to score

next season.

Rangnick has lost just one of his 10 games since taking temporary charge till the end of the season, but once again the result was more impressive than the performance from the German's side.

Bruno Fernandes looked back to his best with two goals and

two assists in the past week and the Portuguese nearly created the opener with a fiercely struck cross that just evaded Cristiano Ronaldo in the most dangerous moment of the first half.

Alphonse Areola was drafted in to the West Ham goal in the absence of Lukasz Fabianski due to a positive test for coronavirus,

It is obviously an important goal and such late on is an amazing feeling. We have to use that winning feeling

MARCUS RASHFORD

but the Frenchman was forced into just one serious save when he turned Fred's driven shot behind early in the second half.

Fernandes dragged another effort wide from the edge of the box as United toiled to the frustration of the 75,000 crowd.

However, Rangnick's changes made the difference.

Rashford has looked devoid of confidence in recent months, but his first goal since October in a 3-1 win at Brentford on Wednesday gave the England international a lift.

Rangnick claimed that Anthony Martial had refused to be part

of his squad for last weekend's 2-2 draw at Aston Villa as he looks for a move away from the club for more game time.

The Frenchman publicly denied that accusation and was given his first minutes under the interim boss when he was introduced along with Cavani in the final 10 minutes.

David de Gea was nearly caught out by a long-range effort from Declan Rice as the game entered stoppage time.

But rather than snatch a winner, West Ham were hit with a sucker punch on the counter-attack.

Martial played in Cavani on the left of the box and the Uruguayan's cross just required a touch from Rashford at the back post.

The wild celebrations survived a VAR check against Cavani for offside and there was barely time for West Ham to kick-off in what could be a fatal blow to their outside hopes of reaching the Champions League for the first time.

Xavi maintains tough Barcelona stance on Dembele



Ousmane Dembele
AFP | Barcelona

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said yesterday the club would not soften their stance on Ousmane Dembele's contract situation, despite the Frenchman's angry riposte on social media on Thursday.

Dembele wrote he would not "give in to blackmail" after Xavi left him out of his squad to face Athletic Bilbao in the Copa del Rey on Thursday night, following a breakdown in talks over a new deal.

The winger's contract expires in the summer, when he will be able to leave Barcelona for free.

The club's director of football Mateu Alemany said on Thursday morning "it seems obvious to us that the player does not want to continue at Barcelona" and "therefore we hope that a transfer will take place before January 31".

BRAVE CF releases list of nominees for 2021 Knockout Of The Year

TDT | Manama

The past 12 months have featured plenty of epic battles inside BRAVE Combat Federation's cage, but the spectacular finishes have always taken the spotlight and have compelled fans to tune in every fight night.

With multiple incredible knockout victories to choose from the 11 live shows in 2021, compiling a definitive list of the very best proved a tough task. With that said, here are the nominees for Knockout of the Year.

The card was aptly-entitled Brave CF 47: Asian Domination in March saw a pair of insane stoppages that are definitely worthy of Knockout of the Year consideration.

In one of the evening's early bouts, India's Mohammed Farhad scored a fantastic one-punch knockout of Pakistan's Uloomi Karim.

Meanwhile, two super welterweights clashed in a featured bout that ended--with Uzbeki-



BRAVE CF Awards 2021 KO Of The Year Nominees

Mohammed Farhad def. Uloomi Kareem - BRAVE CF 47

Ruziboev def. Ibrahim Mane - BRAVE CF 47

Anton Turkalj def. Konstantin Soldatov - BRAVE CF 50

Denis Maher def. Rinat Sagyntay - BRAVE CF

Valeriu Mircea def. Ayub Gaziev - BRAVE CF 52

stan's Nursulton Ruziboev putting France's Ibrahim Mane to sleep with a thunderous slam in the opening round.

On the other hand, one knockout win stood out at the historic BRAVE CF 50 last April when Anton Turkalj of Sweden got the job done in 13 seconds against Konstantin Soldatov of Kazakhstan, becoming the record-holder for fastest-ever KO in the promotion's history.

At BRAVE CF 51: The Future Is Here, Belarusian rising star Denis Maher's star shined the brightest by trouncing Rinat Sagyntay of Kazakhstan via first-round knockout.

To round up the list of nominees, Moldovan standout Valeriu Mircea had a short night at BRAVE CF 52; Bad Blood in August as he triumphed against Ayub Gaziev, finishing off his Austrian counterpart in only 43 seconds.

Fans will get the chance to determine the winner of this category by casting their votes through BRAVE CF's official Instagram account @bravemmaf.

Eira barges through to girls' U16 semis

TDT | Manama

Eira Corral booked her ticket to the semi-finals of the girls' under-16 singles in the ninth EK Kanoo Juniors Open Tennis Championship 2022, being played at Bahrain Tennis Club (BTC) in Juffair.

Eira defeated Jood Kadoura 6-0, 6-0 in their round of eight match to power through to the last four.

Eira is next set to face off with Leanne Sinocruze, who also advanced to the semis following her own 6-0, 6-0 triumph against Chloe Elkara.

The other contest in the last four will be between Salma Faragallah and Zaidan Hajar. Salma beat Mona Khazindar 6-2, 6-0 to earn her berth in the next round while Zaidan defeated Latifa Abdulla 6-1, 6-2 to march through.

The girls' under-16 semi-finals are scheduled to take place today at BTC.

Meanwhile, also yesterday, Salma qualified for the semi-finals of the girls' under-12 singles following a 6-1, 6-3 win over Mariam Ahmed. Naila Abdulla joined her in the last four, beating Rhea Pradhan 6-1, 6-0, as did Fatima Albaajari, who was a 6-0, 6-1 winner against Heer Bavra.

The last semi-final place will be decided between Alanna Cifra and Lara Ahmed.

On the distaff, Rayyan Ahmed and Alston D'Souza made it through to the boys' under-16 doubles semi-finals following a 6-1, 6-1 win against James Thomas and Rion Jay. Rayyan and Alston next meet Clark Sayago and Hamza Mousa, who also advanced via walkover.



Eira Corral in action yesterday in her girls' under-16 singles quarter-final match

In the other final four clash, Rohan Mukherjee and Shadi Kallel will play Mohamed Al Huda and Anthony Ghosn. Rohan and Shadi defeated Mohammed Al Jishi and Mohammed Hossam 7-5, 6-4, whereas Mohammed and Anthony beat Mohamed Al Shehabi and Yousuf Al Shehabi via walkover.

In the boys' under-12 doubles, Abdulrahman Al Dosari and Nasser Al Saeed beat Ebrahim Mohammed and Shaheer Khalid Rajput 6-1, 6-0 to march through to the semis. There they will face Mohammed Nasser and Ahmed Murtadha.

Ali Alkhayyat and Abdulla Al Dosari also made it through with a 6-0, 6-1 win over Ishan Ravi and Aryan Upponi. They will then take on Mohammed Salman and Hamad Al Jishi for a berth in the title match.

Action continues today at the BTC hard courts.

Stokes, Archer, Gayle missing from IPL auction

AFP | New Delhi

England's Ben Stokes, Australia's Mitchell Starc and veteran West Indies big-hitter Chris Gayle are among the stars missing from the upcoming auction for the Indian Premier League, media reports said yesterday.

More than 1,200 cricketers from India and 18 countries across the world have registered to go under the hammer in Bangalore on February 12 and 13 for the 15th edition of the world's most lucrative cricket tournament.

10 teams will bid and participate in this year's IPL after the addition of two new franchises, Ahmedabad and Lucknow



Rajasthan Royals' Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer during a match (file photo)

Other notable absentees from the long list of players in the bidding pool for the IPL -- expected to begin in April depending on the Covid situation in

India -- are the English trio of Jofra Archer, Chris Woakes and Sam Curran, the reports said.

Stokes and Woakes both participated in England's recent

disastrous Ashes tour of Australia. Captain Joe Root -- who has never played in the IPL -- is also sitting out the auction although fast bowler Mark Wood is on the list along with Australian stars David Warner and Pat Cummins, the reports said.

Ten teams will bid and participate in this year's IPL after the addition of two new franchises, Ahmedabad and Lucknow.

India's opening batter KL Rahul will captain Lucknow after he was signed as the joint-highest-paid player, for 170 million rupees (\$2.3 million), in the history of the tournament.