



SOUTH AFRICA VS SRI LANKA
Steyn Takes 4 as SA Lead in Durban

Dale Steyn took four wickets as South Africa claimed a 44-run first innings lead at tea on the second day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at Kingsmead on Thursday. Sri Lanka were bowled out for 191 with an early tea taken when the last wicket fell. Steyn took four for 48 to take his career tally to 437 Test wickets, passing India's Kapil Dev (434) and drawing level with Stuart Broad of England in joint seventh place on the all-time list.

£19.6m Manchester United spent to sack Jose Mourinho and his staff in December

SENIOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
Poor Surface, Saina Refuses to Play

Controversy erupted at the Senior National Badminton Championship on Thursday with defending champion Saina Nehwal refusing to play her singles match, citing a "poor playing surface" at the venue in Guwahati. The officials, led by Badminton Association of India Secretary (event) Omar Rashid, swung into action to sort out the issue. The BAI officials later convinced Saina, P Kashyap and Sai Praneeth to play in the evening.

The exchange occurred during a tense moment on the field. The pressure was on and England's captain Joe Root was looking at me intensely as I prepared to bowl, which may have been the usual psychological strategy with which all test cricketers are familiar. I recognise now that I was attempting to break through my own tension when I said to Joe Root: 'Why are you smiling at me? Do you like boys?'

SHANNON GABRIEL, West Indies pacer, apologises and clears air over Joe Root sledge

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Hot Spurs

'Clinical' Tottenham beat Dortmund to pass the progress test

Jack Pitt-Brooke

If there has been something elusive and ambiguous about Tottenham this season, then on Wednesday night at Wembley they finally delivered a weighty tangible bucket of progress. Spurs fans had been waiting all year for a sign that this season might be different from the last one. They hoped this would be the year of the new stadium, and it has still not opened. They wondered if this might be the year they win a trophy and they are out of both cups.

But here against Borussia Dortmund, Spurs produced a second half performance that was the clearest marker possible that this is a team that is still learning and still improving. Even now, coming up to five years since Mauricio Pochettino took over. Any lingering worry that this is a team at the end of its cycle, whose progress had petered out, was emphatically answered by this second half performance.

The real story here is not only that Spurs have one foot in the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time since 2011, or that they might start to dream about a generous draw and an unlikely trip to Madrid on 1 June. All that can wait. The story of this evening is about the contrast between this and Spurs' last Champions League knock-out game here at Wembley, their 2-1 defeat to Juventus one year ago.

Remember that Spurs had played well in the first leg in Turin, fighting back to earn a 2-2 draw. Remember that they went 1-0 up at home, missed chances, and were 25 minutes away from progress. Before they lost focus, conceded twice in three minutes and were dumped out. That night was the shadow over this tie. We all know that Spurs were good enough to compete in games like this, against some of the best teams in Europe. But were they sharp enough to win? Christian Eriksen knew what Spurs got wrong here one year ago. It was what he called "the clinical part". The few minutes, the few actions, when the whole three hours of football would be decided. They were the moments that would matter the most.

It's a massive, massive performance and effort from my players. It's only the first half of the tie - 3-0 is a very good result, but we must go to Dortmund with the idea of winning. It's a very good result but there is a lot of work to do

MAURICIO POCHETTINO
Tottenham Coach

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR 3-0 BORUSSIA DORTMUND
Son (47'), Vertonghen (83'), Llorente (86')

| MATCH STATS | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 55 | POSSESSION% |
| 89 | PASSING ACCURACY% |
| 4 | CORNERS |
| 38 | DANGEROUS ATTACKS |
| 16 | TOTAL ATTEMPTS |
| 6 | ON TARGET |
| 6 | OFF TARGET |
| 0 | BLOCKED |
| 1 | YELLOW CARDS |
| 0 | RED CARDS |

Eriksen spoke to The Independent soon after that game and explained that it was ruthlessness and experience that made the difference. When the tie was on the line, Spurs should have sharpened up, but instead they slackened off. "Juventus were waiting for it," Eriksen said last year. "We were almost over-confident that it couldn't go wrong. We were in a good posi-

tion, almost a perfect position, to go through. We know they were more used to the bigger stages, they don't need the ball as much." And Eriksen predicted what Spurs had to improve in 2019: "The clinical part. We know that in the knock-out stage of the Champions League, it can be just three minutes. They had two shots and scored two goals. That's the three minutes we need to be even more aware of, so it doesn't happen again, to give ourselves a better chance to go through." Spurs could hardly have lived up to Eriksen's message any better than they did at Wembley. This was not the finest Tottenham performance of the season, not a display of total control, and in the first half they looked second best all over the pitch. But then without Dele Alli and Harry Kane this was never going to be their very best.

And yet the only real story of tonight was that Spurs took their chances and Dortmund did not. Forget about a complete 90-minute performance, this was a lesson in clinicism, and it came from the English team. Tottenham looked off the pace first half but they scored with their first proper attack in the second half. Jan Vertonghen's clever cross, and Heung-Min Son's volley took advantage of one brief dozy moment from the German defence.

It was a huge moment in the tie, but the most important spell, and the true reversal of the Juventus game, came right at the end. Two goals in three minutes, but this time they were both for Spurs, rather than both against them. First Vertonghen storming into the box to finish, then Fernando Llorente heading home from a corner. Dortmund looked like they had barely recovered from the last punch and they were back on the canvas again.

These were the three minutes Spurs needed to be aware of, as Eriksen had put it last year. "The clinical part" of the tie, when Tottenham made a small advantage into a big one, finally looking like they knew how to perform on this stage after all.

The Independent

Inadequate VARDict

Ajax vs Real Madrid: VAR clouds otherwise intriguing first leg

Ed Malynn

AJAX AMSTERDAM 2-1 REAL MADRID
Ziyech (75') Benzema (60') Asensio (87')

| MATCH STATS | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 50 | POSSESSION% |
| 84 | PASSING ACCURACY% |
| 4 | CORNERS |
| 51 | DANGEROUS ATTACKS |
| 19 | TOTAL ATTEMPTS |
| 6 | ON TARGET |
| 6 | OFF TARGET |
| 0 | BLOCKED |
| 1 | YELLOW CARDS |
| 0 | RED CARDS |

Ajax and Real Madrid looked like they were headed to the Bernabeu with this enticing Champions League knockout evenly poised. Madrid went ahead through Karim Benzema just after the break, but Hakim Ziyech levelled with a cool finish and the game was petering out to a draw.

It was the least Ajax had deserved in a game where possession was fairly even but where the hosts made all the running and looked easily the more dangerous side.

But a late winner from Marco Asensio tilted the tie heavily in Madrid's favour heading back to Spain.

The big talking point of the first half should have been Ajax's dominance and then, quite possibly, Ajax's goal.

But Nicolas Tagliafico's header was controversially ruled out, the first instance of VAR being used in Champions League history and a worrying sign that much of what is to come surrounding video replays might end up being tiresome debate that solves nothing.

VAR HANGS OVER EXCELLENT GAME

The moment that defined this game, however, might well go down as something that was so right it was wrong.

Here is the context: Ajax had a chance after Thibaut Courtois spilled an attempt on goal and it looped towards Nicolas Tagliafico. The Argentina defender headed the ball over the — by now, flapping — Belgian goalkeeper and into the net. A goal was given.

VAR went to check for any offside in the build-up to Courtois' mistake, which there wasn't, but the video referee began to focus on a later part of the incident after the error, establishing that Dusan Tadic was probably fractionally offside.

Tadic wasn't really involved though. That's the thing. The officials will determine, and indeed they did, that according to the rules this was a situation where Tadic was "interfering with play" because Courtois, desperate to atone for his error, ran into Tadic's back in a flap.



Ajax defender Nicolas Tagliafico's (R) goal which was rejected after VAR deliberation

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