

# A lesson in United



AFP, Manchester

Quinton Fortune scored his first European goal for Manchester United as the English champions launched their Champions League campaign with a five-goal demolition of an overwhelmed Panathinaikos at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

The South African winger's 15th-minute strike was the highlight of a first-half blitz in which Mikael Silvestre, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Nicky Butt also scored.

Eric Djemba Djemba completed the Group E rout seven minutes from the end with his first goal for the club.

United's Welsh star Ryan Giggs said the result was the perfect start to the campaign.

"We had to work hard in the first few minutes but then our passing and movement were brilliant," he said.

"It always good to get a home game and a win first. If we put in more performances like that then we will keep getting the results."

United certainly took full advantage of the generosity of the visiting Greeks, who came bearing gifts in the form of a wildly erratic goalkeeper combined with a central defence that barely managed to clear a single cross all night.

Five goals in any Champions League match is not to be sniffed at. But Panathinaikos were so poor that this was not a performance that will necessarily have the likes of AC Milan and Real Madrid fretting about the prospect of meeting the David Beckham-less United later in the tournament.

United secured a stranglehold on the game with two goals in the space of as many minutes just before the quarter-of-an-hour mark.

The new campaign might have started in even more spectacular fashion but for a lapse in Ruud Nistelrooy's clinical touch in front of goal after just 40 seconds.

Apparently mesmerised by the sight of Gary Neville turning inside his marker near the right touchline, the Panathinaikos back four allowed his cross to float across their six-yard box.

Van Nistelrooy appeared equally surprised and his header was steered back across goal and wide

of the target. That uncharacteristic miss and some careless early touches from Nicky Butt and Mikael Silvestre seemed to be setting the tone for an off-colour performance from United.

But Panathinaikos's reliance on solitary striker Michael Konstantinou left them unable to exploit any lapses and United suddenly clicked into gear with a quick-passing counter-attack that finished with Phil Neville's left-foot shot being scrambled, somewhat fortunately, round the post by Antonis Nikopolidis.

The Greeks proved incapable of dealing with the resulting corner and Silvestre blasted the ball home from close range at the second attempt after his first contact had been blocked.

United were two up inside two minutes, another slick one-touch move concluding with a pinball exchange of passes inside the box and Fortune rifling Ryan Giggs's lay-off into the roof of the net.

Konstantinou outjumped Rio Ferdinand to provide the first hint of a threat from the visitors but his header was confidently turned away by Tim Howard.

Nikopolidis, who had produced a similar stop to deny Van Nistelrooy at the other end, then gifted United their third by allowing Solskjaer's side-footed connection with a Ryan Giggs pass to slither under his body into the net.

In the goalkeeper's defence, his back four had been equally ineffective in their attempts to close down the mauling Giggs or pick up Solskjaer.

The Greeks' weakness on crosses, which will have been duly noted by their other Group E opponents Rangers and Stuttgart, was exposed once more five minutes before the break when John O'Shea swept in a centre from the left.

Butt met it with a header from close to the penalty spot that van Nistelrooy would have been proud of and, for once, Nikopolidis was left looking helpless rather than hapless.

Kostas Chalkias replaced the unfortunate goalkeeper at half-time and, with United also giving the likes of young Scot Darren Fletcher a runout, Panathinaikos had a more solid air for much of the second half.

That was however only until Gary Neville found space near the corner flag seven minutes from the end. Once more a cross somehow slipped across the goalmouth and Djemba Djemba was able to open his Old Trafford account with a finish from four yards.



PHOTO: AFP

FORTUNE FAVOURS THE PERSISTENT: Manchester United's Quinton Fortune is over the moon after scoring against Panathinaikos at Old Trafford on September 16.



PHOTO: AFP

HOTTEST IN BUSINESS: Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo (R) outwitting Olympique Marseille's Pascal Johansen at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid on September 16.

# Real put on a show



AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid beat French hopefuls Marseille 4-2 on Tuesday as they opened their Champions League challenge with a powerful attacking display that also exposed some defensive flaws.

Marseille silenced the Bernabeu when Didier Drogba put them into a short-lived lead in the Group F match, before Roberto Carlos equalised and Ronaldo scored twice.

Luis Figo added the fourth with a penalty before Daniel Van Buyten headed in the French side's second goal.

Ronaldo praised the Marseille defence but said: "We knew with all our technical skill we could outrun them."

"But having said all that it was still good to return to the changing rooms with a score line like that!"

The Brazilian World Cup winner added: "When we went behind we weren't worried because with our quality of play we can do a lot in five minutes."

"And at that stage we knew there were still 20 minutes of the first half to go and all of the second."

"I'm happy with my two goals but even happier to win our first European game."

It was a relatively quiet night for David Beckham in his Real debut in Europe's top club competition although the England captain's cross set up Real's opening goal.

Beckham reflected: "It's always great to get a winning start. I don't think anyone can ask for more than that. That's all that matters - we're a great team."

Before Marseille's goal, Esteban Cambiasso set up Zinedine Zidane, who was playing against his hometown club, and his rasping 25-yard shot curled just wide.

The French side, European champions in 1993, were undaunted and went ahead on 26 minutes.

Egyptian striker Ahmed Mido Hossam dribbled past two Real players, got a lucky rebound, and when his shot was blocked by Raul Bravo, Drogba pounced to slot the ball in.

But Real were level three minutes later. Beckham's cross found Roberto Carlos whose shot into the turf bounced high and over Marseille keeper Vedran Runje.

Madrid began to turn on the style and when Michel Salgado cut in from the right his cross eluded everyone except Ronaldo who smashed home the ball. Just eight minutes into the second

half, Brahim Hemdani stopped Ronaldo in his tracks as he had the goal in his sights.

But with their next attack, Zidane jinked past the Marseille midfield and pushed the ball sideways to the Brazilian who found the net with a fine shot from 15 yards.

Roberto Carlos created Real's fourth when he was tripped by Runje in the area with an hour gone.

Figo scored the first penalty, only for the referee to order a re-take, and made no mistake with the second attempt.

A Zidane attempt came close and with 10 minutes to go, Habib Beye made a crucial interception to deny Ronaldo a hat-trick.

Marseille picked up a second goal seven minutes from the end when Van Buyten's towering header caught Casillas misplaced on the line and bounced into the net off Roberto Carlos.

For Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz it was a satisfying night's work at the Bernabeu.

"Marseille posed us problems for the first 25 minutes but we came back into the match not because they were scared but because we played good football."

"Our game was functioning well. Marseille came not only with three strikers but with a well organised defence and we adapted well - I'm happy with how my team performed."

His opposite number, Alain Perrin was disappointed.

"We were worried this might happen, that's to say we weren't at our best and we played with fear. We were very weak on the attack and gave the ball away too easily."

Real travel to FC Porto for their next match on October 1, while Marseille will host Partizan Belgrade in the Velodrome.

# Chelsea thank Gallas



AFP, Prague

French defender William Gallas struck the only goal of the game to give Chelsea's millionaires' club a winning 1-0 start to their Champions League campaign against Sparta Prague here on Tuesday.

Gallas, whose only other previous goal in the competition had come during his Marseille days four years ago, put the striking talents of Hernan Crespo, Adrian Mutu and Jimmy Floyd Haselbaink in the shade as he found himself in the right place at the right time to poke the ball home after 85 minutes.

The goal had been created by Damien Duff whose left foot cross from the right touchline was flicked on by fellow substitute Haselbaink to fall conveniently for Gallas to score from six yards out.

"It was a difficult night because there were two or three players who were playing together for the first time," said Chelsea coach Claudio Ranieri.

"It is not easy to become a team so quickly, but I am happy."

"William did very well. He has a great attitude."

Gallas dedicated his goal to the rest of the expensively-assembled squad.

"My goal is for all the players because we are a good side and everyone gives the maximum," said the Frenchman.

"I am very happy because I didn't play for a whole month and in the first half my position was not good. In the second half, it was much better."

It had been a disjointed Chelsea performance for large parts of the opening Group G game as they struggled to show any indication of repaying the 111 million pound (£170 million dollar) investment by new owner Roman Abramovich.

After 15 minutes, Crespo, making his first full appearance along with Claude Makelele, had a left foot shot easily saved by Jaromir Blazek in the Czech goal and his wastefulness was to be a feature of the evening.

Former Manchester United star

Karel Poborsky was probing in midfield but it took until the 18th minute before Claudio Cudicini was called into action, diving smartly to his right to gather a sharply-hit free-kick by Vladimir Labat at his right-hand post.

A minute later, the Chelsea keeper was alert again to gather a tame effort from Radoslav Kovac while Blazek then kept out a left foot strike from Adrian Mutu at the other end.

Overall it was the Czech champions who were looking the most dangerous as Chelsea lacked shape in their defence and confidence in midfield.

Their lacklustre opening was summed up when, after Mutu had won a free-kick on the edge of the box, Geremi skied his effort high over the crossbar.

Poborsky then crossed to Kovac, who had escaped down the left on the stroke of half-time, but the blond-haired midfielder headed just wide of the mark.

Ranieri was forced to take Mutu, who had received a knock, off at the interval along with Emmanuel Petit. Frank Lampard and Duff were called into action.

In the 52nd minute, Glen Johnson played a wonderfully weighted pass into the path of Crespo but the Argentinian's right-foot chip fell comfortably into the arms of the advancing Blazek.

Duff, who has criticised Ranieri for his controversial rotation policy, got away down the left and tried to pick out Crespo but Petr Johana stuck out his left foot to divert the ball just past the post and conceded a corner.

Slowly, Chelsea were beginning to find a pattern and, after 65 minutes, Juan Sebastian Veron, who had been off the pace all night played Crespo in down the middle but the striker hit a lazy lob wide of the target.

Two minutes later, the two Argentinians combined again only for Crespo to hit a left-foot half-volley over the top of the Sparta goal.

Ranieri then lost patience with the misfiring Crespo and replaced him with Haselbaink for the last 18 minutes of the game.

## RESULTS AT A GLANCE

AFP, Paris

Collated European Champions League results on Tuesday:

**Group E**  
At Glasgow  
Glasgow Rangers (SCO) 2 (Nerlinger 74, Lovenkrands 79)  
VfB Stuttgart (GER) 1 (Kuranyi 45)

**At Manchester, England**  
Manchester United (ENG) 5 (Silvestre 13, Fortune 14, Solskjaer 33, Butt 40, Djemba-Djemba 83)  
Panathinaikos (GRE) 0

**Group F**  
At Madrid  
Real Madrid (SPA) 4 (Carlos 29, Ronaldo 34, 57, Figo 62-pen)  
Marseille (FRA) 2 (Drogba 26, Van Buyten 83)

**At Belgrade**  
Partizan Belgrade (SEM) 1 (Delibasic 54)  
FC Porto (POR) 1 (Costinha 22)

**Group G**  
At Prague  
Sparta Prague (CZE) 0  
Chelsea (ENG) 1 (Gallas 85)

**At Istanbul**  
Besiktas (TUR) 0  
Lazio (ITA) 2 (Stam 37, Fiore 77)

**Group H**  
At Milan  
AC Milan (ITA) 1 (F. Inzaghi 67)  
Ajax (NED) 0

**At Bruges**  
FC Bruges (BEL) 1 (Saetemes 84)  
Celta Vigo (SPA) 1 (Juanfran 50)

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# Dida saves the day



AFP, Milan

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plause for what was a solid team performance that should have reaped more goals.

"It's a magical moment, let's hope it continues," he said. "I dedicate the goal to all of my team-mates, even those who didn't play."

"We mustn't forget that there were great players on the bench like Manuel Rui Costa and Rivaldo."

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti was disappointed with the way his team failed to kill off Ajax.

"We really should have had the game sewn up, but we wasted many chances and they nearly drew level

right at the end," he said. "On another day we might not be so lucky."

Rui Costa was left out to accommodate Brazilian midfielder Kaka, while Tom Soetaers and Nigel De Jong, who played in the 4-1 league win at the weekend, were dropped to the substitutes' bench.

A surprisingly open first-half, lit up by a majestic performance from Kaka, failed to produce a goal, despite numerous openings for both sides.

The first opportunity fell to Van der Vaart whose rising drive was tipped over the bar by Dida.

The Italian hosts responded to the

early scare and with Kaka pulling the strings on the left-hand side of midfield put Ajax's goal under siege.

Andriy Shevchenko volleyed wide after latching on to Andrea Pirlo's pinpoint cross, before Gattuso's venomous drive cleared the bar by inches.

Dida palmed away Ibrahimovic's angled header just after the half hour mark as Ajax interrupted Milan's spell of possession, while at the other end only a last-ditch tackle by Julien Escude denied Inzaghi a certain goal.

The first 45 minutes ended in controversy as Milan were denied what appeared to be a certain penalty.

Inzaghi danced his way through the Ajax defence and closed in on goal only to be sent tumbling to the floor by Petri

Pasanen's clumsy challenge. However the cheers of the home crowd were silenced as the referee waved play on, much to the annoyance of the Milan players.

Milan continued to dominate after the break and Shevchenko saw two early chances comfortably saved by Ajax goalkeeper Bogdan Lobont.

Steven Pienaar's goalbound flick was smothered by Dida before Milan took the lead in the 67th minute.

Inzaghi broke forward with purpose and fed Shevchenko, who turned his marker smartly before firing towards goal.

Lobont failed to hold the Ukrainian's powerful effort and Inzaghi was on hand to tuck the ball home.

Gattuso's 90th minute dismissal gave Ajax a numerical advantage and they almost cashed in through Van der Vaart's last-gasp effort only for Dida to come to Milan's rescue.

Last season Ajax were poised to go through to the semi-finals on the away goals rule until Jon Dahl Tomasson scored a late winner to clinch a 3-2 win at the San Siro after the teams had played out a goalless draw in Amsterdam.



PHOTO: AFP

IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THE NAME! AC Milan striker Filippo Inzaghi shows his name on the shirt after scoring against Ajax at Milan's San Siro stadium on September 16.