

Sun shines on bankers as owners face rare soccer loss

You could argue that it is not the financial crisis but football that is denting the pride of German bankers.

Why? Because shipfinanciers in Hamburg have suffered successive defeats against their shipowning rivals in each of the past six years.

But, this year, the bankers levelled the field with a stunning 3-1 victory over the shipowners, staged in warm September sunshine at the city's Adolf-Jäger Stadium.

The match, which has become one of the most hotly contested sporting events of the German shipping calendar, was remarkable, with the scoring of the fastest goal in the tournament's history.

It took just 20 seconds for bankers striker Matthias Herrmann of Deutsche Shipping to head the ball into the shipowners' net.

The shipowners pulled one back but their constant efforts to draw level again after their opponents retook the lead were thwarted by Michael de Visser of NIBC, the bankers' goalkeeper, who was later named man of the match.

The shipowners probably



FIGHT FOR THE BALL: Opposing players fight hard to gain possession during the match. **Photo:** RED ROBIN

looked for excuses, with some saying they had fielded the oldest team ever — also reflecting the growing average age of the German fleet.

But they were magnanimous in defeat.

"Congratulations to the bankers," said Jorg Molzahn of the Euromar ship registry.

"The shipping crisis began the last time bankers won seven years ago. Now they can hopefully end the crisis with this success."