

Yeovil fall short



eventually United did create a chance, the second goal was taken beautifully.

It started with a long ball cleared out from the back by Luke Shaw and gathered by an unlikely target man, Mata, whose touch and awareness of space meant that he could turn right and pick out Sanchez breaking forward into the Yeovil half.

It must have crossed the Chilean's mind to have a shot himself in front of the away end, but he had Rashford and Herrera holding their runs ahead of him and picked the latter, who finished neatly across goalkeeper Krysiak.

Before at last Sanchez was replaced by Lingard after 71 minutes, he was kicked on his right ankle

Cashing in: Marcus Rashford makes the most of hesitancy in the Yeovil defence to score United's opener

and spent some time demonstrating his pain on the pitch while his new team-mates carried on building their attack regardless.

It precipitated an aggrieved Sanchez charge towards his own goal to win back possession as Mourinho urged caution and then later decided to summon a replacement.

Gomes, Romelu Lukaku and Lingard had all come on by the end, when Lingard was given too much space by Yeovil to add a third goal. By the time Lukaku added a fourth the dream was over for the home team – although it would be hard to say they were ever close.

◆ In the night's other tie, Sheffield Wednesday beat Reading 3-1.

United's new No7 has the look of value for money after high-energy debut

Jim White
at Huish Park



Although it is early days, Sanchez slotted straight into Mourinho's system with a quality display

For a moment Alexis Sanchez must have wondered what on earth he was doing. There were his former club Arsenal booking a place at a Wembley final the minute he left and here he was, playing in a League Two stadium, with more sand on the pitch than on the beach at Weston-super-Mare.

At the Emirates he had despaired of the lack of recruitment of quality colleagues and here he was lining up alongside Matteo Darmian. Then, barely had he got used to wearing Manchester United's hallowed No7 shirt, left unattended since the red legend that was Memphis Depay departed for Lyon, than he was welcomed to Yeovil with a foursquare tackle entirely lacking in ceremony.

It came from the uncompromising centre-back Nathan Smith, who sent him spiralling into the cold January air with an assault perfectly matching the agricultural surrounds. He might have started the game wearing gloves, but they weren't going to protect him from that. Anticipating nights with United in the elevated surrounds of Paris, Munich and Madrid, being kicked in rural Somerset was presumably not what he signed up for.

But Sanchez immediately demonstrated his resilience, picking himself up and firing the resultant freekick just wide of Artur Krysiak's goal. Not that the locals seemed keen to recognise his gameness. As the ball hit the advertising boards to the side of the goal, the occupants of the home stand chanted in his direction: "What a waste of money." Money has been the defining mark of everything to do with Sanchez's transfer, the amount he is earning, the amount his agent has trousered. Before this game, one newspaper reported that his car is worth more than the value of the motors of the entire Yeovil squad added together.

But never mind the quality of his wheels, there is no question that the locals were pleased to see him stroll out with his new colleagues, starting the game rather than having his pricey limbs protected on the bench. As he warmed up, the occupants of the stand running along one side of Yeovil's neat Huish Park gathered at the front to film him on their phones. This was proper celebrity arriving in a place

where the biggest name they were previously expecting was A-ha, the now venerable Norwegian pop band whose gig here in June was advertised on posters in the gents.

And, whatever the supposed cost, Sanchez is a player who generally offers value for money. When, midway through the first half, he took out two defenders with a sudden switch of direction, the home supporters oohed and aahed in appreciation. As every Arsenal fan knows this is not someone inclined to remaining static. A constant whirl of energy, he gave his marker, 21 year-old Tom James, a guided tour of every inch of the Huish Park turf, as he tore around in a busy flurry.

But what will have pleased the Manchester United fans stationed on the open terrace was how quickly he seemed to have assimilated into the United system. There seemed little need for integration. Playing on the left of a front three, from the off he was exchanging sharp passes with

Welcome to Yeovil: Alexis Sanchez feels the force of a challenge by Nathan Smith



As a start this was close to perfect and the evidence is he will make them even better

Marcus Rashford and Juan Mata, releasing Scott McTominay to draw a magnificent save from Krysiak. Even if not everything came off, even if his long passes were occasionally awry, how his new colleagues seemed to relish his presence, loved the space he found, the space he created.

It was his pass that sent Rashford through for the visitors' first goal. Though in truth it was less the precision of Sanchez's intervention than James's nervous dawdling on the ball that allowed the forward to score. And it was his pass too, hit at speed and timed to perfection, that set up Ander Herrera for the second. When he left on 72 minutes, there was a sense around the ground that he had made his mark. The United fans may be hoping there is more to come, more goals, more assists, more involvement. But as a start this was close to perfection. The truth is, the cost may be way beyond the ken of anyone at Yeovil, but on this evidence he is going to make Manchester United a better team. And in today's Premier League economy, that represents investment well made.