

Sports

Eintracht Frankfurt beat Rangers on penalties to win Europa League

Frankfurt earned spot in next season's Champions League

SEVILLE: Eintracht Frankfurt defeated Rangers 5-4 on penalties to win the Europa League on Wednesday after the final in Seville finished 1-1 at the end of extra time. Aaron Ramsey missed for Rangers in the shoot-out after coming on as a substitute with only three minutes left of extra time, before Rafael Borre struck the winning shot to complete Frankfurt's remarkable triumph. "We will celebrate for the next few days now," said Frankfurt coach Oliver Glasner.

Borre was the hero of the night, after already cancelling out Joe Aribo's opener for Rangers as Frankfurt won their first European trophy since 1980 and booked their place in next season's Champions League group stage. "I dreamed of tonight, of a historic night for the club, a historic night for me," said Borre, the Colombian. "It's my first European title. I will keep this memory forever."

"We are all heroes. Without the fans we wouldn't have made it," said Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp. Both clubs were looking to win a second European title in their history, Rangers after clinching the Cup Winners' Cup in 1972 and Frankfurt after they lifted the UEFA Cup 42 years ago.

But Rangers came up just short at the end of an incredible run to the final. Only 10 years ago this week, Rangers fell into administration before being liquidated and relegated to Scotland's bottom tier. Frankfurt had already beaten Real Betis, Barcelona and West Ham United en route to the final and they were probably deserving winners, shading a compelling contest that always seemed to lack real technical quality.

With a capacity of just under 43,000, Sevilla's Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan ground was never going to be big enough to house all the travelling fans, with Rangers bringing over an estimated 100,000 while around 60,000 followed Frankfurt to Spain. The vast majority enjoyed the day in good spirits but security concerns were not unfounded, with skirmishes breaking out in the city centre during the day on Wednesday while five German fans were arrested late Tuesday after police said 200 Frankfurt fans launched an attack on Rangers supporters.

It was a scruffy opening 15 minutes as Joe Aribo almost got away after a neat pirouette by Scott Wright before John Lundstram scraped his studs down the dipping head of Sebastian Rode, leaving the Frankfurt captain with a bloody shirt that had to be changed and a head that had to be strapped. The Germans gradually took control, suffocating Rangers, who were reduced to speculative punts forward to try to escape the press.



First European trophy since 1980

Pressure mounting

Frankfurt's Ansgar Knauff went close, the penalty box opening up for the winger at the end of a winding run forward, only for Allan McGregor to tip wide. Rangers had their moments and improved before the break as Lundstram's header had to be pushed over and Ryan Jack drove too high.

Frankfurt seemed rejuvenated for the start of the second half but it was Rangers who took the lead just before the hour, capitalising on two dreadful Frankfurt errors, each compounding the other. First, Djibril Sow misjudged a header in midfield, sending it back behind his own defense for



SEVILLE: Eintracht Frankfurt's German midfielder and captain Sebastian Rode lifts the trophy as Eintracht Frankfurt players celebrate after winning the UEFA Europa League final football match between Eintracht Frankfurt and Glasgow Rangers at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Seville on May 18, 2022. —AFP

the lively Aribo to latch onto, and then as Frankfurt's Tutu chased, he slipped, gifting a free run to the striker, who slotted home.

However, Eintracht drew level in the 69th minute as Filip Kostic was given too much space out wide to cross and then in the middle, Connor Goldson and Calvin Bassey both hesitated to clear. Borre nipped between them and prodded in.

There were precious few opportunities in the final minutes but the contest became stretched in extra time. Rangers might have won it in the 118th

minute as the sprinting Ryan Kent arrived at the back post only for Trapp to make a sensational save.

To penalties, and the Rangers fans roared when the coin toss put the shoot-out at their end. James Tavernier, Steven Davis and Scott Arfield all scored for Rangers as did Frankfurt's Christopher Lenz, Ajdin Hrustic and Daichi Kamada, whose shot squeezed in off the post. But Ramsey fired too straight, hitting Trapp's left foot and after Kostic and Kemar Roofe converted, it was up to Borre to finish it. He made no mistake. —AFP

Finalists Orlando Pirates vow to avoid another Moroccan mauling

JOHANNESBURG: South African club Orlando Pirates aim to dispel the belief that they are easy prey for Moroccan rivals by defeating Renaissance Berkane in the CAF Confederation Cup final in Uyo, Nigeria, on Friday.

The Buccaneers from Soweto on the outskirts of Johannesburg suffered a 5-1 aggregate hammering from Raja Casablanca in the quarter-finals of the second-tier African competition last season. Having forced a 1-1 draw in South Africa, Raja powered to a four-goal lead at home before taking their foot off the accelerator and sparing the visitors further humiliation.

"There will be no repeat," stressed Pirates Ghana-born goalkeeper Richard Ofori after a training session. "We are going to Nigeria to win the final. I did not play against Raja but remember that match. The Moroccans were four goals ahead well before half-time. That was a huge stain on Pirates' proud record in Africa."

"We do not underestimate Berkane, especially after they scored four goals to eliminate TP Mazembe (from the Democratic Republic of Congo) in the semi-finals," he said. "I appreciate that Mazembe had a player sent off late in the second half — but when last did any club in Africa score four against Mazembe? Pirates have had a poor domestic season and the only trophy we can win is the Confederation Cup. Supporters remember only winners and that is why we must succeed."

Pirates lie seventh in a near completed South African Premiership already won by Mamelodi Sundowns, and made early exits from the two domestic knockout competitions. The Buccaneers have reserved their best for the Confederation Cup, the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League, particularly in north Africa, a region where they have often struggled in the past.

Stood out

A 2-0 Group B win over JS Saoura in Algeria stood out, as did a semi-final first-leg victory by the same score against Al Ahly Tripoli in Libya. If Pirates can recapture the form shown in those matches, they stand a chance of becoming the first South African winners of the Confederation Cup, after losing the 2015 final to Etoile Sahel of Tunisia.

Twenty years earlier, Pirates became the first South African club to triumph in Africa, lifting the African Cup of Champions Clubs (now the CAF Champions League). "The 1995 heroes are fondly remembered. We want to achieve the same status," said Ofori, who hopes to be at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar with qualifiers Ghana.

Berkane, known as the Orange Boys because they hail from the citrus-growing northeast of Morocco, are not as well known internationally as Pirates. But they boast a proud Confederation Cup record, finishing runners-up to Zamalek in 2019 and beating another Egyptian club, Pyramids, in the following final. They had a tougher path to the final than Pirates, topping a group where former African champions ASEC Mimosas of the Ivory Coast fell before ousting Al Masry of Egypt and Mazembe in knockout ties. —AFP

'Blood, sweat and tears' pays off for Abraham as he eyes European glory

ROME: Tammy Abraham said to himself when he joined AS Roma from Chelsea last summer he would give his "blood, sweat and tears for this club". In keeping his promise he could be rewarded with European silverware next week. The 24-year-old England international striker's nine goals have been pivotal in Roma's passage to next Wednesday's inaugural European Conference League final against Dutch side Feyenoord in Tirana.

With 25 in all competitions he has more than justified Roma coach Jose Mourinho's decision to convince the board to shell out 40 million euros (\$42 million) — not including bonuses — for him. It brought to an end a disappointing final few months for the homegrown Chelsea player who fell out of favour with manager Thomas Tuchel when the German replaced Frank Lampard.

Abraham failed to make either the FA Cup final or Champions League final matchday squads under Tuchel. The German even selected two substitute goalkeepers for the European showpiece. However, Abraham has put those setbacks firmly behind him and from the first day in Italy his attitude was one

of positivity.

"For me since day one, as soon as I touched down in Rome, it made me feel like one of their own straight away," he told AFP and another international press agency in an interview conducted at Roma's training center. "It was the love, the passion, the way they worked with me. I told myself, 'I'll give my blood, sweat, tears for this club,' and it's been an amazing year."

Abraham's impressive performances and the way he has adapted to a different lifestyle in a country where English players have not always flourished could well see him add to the 10 international caps he has accrued.

However, for the moment he is focused on bringing home Roma's first silverware since the Italian Cup in 2008 and first European trophy since the old Fairs Cup — the predecessor to the UEFA/Europa League — back in 1961.

'Club had ambitions'

The Europa Conference may be in its first year and some may sniff at it being the poor man of the three European club competitions but Abraham said that mattered little to him. "For me it's not a little cup," he said. "I believe every final is a final — no matter what competition it is. You get to the final, you want to win the final. It's a trophy and these are the moments you look back on in your career, saying you want to win trophies. For me this is an opportunity and for my teammates and for

Roma fans this is an opportunity to lift a European title."

Mourinho, like Abraham, took the Roma posting to try and revive a career which had rather lost its lustre with a sour end to his spell at Manchester United and a disappointing time at Tottenham Hotspur.

"For me, he's been one of the best coaches in the world for a long time," said Abraham. "He knows his stuff about football. When I spoke to him on the phone he had ambitions, the club had ambitions and a mindset where they want to get to. For him to take a club to a final, which they haven't been in many years, you can only see how well he's doing and how well we're doing."

Ahead of the final in Albania Abraham wants to round off the Serie A season by winning Roma's final match on Friday away at mid-table Torino to secure a place in the Europa League next term. Fiorentina and Atalanta, who are both at home to Juventus and Empoli respectively, are a point adrift of them in sixth spot going into the weekend.

Abraham says victory both on Sunday and in the Conference League final would be due reward for Mourinho and for a "great" bunch of team-mates. "We have a good mix here," said Abraham. "We have Italian players who have played here their whole lives. We have players who've played in England as well. This is a great bunch of lads who have come together. We need to make the last two games a very special moment to top everything off." —AFP

KIB continues to support Kuwaiti Jet Ski champion

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to support local talents in the field of sports and empower them to compete internationally at the highest level, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently renewed its one-year sponsorship agreement with Kuwaiti jet-ski champion, Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq. This collaboration comes within the Bank's community development initiatives, related to promoting sports culture among society, while encouraging its members to lead a healthy and purposeful lifestyle.

Aqua-Bike world champion, Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq, is considered one of the most prominent Kuwaiti athletes, ranked No.1 worldwide in his area of sport. His career spans more than 18 years, with many notable achievements, including winning the world championship 6 times, and a number of gold medals competing in the Olympics. Guinness World Records enlisted Al-Abdulrazzaq, having collected as many international titles under his belt.

Commenting on this sponsorship, Assistant

Manager, Marketing & Corporate Communication, Marwah Maarafi stated that the Bank has been continuously striving to enhance its social program, by expanding the scope of its activities and initiatives, especially those related to empowering Kuwaiti athletes. Through this continued support, KIB aims to see them highly qualified and well accomplished to compete, both locally and internationally. According to Maarafi, supporting the success of these figures and driving them to win advanced titles will surely contribute to the Bank's social objectives, mainly those aimed at raising awareness about the level of skill and capability a Kuwaiti player can achieve, presenting only role models to society that are able to inspire current and future generations.

Maarafi further added: "Renewing Al-Abdulrazzaq's sponsorship also came from KIB as an expression of pride and a message of gratitude to this Kuwaiti champion for the history he made in the field of sports, and his extraordinary competitive performance over the years, through which he was able to raise Kuwait's flag



Marwah Maarafi



Kuwaiti jet-ski champion Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq (center) with KIB officials.

high and place his country's name on the map of international sports competitions".

Concluding his statement, Maarafi reaffirmed KIB's continued efforts in utilizing its resources, as much as can be, for the benefit of the community and all its members - under its corporate slogan: "Bank for Life". She reiterated that the Bank has been consistent in playing an active and leading role within its corporate social responsibility, with a robust development program that has been designed and proposed as an integral and core pillar of the Bank's integrated strategy.

Kuwait disabled table tennis team leaves for Jordan

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Disabled Table Tennis Team left for Jordan Tuesday evening to participate in the 12 "Watani" Paralympic tournament. Ten countries are participating in the tournament including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, India, France, Britain, Cyprus and the host country Jordan. The delegation is headed by Falah Al-Dousary and players Ahd Al-Rashidi, Yaqoob Al-Khalifa, Mohammad Al-Rashidi, Abdallah Hajji and Fahad Al-Ansari. Head of Table Tennis Paralympics committee Duaij Al-Hajiri said the team prepared well for this tournament and hoped the team gets good results despite the expected tough competition.

