

MOURINHO TIES HIS FATE TO IBRAHIMOVIC AT UNITED

MANCHESTER: Jose Mourinho's announcement that Zlatan Ibrahimovic will stay at Manchester United for a second season was a bold statement of faith in a striker still trying to prove himself in England. United's manager swatted away questions about the 35-year-old's pace and suitability, effectively tying their fates together as they seek a way to turn around United's season.

"We are going to execute the option of a second season," said Mourinho. "After that he can do what he wants."

While it is not hard to see why Ibrahimovic would re-sign a one-year deal reported to be worth 260,000 pounds (\$323,362.00) a week, some United fans question whether he remains the right man to spearhead their attack into his 37th year.

The goals have dried up after five in his first five games. Since then the Swede has netted three times in 12 attempts, once against Ukrainian side FC Zorya in the Europa League and twice versus Swansea City, the Premier

League's bottom side. Although some of those strikes were spectacular, Ibrahimovic has appeared a throwback in a season where Chelsea and Liverpool have literally set the pace with high-octane performances that have seen them surge ahead of sixth-placed United.

The Swede defended himself with characteristic charm on Wednesday when it was suggested at a news conference that he had not shone this season.

"I shine for 24 hours (a day), so it depends how you want me to shine," he

said. "I've been in the game for 20 years and, while I'm getting older, I feel I'm getting better as I get older.

"I am shining in one way or another, but if you want me to shine even more then I will try and do it for you," he joked.

The problem is Mourinho has already identified a lack of pace as a problem for his attack, explaining he overlooked Wayne Rooney at home to Arsenal on Saturday because he was too slow.

Wednesday's contract announcement was all the more surprising because

Ibrahimovic had suggested earlier this week that he might "outnapoleon Napoleon" by decamping to the MLS.

"Perhaps I should do what Napoleon didn't and cross the Atlantic and conquer the States as well," he told Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet. But first he must conquer Manchester. With a trophy bagged every season since 2001, including 13 league titles, and a statue to be erected in his honour in Stockholm, Mourinho clearly believes Ibra will deliver. — Reuters

HAT-TRICK DELIGHTS REUS, TUCHEL IN RECORD WIN

DORTMUND: Marco Reus was delighted to have netted a hat-trick on his comeback in Borussia Dortmund's record 8-4 hammering of Legia Warsaw in the Champions League after six months out.

"That was an important step for me, it's how you imagine your first day back will go," said Reus with a grin. "I've worked hard for this moment and I am pleased that I could help the team."

The Germany winger led the way in a record-goal haul for a Champions League game. The 12-goals in Dortmund on Tuesday bettered the competition's previous record of 11 set when Monaco beat Deportivo de La Coruna 8-3 in November 2003. With Dortmund already through to the last 16, the huge win keeps them top of Group F, two points clear of Real Madrid with one match to go.

Dortmund's Shinji Kagawa and Legia's Aleksandar Prijovic also finished with two goals each thanks to some poor defending by both teams. Reus, who captained Dortmund, made his return after 185 days out with an adductor injury which sidelined him for June's European championships. It was his first match since Dortmund lost the German Cup final to Bayern Munich on penalties in Berlin on May 21. Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel was delighted with Reus' return as he welcomed back one of his key stars on a night when the goals flowed.

'FANTASTIC'

"You couldn't have expected him to score three times in his first game back," enthused Tuchel. "This is extraordinary and a fantastic performance," he added in praising his team. "This is the quality which has been missing for months and Marco has been sorely missed." But Tuchel admitted Dortmund have clear defensive frailties to fix. He said he was feeling sorry for goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller, who was often left brutally exposed by his defence. "It was surreal, I've never seen anything like it," said Tuchel. "There is clearly room for improvement in terms of defence, especially on a counter-attack. I felt really sorry for Roman and we have to address these blatant errors." Ex-Germany goalkeeper Weidenfeller, 36, back in the starting line-

up after first-choice Roman Burki broke his hand in Saturday's 1-0 league win over Bayern Munich, was unhappy with his defence. "There are points we should talk about, we must behave differently in defence," he fumed. "We're playing here in the Champions League, you have to give a different account of yourself. It was a great game for the spectators, but we should not have leaked four."

NINE CHANGES

Tuchel had made nine changes to the side which beat Bayern on Saturday and Prijovic took advantage of sloppy defence to chip his shot home and stun the Dortmund crowd on 10 minutes.

Even though UEFA had banned Warsaw's fans from this particular match for previous bad behaviour, a small band managed to get into the stadium and cheered their side's opener. But Borussia roared back with five goals in 16 minutes. Their first three goals came in 198 seconds when Kagawa headed home on 17 minutes, then slotted a second just a minute later. To compound Warsaw's problems, a clearance punch from goalkeeper Radoslaw Cierzniaik clattered off Nuri Sahin's chest and into the Legia goal to make it 3-1 on 20 minutes.

Prijovic pulled another goal back for Warsaw on 26 minutes, and could have claimed a hat-trick when his chip hit the crossbar moments later.

Dortmund's French winger Ousmane Dembele made it 4-2 when he beat several defenders to fire home on 29 minutes.

He then helped Kagawa set up Reus for his first on 32 minutes. Dembele weighed in with his third assist of the night with a superb cross to allow Reus to claim his second and Dortmund's sixth on 52 minutes.

Warsaw midfielder Michal Kucharczyk pulled a third goal back for Legia on 57 minutes before Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang came off the bench to hit the post for Dortmund. Dortmund defender Felix Passlack then scored his first Champions League goal before Hungary striker Nemanja Nikolic netted Warsaw's fourth in the final ten minutes. Reus wrapped up his hat-trick in the 93rd-minute when he converted Aubameyang's final pass at point-blank range. — AFP

TEN-MAN SEVILLA FURIOUS AS JUVENTUS FIGHTBACK TO QUALIFY

SEVILLE: Sevilla were left fuming at English referee Mark Clattenburg as Juventus came from behind to win 3-1 in Spain and seal their place in the last 16 of the Champions League on Tuesday.

The hosts made the perfect start through Nico Pareja's ninth minute opener, but were reduced to 10 men after just 36 minutes when Franco Vazquez was shown a second yellow card by Clattenburg.

A controversial Juventus penalty converted by Claudio Marchisio followed and Sevilla coach Jorge Sampaoli was also sent to the stands before two goals in the final six minutes from Leonardo Bonucci and Mario Mandzukic ensured the Italian champions' progress.

By contrast, Sevilla's first defeat in Group H means they have to avoid defeat by a two-goal margin away to Lyon in two weeks to guarantee their place in the last 16. "When they went down to ten men, they closed down all the space and we made several mistakes. Fortunately my left foot came to the rescue," Bonucci told UEFA.com. "We can celebrate because we reached our first objective, but now we have many others." However, Sevilla winger Vitolo claimed it was Clattenburg who changed the game.

"Today two decisions from the referee have harmed us," the Spanish international told BeIN Sports Spain. "At 1-0 we were

playing well, in control and taking the game to them; we didn't have many problems. "All of a sudden we are left with a man less and he has given a penalty that for me you can't give."

Juventus travelled to Spain shorn of a number of key players, including first choice strike pairing Gonzalo Higuain and Paulo Dybala, and got off to the worst possible start. A corner from the right was only partially cleared and the loose ball was expertly dispatched into the bottom corner from the edge of the area by Pareja.

Sergio Escudero nearly added a spectacular second as his volleyed effort flew just over the bar. However, ugly clashes between the two sets of fans on Monday night that left one Belgian Juventus fan in hospital, spilled onto the pitch in a bad-tempered encounter in which Clattenburg became the protagonist.

Vazquez's poorly timed trip on Sami Khedira just inside the Sevilla half was shown no mercy by the official who took charge of last season's Champions League final. Sevilla were far more infuriated in first-half stoppage time, though, as Clattenburg pointed to the spot when a series of bodies went to ground from a Juventus corner.

Sergio Rico got a hand to Marchisio's spot-kick, but couldn't keep the midfielder's effort out. — AFP



LEICESTER: Leicester's Christian Fuchs, left, and Brugge's Jelle Vossen challenge for the ball during the Champions League Group G soccer match between Leicester City and Club Brugge in Leicester, England, Tuesday. — AP

OKAZAKI, MAHREZ FIRE LEICESTER INTO LAST 16

LEICESTER: Shinji Okazaki and Riyad Mahrez scored as England's miracle club Leicester City beat Club Brugge 2-1 on Tuesday to book their place in the Champions League knockout phase. Leicester are toiling in defence of their 5,000-1 Premier League title, but the fairytale continues in Europe as they became the first Champions League debutants to win their group since Malaga in 2012. Porto's failure to beat FC Copenhagen left Leicester five points clear at the Group G summit, guaranteeing them a kinder draw for the last 16 even before their final match away to Porto on December 7.

"We're on another journey. I don't know where, but we're excited!" said Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri. "We started well, we pressed, scored twice and kept possession. But after they scored we lost our way a little."

"Now the group is won, it's important to come back in the Premier League." The only disappointment for Ranieri's side, who sit two points above the relegation zone in the Premier League, was a second-half goal by Brugge's Colombian winger Jose Izquierdo.

It prevented Leicester from becoming the first team since Manchester United in 2010 to keep clean sheets in their first five group games, but that was of secondary importance on a historic night. Brugge's defeat at the King Power Stadium was their fifth in succession in the group and extinguished the Belgian champions' faint hopes of pipping Copenhagen to a Europa League place. Leicester had needed less than five minutes to get off the mark in their 3-0 win in September's reverse fixture and they were just as quick to get going in the teams' reunion.

A sharp break down the left wing involving Marc Albrighton and Jamie Vardy culminated in Christian Fuchs curling a delightful cross behind the visitors' defence that Okazaki hooked home at the near post. Leicester's Jekyll and Hyde transformation had taken place once again and they swarmed all over their punch-drunk opponents in a manner reminiscent of last season's extraordinary title surge.

Mahrez turned Laurens De Bock inside-out before drawing a near-post block from Brugge goalkeeper Ludovic Butelle, who also gathered a shot from Okazaki after Vardy nixed Brandon Mechele's attempted clearance.

IZQUIERDO THUMPER

In the 29th minute it was 2-0, Mahrez sending Butelle the wrong way from the penalty spot after Albrighton had lured Dion Cools into an untidy challenge on the edge of the box.

It was the Algeria winger's fourth goal of the campaign, strengthening his position as the top scorer in the group.

Leicester goalkeeper Ron-Robert Zieler, deputising for Kasper Schmeichel, could not have wished for a gentler start to his competition debut, although he did have to box away a curler from Izquierdo.

Leicester went into half-time as the last team in the competition still to concede a goal, but that statistic would change within seven minutes of kick-off in the second half.

After winning the ball back in his own half, Izquierdo set off on a charging run down Brugge's right flank before thumping a shot high past Zieler at his near post.

Players on both sides had goals chalked off for offside-Vardy for Leicester, Claudemir for

Brugge-before the hosts were given a scare when substitute Anthony Limbombe sliced wide. Seeking to keep Brugge on the back foot, Ranieri sent on the fleet-footed Jeff Schlupp and Demarai Gray for goal-scorers Mahrez and Okazaki, with Ahmed Musa following shortly after. Schlupp almost made an immediate

impact, seizing on a loose pass and dispatching a low shot that Butelle dropped to his left to save. Ricardo van Rhijn's corners gave the hosts some nervy moments late on and Butelle prevented Gray from making it 3-1, but Leicester would not be denied their place among the continental elite. — AFP

MONACO SEND SPURS CRASHING OUT OF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

MONACO: Harry Kane scored his first Champions League goal but could not prevent Tottenham Hotspur from crashing out of the competition with a 2-1 defeat in Monaco on Tuesday. Spurs needed at least a point to keep their hopes of reaching the last 16 alive and Kane brought them level with a penalty shortly after Djibril Sidibe had put Monaco in front at the Stade Louis II.

However, Thomas Lemar ended a whirlwind spell by restoring Monaco's lead in the 53rd minute and the hosts-for whom Radamel Falcao had an early penalty saved-held on to claim the win that secures their place in the knockout stages.

Monaco are also guaranteed to progress as Group E winners, while Bayer Leverkusen are through too after drawing 1-1 away to CSKA Moscow in Russia earlier in the day.

"It is a beautiful victory. We are happy and let's hope this continues," Sidibe told BeIN Sports of a Monaco side who are through to the last 16 for the second time in three seasons. "Our objective was qualification and we are first, which is important. We will savour this before we start looking forward."

Meanwhile, Tottenham will go into their final match against CSKA at Wembley with only a berth in the Europa League after Christmas up for grabs.

It is a deeply disappointing outcome for Mauricio Pochettino's men, who have now managed just one win in their last nine

matches in all competitions and have lost three of their five games in Europe.

"After we lost the first goal we came back with the penalty but it is difficult to understand how we conceded the (second) goal," Pochettino said.

"If you want to go to the next level in the Champions League you can't concede goals like that." The Premier League side had showed their intent as Kane, Dele Alli and Mousa Dembele all started for despite having been cited as doubts before the game by Pochettino. Meanwhile, Monaco coach Leonardo Jardim named the attacking line-up that has made his team the most prolific in Europe's leading leagues this season.

However, Tottenham missed a glorious chance to go ahead inside six minutes when Alli's defence-splitting pass sent Song heung-Min racing clear. The Korean found himself through one-on-one with Danijel Subasic but was pushed wide by the Croatian goalkeeper and the opportunity was gone.

Four minutes after that Monaco won a penalty. Fabinho went down in spectacular fashion under an Eric Dier challenge and Dutch referee Bjorn Kuipers pointed to the spot, only for Hugo Lloris to dive low to his right and save Falcao's kick. The home side did not let that miss get to them, instead continuing to look the more dangerous side but it took them until three minutes into the second half to get the breakthrough. — AFP



MONACO: Tottenham Hotspur's Dutch striker Vincent Janssen (C) vies with Monaco's players during the UEFA Champions League group E football match AS Monaco and Tottenham Hotspur FC at the Louis II stadium in Monaco on Tuesday. — AFP



SEVILLE: Sevilla's Argentinian defender Gabriel Mercado (L) vies with Juventus' Brazilian defender Alex Sandro Lobo Silva during the UEFA Champions League football match Sevilla FC vs Juventus at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Sevilla on Tuesday. — AFP