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ISSUE 1463

Friday 28 May 1999

# 400,000 join the carnival as glory boys return

By Nigel Bunyan

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MORE than 400,000 people converged on Manchester last night to give a carnival-style welcome to [the conquering heroes of the European Cup Final](#).

Manchester United had long laid claim to being [the world's most popular football team](#). Yesterday, as they flew home to parade their three trophies, only the most cynical could have any doubts. The greeting they received on their seven-mile "glory parade" was tumultuous. Thousands of fans, bedecked in red and festooned with flags and favours, lined every street.

Greater Manchester police estimated that 150,000 fans were in the city centre to greet the team and at least another 250,000 lined the rest of the route. Many had begun the party the day before. By the time the Class of '99 touched down at Manchester Airport, with goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel first to hold aloft the European Cup, they were running on adrenalin.

Scores of companies allowed their employees to leave early: in part to avoid the congestion but also because many would leave anyway. The march on the city centre began hours before Alex Ferguson's team had left Barcelona. Sounding their horns, hundreds of cars formed a chaotic cavalcade through the streets. Fans hung out of windows or poked their heads through sunroofs. Some of those on foot clung from traffic lights, others climbed on top of telephone boxes or leaned out from the windows of buildings.

A deafening roar greeted the players as United's open-top bus pulled into Manchester Arena, where 17,500 fans watched the team parade their trophies. In

the wake of United's victory a new number has appeared on the back of the club's replica shirts - 99.

- William Hill yesterday stopped taking bets on Alex Ferguson receiving a knighthood. The company had earlier reduced its odds from 50-1 to evens.

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MANCHESTER United's European Cup winners celebrated so long and hard in their hotel dining room that the party broke up only when staff began laying breakfast around them at 7.30am yesterday. Being sensationally late was only fitting, given the way United's players overcame Bayern Munich in stoppage time at the Nou Camp.

United's [2-1 victory sent shockwaves around Europe](#). Many observers wondered if this was the greatest final yet, in climax if not content. Most acknowledged that the English, a faded force in the European Cup [since the horrors of Heysel](#), were back among the elite. The Italians, serial finalists in recent years, could provide only the referee this time.

"I looked at the names on the cup and there was Ajax, Borussia Dortmund, Juventus and Real Madrid and then Manchester United," said Alex Ferguson yesterday. "I said to myself 'that is what it is all about'."

[United's delight was England's](#). Champions of Europe like David Beckham, Teddy Sheringham, Andy Cole, Nicky Butt, the Nevilles plus Paul Scholes, who was suspended for the final but helped his team reach Barcelona, will all be



named in Kevin Keegan's squad today for next week's highly significant Euro 2000 qualifier against Sweden. Optimism will be rocketing, the banter among the players at Bisham keener than usual. Keegan can use United's momentum to build England's.

Psychologically, United's triumph means that football's mother country is [no longer the Aunt Sally of the global game](#). It was as if the national team had won in Barcelona, not just England's most celebrated club side.

Heathrow's baggage-handlers even programmed in a special message on the screens for those passengers arriving on flights from Munich yesterday. "Manchester United 2, Bayern Munich 1," it read. "Welcome to England, home of the European champions." PS: your bags are in Kuala Lumpur.

United certainly shed some baggage on Wednesday. The 31 years of hurt disappeared in one memorable minute. "The time was up and I looked around and I saw the cup was on its way down and it had Bayern Munich's colours on it," said Beckham. "Two minutes later, I had it in my own hands." Beckham's chaos-causing corners set the scene for Teddy Sheringham's equaliser and then Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's winner.

The seeds to the revival, to the seizing of a game hitherto largely [controlled by Jens Jeremies, Sammy Kuffour and Mario Basler](#), were laid during Ferguson's stirring half-time talk. "I said that the cup will only be 6ft away from you at the end of the game," United's manager recalled. "If you lose, you won't be able to touch it. [You have got to find a way to effect people's lives through motivation](#). But you have to have players who can be motivated. Some people can just melt."

Ferguson's players just grew stronger on an emotional night for United, who prevailed on Sir Matt Busby's birthday against a side from Munich. "Back in the dressing room [Bobby Charlton and I were chatting about how these things happen](#)," added Ferguson. "It was a fairy tale. You could tell Matt Busby was looking down on me. I said a few weeks ago that I hope there is some meaning to the final being on Matt's birthday and against Bayern Munich.

"It was just brilliant the way it happened: Peter Schmeichel's last game for us and there he is, up there in their box, having a helping hand in the first goal. I had got to the stage where I felt we had to accept defeat. I was gearing up to face the question about 'do you think you will ever win it?'

"I do feel a sense of fulfilment now that I didn't have before. [My players cannot be ignored now in terms of the history of this club](#). Some of the '68 team were at the party last night. They were proud of them. Twenty years from now, when people talk about the main characteristic of this team, they will always be



Manchester United fans focus on their heroes return from an historic victory

remembered for their last-minute goals, for never giving in. Two goals in injury time? Who would have believed it?"

Ferguson, typically, voiced his determination to make the most of his final three years at Old Trafford. "I don't want to finish by not having won anything since Barcelona. That would be a waste of talent for the players and myself.

"What is required now is to show that we can get better and drive ourselves to other challenges."

One challenge that will be given a Giggs-style dropped shoulder to is FIFA's daft World Club Cup in January (probably in Brazil). "There's no chance of us going," said Ferguson. Bayern will now be UEFA's representatives.

Ferguson's men will contest the European Super Cup against Lazio, the UEFA Cup winners, in Monaco, on Aug 27.

Ferguson's achievements, which are likely to bring him a knighthood as well as a long residency in the best-seller list for his forthcoming autobiography, were acknowledged by Keegan yesterday. "Alex has gone past Bob Paisley by winning the Treble," said Keegan, who played for Liverpool under Paisley.

"That's more of an achievement than anything we accomplished at Liverpool because of the sheer difficulty of winning the European Cup now there are so many more fixtures. You can put them both together as the greats along with Bill Shankly and Matt Busby." This season's stats say it all: played 63, lost four, scored 128 goals. United had earned that party.

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# History men are a lesson for the English game

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YOUNG Charlie Sheringham was clutching his dad's mobile phone and wearing a replica United shirt with Teddy's name and number on the back. "Come on dad, the coach is about to go," he called to his father, who was still chatting merrily into a hedgehog of microphones. David Beckham had just walked past carrying the enormous European Cup by one handle as if it were a holdall.



The Manchester United players receive a heroes' welcome in their home town

In those delirious moments, Sheringham junior was probably incapable of appreciating the wider significance of what he had just seen, though the hug from his father on the team bus when they finally boarded it will have told him that [his hero was mightily pleased](#). Charlie is at an age, 11, when history at school is largely about remembering names and dates. It will be a challenge to his teachers to find one that will be more meaningful in this boy's life than May 26, 1999, when he went to Spain and found himself with his father at the centre of sport's universe.

Barcelona airport the next morning was history with jet-noise. Dozens of dishevelled United supporters lay on the cold marble floors unconscious but probably lost in blissful dreams. It looked like an emergency shelter for flood victims. A man with a Debonair receipt tried to talk his way on to a British



Airways flight. Penniless acolytes who had missed charter planes begged foreign airlines to help get them home. Nobody left Barcelona until they absolutely had to. In the early hours of yesterday, seasoned football writers stood by the side of the United coach, not working any longer but determined to extract every last second of juice out of a miracle we had actually been paid to see.

There was, as Charlie Sheringham threw an arm round his father behind the dark glass, a sense that [the privilege of taking part in the 1999 European Cup final](#) extended far beyond the United players caressing the sort of medals last worn by Manchester men in 1968. Two magnetic forces held everybody who had been at the game in place. One was an awareness that the nature of United's victory made this probably the most dramatic finish to a major football match yet seen. The other was the certain knowledge that English football had not reached such peaks of rapture since England's World Cup victory in 1966. Who, among archivists this morning, would dispute that we have just peered in on the finest achievement in English team sports since Bobby Moore raised the Jules Rimet trophy 33 summers ago?

It is the tiniest irony that United were not League champions when they qualified for the European Champion Clubs' Cup. They squeezed in as runners-up to Arsenal and had to endure the indignity of pre-tournament qualifying against LKS Lodz. If a single season is any criterion, they are the most productive side in the 44-year history of the European Cup. With 1966 as the starting point, the mind gropes for a proper sporting context in which to assess [the conquest of three major trophies](#) inside 10 days.

Wednesday night was a feast, the three decades or so that preceded it only high-grade tapas. Nick Faldo, Lester Piggott, Seb Coe, Daley Thompson, Nigel Mansell, Ian Botham, Steve Redgrave: heroes all, but somehow individual brilliance wilts when set against the collective excellence of a squad who took a few pulsating seconds in the last-chance saloon to revive the idea of English football as a player on the world stage.

The emotional effect of United's manifold triumphs will be felt [when England play Sweden](#) in a crucial European Championship qualifying game on Saturday week. It will be felt in the boardrooms of Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Leeds. United have smashed the door down, but is anybody else from the madcap Premiership capable of running through the hole?

United's marketing department will conquer fresh lands. Beckham and Yorke will be proclaimed in a dozen new tongues. The trouble with setting high standards is that you have to stick to them. For United themselves there is the daunting realisation that they will have to keep banging out blockbusters just as good.

There is another interpretation of what happened in Catalonia which ought to be dealt with and discarded now. The completion of an unprecedented League, FA Cup and European Cup Treble drew this sniffy observation from Bayern's Lothar Matthaus: "It was not the best team that won but the luckiest."

The theory goes like this: Alex Ferguson's experiment with Jesper Blomqvist wide left and Ryan Giggs on the right was a dog's breakfast; Bayern, who twice hit Peter Schmeichel's woodwork, were tactically the more sophisticated side; only when Sheringham came on for Blomqvist did United start to present a consistent threat; and only by succumbing to hubris and defending like traffic bollards at the death did Bayern allow a victory they had already started celebrating slip from their grasp.

[Much of this is correct, technically](#), but it ignores other crucial human elements, such as perseverance, guts, unity, self-belief and the almost indefinable strength of will that drives these United players on. They could give lectures on the unthinkability of defeat. A gust of resentment blew through United's ranks when Bayern's Mario Basler started proclaiming a German victory 20 minutes before the end. Basler's wave to the Bayern fans was his own farewell to glory. The English bull smashed down the bars of its cage.

England is thwarted no longer, and the Germans are not what they were. Bayern's inability to hold what they had will add to the sense of vulnerability and bewilderment across the German game. Some of their players will be permanently diminished by what United did to them in the dark alley of Oliver Kahn's penalty box.

For once the abiding image of despair was not some Englishman weeping into his shirt after blasting a penalty into Row Z but a German team's previously imperious central defenders punching the Nou Camp turf and raging at the moon.

More history for Charlie Sheringham, but not the sort he will be familiar with from books.

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# Basler's gall gave United incentive to save the day

By Henry Winter

[The party's just beginning for Ferguson's men](#) by Henry Winter

IT WAS late on Wednesday evening and the Nou Camp's giant clocks indicated that time was running out for Manchester United, who were trailing 1-0 to Bayern Munich. Some of the German players even thought they were home and lederhosed. [Mario Basler certainly did](#).

"With 25 minutes to go, Basler was in the corner waving to his fans," said Teddy Sheringham. "I was warming up and standing right next to Basler as he was doing it. I couldn't believe what he was doing. It gives you a sweeter incentive to get on and get a result out of it. I was looking for Basler at the end, just to give him a little wave."

Sheringham equalised and then another substitute, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, [hooked in the winner as United's players displayed their indomitable streak](#). "We have shown this season that we never give up," said Ryan Giggs. "[We did it against Arsenal](#) and [Liverpool in the FA Cup](#). We have done it again against Bayern. Liverpool used to score in the last minute. Truly great sides do that."

Giggs and Sheringham were talking after emerging from United's champagne-soaked dressing-room. As they relayed the tales of the unexpected, David Beckham strode past with the European Cup. Gary Neville, shortly to be Beckham's best man, laughed at the suggestion that the trophy had been on the wedding list before returning to the theme of the team's determination.

"We've shown that this team never dies," Neville said. "It keeps going right until the end and we've shown it on the greatest stage. We didn't play to our best ability-wise or skill-wise. It was something else that won us the game. We were

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not going to lie down. Our guts took us through.

"There is a refusal to give in, a will that we've got to win because nothing else is accepted at this club. [It mirrors the manager's thoughts](#), the manager's ambitions. He has got that into the players' heads. Come the first day of pre-season, the manager will be at us again. When you see your manager, who has been there, seen and done everything in the game, and you see his motivation and determination, how can I fail to have it at 24?"

Sheringham agreed. "It stems from the manager," said the England striker. "He gave a great speech at half-time, telling us, 'you are yards away from the European Cup. I know you are 1-0 down but don't just come back in here without giving your all.' We certainly gave our all."

[Dwight Yorke has been at United less than a season](#) but is fully versed in the dressing-room camaraderie. "It's all down to the good management, the good team spirit," said the Tobagan forward. "My private life has been published a few times and my team-mates and manager supported me. That has made me stronger. There is a close togetherness of the team. We have proven that over the season when people have written us off and we bounce back every time."

Yet for a long period of the game resilience seemed insufficient to overcome a tactically smart Bayern side. "I told the players in the dressing room afterwards that it looked like a German team were going to do us again," said Neville. "I remember Euro 96. [I remember Borussia Dortmund](#) when we missed all those chances. Bayern were unlucky. To win three trophies, you need an element of luck and we've had that this year in Europe. In the past, we hadn't."

Giggs was less sensitive to Teutonic sensibilities. "The Germans have been so lucky in the past against us that I think we deserved this bit of luck," said the Wales international.

Giggs observed that he never felt the weight of history hanging heavily upon him. "Matching the team of '68 wasn't a pressure," said the winger often compared to George Best. "It has always been rammed down our necks as it was before we won the League.

"There was this expectancy about 'are United ever going to win the league again?'. We did do and have done so consistently. We have dominated domestically. [We now want to dominate Europe](#). We want to emulate great teams like Juventus and the Liverpool of the Eighties."

Neville echoed Giggs's sentiments about the obsession with Sir Matt Busby's European Cup-winners. "Sixty-eight was never a burden," said the England right back. "The '68 team were a fantastic team. People will probably say we've surpassed the '68 team but I wouldn't agree with that. We've just won the same competition. It's nice that people will look upon us in the same way. They had world-class players.

"We have said all season that we don't have a priority, that we play each competition as it comes along. But the European Cup has always been the big one for us."

Yorke was overcome with the emotion of it all. "It is unbelievable," he said. "I grew up as a kid thinking of these matches. Lothar Matthäus is a hero in my eyes, a legend. To play against him in the Champions' League final shows what a life I've had. I was close to tears just thinking about it."

It was stand-in captain Peter Schmeichel's last match for United. The Danish goalkeeper is now pondering a move to the Continent, possibly to Udinese, Roma, Bordeaux, Monaco or Marseilles. When asked where he might end up, however, he replied: "Now is a time for champagne, not thinking about the future."

The final word must go to Gary Neville, such a proud spokesman for the dressing-room. "We have given people so much entertainment. We've done it with style. People have to admire us even if they don't like us."

- United winning the European Cup was the last leg of many season-long accumulators which had been going well because of the domestic title wins by fancied sides Sunderland, Fulham and Brentford, as well as United's Premiership success. There were also some optimistic souls celebrating having backed United at 100-1 last August to complete the Treble.

The sheer weight of small-stakes bets involving United's European Cup victory means bookmakers could be facing a pay-out of several million pounds, although the figure will only become clear when the majority of winners have returned to the betting shops to pick up their money. United are 5-1 with Ladbrokes to retain the European Cup and a desperately short 11-10 to retain the Championship, which with all their fixture requirements next season as European champions will be a tough order. Hill's offer 66-1 against a repeat Treble.

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# Fortune favours the brave

By David Miller

▶ [The party's just beginning for Ferguson's men](#) by **Henry Winter**

LIFE, [George Best once observed, seldom works out the way you plan it](#). He had intended, with that glorious God-given ability, to touch a new pinnacle of a career already acclaimed at 22, in the European Cup final of 1968. How alarmingly close was the final of 1999 to being the same anti-climax as it had been 31 years ago for the first 90 minutes.

"I was going to score a hat-trick, in my mind, to take Wembley by storm," Best recalled. "I had it all worked out. Instead, chopped, harried and bruised, I had to settle for a single goal." The sudden, liberating transformation as the inimitable winger, [the most accomplished British player of my lifetime](#), took a long clearance by Alex Stepney, that was glanced on by Brian Kidd, past lunging centre-half Humberto, then round goalkeeper Henrique, and rolled into an empty net, was only slightly less climactic than [the extraordinary conclusion at Nou Camp](#).

Best rescued Matt Busby's dream that night, made reality of the perished ambitions of the revered Babes, and in an instant turned what had been a dull occasion into a rampant celebration. Kidd and Bobby Charlton, with his second goal, triumphantly completed the rout of Benfica. How many remember now that Eusebio, the black pearl from Mozambique, should have buried United with only minutes of normal time to run, when attempting to score a great goal instead of a simple one, blasting rather than placing an easy chance and allowing Stepney to make a brilliant reflex save?

In years to come, few will remember, or care, that United's performance in their second victory was for much of the match as ordinary as in the first. [History's judgment can be perversely generous or cruel](#) regarding our would-be heroes, be they political, military or sporting. Split seconds can make or break a lifetime's

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work, and now again fortune smiled upon United.

If the somersault of the unforgettable climax left luckless Bayern emotionally desolate, at least they had lost only a football match, not their lives as Duncan Edwards, Tommy Taylor, Roger Byrne, Eddie Coleman, David Pegg and the others did at Munich. For them, strident in their youth and potentially about to dislodge Real Madrid as Europe's foremost team, there would never be another chance. Bayern live to try again.

On the way home, I met Ruud Gullit, still nursing his disappointment with Newcastle, from the FA Cup final. Without a trace of bitterness, he reflected that he had never seen a side enjoy so much luck - the factual twist of events as opposed to being undeservedly, colloquially lucky - as United in the past month.

"Giggs's late equaliser at Old Trafford against Juventus, Arsenal's missed penalty in the FA Cup, Arsenal's defeat at Leeds, Sheringham's instant goal at Wembley, Bayern hitting the post and bar, everything has turned for United as though it were decreed in advance," Gullit said. "And I believe they, and Alex Ferguson, deserve it. They have been so persistent, they have attacked, and they deserved it last night for the way they kept going when all seemed lost. Alex took a chance with his formation, with Beckham for Keane in the middle. What happened was part of the joy of football, even if it was unbelievably cruel on Bayern."

Ferguson's gamble, so worthy in its positive principle, in playing Beckham and Ryan Giggs out of their normal positions, and even pushing Dwight Yorke on to the unfamiliar right flank when sending out Teddy Sheringham for Jesper Blomqvist, was an echo of Busby's own unfailingly wilful attitude: when United, for instance, were trailing Real at Bernabeu in the semi-final second leg, and when forced into extra time at Wembley. "Attack them. Surprise them."

Other clubs and their followers may be excusably envious of the wealth of Old Trafford, of the ability to buy the best, yet for 50 years the club have maintained that sense of glory which is the essence of the game at its finest, which is what draws admiration all over Britain and around the world.

Ferguson, although skirting so close to epic failure, has remained true to Busby's tradition, including the development and promotion of youth, and in doing so his players gained a miraculous victory. In a simple, yet sensational match, they epitomised one of life's prime lessons: nothing is ever over till it's over.

Substandard the performance may have been, yet there is little doubting that the new champions when at their peak are superior to 1968, notwithstanding the genius of Best and the then fading mastery of Charlton and Paddy Crerand. Nobby Stiles, too, was by then past his best. If Ferguson can find another goalkeeper, there is the prospect of United emulating Real, Benfica, Inter, Ajax, Bayern, Liverpool, Nottingham Forest and AC Milan in retaining the trophy.

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ISSUE 1463

Friday 28 May 1999

# I was wrong to underestimate this gutsy side

By Bobby Charlton

▶ [The party's just beginning for Ferguson's men](#) by **Henry Winter**

I SHOULD have learned never to underestimate this Manchester United team, even though I thought the season had caught up with us at last in the final five minutes in Barcelona. Somewhere along the line I feared one test would be beyond us but, once again, they proved me wrong.

The manner of [the victory over Bayern was sensational](#): the players never know when to quit and what happened in those final, unbelievable minutes is down to more than mere tactics or substitutions. It is about having the guts to keep going. Never has the phrase "making your own luck" seemed more appropriate.

We had enough possession in the match to think that one good ball into the danger area would give us the chance we needed but Bayern Munich defended so well I thought that maybe it was going to pass us by this time.

Peter Schmeichel coming up for the corner [absolutely threw them](#): three defenders jumped with him but none got the ball. It created almost the first moment of time and space in their box all evening, plus a touch of panic and a mis-kick. Ryan Giggs popped it back and Teddy Sheringham was on the spot to score.

There was no way we were going to lose after that but I thought we would have to go to extra time. What happened next defied belief: people around me were speechless and in shock after Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's winning goal.

I felt sorry for the Germans, even though they didn't really cause us too many problems at the back until we started stretching the game to get forward at the end. These things happen to everyone in football at some time but it is hard to

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accept for any professional who worked as hard as they did.

It has been a season of incredible ups and downs but Manchester United seem to be drawn into these adventures. Sometimes it has not just been hurdles to climb, but mountains. It is difficult to single anyone out, but [David Beckham was sensational](#). Alex Ferguson's tactics provoked a lot of discussion but I never question Alex, how can you after what he has done?

After the final whistle Martin Edwards, our chairman, and the Sports Minister, Tony Banks, called me down to the front of the box for a better view. It was a magic moment and I was not the only one with a tear in my eye.

The party for players and staff was in full swing when I left at 4.30am. Sixty-five thousand United fans were also enjoying their own parties around Barcelona.

Already people are asking "where next" for this United team. Maybe we can't repeat the Treble but we can give it a go and, with a young side, there is plenty to look forward to.

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## Scott salutes Ferguson's finest hour

▶ [The party's just beginning for Ferguson's men](#) by **Henry Winter**

TEDDY Scott, the veteran Aberdeen kitman, was convinced Alex Ferguson would triumph in Europe because he witnessed the Manchester United manager's winning mentality at first hand - playing head tennis.

Scott, whose long-standing link with the Old Trafford manager saw United travel to Pittodrie for a testimonial fixture earlier this season, believes the Champions' Cup victory cements Ferguson's reputation among the greats.

The pair combined to win the Cup-Winners' Cup for Aberdeen in 1983 and [Ferguson even invited him along](#) when he briefly assumed charge of Scotland providing Scott with a genuine insight into his character.

He said: "I don't think it will be difficult for Alex to follow this treble. [He likes a challenge and is never beaten](#). He has always been the same as long as I have known him.

"I remember him playing head tennis in his Pittodrie days going at it hammer and tong, claiming his opponent was a cheat. Whatever he is doing Alex is a winner."

[15 November 1996: Youth on the side of Aberdeen](#)

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## German newspapers reaction

### [The party's just beginning for Ferguson's men](#)

A SIMPLE "Oh No!" - in English - from Germany's most popular daily newspaper, Bild Zeitung, characterised the reaction to Wednesday's extraordinary defeat of Bayern Munich.

The paper's match report began: "It was the most terrible finish that a German football team must ever undergo, the most unbelievable that a football fan, whether in the stadium or in front of the television, has ever experienced.

"We were only 13 seconds away. Isn't that bitter? Simply inconceivable. Football can be so cruel," Bild continued, with a picture of dejected midfielder Stefan Effenberg.

"Ninety minutes party: and then the tears poured" was the headline in Munich's TZ tabloid.

The Bonn Express said the result was "terrible. Absolutely terrible", adding: "Bavaria is in mourning and so are we."

According to RTL television, 13.59 million people in Germany watched the entire game, a 48.4 per cent share of those watching television at the time.

The station said that this was the second largest TV audience to watch an event, topped only by the 1997 European Cup final between Borussia Dortmund and Juventus, when 15.28 million, or 51.5 per cent of the country, watched.

Ironically, with Bayern 1-0 up and the match entering the 90th minute, the German TV commentator [chose to cite Gary Lineker's famous remark](#) that "football is a game where 22 men run around after a ball. And then the Germans win". And then came the goals from Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

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## For the better: Small stakes, big gains

By Angus Loughran

[The party's just beginning for Ferguson's men](#) by Henry Winter

MANCHESTER UNITED'S victory at the Nou Camp was largely a triumph for small-stakes punters.

United winning the European Cup was the last leg of many season-long accumulators which had been going well because of the domestic title wins by fancied sides Sunderland, Fulham and Brentford, as well as United's Premiership success.

There were also some optimistic souls celebrating having backed United at 100-1 last August to complete the Treble.

The sheer weight of small-stakes bets involving United's European Cup victory means the bookmaking industry could be facing a pay-out of several million pounds, although the exact figure will only become clear when the majority of winners have returned to the betting shops to pick up their money.

United are 5-1 with Ladbrokes to retain the European Cup and a desperately short 11-10 to retain the Championship, which with all their fixture requirements next season as European champions will be a tough order. Hill's offer 66-1 against a repeat Treble.

Spread betting firms were open throughout the drama of Wednesday's final. Sporting Index reported it their worst day's trading as the match swiftly followed the heavy losses suffered when India went on a run spree against Sri Lanka in the Cricket World Cup.

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## Bayern Munich (1) 1 Man Utd (0) 2

THIS magnificent Manchester United side simply refuse to give up. Yesterday, when all seemed lost, when the German jinx again appeared to hold sway over an English side, United scored twice in the final seconds through Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer to lift the European Cup on the day that marked Sir Matt Busby's 90th birthday. Amazing.

United have this alarming habit of making life difficult for themselves in Europe. Scarcely five minutes had elapsed when the champions of England conceded the sloppiest of goals, the devastating early blow emanating from the confusion between Ronny Johnsen and Jaap Stam. Communication and positional sense, the staples of central defensive pairings, appeared minimal as Carsten Jancker, Bayern's burly striker, muscled down the inside-left channel.

The area appeared Stam's zone of responsibility but there was Johnsen diving in and fouling Jancker. Bayern eyed up the situation, 20 yards and with promise writ large. United realised the danger and quickly gathered in a wall. Germans, though, are past masters at opening walls through run or tug.

Jancker and Markus Babel made the key moves. Jancker was first to peel away, taking Stam chasing after him. Then Babel went, nipping behind the wall itself and applying a slight tug to Nicky Butt's shirt on the way. The cover was blown, the hole opened.



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Basler, having bided his time, stepped up and sent his free-kick curling into the space vacated by Babbel and Jancker. Peter Schmeichel, captain on his last appearance for United, stood helpless as the ball swerved in to his left, sending the Germans into paroxysms of delight.

A brutal lesson unlearned, United still struggled defensively. Still the mix-ups came, most notably between Schmeichel and Johnsen, although Bayern failed to press home an unexpected advantage.

Lacking Roy Keane's midfield drive and leadership, United desperately sought for one of their rank to stand up and lift them from this mess of their own making.

David Beckham picked up the gauntlet. As United's faithful ran through their song-book, Beckham ran through his passing repertoire. This was his stage, his hour but the experienced Germans refused to buckle.

The strivings of England's finest midfielder were watched and assessed by the great and the good of the global game, Pele even taking time out to describe Beckham as one of the world's great players just behind Rivaldo and Zinedine Zidane.

Of Alex Ferguson's decision to hand Beckham the central play-making role, Brazil's most famous son said: "With a player like David Beckham, you must give him his freedom." Now it was United who needed liberating from of Bayern's cold clutch.

Beneath a sea of banners, one of them proclaiming "Spirit of 68. Class of 99", Beckham kept trying to release a low-key Jesper Blomqvist down the left, Ryan Giggs down the right and Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole through the middle. One clever ball saw Yorke flicking goalwards only for Bayern's excellent goalkeeper, Oliver Kahn, to punch clear.

Beckham's first-half promise foundered on the rock of German determination and organisation. Whenever Beckham gained possession, Jens Jeremies powered in, making control and composure even more crucial assets.

Bayern's tactics were so clever, so efficient. When Schmeichel had the ball, only one grey-shirted striker stayed up while the other two fanned towards the flanks, filling the space that the English love to exploit.

Giggs looked ill at ease on the right, adding to Bayern's sense of control. When United did break through, Kahn was there to quell the danger. One quickfire link-up between Yorke and Cole did release Giggs, ripping United's supporters from their seats in fevered anticipation. Yet there was Kahn, so calm and canny, advancing to seize the ball. As United themselves have done across Europe this extraordinary season, Bayern threatened on the break.

After 28 minutes, Lothar Matthäus showed his enduring class, taking the ball away from the hard-tackling Jeremies and sweeping forward, brimming with

intent.

Having driven deep into United's half, Matthäus slipped the ball to the ungainly but effective Jancker, who found Alexander Zickler. The ensuing shot scarcely worried Schmeichel, sliding apologetically into the hoardings, but United had again been reminded of the need to re-gather when their own attacks broke down. At least the half finished on a promising note with Irwin and Cole combining to create a header for Giggs, which proved too weak to alarm Kahn.

The second half beat to the same rhythm: United pressuring and Bayern parrying. Jancker sent Schmeichel into a slithering save and then Babel misjudged a header with United's goal gaping. Giggs fashioned chances for Yorke, whose header was blocked, and then Blomqvist, who could not keep his shot down. As the clock ticked ever louder, urgent action became essential.

Sheringham came off the bench for Blomqvist, yet it was Bayern who threatened, Jancker turning the ball into the path of Stefan Effenberg, whose attempted lob was pushed over by Schmeichel. Then Mehmet Scholl chipped Schmeichel but the ball rebounded into the 'keeper's arms.

But then a miracle. Beckham's corner swung over and there was Schmeichel, up from the back, pressuring Bayern's proud defence. Yorke headed back, Giggs shot in and there was Sheringham playing the poacher. In added time, Beckham swung in another corner, Sheringham headed on and there was Solskjaer to hook the ball in. The Treble was complete. Amazing.

**Manchester Utd:** Schmeichel; G Neville, Stam, Johnsen, Irwin; Giggs, Beckham, Butt, Blomqvist (Sheringham 66); Yorke, Cole (Solskjaer 80). Subs: Van Der Gouw (g), May, P Neville, Brown, Greening.

**Bayern Munich:** Kahn; Matthäus (Fink 80); Linke, Kuffour; Babel, Effenberg, Jeremies, Tarnat; Basler (Salihamidzic 89), Jancker, Zickler (Scholl 70). Subs: Dreher (g), Helmer, Strunz, Daei. Booked: Effenberg.

**Referee:** P Collina (Italy).

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# United break through to a new dimension

By Paul Hayward

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▶ [Solskjaer makes Treble come true](#) by **Henry Winter**

RED flares illuminated a clock that showed 90 minutes - the nominal end of the game. United's hearts were about to break. In time that existed only in some alternative cosmic dimension, Manchester United went from 1-0 down to winning the European Cup. Lothar Matthäus was wrong. [Twenty-two men run around for 90 minutes and then the English win.](#)

Bayern Munich were in the mood to give Manchester United trouble last night but not a treble. Sir Matt Busby, who would have been 90 yesterday, [must have twitched a little in his grave.](#) All we saw through the smoke and noise and chaos was Teddy Sheringham's boot swinging a desperately poked ball into the net. Wonderful. Extra time and maybe penalties. But then Ole Gunnar Solskjaer dragged another goal from a game that was chugging deliriously towards another 30-minute ordeal. The synopsis is simple. This was the greatest comeback in European football, possibly the history of the game. [League](#), [FA Cup](#) and now European Champions' Cup - United have exhausted and thrilled us in them all.

A season that has been raining eulogies threatened to turn into elegies for all but the final script-defying seconds. United had got close to reviving the spirit of 1968 but still not close enough. An apparently routine assignment in their own domestic cup seemed to stand between Bayern and Germany's own first treble. Alex Ferguson, who insists he will retire at 60, was [running out of chances.](#) Cut to the 91st minute: Bayern's gallant players are scattered across the turf in impossible and abject despair.

Bayern's sudden, matador strike at a time when most people back in Britain were probably still plonking tea mugs on coasters raised the dread thought that [English](#)



[teams are destined to make grievous errors against the Germans](#). The foul by Ronny Johnsen on Carsten Jancker was the product of a desperate attempt to recover position. Then came Mario Basler's free kick, which penetrated a gap in the United wall punched open by clever movements from Jancker and Marcus Babel, who pulled Jaap Stam and Jesper Blomqvist away.

The hole-in-the-wall gang had struck. [Penalty shoot-outs are normally the problem](#), but this time it was free kicks. Remember Turin, the United players must have whispered to themselves. But there was a sense that, unlike Juventus, this Bayern Munich side would be singularly unwilling to yield. They did finally, but so late in a magnificent day.

Barcelona is a city so sensuously stuffed with art that only a tense, painstakingly fought match could have done justice to the setting. The locals had shown their visitors how to celebrate the beautiful on Monday with a teeming pageant to mark Barca's successful defence of their league title. Hot, rowdy and excitable, but with its usual understated nobility, this repository of Catalan culture invited two treble-chasing teams into the Nou Camp to experience the centrifugal thrill of playing in the continent's finest footballing arena.

Just north of the Olympic village, where such a good time was had by all in 1992, and half an hour's walk from Gaudi's unfinished master work, the Sagrada Familia, the Nou Camp has the hum and pull of a great architectural treasure. It is probably the only European stadium capable of absorbing such tidal crashes of passion and noise. Last night, it was like one of those white-knuckle rides a large part of you just wants to get off. With its mountainously steep stands, there is always the sensation of falling into the crucible below, where, last night, two sets of scurrying ant-like men had to suppress all thought of how much was at stake and stick to the simple business of winning a ball game.

United are the Esperanto of football supporting. The club have done such a fine job of marketing the United mystique that there were banners here from Croatia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Malta and Australia. "Man United - The Religion," said one. For religion read "brand". Allegiance to United is a brilliantly manufactured obsession. It is love on the net, marriage by club magazine. Not that there is anything wrong with that. The world is full of such electronic communities. United are the game's favourite international pen pals. Last night, they needed all the support they could get.

When an opening ceremony reminiscent of a mini Super Bowl ended, there was little initially to encourage the belief that all those transcontinental airfares had been money well spent. Without Roy Keane and Paul Scholes, Ferguson fielded an experimental United midfield in one of the most daring acts of his 13-year Old Trafford career. Both his most formidable wide players were moved from their usual positions. David Beckham was transferred to the centre of midfield and Ryan Giggs switched to the right flank to accommodate Blomqvist on the left. The most likely explanation is that Ferguson felt safer with Johnsen alongside Stam in defence than he would have done with David May. Hence the need for

Beckham to bolster a central midfield staffed by a reservist in Nicky Butt.

In the first half, both sides of Ferguson's normally wide-flowing team were emasculated. Using his left foot as he galloped down the right-hand side, Giggs was carried inside rather than outside his marker. On the opposite wing, Blomqvist lacked the requisite gas to go past Babel. Thus play became congested in the centre of the pitch where Bayern's wing-backs acted as the string tying Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole into a sack created by their three central defenders. Not good. For once there was no howling dervish from United, no unstoppable force ripping into a foreign defence, just uncertain, crab-like incursions that lacked the usual fluency and conviction.

The experiment was abandoned two-thirds of the way into the game. Off came Blomqvist, on came Sheringham. Giggs went left and Beckham right while Cole, Yorke and Sheringham all hunted for that precious equalising goal. But Bayern still held their shape and nerve: a smothering grey blanket laid expertly across the pitch. By now, the suffering of United's supporters had lasted well over an hour. In Europe, some would say, it had lasted 31 years.

Bayern Munich may never get over the trauma of what happened to them in a handful of seconds. None of us in the Nou Camp will ever forget we were there.

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ISSUE 1462

Thursday 27 May 1999

# Wondrous finish covers up tactical frailties

By David Miller

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▶ [Solskjaer makes Treble come true](#) by **Henry Winter**

NEVER in the history of the game, it can be safely said without exaggeration, has a cup final been turned on its head so late, not even [the Matthews Final](#). One's heart bleeds for Bayern, who had dominated most of the 90 minutes and had hit post and bar in the last 10. Much as there is joy for Manchester, the cruelty inflicted on Bayern, [straining to regain the trophy after 23 years](#), was something no team should be asked to bear.

It took little time for Bayern to show United that what might have worked [against Newcastle on Saturday at Wembley](#) would not at the Nou Camp.

Additionally, Alex Ferguson's tactical change played into the hands of Bayern. The idea of having David Beckham [as the replacement for Roy Keane in central midfield](#) did not look clever.

Prior to the match, it had seemed that United's formation, with Beckham and Ryan Giggs on the flanks, was going to cause problems for the Germans. Instead, it was Bayern's 1-2-4-3 formation which created difficulties for United.

It had always seemed likely that Bayern's central midfield of Stefan Effenberg and Jens Jeremies might prove overpowering. In the event, Beckham was unable to shake off the attentions of the dogged Jeremies, and although Nicky Butt was successfully restraining Effenberg, the balance of midfield control in the first half lay with Bayern.

With Michael Tarnat not allowing Giggs to escape on his unaccustomed right flank, and Jesper Blomqvist making no headway against Marcus Babbel, Bayern's defence was largely secure. Try as they might, Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole



could not find a way past the Linke-Matthaus-Kuffour trio.

Ferguson's choice of Beckham to replace Keane affected so many other aspects of the game in Bayern's favour. Giggs is nowhere near as dangerous on the right; he does not have a working relationship with Beckham as a close-hand midfield partner; and by moving inside United lost Beckham's most telling weapon, the swerving crosses that feed the rest of the front line. The consequence was that Bayern were able to be relatively relaxed and confident while United, once they had gone behind to Mario Basler's early free-kick, were all too clearly a side struggling to get back into the match. United's moves ground to a halt around the edge of Bayern's penalty area.

Bayern had soon shown their attacking hand: the usual high diagonal passes played to Carsten Jancker as he moved to the flank, supported by crosses from either Basler on the right or Tarnat or Alex Zickler from the left in search of Jancker's head. It was just such a ball played forward by Tarnat that had seen Jancker pounding into the penalty area on the left under pressure from Ronny Johnsen. Jancker's power, such a threat, caused Johnsen and Jaap Stam constant anxiety. He was the central point of almost every Bayern attack, big, strong, sometimes clumsy, but his unquenchable willpower constantly rose above his technical shortcomings.

Bayern must have been both surprised and delighted that United came out for the second half showing no adjustment, and still with Giggs trying to adapt to his clearly uncomfortable situation on the right flank. He did have one left-footed cross to which Blomqvist lunged on the edge of the six-yard area, the shot going over the bar, but United could not find the kind of rhythm to lift their game and their prospects.

Hitzfeld may well have wondered why Ferguson did not attempt to regain the team's normal, natural shape, returning Beckham and Giggs to their regular flanks, and, so, pushing Gary Neville forward to midfield and bringing on Wes Brown at full-back. Bayern were showing the values of familiarity, knowing exactly what each was about to do.

With an hour gone something new was needed to break the pattern of Bayern's control, their game now having that comfortable feel of a team who sense their lead cannot be taken away from them. With just under 25 minutes remaining, Teddy Sheringham appeared in place of Blomqvist. Could Bayern be frightened out of their calm grip on the game?

Steadily, almost confidently, Bayern proceeded towards a triumph that had become almost touchable and it was sympathy that any independent viewer felt for United as they so narrowly avoided going three down. Then the 90-second avalanche struck Bayern as United threw their substitutes headlong at the Germans in agonised desperation. How extraordinary that it should work in such a way.

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ISSUE 1457

Saturday 22 May 1999

# United playing for England - that's official

By Paul Hayward

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STAND up if you hate Manchester United. Sit down if you think the abuse heaped on Britain's best football club is pathetic. Stand up, sit down, or do whatever you like to consider the following statistic. In a Gallup poll commissioned by The Daily Telegraph an amazing 86 per cent of respondents said that they want United to beat Bayern Munich in Wednesday's European Cup final. Alex Ferguson, who encourages a siege mentality at Old Trafford, will probably order the team's hotel to shred all copies of this morning's Telegraph.

Every week in the Premiership, thousands of backsides rise from expensive seats to obey a tribal chant that is an expression of profound envy and loathing. Gary Neville, United's likeable young right-back, says: "When we travel to away grounds, hundreds of people are there an hour and a half before the game to 'greet' us and they're back again an hour and a half after the match. I always look at them and wonder whether they do the same the following week for Charlton." Neville, together with many of his younger team-mates, knows only what it is to



be either loved or loathed, with no emotional middle ground except, as the Gallup survey shows, when they are carrying the English ensign against a German adversary in Europe.

Five questions were put to a representative sample of more than 1,000 men and women across all ages, regions and social groups. The answers provide a more reliable guide to United's popularity than could be obtained by spending lunch-time in a pub near Stamford Bridge or Highbury on match day.

In Britain's sometimes depressingly inane football culture many supporters would testify that it is impossible for them to love their own team without despising everybody else's. The more closely our respondents follow football, the more likely they were to want Newcastle to win today's FA Cup final and ruin [United's pursuit of a historic Treble](#). But taking the population as a whole, 47 per cent want United to win at Wembley compared with 44 per cent for Ruud Gullit's team. Eighty-one per cent think that United's current rampant success is "good for British football".

This week a number of United players and officials were invited to consider the possibility that hostility to United is on the wane; that grudging admiration is slowly replacing the enmity of the Hughes-Ince-Cantona years, [when the planting of Cantona's studs in a demented Crystal Palace supporter's torso](#) suggested that United in general and Mon Genius in particular had decided to face the wrath of the mob head on. Everybody at United I spoke to produced the same initial response. They laughed. The antipathy of opposition supporters is as familiar to them as Manchester rain. It is as much part of their jobs as roaring into the training ground at The Cliff in impossibly expensive cars.

Throughout his 13 years at Old Trafford, Alex Ferguson has used the incoming hatred as a positive motivating force. Unwittingly, Arsenal and Chelsea fans have been helping United to win games. Teddy Sheringham, every inch a Londoner in a foreign town, shook his head admiringly and said: "He [Ferguson] is an intelligent man to be able to turn that hostility around so it works in our favour. The manager drives it into us all the time. He says, 'People want you to fail - show them you're not going to'." But while Sheringham understands the uses of circling the wagons and siege mentalities, he remains appalled that individual United players have to endure such vilification. "Look at the England games, when large sections of the crowd sing, 'Stand up if you hate Man U'," he says. "That's quite disgraceful when you've got people playing for their country, and particularly for young players pulling on an England shirt."

This is the time of year when many of us are relieved not to have to listen to people calling each other scum and reducing the banquet of the English language to a mixed grill of four or five expletives. FA Cup day is a sunny, joyous, almost corny ritual that sends the sport off on its hols happy.

For long periods of the season we half-convince ourselves that the taunting of David Beckham and others is part of a knockabout terrace culture that was never

intended to be taken seriously. It is a deceit which allows us to put up with all the poisonous songs. This year Beckham has managed to de-personalise the abuse and persuade himself that it is aimed not so much at him as the voracious club he represents. "I knew I was going to get a bit of stick after the World Cup," he said, "but I'm playing for the biggest club in the country, if not the world, so I was bound to get some abuse. It has made me a stronger person."

But then belligerence towards the opposition is as old as the game itself. In an article in *The Nineteenth Century* in 1892, a certain Charles Edwardes said of "the new football": "It is ludicrous to see how boys of a very tender age get possessed of a frenzy at some of these matches." Edwardes recorded shouts of "Down Him!" "Sit on his chest!" and "Knock his ribs in!". The swearing was just as bad, the paganism of the new national obsession equally alarming to politicians and Victorian social engineers.

As they embark on the second leg of their great end-of-season pageant, Ferguson will concede only that many non-United fans have reluctantly accepted his club's role as emissaries for English football. "I think there's been a gradual warming towards us in the European Cup, though not from everyone," he said. "There'll always be those who want to jump off Tower Bridge when we win something. I think the majority are swinging towards us for the Bayern game, but at Wembley we'll be back to normal."

There are those who believe that Ferguson's worst nightmare is to see the nation swooning over his rampaging team. There would be nothing to pin on the dressing-room wall, no need for his players to huddle together in hostile lands like soldiers in the snow.

Certainly Ferguson has never attempted to win over those who stick pins in effigies of United's heroes. His own power is hugely enhanced by the constant baying at away games. You can almost hear him saying: "We'll be okay, boys, if we stick together. I'll handle the flak; you just do as I say."

Beckham's testimony bears this out: "After the World Cup a lot of people thought I might crack or go somewhere else. All I wanted to do was get back to United and playing again. The manager said, 'As soon as you get back here playing again you'll be fine'."

The origins of the hostility are not hard to locate. [Matt Busby's teams rode a long wave of public sympathy with the Munich air disaster](#). In the 1960s United were admired for their ability to regenerate; more than that, for their refusal to concede defeat emotionally in the face of overwhelming grief. United were playing again two weeks after Munich. The 1968 European Cup winners were revered while Beckham, Roy Keane and Peter Schmeichel are more often reviled. In the Gallup survey, many older respondents who remember Munich were more respectful of the current side.

[Liverpool, the club of the Seventies and Eighties](#), had it easy. It may just be that

we live in coarser times. But the twin themes that emerge in any conversation with the anti-red brigade are: a) money and b) arrogance, which is usually left undefined but often seems to relate to the slightly surly demeanour of many of the players and Ferguson's refusal to concede an inch (as evidence, his views on referees). Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt loathe having to talk to the media. Old Trafford's dialogue is directed inwards. This image of a self-sufficient club with a ruthless winning mentality probably depresses supporters who wish their team could be the same. People rage against the things they want but know they cannot have.

Money is another major factor. [United have it, most other clubs don't](#). Their turnover is now twice the size of their nearest competitors. Last month the accountants Deloitte and Touche declared that even without Rupert Murdoch's help United had become the richest football club in the world.

Again, this is profoundly galling even for Chelsea and Arsenal fans. They fear that United are destroying the viability of the Premier League. United's five championships in seven years (and three Doubles if they win today) add weight to that view. All the while there is an implication that United have achieved this dominance unfairly whereas, in truth, they [came close to being sold to Michael Knighton for £20 million a little over a decade ago](#).

"I sense when I read the papers that there's a little bit more admiration than in the past, but I'm not sure that's there when we go to away grounds," Gary Neville said. "The reaction there is worse - no doubt about that. It's a compliment, in a way. People want to see us play. I haven't played to less than a full house for four-and-a-half years. For eight or nine years I've played teams desperate to beat mine. It's something that's instilled in you here even in the A and B teams. There's only one club that can generate that much excitement and anticipation."

It would make the average Chelsea headcase weep to see how much his rantings have helped Ferguson pull his forces together. On the wall of the youth academy at The Cliff this week, a newspaper article quoting Bill Foulkes, one of the original Busby Babes, had been stuck up for perusal. Foulkes had said: "[The way Alex's boys played in the semi-final replay \[against Arsenal\] reminded me of the pre-Munich team](#). It's not just about team spirit and the will to win that they showed. It's about the atmosphere within the club that the home-grown youngsters develop within. It's priceless. The home-grown boys won't accept being on a losing United side." Above the cutting was a note: "Academy players please take notice of this article."

Foulkes's point was that winning has become a way of life, a sacred duty, at Old Trafford. The fraternal spirit that becomes obvious from even the briefest conversation with any of the back-room staff at The Cliff is not a commodity that can be bought. It may be that the country can no longer stop itself admiring all that Ferguson and his gifted players have achieved. The Treble, meanwhile, has its own dynamic, drawing neutral observers in to see whether the big man can

pull the tractor all 20 feet.

It was a significant scientific breakthrough when psychologists proved that humans can feel two violently conflicting emotions at the same time. Football is the sport that best allows people to experience simultaneously the consuming passions of love and hate. Love for their own team, hatred of the opposition. And no set of players stir up the tribal loathing of the rest of football's strange breed like Manchester United, who, with their recent heroics at Villa Park, [in Turin](#) and [with their championship victory](#), might just be winning a few more people over.

Wednesday at the Nou Camp in Barcelona is already taken care of. Manchester United are playing for England, and that's official. Only a spoilsport gang of nine per cent want Bayern Munich to win; the same surprisingly small proportion think United's success is bad for English football. Ferguson will be alarmed. No fatty food, he may say to his players at breakfast, and definitely no Daily Telegraph.

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ISSUE 1457

Saturday 22 May 1999

## Centre stage beckons for Ferguson's deputies

By Henry Winter

▶ [United playing for England - that's official](#) by **Paul Hayward**

ALWAYS alive to a commercial venture, it was only a matter of time before Manchester United moved into the furniture business and, shortly before 3pm today, they should unveil the most expensive bench in history.

Whispers swirling around Old Trafford this week indicate that Ryan Giggs and Dwight Yorke, £30 million worth of talent, [will start today's FA Cup final in tracksuits](#) while a similarly-prized pair, Jaap Stam and Andy Cole, may not even remove their Prada suits. United's will be the most distinguished bench in London this side of the Old Bailey.

Wembley could see a march of the understudies with Jesper Blomqvist expected to replace Giggs, [Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Teddy Sheringham in for Yorke and Cole](#) while David May again covers for Stam. Apart from May and Paul Scholes, Alex Ferguson's probable line-up resembles that which started the semi-final replay against Arsenal (though Giggs, famously, and Yorke did rise from the dug-out at Villa Park). [Ferguson could even rest David Beckham](#), though he is not blessed with right-sided alternatives.

Before the traditionalists' opprobrium cascades down on Ferguson, it must be remembered that today's team-tinkering will have been made with Wednesday's European Cup final in mind. Yorke and Cole, key performers in Europe, need to be kept mentally fresh.

Giggs's sensitive hamstrings would be at risk on Wembley's sapping surface. Stam's sore Achilles' tendon could not withstand a double dose of punishment in four days. The romance of the Cup has been replaced by the realism of

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**WIN**  
An Eclipse  
Cruise

Ferguson's European focus.

Ferguson is not averse to the odd red herring and Newcastle's captain, Alan Shearer, expects Stam to start but Ferguson did reveal some of his thought process when recently discussing the un-taxing itinerary of Bayern Munich, United's opponents in Barcelona. "Being able to rest their bodies before the final [gives Bayern a big advantage](#)," Ferguson said.

Ferguson's possible stand-ins are hardly poor substitutes. Solskjaer has registered 17 goals from 18 appearances this season while Sheringham proved a class act against Arsenal at Villa Park. Sheringham certainly sounds in the mood.

"Supporters around the country have revelled in making it known that I came to Manchester United to win things and I haven't," said the former Tottenham player. "I get a drive from that.

"I'll be looking forward to walking around London in the summer with a medal around my neck, seeing the faces of Gooners and having a little smirk. I found it strange to hear Arsenal fans singing songs about me rather than about how well Dennis Bergkamp was playing."

Providing the left-sided service to Sheringham should be Blomqvist, who lacks Giggs's penetrative, matchwinning power but will still cause Newcastle problems. May is hardly in Stam's league and neither he nor Johnsen have impressed recently.

But any vulnerability is slightly offset by [Duncan Ferguson's groin problem that restricts him](#) to the bench with an adductor muscle operation pending on Monday. May's tussle with Shearer, his old Blackburn Rovers colleague, should be interesting.

Any team containing Shearer, Gary Speed and Dietmar Hamann can hardly be described as makeweights but Newcastle, 13th in the Premiership, appear inferior in every department to the title-winners. Roy Keane and Scholes, suspended for Barcelona, will make the most of their last game of the season. Keane will be doubly determined since Monday's alleged bar-room altercation which has had Old Trafford smelling rats.

Newcastle will need to stand strong today. Ruud Gullit, Newcastle's manager, talked of the communication problems in such a noisy arena, saying: "At Wembley nobody can hear, however much you scream."

At Wembley, nobody can hear you scream; what a chilling thought for a player. Seemingly paralysed with fear in last year's defeat by Arsenal, Newcastle's players certainly owe the Toon Army a nerve-free display.

Such is their passion, Newcastle's fans have even released a Cup final CD, entitled Support the Toon, It's Your Duty. Sung by Mungo Jerry and the Toon Travellers, tracks include Toon Army Going to Wembley (sunshine mix) and Bottle of Beer, which goes down well with the fans.

St James' premier fanzine, The Mag, carries goodwill messages from Geordie exiles. One Tokyo emigre suggested a Three Lions re-working: "Black and white stripes on the shirts; the Fairs Cup still gleaming." Newcastle have not won a major trophy for 30 years. Manchester United have not won a trophy for six days.

Newcastle have not won a game for 41 days. Manchester United have not lost a game for 154 days. Peter Schmeichel has been beaten once in nine hours of FA Cup action. If Newcastle are to upset the odds, then they must stifle the stealthy movement of Sheringham and Scholes, combat Keane's charges and Beckham's crosses and direct the right balls to Shearer.

If Newcastle win, the Toon Army will love Gullit as much as he loves himself. There is little doubting the self-absorption of Gullit. "I'm not here to be liked or disliked," Gullit said candidly. "I'm here to bring success." He yesterday dismissed stories linking him to Sampdoria, one of his former clubs.

Talking of matters Italian, Wembley's crowd will provide a breath of fresh air following the contingent of Lazio fans who racially abused Real Mallorca's Cameroon-born midfielder, Bisan-Etame Myer Lauren on Wednesday. On the eve of the new millennium, it is reassuring to know that English fans have, largely, moved on from such intolerance. Any match involving the Toon Army should be a party but unless Shearer gets the service, Manchester United's reserves should win by two.

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ISSUE 1457

Saturday 22 May 1999

# Hate the Reds? Now you can join the club

By Mihir Bose

▶ [United playing for England - that's official](#) by **Paul Hayward**

DAVID MEEK has followed Manchester United's fortunes for more than 40 years and, as football correspondent of the Manchester Evening News, wrote more words about the club than any other human being.

Under normal circumstances he would be at Wembley this afternoon to watch his team in the FA Cup final. That he won't is because his brother-in-law so hates the club that he has deliberately arranged his wedding to coincide with the match. As the final kicks off, so will the ceremony in Manchester.

Meek became the Evening News football reporter in 1956 and until his retirement two years ago chronicled on a daily basis the the great glories and the awful despairs at Old Trafford.

Another could unfold at Wembley, but because his brother-in-law, who is [a Manchester City fan, hates the Red Devils with such passion](#), Meek will be absent, feeling unable to jeopardise peace in the family.

If this was just a story of the intensely tribal feeling that exists between City and United fans it would hardly be news. There is, after all, [a book entitled How Manchester United Ruined My Life](#), written by a City fan. But it is symptomatic of a much larger feeling which extends well beyond derby rivalries into what is now an institutionalised hatred of United.

The loathing has spread beyond this country to Ireland where, for the last eight years as United have had their most successful period, an organisation called Anybody But United has grown and prospered.

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**WIN**  
An Eclipse  
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ABU was the brainchild of Irish broadcaster Des Cahill, presenter of the breakfast programme on RTE, the Irish broadcasting organisation, and he says that being a member is "a state of the mind".

Cahill, who is a West Ham supporter, found his mind filled with anti-Manchester United feeling in 1992 when they narrowly lost the old First Division title to Leeds.

"The United supporters started crawling out of the woodwork. Ireland has always had a huge United support. Some 4,000 to 5,000 go to Old Trafford from Ireland for every home game and what got me was why should someone from Cork care so much about what happens to the full-back of United."

Since then, with each United success, what started as a state of mind has expanded into a very Irish-style evangelical movement delighting in every United defeat as if the club was the devil incarnate. So there is a T-shirt which lists all the clubs, such as York and Galatasaray, who have [inflicted humiliating defeats on United](#). And the ABU movement also have a theme song, which is played on Cahill's show the morning after every United defeat. It is that ditty from Song of the South that goes 'Zip a dee do dah, zip a dee eh, my, oh my, what a wonderful day, plenty of sunshine heading my way, zip a dee do dah, zip a dee eh'.

"My post bag is huge," Cahill said. "Letters come from Leeds and Newcastle fans and in Ireland it has got to the stage that if you go into a pub you have Manchester United in one corner and ABU in another."

Cahill started the whole thing off as a bit of a lark and still retains a keen sense of fun about it, having organised poetry competitions immortalising the names of players who have scored important goals against United.

However, amid the fun and banter, Cahill feels strongly that there is good reason to dislike United. It is not so much their continued success on the field, it is more to do with their supporters who, he says, exude an air of arrogance and invincibility which other fans find hard to stomach.

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electronic Telegraph

ISSUE 1457

Saturday 22 May 1999

# The unbeatable Giggs

Ryan Giggs interviewed by Giles Smith

▶ [United playing for England - that's official](#) by **Paul Hayward**

OBVIOUSLY, it's up there on the near horizon, an appointment with destiny, a date to set the pulse racing, the day when Manchester United's young stars discover whether they are truly fit to stand alongside the greatest of the age.

But [enough about the wedding of Becks and Posh](#). (Ryan Giggs will be there: groom's side.) In advance of that, there's an FA Cup to be won and then, next Wednesday, a European Champions' League trophy. All this on the back of the successful Premiership campaign, [which closed last Sunday with the win against Spurs](#).

It was Giggs's fifth championship victory. He is 25. Somehow those figures ought not to add up. [Too much success; too few years](#). It doesn't seem fair. So, Ryan; last Sunday; did you bag the medal, stifle a yawn and head for home?

Giggs is sitting on the terrace of a hotel in one of the leafy bits just outside Manchester. He is wearing a navy blue baseball cap. The baseball cap is now, officially, the global uniform of off-duty sportspeople. Even cricketers are wearing them. And he is showing no signs of being blasé.

"It was always going to be nerve-racking towards the end," he says. It is Tuesday, but the closing seconds of Sunday's game are still printed on his mind. "They got a free-kick just outside the edge of the area, and you're always going to be thinking the worst. And then, eventually, Walker's got the ball and he's kicked it up in the air and the ref's blown and I knew we'd done it. And I was just hugging everyone on the bench, going mad. . .

"It was the closest title race I've been involved in," Giggs says. "To think that Arsenal have got more points than they had last year, conceded less goals, scored more. I think they would have taken that at the beginning of the season."

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It was, Giggs says, a reward for a heroic degree of consistency on the part of his team. Where did that consistency come from? "It's just a habit, really. You get confident about it. Every game you feel unbeatable."

But what accounted for that feeling? "A mixture of a lot of things," Giggs says. "The manager's will to win, which he grinds into you, really. He wants winners to play for him. Plus the expectation that's always on you at Manchester United." Giggs thinks about it for a little longer. "Probably most of all the fear of not winning anything," he says, finally. "The fear of losing."

What Giggs knows about losing he learned principally last summer, after one of Manchester United's rare barren years. He then had to put up with the one [significant disadvantage of being a Wales international](#): no World Cups. Friends eventually persuaded him to go out to France as a spectator, which he said he enjoyed more than he expected to. But he found the previous season hard to escape.

"You find yourself trying to rewind the year and thinking, could I have done better in that game? Could I have contributed a lot more? And you've got to go through the summer knowing that you've not won anything: all that hard work and nothing to show for it. And you don't want to go through that again. You don't want summers like that."

Because future engagements remained to be filled, last Sunday night's championship celebrations were cautiously tempered. The United squad went to a hotel in Worsley and had a small party with friends and members of their families. Alex Ferguson was there, which, as regards the general atmosphere, must have been akin to having your parents in the sitting-room during your 16th birthday party. Giggs took his mother, Lynne.

"It's good for your family to celebrate with you," Giggs says earnestly. "A lot of the lads who are married, their wives have got to put up with a lot of things. You're away a lot so it's nice to be able to celebrate it with the people who have helped you through the season."

It is probably typical of Giggs that he seems less interested in [talking about the stresses of his position](#) than about the effects of his life upon the people close to him. "The last four months it feels like it's been big game after big game," he says. "Next year, with the expanded Champions' League, it'll be like that all season. It's pressure on your friends and family."

Giggs seems remarkably unaffected. He is by no means shy, but he is quietly spoken and talks completely without hand gestures. He is nearly, but not quite, able to relax; almost contrarily modest. (This is the player who once, in order to explain his poker-faced expression after goal-scoring, maintained he was trying to pioneer "a goal celebration which isn't".)

But his very normality seems, itself, like some kind of near-heroic achievement.

Being a successful, high-grade product of the Manchester United youth system, trialled at 13, nurtured from 14, reared beneath the terrifying eye of Alex Ferguson, and bound up with the financial ambition of Manchester United plc, with their simultaneous demands that the public image of their players be at once tightly controlled and massively exploited - all this taken together offers probably the closest parallel in British life to the experience of growing up as one of the Jacksons.

Alex Ferguson squirrelled Giggs away from the press entirely until he was 20. It's the same for any of the young players at Manchester United, but a fuss was made about it because people hadn't seen anything quite so exciting for years as Giggs on a run - the way he could push a ball past a defender and then tear off after it. As usual, the George Best comparison was run up the flagpole, but for once it didn't just sit there looking dumb.

Cruelly, Giggs's subsequent period of intense exposure coincided with a loss of form. He took a knock on an ankle in an international which put him out for a while and seemed to deal a blow to his confidence. So while the magazine covers, books, videos and television tutorials flourished, the crosses started going astray, to the ire of Manchester United fans who were sensitive to the distinction between the package and the goods.

Best was, in the awed description of Benfica fans in 1968, El Beatle: Giggs was suddenly, in the derisive words of a Manchester United fanzine in 1995, 'El Take That'. His girlfriend at the time was television presenter Dani Behr, who would receive verbal lashings at Old Trafford for her supposed part in the diminishment of Giggs's powers.

It did not help, at this time, that Giggs was at the centre of what may well be our age's definitively modern sporting controversy, when Reebok grew upset with him for having a haircut without consulting his sponsors first. Executives at Reebok were anxious to find themselves paying £200,000 per year for someone who no longer matched the posters.

Of course, these days, when one thinks of a Manchester United player with a famous girlfriend and a culturally significant haircut, Ryan Giggs is not the first name that comes to mind. The kind of heat which used to be on Giggs was this year turned up several notches and applied to David Beckham, leaving Giggs free, to some extent, to cool off in what passes at Old Trafford for shade. It is no surprise that, asked to nominate his player of the year at Manchester United this season, Giggs says, without hesitation, "Becks". If anyone can identify with Beckham's peculiar public quandary, Giggs can.

"This has probably been his best season. The pressure he was under . . ." Giggs puffs out some air to signal amazement. "It was just unbelievable. And so uncalled for, because he's still only a young lad." (There, rather sweetly, speaks the voice of maturity: Giggs is the grand total of one year Beckham's senior.) "The start of this season, it was unknown territory for him. I don't think he knew

what to expect. The amount of jeering he's had and the way he's coped with it, the winding up from other players. But the performances he's put in, the goals he's set up, the goals he's scored, have just been brilliant. And his free-kicks have been unbelievable. He's a good friend and I know what he has to put up with off the field."

And what of Giggs's own season? There have been the usual infuriating passages of downtime and losses of momentum; but within them he has looked sharp and explosive. He came off the bench in the FA Cup semi-final against Arsenal and scored the goal of the century. (Or this season's goal of the century, at any rate.) Yet he is not guaranteed a place in today's starting line-up.

"It's been a frustrating season because I've had niggling little injuries and I've missed out on big games," he says. "I missed out on Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Juventus. But the games I have played, I've been happy with my form. Five or six years ago, I wouldn't have been like that. Little injuries with three or four weeks out, that's the most frustrating. You don't lose your fitness but you lose your sharpness. And it takes two or three games for that to come back."

There's a respectable school of thought which suggests that, poised between the two clearly brighter-looking prizes, this afternoon's Cup final may find United somehow strung out and vulnerable: looking back, looking forward, looking anywhere but at the task at hand. But Giggs, who can sound quite steely sometimes, for all the softness of his tone, insists "the concentration is still there". He had, he pointed out, won the FA Cup twice and lost it once. "So I know how important it is. There's no better feeling."

And then Bayern Munich in the Nou Camp on Wednesday. "It's like no other ground in the world. It's just huge," Giggs says, sounding more like a fan than a player. The last time he played there, Manchester United lost 4-0 to Barcelona. "I won't be thinking about that," Giggs says.

"That's gone. We won't be recognised as a great team until we win in Europe, no matter what we do in the League.

"We won't be compared with the Liverpools of the 1970s and 1980s and the 1968 United team. I think it's important that we do it, especially with the barren spell British teams have had in Europe. It'll do English football a world of good: especially beating a German team."

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ISSUE 1457

Saturday 22 May 1999

## Talking Football: Jaap Stam

► [United playing for England - that's official](#) by **Paul Hayward**

FOR 11 months we have worked our way towards these glories. But for me the three great climaxes of the season have been put in jeopardy by a sore Achilles heel. Good progress has been made, but this morning Alex Ferguson and I will get together to decide whether it's wise for me to play this afternoon. I have an engagement with Alan Shearer I'd like to fulfil.

Wembley and I got off to a bad start. [I played for United when Arsenal beat us in last summer's Charity Shield](#), and before that I sat on the bench for Holland when England beat us 4-1 during Euro 96. England were superb that day. They outclassed Holland. It's my turn to be on the winning side at Wembley. Even if I'm absent today, Bayern Munich and the great cavern of the Nou Camp await. I have a job to finish and, if necessary, I will finish it in Spain.

Our manager will also talk about Newcastle in depth for the first time this week. They haven't been mentioned much up until now. We have played them twice this season and have a mental map of how they play and who the various players are. Mysteries and trickery are in short supply this late in the season. We've all been round the block together plenty of times.

Whoever marks Alan Shearer is in for a tight, combative one-on-one. People imagine that I prefer those sort of confrontations because I'm from the physical school of centre-halves who enjoy the rough-and-tumble of keeping a traditional No 9 quiet. But I don't have a strong leaning towards that kind of contest. The psychology of it is determined by how you feel in yourself when defender and attacker engage. At the height of his confidence, a defender has the blissful sense that he can handle anybody.

Shearer is strong. Strong on the ball and in the air. He always does his best to deprive you of the ball. There are no time-outs with him. Concentration has to be maintained over the entire game. I've played against him twice now, but we have

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never really had a conversation on the pitch. He's not that type. The only dialogue he has is with his team-mates - and the referee, who he likes to alert when he feels he has spotted a foul. He likes to point things out to the officials. It's part of the process by which strikers try to gain an edge. We defenders know what complaining sounds like.

One of Shearer's assets is a nose for the right position. It's a subtle art, but one which separates the most potent strikers from the rest. Ironically, that skill can also work in the defender's favour. If we begin with the knowledge that an opponent will be challenging for every ball, there is no option but for us to contest them, too. I always feel especially sharp against those players. The gills are always open, the eyes clear and quick. It is in that state that the game is most thrilling.

In one sense, defending is a negative art. It is about stopping other people playing. Midfielders and goalscorers get much more of the public's attention. But good defending is appreciated as well. People who really study the game look for it and know what it means. In my youth, up to the age of about 17, I played in midfield. It was then that I was sent back into defence. I didn't like it, but soon came to see the wisdom of changing position.

Getting to Wembley and the Nou Camp is a long journey from my first professional club, Cambuur Leeuwarden, who were in the Dutch first division when I joined them in 1994 but attracted only 8,000-9,000 fans. We were relegated in my first year and pulled in far fewer fans the following season. From there, I made my way up to the top via Willem II. I treasure those early memories.

Even on the sidelines, I still feel part of the game. It is a feature of life at Man Utd that people strive to make you feel part of the effort being made on the pitch.

Injured players are not left to fret or mourn. When the victory is clinched, everybody floods on to the pitch and there is a blurring of the lines between those who have played and those who missed out. Triumphs are shared by everyone who made them possible.

There is enormous confidence in our team. It's not that we are walking around saying that we will definitely beat Newcastle. But knowing your own strength and capabilities enables you to relax, when normally there would be tension fizzing through the side.

We have trained as normal and I have spent several sessions on the treatment table. At our hotel there is a river with boat trips and there is a sense that the frenzy is finally draining from the season.

We are sustained by the knowledge that even when we go behind, we come back to win games. Newcastle know that, Bayern Munich, too. After 11 months work, I just want to be part of the final push.

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ISSUE 1463

Friday 28 May 1999

## Manchester Unlimited

By Caroline Davies

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THEY say you can't put a monetary value on true glory. But if anyone could, it would be the players, staff and shareholders of Manchester United.

Already, officially the richest club in the world, the club's European Champions' League success will swell even further the coffers at Old Trafford. Replica shirts, watches, socks, pyjamas, curtains and duvets will fly off the shelves. Fans will toast success for many a day with Manchester United premium lager.

But with an annual revenue of £88 million, the club which identified and seized on the power of marketing long before any other may not even notice the difference. The club's phenomenal earning power will remain just that - absolutely phenomenal. It is estimated that United will pick up about £15 million in prize money, TV revenue and gate receipts.

But with £44 million already pledged to build a new training ground and increase stadium capacity from 55,000 to 67,400, the £15 million will merely drop into the giant pot that daily drives this huge money-making machine.

It is widely understood that Alex Ferguson will pocket a £350,000 bonus as a result of Wednesday night. While such figures are never confirmed, put in the context of an £800,000 salary, and a reputed £5 million deal to continue at Old Trafford for another three years, it appears almost modest.

The players are rumoured to be receiving a £150,000 bonus, pocket money to most of them. David Beckham recently spent exactly that amount on a Ferrari Maranello. He is about to move into a £2.5 million Shropshire home with the Spice Girl Victoria Adams, and their son Brooklyn. Ryan Giggs, who earns £20,000 a week, has a similar £150,000 Maranello - along with a collection of 13 other vehicles.

A bigger benefit will be in the way the club's image is reinforced abroad, something the Manchester United International arm is poised to expertly orchestrate. There are plans to open a chain of superstores and cafes in the Far East where it has an enormous following. In China, where it has 20 million supporters, a chain of cafes and stores will open under the name Theatre of Dreams, United chairman Martin Edwards's nickname for Old Trafford.

Thousands of Asian fans, who don't even know where Manchester is, can watch the club's daily television channel MUTV, access the Old Trafford Internet sites, and even read the team magazine in Thai.

Naturally, they will be doing this wearing the latest replica shirts. Who knows, some may even be persuaded to book a holiday at Manchester United's 111-room Quality Hotel. Being European champions certainly helps such ventures. With only 5 per cent of the club's merchandising currently being sold overseas, there is ample opportunity for expansion.

John Smith, chief executive of the agents First Artists predicts that Wednesday's victory will have little immediate effect on Manchester United, simply because there is little or no room for improvement.

"They are so well managed, and they are so well organised. They are already a global brand, anyway. They are more of a global brand than Real Madrid who won it last year," he said.

"It will mean that they can command more from their endorsement deals. But the companies will gladly pay more because nothing succeeds like sleeping with success.

"They cannot really improve their licensing deals because they are so good already. They have a very, very good commercial manager. I think he must have been Noah's commercial manager on the Ark, not because he's old, but because he has been with them a long time and is a consummate professional.

"Their share price will probably rocket. But I think that it will be good for the English football industry. I think we are going to see an upward lift coming from Manchester United's success. I think we will see shares on other publicly-quoted football clubs rise. There will be an upturn, a sentimental uplift, in that sector of the market.

"We have the European champions, and we beat the Germans in the final, two big bugbears. We can respect English football, and the knock-on effects will be great for English football."

But the road to success has not been without a few financial hiccups. Rupert Murdoch's £623 million BSkyB takeover deal, the most lucrative in Manchester United's rich and successful 121-year history, [was scuppered by the Department of Trade](#).

However, the club's sustained earning power means it is the master of its own destiny in the transfer market. And Alex Ferguson has suggested that next season's enlarged, 13-match Champions League will necessitate signing more players. But fans expecting a spending spree to match the £28 million paid for Jaap Stam, Jesper Blomqvist, and Dwight Yorke will be disappointed.

Manchester United has substantial savings to draw upon. Its reserves at the end of the current financial year should be in excess of £30 million. But it is a publicly-owned company and has to consider its shareholders.

One way to pay for those extra players, would be to win the European final next year, when the prize money will be at least three times what it was on Wednesday. Alex Ferguson has probably already picked his line-up.

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