

Moscow 7.45pm

Manchester United v Chelsea

ITV1 and Sky Sports 1

● Second golden age for English clubs in Europe

English football appears to have entered its second golden age in Europe. Having been represented in only one of the first 19 finals in the continent's senior club competition, they followed that by having a

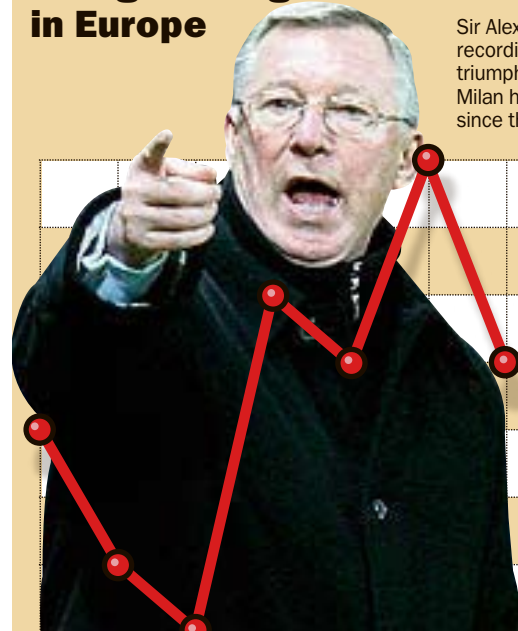
club in nine of the next 11 finals. They then repeated their earlier dismal run of one final in 19 years (hindered by the five-year Heysel ban and the aftermath of that suspension), but the subsequent four

seasons have all featured an English finalist, with the re-birth emphasised by the presence of two teams at this season's climax

Final of European Cup/Champions League

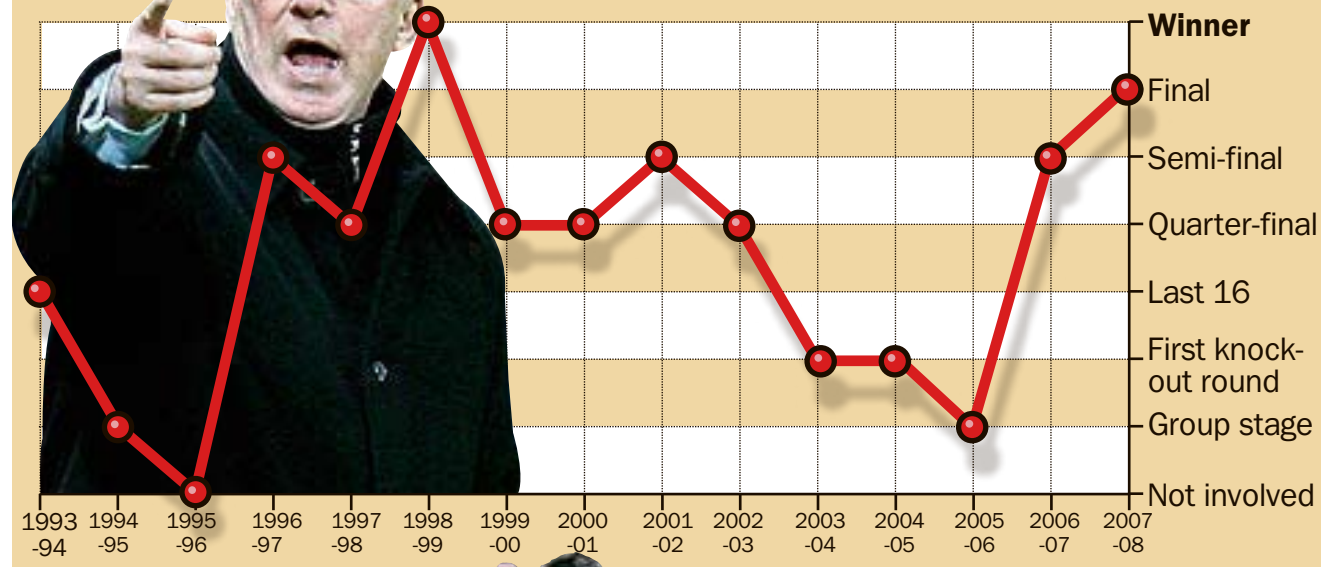
1956-67	No finalist	1979	Notts Forest	W	1986-98	No finalist		
1968	Man Utd	W	1980	Notts Forest	W	1999	Man Utd	W
1969-74	No finalist	1981	Liverpool	W	2000-04	No finalist		
1975	Leeds Utd	L	1982	Aston Villa	W	2005	Liverpool	W
1976	No finalist	1983	No finalist	2006	Arsenal	L		
1977	Liverpool	W	1984	Liverpool	W	2007	Liverpool	L
1978	Liverpool	W	1985	Liverpool	L	2008	Man Utd/Chelsea	

● Ferguson's good record in Europe



Sir Alex Ferguson has been criticised for recording just one Champions League triumph with United but only Real Madrid and AC Milan have lifted the trophy more than once since the Scot first entered the competition.

Indeed, in United's 11 campaigns since the abolition of the crippling three-foreigner limit - when Scots, Welsh and Irish counted as foreign - his team have only once failed to reach the knockout stage



● Stat attack

No English team has been eliminated by foreign opponents in this season's Champions League. The Premier League quartet won all nine ties against foreign sides and also progressed from their groups. Chelsea knocked out Liverpool, who saw off Arsenal

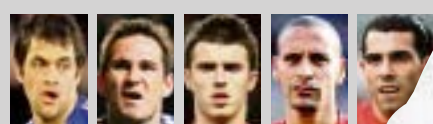


English clubs have accounted for eight of the 14 times a side has scored at least four goals in this season's Champions League from the group stage onwards. Four or more goals in a Champions League game this season: 8 goals in a match: Liverpool, 7: Arsenal, 4: Liverpool (3 times), Manchester United (twice), Chelsea, Real Madrid, AC Milan, Lyons, AS Roma, Inter Milan, Seville

Avram Grant's first and last games in charge of Chelsea could both be against Manchester United, given the doubts over his future in the job. United were also José Mourinho's first opponents as Chelsea manager



Chelsea and Manchester United will meet in the first and last fixtures of the season - they also contested the Community Shield, before the Premier League and Football League had started and before the Champions League qualifiers involving English clubs. United won the game in a penalty shoot-out, an outcome that could be repeated tonight



The match is likely to feature five former West Ham United players: Joe Cole, Frank Lampard, Michael Carrick, Rio Ferdinand and Carlos Tévez

United are aiming to become the fourth team to be crowned champions of England and Europe in the same season, after Liverpool in 1977 and 1984 and United in 1999

This is the first final to be held in a former Eastern Bloc country

Champions League final



● Average positions

Chelsea used a 4-3-3 system to defeat Liverpool 3-2 in the second leg of their semi-final. Joe Cole and Salomon Kalou flanked Didier Drogba up front while Claude Makelele played behind Frank

Lampard and Michael Ballack in midfield. Manchester United's 4-4-2 formation in the 1-0 win over Barcelona involved Carlos Tévez, Cristiano Ronaldo, Park Ji-Sung and Nani all drifting across the front line

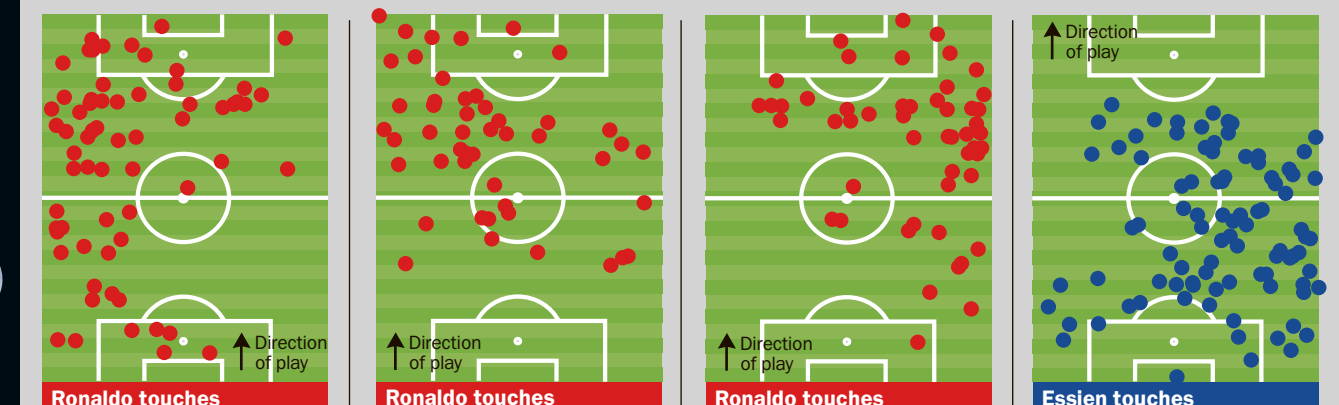


Flexible foes : Cristiano Ronaldo v Michael Essien

Michael Essien's versatility has helped Chelsea to cope with their many injuries this season and his touch graphic against Bolton on the final day of the season illustrates his contribution in three areas of the pitch. The Ghanaian began the match at right back but

moved to centre back when John Terry departed early on with a dislocated elbow. However Essien frequently launched attacks by advancing from defence into the Bolton half to display the skills he possesses as a specialist central midfielder. Cristiano

Ronaldo has filled three different forward roles in Manchester United's past three matches. Having played predominantly in the centre at home to Barcelona, he operated mostly on the left against West Ham and then on the right against Wigan



Ronaldo touches v Barcelona, April 29

Ronaldo touches v West Ham United, May 3

Ronaldo touches v Wigan Athletic, May 11

Essien touches v Bolton Wanderers, May 11

Cristiano Ronaldo has filled three different forward roles in Manchester United's past three matches. At home to Barcelona, while playing wide at times, he operated predominantly in the centre as Park Ji-Sung and Nani took more responsibility on the wings

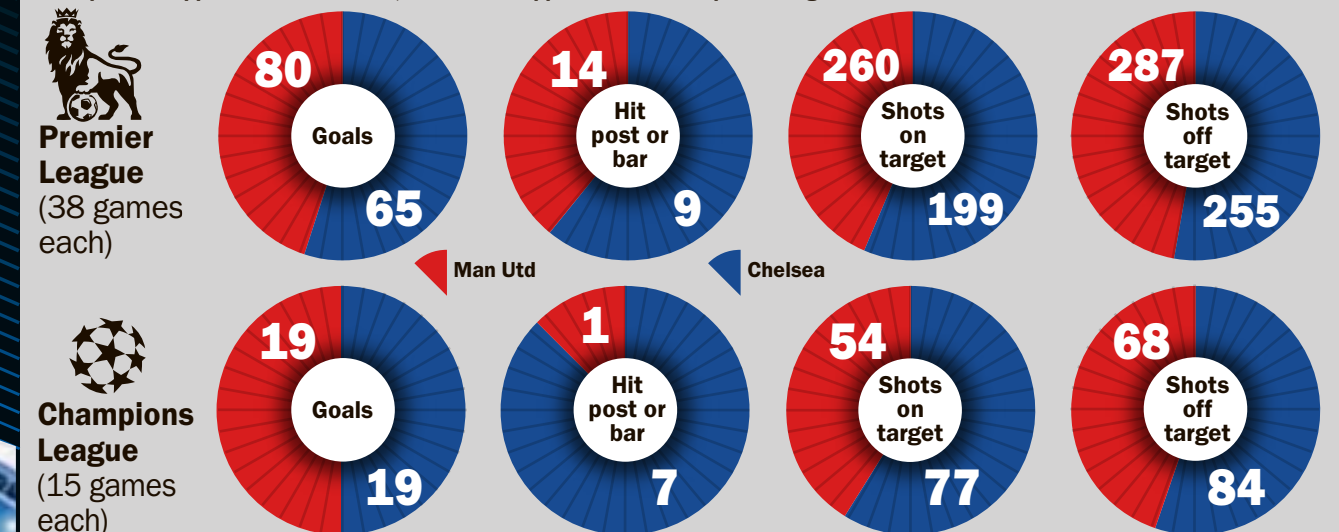
Ronaldo scored a memorable goal from the right flank at home to West Ham, collecting a flick by the touchline and running in field to score United's goal, but the vast majority of his touches came on the left-hand side of the pitch

To complete the set, the Portuguese spent much of the match away to Wigan wide on the right even though he was struggling to make a great impact in that area. This is the position in which he originally made his mark at Old Trafford as a teenager

Michael Essien showed his versatility against Bolton by contributing in three areas. He began at right back, moved to centre back when John Terry was injured early on and - using his skills as a specialist midfielder player - launched attacks by advancing from defence

● How they compare

Manchester United abandon their normal attacking strategy when they play in Europe. While their Premier League figures show a more positive approach than Chelsea, the reverse applies in the Champions League.



Words Bill Edgar