

Sports

'Job done' as Solskjaer's United reach Europa League last eight

Inter Milan beat Getafe to clinch places in quarter finals

PARIS: Manchester United coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer praised the performance of his second-string side in reaching the Europa League quarter-finals with a 2-1 win over LASK on Wednesday. United had a 5-0 lead from their first leg played in March and will face Copenhagen who enjoyed a 3-0 victory on the night over Istanbul Basaksehir in their last 16 tie.

Usual starters such as Paul Pogba, Marcus Rashford and Anthony Martial were named on the bench while the likes of Jesse Lingard and Fred started at an almost empty Old Trafford. "It was a good exercise, job done, minutes under the belt and ready to travel," Solskjaer told broadcaster BT Sport.

"The sharpness you lack when you don't play regularly. Some of these haven't really played since lockdown. They played last time against Norwich which is a month ago," he added. Despite United's comfortable lead from March 12's first leg the visitors caused problems early on.

Andres Andrade hit the crossbar with a powerful header after 10 minutes before Peter Michorl fired wide just after the quarter of an hour mark. The Linz-based outfit had to wait until the second half to break the deadlock as defender Philipp Wiesinger rifled into the top corner from outside the box after 55 minutes.

Their celebrations were shortlived as Lingard equalised on the counter attack for United three minutes later. Martial claimed the match-winner with two minutes to go despite LASK goalkeeper

Alexander Schlager getting a foot to the France striker's shot.

LUKAKU SCORES AGAIN

Elsewhere, Antonio Conte's Inter Milan will face either Steven Gerrard's Rangers or Bayer Leverkusen with the Germans holding a 3-1 lead going into today's match after his side beat Getafe 2-0.

Romelu Lukaku and Christian Eriksen scored either side of the break for the Italians. "It was a difficult match against a team that plays aggressively, but we did well, the defence did a good job and I'm happy to score for the team," Lukaku told Sky Sport Italia.

"Christian also got an important goal for the side and we must continue like this." Inter's meeting with the La Liga side was played over just one leg in Gelsenkirchen to save time ahead of next week's last eight to be held in Germany.

Lukaku became the club's first player to score in five straight European appearances since Brazilian striker Adriano in 2004. Lukaku slotted home after Alessandro Bastoni's long ball after 33 minutes. The Spaniards were given a chance to take the game to penalties with 25 minutes remaining as VAR said Diego Godin had handballed in his own box but veteran centre-forward Jorge Molina missed the resulting penalty.

Eriksen made sure of Inter's last-eight spot after 84 minutes with his first touch after Dakonam Djene made a mess of a clearance in-



MANCHESTER: Austrian defender Philipp Wiesinger (L) vies with Manchester United's Nigerian striker Odion Ighalo during the UEFA Europa League last 16 second leg football match between Manchester United and Linzer ASK at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England. —AFP

side his own area.

Earlier, 2009 champions Shakhtar Donetsk booked a quarter-final place against Basel or Eintracht Frankfurt after three goals within the

closing four minutes clinched a 3-0 win over Wolfsburg. On Thursday Rangers head to Leverkusen, Wolves host Olympiakos, and Sevilla face Roma in Duisburg. —AFP

Smith has 'unfinished business' with England and India

SYDNEY: Winning the Ashes in England and clinching a Test series in India are the "two big mountains" still to climb before master Australia batsman Steve Smith considers retirement. The 31-year-old had an astonishing tour of England last year, blazing 774 runs from just four Tests, having missed the third Test with concussion after being hit by a Jofra Archer bouncer.

But his exploits were only enough for Tim Paine's side to retain the fabled Ashes urn as holders, rather than win it outright, with the series ending 2-2 after Australia lost the fifth and final Test at The Oval. Smith said it left him disappointed and with "unfinished business". "To know that we'd got the Ashes back was pretty special," he told The Unplayable Podcast this week. "Unfortunately, we couldn't win them which is something I'd still like to do. "From my personal perspective, I think it's unfinished business," he added. "It's great to retain the Ashes but it just doesn't sit right with me when you don't win it. We drew the series — good, but not great. "So I probably left at the end of the fifth Test (feeling) more disappointed than a sense of achievement." —AFP

Juve's 'MVP' Dybala in race against time for Lyon decider

MILAN: On the verge of being sold to Manchester United last summer, Paulo Dybala is once again Juventus' talisman as the newly-crowned Italian champions race to get him ready for their Champions League showdown with Lyon.

This time last year Dybala, 26, looked to be the counterweight in Romelu Lukaku's transfer to Turin but has since re-established himself as the fulcrum of Juve's attack alongside Cristiano Ronaldo, scoring 16 goals in all competitions and setting up 14 more. His form, after a slow start to the season, led to him being crowned Serie A's 'MVP' on Tuesday ahead of Ronaldo and European Golden Shoe winner Ciro Immobile.

And now Dybala is reportedly on the verge of a new five-year deal with Juve, a remarkable turnaround from what at one point seemed a near-certain departure to England.

Now the Italian champions are feverishly trying to help the Argentine recover from a thigh injury picked up the night they won their ninth straight 'Scudetto' in the hope

he can start against Lyon on Friday night.

Last week coach Maurizio Sarri said that Dybala's "recovery process is going well", but admitted he wasn't sure when Dybala would return to action. However Italian media reported on Wednesday that there is some optimism that he will be back in time to play some part the clash at the Allianz Stadium. Juve trail the Ligue 1 side, who lost on penalties to Paris Saint-Germain in the French League Cup final at the weekend, following their 1-0 defeat in France six months ago. Despite winning the league with two matches to spare — having restarted the 2019-20 campaign in June just a point ahead of nearest challengers Lazio — their form at the end of the campaign has raised concerns that they might not make the final eight tournament in Lisbon later this month. They finished the season with just two wins and four defeats in their final eight matches, with performances throughout the season rarely hitting the heights of the famed 'Sarriball' their coach achieved at Napoli.

In the 12 games between Serie A's return from the coronavirus lockdown and the end of the league campaign Juve conceded 19 goals, nearly half the overall tally of 43 in the 'goals against' column. Sarri has accused the league of "creating problems" for his team with a packed schedule and had threatened to play Juve's under-23 side against Roma on the final weekend, a match which ended in a thumping 3-1 defeat. —AFP