

Sporting 2-2 Manchester United: Bruno Brace, Lisbon Chaos

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Sporting 2-2 Manchester United was a Champions League night that had everything: three penalties, two disallowed goals, a Bruno Fernandes strike that bounced off a divot and a late red card. Mauricio Pochettinoâ??s side left Lisbon with a point after the wildest 90 minutes of his young reign.



Bruno Fernandes at the end of the game in Lisbon. Source: Manchester United official website (manutd.com)

Sporting 2-2 Manchester United: how the madness unfolded

The Jose Alvalade Stadium on Wednesday 25 November 2026 did not look like the setting for a classic during the opening half-hour. Neither side dominated, and it felt like a game that would be settled by one moment of quality. Then came a spell of roughly 15 minutes before the interval that almost defied belief.

A first half of penalties and VAR drama

Sporting were awarded a penalty after Lisandro Martinez was penalised in the area. Luis Suarez missed it. Then another spot-kick was given, and this time the Colombian striker converted, all within 74 seconds. For a stadium already on its feet, it was pure theatre.

United thought they had levelled before the break when Amad finished off a move that began with a pass from Youri Tielemans. The travelling Reds were celebrating before a delayed realisation set in: the goal was chalked off after replays showed Tielemans tangling with Sporting captain Goncalo Inacio as he followed through. United went in at half-time 1-0 down, reeling, and feeling hard done by.

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Fernandes turns it round, and the pitch helps

Football luck can swing in an instant. Within three minutes of the restart, Martinez was fouled in the Sporting box and Fernandes stepped up to level from the spot, to loud whistles from the home support. Less than two minutes later he struck again, a shot that looked a routine claim for goalkeeper Kaique Pereira until it hit a divot, popped up and flew into the net.



Joshua Zirkzee in action against Sporting. Source: Manchester United official website (manutd.com)

Fernandes did not celebrate either goal. It was his first meeting with Sporting since leaving the Lisbon club in January 2020, and he was warmly applauded in the pre-match introductions and honoured by club president Frederico Varandas with a framed display. The Portuguese captain left to a notable

ovation late on.

Suarez made it 2-2 with ten minutes remaining. United appeared to have an instant answer when Pereira punched a Fernandes corner into his own net, but referee Szymon Marciniak went to the VAR screen and ruled out the goal for too much contact between Patrick Dorgu and the goalkeeper. A late red card for Tielemans completed a chaotic finish. In all, four goals, three penalties, two disallowed United efforts and a sending off.

Pochettinoâ??s shape and Zirkzeeâ??s claim to a place

This was only game two of Pochettinoâ??s reign. At Anfield on Sunday, his plans were wrecked by an early red card, as we covered in our Liverpool 4-0 Manchester United report. In Lisbon, there was a far clearer picture of what he wants.

Without the ball United defended with a back four, with Noussair Mazraoui and Martinez either side of Leny Yoro and Harry Maguire. In possession, Mazraoui pushed higher to give width on the right, which allowed Amad to tuck inside and link with Joshua Zirkzee. The result was a fluid front line. Sporting looked unable to keep tabs on Fernandes and Bryan Mbeumo, who were given licence to roam between the centre and the left.

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Mauricio Pochettino applauds the travelling fans. Source: Manchester United official website (manutd.com)

Zirkzee, handed his first start of the season after a bright cameo against Liverpool, gave United a focal point and sharp touches, and could have scored in the first half had his connection with a Yoro ball in behind been on target. He was serenaded by the away end as he left the pitch and may well have earned another start. Benjamin Sesko is expected to be out a while longer, though Matheus Cunha returns after serving his one-game European suspension.

What next: Brentford at Old Trafford

The focus now switches to the Premier League. United host Brentford on Saturday 28 November, Pochettinoâ??s first home game, which is 11pm in Singapore. United must keep the energy of the second half in Lisbon and cut out the first-half errors. With Cunha available and Zirkzee pushing for a start, the attack has options.

Elsewhere in the league, Everton and Liverpool meet in the Merseyside derby, which we have previewed in our Everton v Liverpool preview. For more match reports, previews and analysis, visit the LBRD Sports section.

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