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Friday, May 28, 1999 Published at 14:25 GMT 15:25 UK

The Kings of Europe



Manchester United were crowned Kings of Europe after a breath-taking victory over Bayern Munich in the pressure-cooker atmosphere of the Nou Camp.

BBC News Online looks back at an unforgettable victory and toasts the team that had already landed the Premiership and FA Cup in a remarkable season.



NIGHT OF MAGIC

United crowned kings of Europe

Manchester United completed a unique treble, after a stunning victory in the European Cup thanks to injury-time goals from Sheringham and Solksjaer.

Fergie modest despite victory

European Cup winning manager, Alex Ferguson, praised the spirit of his players, but admitted he thought they had thrown it all away.

Barcelona: Quotes at a glance

BBC News Online rounds-up the quotes from a memorable

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evening at the Nou Camp stadium.

 [Listen to the highlights of the match.](#)

Barcelona: Victory in pictures

European final - key moments

Matthaus: United were lucky

Bayern Munich's disappointment was obvious at the end of the match as victory was snatched away from them.

Bayern fans distraught

German football fans are in a state of shock following Manchester United's stunning defeat of Bayern Munich in the final of the European Cup.



Arise Sir Alex?

From the shipyards of the Clyde to all-conquering football glory, the Guv'nor from Govan is finally smiling.

In squad we trust

Manchester United's European Cup-winning goalscorers prove that Alex Ferguson's strategy of rotating players within his squad is the key to success in modern football.

Schmeichel goes out with a bang

Manchester United's European Cup victory over Bayern Munich proved a fitting finale for goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel - who leaves Old Trafford after eight years.

Are Man Utd the best ever club side?

Manchester United secured a unique treble by adding the European Cup to the FA Cup and Premiership title with victory in Barcelona - but are they the best ever?

City's muted salute to United

Manchester United's win fails to set the City of London alight - but it will add millions to the value of the club in the long term.

The architects of Old Trafford

Two men stand head and shoulders above all Manchester United managers - Sir Matt Busby and Alex Ferguson. But how do they compare?

United '68 v United '99

If the two great teams were to face each other, which would win?



United do the double

Defeating Newcastle United in the FA Cup final, the Reds complete the double - match report.

United's road to Wembley

Winning the FA Cup may have been the least of Manchester United's achievements in a sensational season - but the road to Wembley was still no easy ride.



Glorious United crowned champions


Jubilant scenes erupt at Old Trafford as Manchester United beat Tottenham 2-1 to secure their fifth championship in seven years.


The league never lies


Winning the league proved to be just the first of three stunning victories for Manchester United but Arsenal took the race for the title right down to the wire.



Key moments from BBC radio and television's coverage of the drama of the treble victory.

 [Kevin Bocquet reports from an ecstatic Manchester.](#)

 [Alex Ferguson: "The greatest moment of my life"](#)

 [Fans all over the world](#)

Manchester United supporters around the globe are over the moon - including Roy Keane's cousin in this report from New York.

 [Liverpool FC supporter Donna says even she's delighted for Manchester United](#)

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Friday, May 28, 1999 Published at 17:29 GMT 18:29 UK

United 'not the greatest'



Many fans believe the 1968 Manchester United side remain superior

Manchester United are not the greatest club side ever, according to News Online users.

60% of those who responded believed that this United side could not be considered the best side ever, citing teams such as Real Madrid, Liverpool and ironically the side they beat to complete the treble, Bayern Munich, as superior sides.



While many were keen to applaud the achievements of Alex Ferguson's side during the season and the decade, they were also determined to keep a sense of perspective.

"As a Utd supporter I am over the moon that we have won the treble, and we have not had an easy run in either the FA cup or the Champions League. Best side in the world ever? NO, we are not even the best side in Europe in the 90's but we do have the potential to become the best side of the next decade," said Carl Sixsmith.

Insult

"It goes without saying the Man U are the best team in England at the moment. However, it is an insult to the Man U Liverpool and Leeds teams of the 60's and 70's to say that this team is better than them," said Mike Mcilroy.

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“
Man U have to be the best team ever. Look what they've achieved. Possibly, with the right goalie they can continue to rule Europe and win the World Club Cup. Ferguson deserves the knighthood”

Matt, UK

"The AC Milan team of 1989 (Gullit, van Basten, Rijkaard) remain the greatest club side of all time," said David Wake.

But there were also those who felt that United's unbeaten run since the turn of the year, combined with their attractive style of play, made them worthy holders of the unofficial title of team of the century.

"With out a shadow of a doubt, United won it with style, panache and flourish. The standard of European opposition nowadays is far greater then in the 70s and 80s

when the Europeans had no answer to the physical game played by the English teams," said Sunit K Joshi in the USA

Jealous

"You don't go 33 matches unbeaten being 'lucky' all the time. As usual we have the jealous collection of Scousers, Gooners and City fans. Look in your trophy cabinets fellas!!" said John Gregory, presumably not the one who manages Aston Villa.

“
Greatest media hyped bandwagon supported team ever, definitely. Real football fans are sick to death of the media misreading public opinion yet again and ramming Man Utd down our throats day after day. Give it a rest please”

Richard D. Wise, UK

There was no shortage of replies when News Online asked why people hated United, and the same sentiment crept out at the asking of this question.

"Yes they are a good football team but greatness is measured in other things such as magnanimity and acceptance of other. Greatness does not embrace arrogance and whinging at referees," said Mike Race.

But the final word goes to Mike in Hong Kong, who certainly has an original answer.

"Sheffield United in 1898 were much better - prove me wrong."

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Thursday, May 27, 1999 Published at 12:32 GMT 13:32 UK

Arise Sir Alex?



Alex Ferguson: His tireless work has helped deliver the treble

Gullit may have the dreadlocks, Vialli the tan, but only Ferguson can claim what they all crave - sheer, unquestionable football immortality.



Manchester United's spectacular victory in the European Cup, sealing an unparalleled treble with the League title and FA Cup, has secured their manager a place in soccer sainthood.

Surely a knighthood is now just a matter of time for Alex Ferguson.



[Alex McLeish remembers Ferguson from his Aberdeen days](#)

Even Ferguson himself, famed for his dourness and eyes like a sulking child, let the image slip.

"You can't top this because this is the pinnacle," he said, in the aftermath of Wednesday night's historic victory in

Barcelona.

Although far be it for him to lose any grip on reality. "You can equal it and we can try to maintain our high standards."

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Ferguson with Man United mentor Matt Busby

"Fergie" is now a British footballing icon to rank alongside Sir Matt Busby, who established United as a world class outfit in the 1950s, and whose reputation every United manager since has been trying to rival.

In truth, Ferguson, 57, had been a worthy heir to the Busby crown even before the victory against Bayern Munich. Since he broke a 20 year drought to bring the league title home to Old Trafford in 1993, he has delivered on his promises.

The side has topped the Premiership in five of the last seven years.

Born in Glasgow to a Protestant, working class family, his leadership skills first came to the fore as a shop steward in the Clyde shipyards, when Ferguson led an unofficial walk-out over a pay dispute.

Honours under Ferguson

- 1990**
FA Cup
- 1991**
Cup Winners' Cup
- 1992**
European Super Cup,
League Cup
- 1993**
Championship
- 1994**
Championship and FA Cup
double
- 1996**
Championship and FA Cup
double
- 1997**
Championship
- 1999**
Championship, FA Cup and
European Cup treble

His first love had always been football and Ferguson cut a reasonably impressive figure with Rangers. But he was made a scapegoat in the team's humiliating 4-0 defeat against arch rivals Celtic in the 1969 Cup Final.

He switched to management, first with St Mirren and then, from 1978, at Aberdeen.

His tough-talking, hands-on approach was a winner and Ferguson smashed the Celtic-Rangers "Old Firm" monopoly, winning three championships, four Scottish Cups and the European Cup Winners' Cup in six years.

Known for his fiery temper, he also won the reputation of a fiercely loyal coach who invests time and effort in star players and apprentices alike.

It is this mix-and-match approach which has served him so well at Manchester, where

Ferguson has weaved home-grown talent and foreign flair into cohesive, gutsy sides.



Yet the going has not always been good for him at Old Trafford, where initially his abilities were called into question by the fans. The low point came in 1989 when the team found itself hammered 5-1 by its most bitter rivals, Manchester City.

On his third anniversary at the club a flag was unfurled at a home game which read: "Three years of excuses, ta-ra Fergie."

Letting slip a smile before the match with Bayern Munich

But chairman Martin Edwards and the board did not waver, a 1990 FA Cup victory bought him valuable time.

The family atmosphere he had worked hard to establish was bearing fruit and three years later the Guv'nor from Govan finally brought home the League title.

His management style has been thoroughly analysed by lovers of the sport. They have attributed his success to factors as diverse as a "working class ability" to assess the qualities of men around him, and "tunnel vision".

Friends in high places

Richard Greenbury, the former chairman of Marks and Spencer and a friend, called him the "best man-manager in Britain today". Ferguson himself has said: "Control everything in management."



Whatever his given talents, Ferguson, who is married to Cathy and a father of three grown-up sons, also puts in the hours. He is usually at the ground by 0730 and regularly works 18-hour days. He is loyal to his players although never shy to give them a blast of his temper.

Added to this is the fact that he is a pure football fan; a fountain of knowledge about the sport.

Now let's do it all again

Ferguson has fostered a wealth of international talent including Ryan Giggs, David Beckham, Paul Scholes, the Neville

Brothers, as well as signing overseas players such as Eric Cantona, Peter Schmeichel and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

For someone so consumed by football, it may come as a surprise that he has outside interests. He owns a racehorse and has been a high profile campaigner for Tony Blair and the Labour Party.

So now Fergie is at the "pinnacle", has his seemingly insatiable thirst for glory been quenched?

Not a bit. Last month, while contemplating the three cups that have since come his way, he commented: "Even if we win all three, I'd want to go out and win it again."

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Thursday, May 27, 1999 Published at 12:36 GMT 13:36 UK

In squad we trust



United's players go wild after their substitutes combine for the winning goal

Never has there been such an eloquent demonstration of Alex Ferguson's "squad system".



Manchester United's European Cup victory owed everything to last-gasp goalscorers Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer - two players who have spent much of the season warming the bench.

While the first-choice strikeforce of Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole was grabbing all the headlines during United's charge towards the treble, these second-string forwards were left kicking their heels.



[Sheringham and Solskjaer reflect on their late, late goals](#)

But manager Ferguson has always insisted that success in modern football, with its energy-sapping schedule, is all about having strength in depth.

And the events of the past 10 days have proved just how pertinent his philosophy has become.

Gunners pipped at post

First the Premiership title was secured, with Arsenal - another

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club determined to follow the squad rotation system - beaten into second place by one point, only because their reserves were not quite of the same quality as the world-class players United could call on.



Alex Ferguson: Master of squad rotation

Then Sheringham was voted man of the match in the FA Cup final victory over Newcastle.

He began the game in his accepted role as substitute - but an untimely early injury to skipper Roy Keane gave him his chance and he took it in spectacular fashion, scoring the first goal and making the second.

Any hopes the former Spurs striker had of starting in Barcelona, however, were dashed when Ferguson stuck with his preferred front pair of Yorke and Cole, whose goals had taken United to the brink of European glory.

But with the starting strikers showing signs that the long season had taken its toll, Ferguson made his tactical move, with Sheringham introduced for Jesper Blomqvist and Solskjaer replacing Cole with 10 minutes to go.

The shake-up in personnel gave United fresh impetus in the dying minutes and the replacements provided the killer blows, Sheringham equalising and then setting up Solskjaer for the stunning winner.

"I had to gamble," Ferguson said. "It's a European final so why not do it? Teddy and Ole paid off."

But, in truth, throwing two proven international goalscorers into the fray does not amount to much of a gamble - it is more like a considered strategy on the manager's part.

Team spirit

Ferguson's recipe for success is simple.

Everyone at Old Trafford knows the team comes first - there is simply no place for the kind of prima donna antics that have enraged fans of other clubs this season.

From the moment a player arrives at United, Ferguson makes it clear that individual ambitions must be put to one side for the good of the club as a whole.

No-one is guaranteed a first-team place and the strict wage structure removes the prospect of jealous back-biting and



Teddy Sheringham: He went to Man Utd and he won the treble

dressing room in-fighting.

Unlike other high profile Premiership sides, there is no clique of superstar players earning sums that are ten times the wages of the average squad tyro.

Regular reshuffles

Such is the level of expectation at Old Trafford that the frustration of sitting on the bench never seems to force players out of the club.

Ferguson has frequently shuffled his pack during his quest for treble glory, resting tired players and preserving others for big games.

Fringe players like Wes Brown, David May, Henning Berg, Phil Neville and Jesper Blomqvist have all been given prolonged runs in the team.

And even established internationals like Nicky Butt and Paul Scholes have had to bide their time.

But it is Sheringham and Solskjaer who will ultimately be branded as United's "super subs".

Both have had difficult seasons while their illustrious team-mates have grabbed the attention.

Terrace abuse

Sheringham's United career had faltered since his arrival from Tottenham as Eric Cantona's replacement.



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer: No regrets for rejecting transfer bids

He has had to endure vicious abuse from rival supporters - particularly from Spurs and Arsenal fans - and a poor run of form saw him suffer the ignominy of losing his place in the England side.

Norwegian Solskjaer has never had a problem scoring goals for United - but he still found himself behind both Yorke and Cole in the queue for a starting spot.

Other clubs scented his desire for first-team football and decided to move in.

But Solskjaer rejected overtures from Spurs and West Ham, with the inference that it was better to play reserve team football for United than lead the attack in a mid-table Premiership side.

"If I had been at any other club but United then I think I would have gone to the manager and asked to leave," he said at the time. "But I want to stay here and win things."

No-one now will be questioning the validity of his decision.

Not too many substitutes have scored the winning goal in a European Cup final - and Solskjaer is in no doubt that the squad system is the key to success.

"The team spirit is unbelievable," he said. "Everyone works for each other. We're all in it together."

"If anyone wonders why I stay here at Manchester United, this is it."

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Thursday, May 27, 1999 Published at 12:34 GMT 13:34 UK

Classic sporting comebacks



Manchester United celebrate victory at the Nou Camp stadium

Manchester United's heartstopping injury-time triumph in the European Cup final is just the latest example of sport's ability to create classic moments of high drama.

And never is that more obvious than when a team or individual fights back for victory against enormous odds.

Such moments are rare, but when they happen they are truly memorable. Other great moments include:

1981: Ian Botham

Ian Botham's year had begun as badly as the previous one had ended. Captain of England, Botham had led his country against the best team in the world, the West Indies, and had lost home and away.

The summer of 1981 saw the arrival of Australia, and the tourists took the first Test.

Botham's form had plummeted, and it came as no surprise when he produced two scoreless innings in the next Test at Lord's.

At seemingly his lowest ebb he received yet another blow when the selectors publicly announced that he had been sacked, despite his offer of resignation.

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Belligerent Botham saves England

The following Test at Headingley saw Botham begin his second innings with England still needing 122 runs to avoid defeat and just five wickets remaining.

But Botham responded with one of the greatest backs-to-the-wall knocks of all time, making an unbeaten 149 with a variety of different partners.

His innings gave England the slimmest chance of bowling out the Aussies, and Bob Willis

duly obliged with 8-43.

1985: Dennis Taylor

Tipped to become snooker's world champion by his 30th birthday, Dennis Taylor entered the 1985 tournament at the age of 36 - his ambition unfulfilled.

His form had improved, however, and he had reached the finals on the back of his best ever season, with three tournament victories under his belt.

But his wits and talent were to be pitted against the might of Steve Davis' clinical skills and will-to-win. An entire gruelling weekend of adrenalin-charged play ensued, with Taylor at times hanging onto the game by the skin of his teeth.

On Saturday, more than six hours after play had begun, he won his first frame. Davis took the next, but Taylor nabbed the remaining six - ending the evening only just behind at 9-7.

All day Sunday, the maul continued - the stifling tension peaking as the last frame was whittled agonisingly down to the black, which was chased around the table until Taylor smoothly potted it at 11.23pm - to the delight of a late-night television audience of many millions.

1996: Nick Faldo

Greg Norman's six-shot lead over Britain's Nick Faldo seemed unassailable in the final round of the 1996 Augusta Masters.

But faced with Faldo's surgeon-like precision, the Great White Shark's record lead was squandered in alarming fashion.

Faldo's recovery began with Norman's wayward wedge to the ninth, resulting in a bogey and the lead being cut to just two shots.



Shark-killing Faldo

The Australian's lead then disintegrated. Despite managing birdies up the back-nine par fives, he shot one into the pond.

Faldo had refused to concede defeat to his playing partner and an immaculate final round gave him a stunning victory, for his third Masters title.

1999: Brian Lara

Brian Lara's double-century against Australia in the second Test in Sabina Park in March of

this year was an innings of timing, elegance and technique.

But it was also much more. It was a defining moment of the captain's character when his team was up against the wall. Not only did it save the Test, it showed that, after many disappointments, the Windies could still be world beaters.

His team had been bowled out for 51 in the previous Test match - an all time low for the West Indies. And under his captaincy, they had been whitewashed 5-0 on the previous tour of South Africa.

With pressure mounting for Lara to resign as skipper, he came to the crease at five for two, and left it a day and a half later with a score of 213 - his team in complete control.

1999: Scott Gibbs

England were hot favourites to win the Grand Slam at Wembley in April - with only one game left against a Welsh side who had defeated France by one point in Paris four weeks earlier.



The "fastest prop in rugby" breaks English hearts

The game started well for England with wing Dan Luger touching down with an early try.

Wales, who failed to break a superb line of defence from England, managed to hang on only through the kicking on fly-half Neil Jenkins.

Further tries from debutant Steve Hanley and Richard Hill left Wales trailing by seven points at half-time.

And so the game continued. Despite a quick second-half try

from Shane Howarth, Wales found themselves six points behind three minutes into injury time.

England seemed to have secured their goal.

But as if from nowhere, centre Scott Gibbs broke free to tear through the heart of the England defence and bring the Welsh within one point.

The conversion was duly slotted by Jenkins to secure an historic victory for Wales and deny England rugby's oldest prize.

1999: Carlisle United

Just weeks ago, seasoned football watchers were left speechless after one of the most thrilling climaxes to a league campaign the game had ever seen.

Carlisle needed a miracle on the last day of the season to maintain their position in the Football League.

Only a win could help them - and they achieved it in injury time.



On-loan goalie saves the day

Lee Phillips had put Plymouth ahead at the start of the second half, and Carlisle's David Brightwell equalised after a tense 15 minutes.

So the scores stood level as the game entered its final stages. With only seconds remaining, Carlisle pulled everyone forward - including goalkeeper Jimmy Glass - on loan to the team from Swindon - out of goal for a corner at the Plymouth end.

As the kick was taken, with the clock on 94 minutes, Glass found the net. "If Schmeichel can do it, I can do it."

The Carlisle fans went into raptures over the goal, but it was also a moment of heartbreak for Scarborough fans - who replaced Carlisle and were relegated to the Nationwide Conference.

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The architects of Old Trafford



Pat Crerand and George Best celebrate Matt Busby's 1968 European Cup win

Two men stand head and shoulders above all other Manchester United managers - Sir Matt Busby and Alex Ferguson.



Sir Matt was, of course, the individual who did more than anyone to build United into arguably the biggest club in Britain and one of the most famous sides in the world.

Twenty-eight years after he ended his second stint as United manager, Busby's shadow still falls over Old Trafford.



His statue adorns the ground, which is itself situated in Sir Matt Busby Way.

It is impossible to underestimate Busby's importance to the Red Devils.

But now Ferguson has achieved his goal of winning the European Cup in Barcelona, his supporters can legitimately put him alongside Sir Matt.

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Ferguson and Busby: United legends



Former United manager Wilf McGuinness assesses Ferguson and Busby

United's triumph in the 1999 Premiership means Ferguson has equalled the five league titles his illustrious predecessor won in the 1950s and '60s.

And now Ferguson has add the one remaining piece of silverware to his personal trophy room - the European Cup itself.

Scottish success stories

The similarities between the two men, who grew up in the same area of western Scotland. are striking.

- Both took over United in a state of chaos and turned the club into undisputed kings of English football.
- Both based their success on shrewd youth development - Busby's Babes were followed in the 1990s by Fergie's Fledglings - and believed in playing the game in a stylish, at times adventurous, fashion.
- And, unlike so many managers who seem to concentrate solely on the first-team squad, both were able to shape the club from top to bottom.

Post-war salvage job

Busby, a stylish half-back whose playing career was disrupted by the Second World War, inherited a team with no home, as Old Trafford had been severely damaged in the Blitz.

Honours under Busby

1948

FA Cup

1952

Championship

1956

Championship

1957

Championship

1963

FA Cup

1965

Championship

1967

Championship

1968

European Cup

The team were forced to play their matches at Maine Road, home of their arch rivals City, but despite the parlous condition of the club Busby soon began to turn them around.

They won the championship in 1952, United's first title for 41 years, and in his first six seasons in charge they never finished lower in the table than fourth.

Then came the tragedy of the 1956 Munich air crash that wiped out half the United team and nearly cost Busby his life.

But undeterred, he rebuilt the side for a second time, basing his success around the world class triumvirate of Best, Law and Charlton.

Burden of expectation

Ferguson took the reins in 1986 in different circumstances, but there were still enormous problems.



Flags adorn the street sign after Sir Matt's death in 1994

Unlike when Busby assumed control, the infrastructure of the club was in tact - indeed United still claimed to be the biggest side in the land.

But it was on the pitch where things were awry.

The title had not returned to Old Trafford since Busby's last triumph in 1967 and despite the occasional FA Cup success, the holy grail of the championship looked a long way off and the pressure had taken its toll on a succession of managers.

At first not everything went according to plan for Ferguson.

Such was the parlous state of the United set-up that results did not go his way and, following a run of bad results in the 1989-90 season, the knives began to be sharpened.

But Fergie saved his job with victory in the 1990 FA Cup - and with his position secure he was able to usher in a decade of domestic dominance.

Fergie's 'the best ever'

Few people in football are as qualified as Wilf McGuinness to offer an opinion on the relative merits of Ferguson and Busby.

The former United manager spent 18 years at the club under Busby and has observed Ferguson's achievements from close range.

And he believes that by bringing the European Cup back to Old Trafford, Ferguson has even eclipsed Sir Matt himself.

"For me there's been nobody better than the two of them," McGuinness said.

"With things going according to plan I think he's got to be the greatest ever. It's as simple as that.

"Typical of Alex, though, he would just be delighted to be thought off

Honours under Ferguson

1990

FA Cup

1991

Cup Winners' Cup

1992

European Super Cup,
League Cup

1993

Championship

1994

Championship and FA Cup
double

1996

Championship and FA Cup
double

1997

Championship

1999

Championship, FA Cup and
European Cup treble

in the same way that Matt was."

McGuinness has no doubts that Sir Matt would be just as proud to be compared with Ferguson.

He said: "I like to look at it in the romantic or dreamer's way and for me Matt Busby is up up there in heaven looking down on Alex and thinking 'What a wonderful job he's done'."

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