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Football

Community Shield: Van Persie's double fires Manchester United past Wigan

• Manchester United 2-0 Wigan (Van Persie 6, 59) • New manager David Moyes picks up first piece of silverware

Daniel Taylor at Wembley
12 Aug 2013 00:00:28

After all the scrutiny of Wayne Rooney, the difficulties of an unforgiving transfer market and the insecurity that change can sometimes bring, there must be something calmly reassuring for Manchester United and their new manager, David Moyes, that Robin van Persie has slipped back seamlessly into where he left off last season – scoring goals, winning football matches and demonstrating, with great finesse, the art of centre-forward play.

The man who scored 30 goals in his first season as an Old Trafford player will not be allowed to carry forward the two he managed here into the new season because the Football Association does not regard it as an official fixture. He has, however, delivered another reminder of his gifts, and a timely one, too, given the complications that have confronted Moyes in his first summer in the job and the negativity surrounding Rooney's ongoing attempts to cut himself free.

Van Persie, in this form, is a source of great optimism for a club in dispute with their other main striker. The Dutchman needed only six minutes to lift the mood with the expertly taken header that put United on the way to a steady win and, though his second took a deflection off James Perch, Wembley had held its breath in anticipation as soon as Van Persie collected the ball and turned inside, with the clear intention of letting fly. This is the sight that excites United's supporters more than any other these days. It is also the sight opposition defenders must dread the most.

On this evidence, it is clear why Rooney has misgivings about his position in the order of merit at Old Trafford these days. Van Persie was not always prominently involved on a day when his team-mates had plenty of the ball but, collectively, did not always do a great deal with it. His contribution, however, was still decisive, from the moment he launched himself off the ground to meet Patrice Evra's left-wing cross, applying power and precision to send the ball just inside Scott Carson's right-hand post.

Level with the penalty spot, Van Persie was in the territory that would ordinarily be considered too far out to score with a header. Yet the timing of the run, having sprayed the ball out to Evra in the first place, then the leverage and ability, mid-air, to pick out his spot was wonderful.

It was a stodgy performance at times from United and, after such an encouraging start, probably a surprise to some extent that the Premier League champions did not emphasise the gulf between the two clubs more emphatically.

Yet they did play with a sense of control against willing but limited opponents. Michael Carrick dictated the tempo in that elegant way of his and Ryan Giggs, now into his 24th season, gave a distinguished performance mainly in a more advanced position than usual, interchanging with Danny Welbeck just behind Van Persie because of Rooney's absence

and Moyes's determination not to over-exert Shinji Kagawa.

Wigan, now of the Championship, are going through an experimental time, with a new manager of their own and a host of different players, and they were fairly obliging opponents. Owen Coyle's team will look back on a couple of reasonable chances towards the end of the first half, first for James McClean and then Emmerson Boyce, but they never managed a shot on target and struggled on the whole to find the fluency that is associated with them on the good days.

Grant Holt made a couple of heavy connections with Nemanja Vidic, and vice versa, but David de Gea had about as easy an afternoon in United's goal as he will face all season.

More than anything, Wigan did not seem to have the belief they could cause an upset that was evident against Manchester City in the FA Cup final.

The disappointment for Moyes will be the hamstring injury that meant Rafael da Silva featured only for the first quarter of an hour before Chris Smalling was introduced and Phil Jones switched from centre-half to right-back. The Brazilian could be out for five weeks and Wilfried Zaha was also limping when he left the pitch in the second half after a lively yet raw performance. Zaha had been precisely what you would probably expect: eager to get on the ball, showy and unpredictable with some crowd-pleasing tricks and fast, direct running, but a player who can also be frustrating, rough round the edges and needing work.

Zaha went off shortly after Van Persie's second goal, starting off a flurry of substitutions that indicated both teams knew that was the moment the game was effectively finished as a contest.

Evra, often playing as an auxiliary left-winger and with plenty to prove as Moyes pursues Leighton Baines at Everton, was involved in the goal again, the ball being worked left to right via Tom Cleverley and Welbeck until Van Persie latched on to it and immediately set about working an angle to shoot.

The ball flew through a congested penalty area, flicked off Perch and United had won the Community Shield for a 20th time.

Unofficial or not, Moyes will have enjoyed getting his hands on a trophy.

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Robin van Persie celebrates scoring his second goal as Manchester United defeated Wigan to win the FA Community Shield. Carl Recine/Action Images

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MailOnline

Football

Suarez refuses to say sorry and still believes Liverpool have betrayed him over broken promises

SAMI MOKBEL and DOMINIC KING

12 Aug 2013 00:02:00

Luis Suarez's relationship with Liverpool will hit a new low this week when he refuses to apologise for his controversial attempts to engineer a move to Arsenal.

Sources close to the Uruguayan believe his relationship with manager Brendan Rodgers is beyond repair after the bitter transfer wrangle that has overshadowed the Merseysiders' pre-season.

Suarez is training alone at Liverpool's Melwood HQ, and Rodgers insists he will not be allowed to rejoin his team-mates until he apologises for last week's public outburst, in which he made it clear he wanted to quit Anfield for the Emirates.

But *Sportmail* understands Suarez will refuse to say sorry, believing he has been betrayed by Rodgers over what he views as broken promises.

He believes he struck a gentlemen's agreement with Liverpool, allowing him to leave the club if they received an offer from a side playing in the Champions League.

Arsenal have already seen two formal offers rejected, the latest of which was a cheeky £40,000,001 bid which the Gunners believed would trigger an escape clause in Suarez's contract.

But Arsenal are still hopeful of landing the South American and will make an improved offer.

Arsenal are expected to complete a £14m deal for Luis Gustavo, the 26-year-old Bayern Munich defensive midfielder, this week.

The Suarez furore has turned the Liverpool spotlight on Daniel Sturridge, who is almost certain to start the season after returning from injury in Saturday's 1-0 defeat by Celtic in Dublin.

Rodgers wants the striker to seize the moment. With Suarez banned for six games at the beginning of the campaign, Sturridge has an opportunity to establish himself as Liverpool's main striker. And that, in turn, could boost his England chances.

Rodgers needs the 23-year-old to show he is ready to handle the responsibility and pressure that comes with being Liverpool's focal point.

'He is aware of the opportunity,' said Rodgers. 'There were maybe teething problems when he came in January but once he got his head around that and the demands of playing at a big club regularly then he was terrific.'

'He was in really good form at the end of last season, which got him called up for England, and it was unfortunate that he got a bad injury, but I can have no complaints about how he has worked. He has wanted to be in this position - leading the'

attack for a big club with everything that brings.

'We will have a behind-closed-doors game for him this week when the others are on international duty to keep him ticking over.'

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NORTHAMPTON 3 - NEWPORT 1: I'M MORE THAN A ONE HIT WONDER SAYS CONOR WASHINGTON

Alec Shilton

12 Aug 2013 00:00:00

NEWPORT striker **Conor Washington** is desperate to play in the derby against **Bristol Rovers** to prove he can do more than score consolation goals.

Washington came off the bench to bag a late one and now hopes for a start in next Saturday's big game.

He said: "I knew when I came on there wasn't a lot I could have done other than score, so hopefully it puts me in the fold."

Rivals Rovers will now cross the Severn Bridge into Wales and Washington is excited by the prospect. He said: "It's absolutely massive and Rodney Parade is going to be rocking, which will suit us because we're all desperate to avenge this result."

County manager Justin Edinburgh has been impressed by the 21-year-old and said: "I think that's what Washington is about, when he's got the ball at his feet and he's running at defenders, he's a real handful.

"That's two goals in a week and that will give his confidence a great boost, and he needs it because he's developing very well as a young man and he's got a real bright future ahead of him."

Jacob Blyth scored Northampton's opener on his debut after he signed a one-month loan deal from Leicester.

Conor Washington

Roy O'Donovan then celebrated his 28th birthday with Northampton's second before Gary Deegan got his first for the club on 84 minutes. Blyth, 20, was ecstatic to open his account for the Cobblers as they got their first win of the season.

He said: "I'm delighted with it because there's nothing better than scoring on your home debut, so I'm absolutely over the moon."

The striker has been impressed by what he has seen at Sixfields and is keen to extend his spell with the Cobblers.

He added: "It's a great club with a great set up and there's a great bunch of lads here. If I did get the chance to stay on, then I'd be more than happy to take that on."

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Roy O'Donovan celebrated his 28th birthday with Northampton's second

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