

Match Report: Manchester United 2 -0 Tottenham Hotspur

Manchester United remain undefeated this season after a 2-0 victory over Tottenham, albeit in controversial circumstances.

In the 84th minute, Portuguese winger Nani went down in the penalty box under a Younes Kaboul's challenge, which was not given by referee Mark Clattenburg. In the confusion that followed, Nani responded unchallenged by tapping the ball beyond a confused Heurlho Gomes, who had placed the ball for a free kick. The goal was allowed, much to the chagrin of the Spurs players.

The game had started brightly when after just 75 seconds Ji Sung Park struck a crisp 25 yard shot against the Spurs woodwork, a feat that was equalled by Tottenham seven minutes later, as the prominent midfielder Rafael Van der Vaart turned his fallen marker before striking Van der Sar's right post. The Dutchman's impact since arriving at Spurs is highlighted by the fact that he has become their most promising playmaker above other midfielders such as Modric, Jenas, Lennon and Bale. Playing just behind lone striker Robbie Keane, the in-form midfielder was Tottenham's most dangerous threat throughout much of the game, which sadly ended prematurely after limping off with a tight hamstring 13 minutes before the end.

However, it was United's in-form pair of Nemanja Vidic and Nani which led to the opening goal. After a foul on the Mexican Hernandez by Kaboul, Nani swung in an inch-perfect free-kick met by Vidic, and his header flew past the helpless Gomes. Prior to kick-off, Spurs boss Harry Redknapp admitted to ESPN that he expected Spurs to have problems with regards to set-pieces, due to the lack of height from players such as the absent Dawson and Huddlestone; a point that was emphasized by and lack of tracking and marking for the goal.

Whilst the match remained with just one goal however, Spurs were never out of contention, especially with United's current theme of throwing away leads. Five minutes after the United goal came Tottenham's best chance; a Van der Vaart corner flew to the edge of the box, to a waiting Modric, whose fierce shot forced a good save from 40 year old Van der Sar.

Despite a theme of attack and flair from Redknapp's team, their final ball left a lot to be desired. With Keane playing as a lone striker, it was essential that Spurs had attacking threats from other areas of the pitch, namely the two wide men. United had Bale well scouted; one of their changes from the Stoke win was to swap the aging Gary Neville for the excellent Rafael, who marked the Welshman out of the game. Lennon, despite his best efforts, never got into the game to create any impact.

The second half brought a much stronger, resilient performance by United, determined not to let past slip-ups reoccur. Nani's contentious goal with six minutes remaining will get all of tomorrow morning's headlines, but the true story belongs to the 11 year record United broke this evening: they are now unbeaten in 21 consecutive competitive matches; their last defeat coming in April against eventual league winners Chelsea. With tricky away fixtures coming up against neighbours City, and Aston Villa, Sir Alex Ferguson has picked a good time to ensure his players 'push on'.

Teams

Man Utd: Van der Sar, Rafael, Ferdinand, Vidic, Evra, Nani, Fletcher, Carrick, Park, Hernandez, Berbatov.
Subs: Kuszczak, Brown, Smalling, Scholes, O'Shea, Obertan, Bebe.

Tottenham: Gomes, Hutton, Kaboul, Gallas, Assou-Ekotto, Lennon, Modric, Jenas, Bale, Van der Vaart, Keane. Subs: Cudicini, Pavlyuchenko, Palacios, Crouch, Bassong, Kranjcar, Sandro.

Referee: Mark Clattenburg