
Immediate Reaction: Real Madrid 3 - 1 AC Milan, Trofeo Santiago Bernabéu

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Real Madrid beat AC Milan 3-1 to win the Trofeo Santiago Bernabéu in what was their last tune-up game before the start of the 2018/19 season. Below are some thoughts on what transpired:

- -Despite some positional rotations between Casemiro and Kroos, it was the latter that mainly played as the DM in possession. Casemiro generally operated as the RCM and was largely uninvolved in proceedings. He mainly looked to regain match fitness as Kroos dictated play through the left and dominated the ball. On defense, Casemiro looked to take Kroos' place in order to make a couple of nice interventions before coming off at the half. It will be interesting to see how Lopetegui uses the Brazilian going forward, as the Spaniard seems intrigued by the idea of Kroos in the single-pivot defensive midfield position. Additionally, I find it hard to believe that Casemiro will simply be cast aside given the positive relationship he had with Julen at FC Porto. Watch this space.
- -As mentioned above, Real Madrid's possession play mainly flowed through the left, something that was likely influenced by the presence of Isco,

Asensio, and Marcelo on that flank and Kroos' affinity for controlling things from the left half space. While AC Milan mostly dealt with Real's attacks from that wing, they were unable to handle accurate switches of play that shifted the Italian defense from side-to-side. Having said that, Real's flow in possession still seemed a bit sluggish.

- -Los Blancos' front three was very fluid. Bale and Asensio constantly switched flanks while sometimes filling in up front went Benzema spread wide to receive the ball.
 - -Madrid's pressing regressed following some impressive performances on that front in the United States. The commitment to marking AC Milan's build-up triangle was lackluster and questions over Casemiro's position seemed to create enough momentary confusion for Milan to periodically break into Real's defensive third.
 - -Real also looked vulnerable on the counter-attack, something that was probably related to their fluidity on offense and the slow way in which Madrid tried to regain their shape.
 - Bale continues to show flashes of quality and looks like he's raring to go as soon as the real season begins.
 - -Keylor Navas put in a magnificent performance, something that was likely motivated by the signing of Thibaut Courtois.
 - -The Bernabéu clearly has big expectations for Vinícius, given that they chanted the youngster's name when he came on in the second half.
 - -Real Madrid's tactical system is still very much a work in progress and will require the fans to be extra patient early on.
 - Higuaín's goal was nice.
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