

Sports

Kane 93rd minute stunner earns Spurs the victory over Juventus

'It's probably one of the best goals of my career'

SINGAPORE: Harry Kane scored a stunning 93rd minute winner from the halfway line as Tottenham Hotspur edged Juventus 3-2 in an entertaining pre-season friendly in Singapore yesterday. The England captain latched onto Lucas Moura's short pass and launched a first-time shot high over a scrambling substitute keeper Wojciech Szczesny as Spurs rallied past new manager Maurizio Sarri's Italian champions in front of a delighted National Stadium crowd.

"It's probably one of the best goals of my career. I noticed the keeper was often off of his line and thought if I get a chance to shoot I will and it just went in," Kane said in a post-match interview. A youthful Spurs dominated the first half as Juventus struggled to adapt to their new coach's "Sarri-ball" tactic of playing out from the back with short, quick passes. Instead of moving the ball forward, Juventus often found themselves defending desperately after being caught in possession as Spurs pressed high up the pitch with the Premier League side going on to take a deserved lead on the half-hour mark.

'Very competitive'

Son Heung-min started the move by holding up play and feeding Troy Parrott for a clear run at Gianluigi Buffon in the Juventus goal, with the 17-year-old forward's low strike parried by the veteran keeper straight into the path of an unmarked Erik Lamela for a routine

tap-in. "It was a very good game, very competitive. To be honest, we are still short in our preparations and I wasn't planning to play this way so early in the pre-season ... we were still hoping to give some players more rest after a long campaign," Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino said.

"The result was not the most important thing today, the performance was and how we continue our preparations for the upcoming season." Juventus had more success after the break when they increased their tempo and went more direct, and halftime substitute Gonzalo Higuain levelled the score in the 56th minute with a drilled strike after exchanging neat passes with Federico Bernardeschi.

Buoyed by the equalizer, Juventus were soon ahead when Cristiano Ronaldo arrived late to drive home Mattia De Sciglio's cutback four minutes later, leaving to rapturous applause by an adoring crowd when he was substituted immediately after scoring. Spurs were level in the 65th minute, however, when Champions League semi-final hero Lucas Higuain fired home record signing Tanguy Ndombele's low cross, the French midfielder finding the Brazilian with his first touch after coming on as a substitute. Kane and Higuain both squandered good chances to score winning goals in the final 10 minutes before the England striker prevented the contest going to a penalty shootout with the most brilliant of strikes. — AFP



SINGAPORE: Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane (R) kicks the ball during the International Champions Cup football match between Juventus and Tottenham Hotspur. — AFP

Bayern beat Madrid in Hazard's Real debut

LOS ANGELES: Bayern Munich spoiled Eden Hazard's Real Madrid debut, downing the Spanish giants 3-1 in a friendly in Houston Saturday despite goalkeeper Sven Ulreich's sending off. Corentin Tolisso, Robert Lewandowski and Serge Gnabry had given Bundesliga champions Bayern a comfortable 3-0 lead before recent Real Madrid signing Rodrygo grabbed a consolation goal with a brilliant free kick.

That followed Ulreich's departure in the 81st for a foul on Brazilian teen Rodrygo outside the area. Rodrygo, Luka Jovic and Ferland Mendy all made their debuts for rebuilding Real Madrid — all coming on at halftime as Zinedine Zidane changed his entire side. Hazard's first outing in a Madrid jersey since his high-priced move from Chelsea had dominated the headlines.

But despite getting a starting nod he made little impact at the NRG Stadium — home of the NFL's Houston Texans, where the European giants produced plenty of lively end-to-end action from the kickoff. It needed a stellar display from Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer to keep Real Madrid at bay. Bayern led at the interval thanks to Tolisso's 15th-minute strike.

Thomas Muller freed Kingsley Coman whose cross made it to Tolisso — who was denied by Real Madrid keeper Thibaut Courtois on his first attempt but slotted home the rebound. Down a goal with half-time approaching Real Madrid poured it on. Karim Benzema let a golden chance go



HOUSTON: Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema (L) and Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng fight for the ball during their International Champions Cup match. — AFP

begging in the 43rd, meeting a cross from Isco but knocking his effort wide. Neuer came up with another impressive save in the 45th, diving to his right to grab Luka Modric's effort from 10 yards out of the air.

Courtois fended off a blast from Coman in first-half injury time to keep Bayern from stretching their advantage before the break. While Real Madrid applied plenty of pressure, Hazard was circumspect, often opting to pass off to his new teammates. The closest the 28-year old Belgian came to his first Real Madrid goal was in the 39th minute, when he found space on the

left and bent a shot toward the far post only for Neuer to punch it away.

Zidane's wholesale changes at the interval did nothing to further Real Madrid's cause, even though they controlled possession early in the second half. Lewandowski doubled Bayern's lead in the 67th controlling a high ball from Niklas Sule, turning and firing into the bottom corner. Two minutes later Madrid gave the ball away deep in their own end and an unmarked Gnabry was able to control the ball and fire past Kyleor Navas in goal. — AFP

Arsenal Next Gen ready to 'take on the world': Saka

CHARLOTTE: After impressing in a starting role for Arsenal in their 3-0 win over Fiorentina on Saturday, 17-year-old Bukayo Saka said he is ready to "take on the world" as part of an exciting next generation of talent. Arsenal made it three wins from three on their tour of the United States, including two in the International Champions Cup, with victory in humid conditions in Charlotte, where youngsters again came to the fore.

With Arsenal yet to make a major signing in the summer transfer window, coach Unai Emery has instead utilized some of the young talent at his disposal in the US, and has been rewarded as all eight of Arsenal's pre-season goals have been scored by youngsters. One of those is Saka, who again shone in a wide role against Fiorentina, and now believes that he and his fellow proteges have what it takes to go far.

"The players coming up from the academy are so special," Saka said. "The next generation of us can be in this Arsenal team and take on the world. The boss is doing a good job of managing all of us, helping us to progress every day and to learn. I just have to keep pushing. Showing the boss what I can do and when the time comes I am ready to play. When I get the chance then I can take it." Saka also hailed the influence of new Arsenal assistant coach Freddie Ljungberg, who has been promoted from the

Under-23s role to work alongside Emery, bringing a wide knowledge of his former charges.

"From the Under-15s I worked with him," Saka added. "It has been a long journey but I feel like we both deserve it. Freddie helps Unai know who we are, tells him our strengths and weaknesses and comes to us individually and tells us what we need to do from Unai. Unai does not have to speak to us directly, Freddie comes to us and tells us what we need to do. It makes the transition from the academy to the first team much smoother."

Emery being patient

Arsenal manager Unai Emery said he is happy to be patient in the transfer market and will wait for the right player to become available. "Really I am with patience because we want to choose the best solution," Emery said. "Some players are very expensive and we are waiting for this possibility. We don't want now to go to the second line of players. We are waiting. We have very good players. We have very good young players."

"We are aware also that we need to improve some players in this squad. I want to sign one, two, three or four players only if we can be sure they are coming to improve our team." Arsenal have been linked with William Saliba in the British press, in a deal that would see the defender return to current club Saint-Etienne in France on loan as part of the deal.

Emery, however, said there were a number of possibilities floating around and he was in constant contact with sporting director Edu and head of football Raul Sanllehi, while they also spoke with the club's owners the Kroenke family. "There are a lot of names. The club is working. Edu is very close to me and Raul," Emery said. — Reuters

Solskjaer targets more signings in search for fast start

SINGAPORE: Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said Friday the club is working on one or two more signings as he hopes to hit the ground running in the new campaign after stuttering badly towards the end of last season. Solskjaer enjoyed a stellar start after replacing Jose Mourinho in December, winning 10 and drawing two of his first 12 Premier League fixtures.

But a stunning slump in form saw the side finish sixth in the standings, 32 points behind champions Manchester City. Aware that his imbalanced squad needed a major overhaul, Solskjaer has already recruited midfielder Daniel James and fullback Aaron Wan-Bissaka, with the club strongly linked to England central defender Harry Maguire and Portuguese playmaker Bruno Fernandes. "We are working on one or two (signings). My objective here though is we have got to get ready for the games and the training sessions," the Norwegian told reporters in Singapore on the eve of a pre-season friendly against Inter Milan.

"We are working on putting a squad together which can compete, we have lots of ways which can play. The Premier League is a very competitive league. Our aim is to focus



SINGAPORE: Manchester United's manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (C) sits with his coaching staff during the International Champions Cup football match between Manchester United and Inter Milan. — AFP

on ourselves, we have to be better and be our only focus. I am sure we will get closer to the top." United have already seen midfielder Ander Herrera depart for Paris Saint-Germain and while question marks remain over the futures of Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku and the talismanic Paul Pogba, Solskjaer is continuing to prepare for the new season with the Frenchman central to his plans.

"I am looking to get everyone to get their form back to when we first came in. It is not just about Pogba, it is about all of us as a team," he said, adding that Lukaku was not fit

to face the Italian side on Saturday. "Everyone has been spot on in pre-season in training and the games. I have been very encouraged. The start of the season is important, I don't think many of these players have had a pre-season like this in many years. In the first eight or 10 games, you don't win anything but you can lose the chance to win anything." United complete their pre-season program with matches against Tottenham Hotspur, Kristiansund and AC Milan before opening their Premier League campaign at home to Chelsea on August 11. — AFP

Griezmann 'cried' when Barca move finally happened

MADRID: Antoine Griezmann admitted yesterday that he was moved to tears of happiness when his big-money move to Barcelona finally came through after a controversial exit from former club Atletico Madrid. The World Cup winner is in Tokyo with Barca ahead of a clash with Chelsea on Tuesday after the La Liga giants shelled out 120 million euros (\$135 million) to match his release clause amid a blistering row between the player and the two clubs.

"I called my father and I started crying with joy because the transfer was all done, it all was over," Griezmann said in an interview with sports daily Marca. "I was with my friends, with my wife, with my children and it was an incredible moment." The 28-year-old added he was targeting European glory with Barcelona after two humiliating exits for the Catalans from the Champions League in the last two years-to Roma and Liverpool-after throwing away commanding first-leg leads. "If you ask the fans, they will tell you (they want to win

all three titles (La Liga, Champions League and Copa del Rey), and that goes for the players and the leaders too, and me too," he said. "We have a team to win everything. It's difficult but we will have to work for it."

Shortly after Barca had announced the signing of Griezmann, Atletico complained they and the Frenchman had negotiated the deal before the buy-out price dropped from 200 million euros at the start of July, adding that they had already "begun appropriate procedures" to defend their "rights and legitimate interests". Spanish media claim that Atletico will go to FIFA to argue that Barca owe them more than the fee they eventually paid earlier this month.

Griezmann almost signed with Barcelona a year ago but instead opted in June 2018 to sign a new five-year deal at the Wanda Metropolitano. But in May this year he announced he would be leaving at the end of the season, with Atletico claiming he told them of a deal with Barca before a 3-0 defeat to Juventus which dumped them out of the Champions League at the last 16 stage.

Griezmann scored 133 goals in 257 appearances for Atletico since he joined them in 2014 from Basque club Real Sociedad, who scouted the attacker when he was just 14. He helped Atletico lift the Europa League in 2018 and won the World Cup with France last year. He was top scorer at Euro 2016 despite hosts France losing in the final to Portugal. — AFP