



Tottenham played fairly loose and confident in the beginning and kept it tight in the second half then won it with an extremely quick counter attack in the later stage of the game.

Milan used a diamond midfield with Seedorf at the top and Tiago Silva at the tail. Flamini and Gattuso respectively played on the left and right sides of the diamond.

Sandro and Palacios both played as defensive midfielders for the Spurs with Palacios venturing more into the attack while Sandro stayed back as the main midfielder.

It was a surprise that the Milan Goalkeeper was the busier of the two goalies in the opening minutes of the game and at around the tenth minute, a waist high cross from Lennon had Crouch and Abbiati colliding as he (Abbiati) came out to fist the ball away. That's where he seemed to have incurred the concussion that knocked him out of the game at the fifteenth minute.

A Crouch Strategy

Right from the onset, Tottenham had one strategy. Play the ball to the flanks, didn't matter which side, and swing a cross to the Milan box for the aerial menace of Crouch to deal with it. Crouch's movement was always to the back post so he could challenge one of the full backs by either knocking the ball down for an incoming Van Der Vaart or heading it toward the goal.

Milan's Midfield handicap

The Spurs looked impressive in defense because Milan lacked creativity in the midfield. Seedorf, the only one who could be creative in that bunch, seemed to always receive the ball with his back to the attacking goal and the Spurs midfield of Palacios and Sandro forced him to either pass it back or lose it. Milan also played into the Spurs hands by trying to go through the middle to Ibra who is not very mobile and was caught always coming back from an offside position.

Spurs First Half Defense

The Spurs defended as a team and when they won the ball as a result of Milan's sloppy passing, the Milan's diamond shaped midfield immediately crumbled into flat three defensive midfield of Gattuso, Flamini and Silva. This produced so much space between the three and Seedorf and the Spurs were able to possess the ball and use their wide men, especially Lennon, who had a good game with some crosses to Crouch. The tracking back of the Spurs wingers was splendid.

The Second Half

Pato came in to replace the ineffective Seedorf, and Robinho played at the top of the diamond. Milan picked up their game and dominated the ball possession with both Gattuso and Flamini pushing forward. Spurs with their disciplined defensive lines stifled Milan in the final third as they denied them space and time for the final ball or a clean shot towards goal.

With the substitutions, the tactics remained the same with Spurs holding on to their 4-4-1-1 and Milan with the 4-3-1-2. Modric who came on for Van Der Vaart played deeper.

The Goal

With Milan plying almost the whole second half on Spurs side of the field, and Spurs defending with spotless team control, Milan became susceptible to a counter attack. And when it happened, it was quite a dagger into the heart of the defense. Gattuso found Ibra who chested the ball down and tried finding Pato. Sandro intercepted and swiftly pushed the ball to Modric who found Lennon. Lennon ate-up the real estate in front of him and successfully dispatched of a Milan defender and with a cool head passed the ball to Crouch who buried low to the right of the goalie.

Conclusion

Spurs won because they were very controlled in the defense and strategic in the manner they attacked. The two players of the match were Palacios and Sandro, they were simply brilliant. They kept to their responsibility skillfully and as a team, they defended superbly. When they got their chance they took it with aplomb.

Milan on the other hand lacked a clear goal scoring threat as they couldn't decipher the Spurs defense. Uphill battle, but they still had ninety minutes to play.