

# Owen the saving grace



AFP, Paris

Michael Owen's record-breaking equaliser saved Liverpool's blushes against Slovenian side Olimpija Ljubljana on a mixed night for English sides in the first round, first leg of the UEFA Cup on Wednesday. Only Newcastle were totally convincing, thrashing Dutch side NAC Breda 5-0 at St James' Park but Blackburn, Southampton and Manchester City face daunting tasks in the second leg matches in two weeks' time.

Owen's header in the 78th minute broke Ian Rush's club record of 20 goals in European competition and brought 2001 UEFA Cup winners Liverpool level at 1-1 on a rough pitch in Slovenia.

Liverpool will be confident of dominating the second leg at Anfield on October 15, but goals from two of the club's former strikers, Robbie Fowler and Nicolas Anelka, might not be enough to guarantee Manchester City a place in the second round.

City beat Lokeren 3-2 in a match featuring a David Seaman blunder that gifted the Belgian side their first goal, although a lucky rebound off Fowler's shin and Anelka's 80th

minute penalty proved enough to pull Kevin Keegan's side back from 2-1 down.

However, the valuable two away goals mean Lokeren will progress if they win 1-0 or 2-1 in Belgium in two weeks' time.

And Graeme Souness' Blackburn have it all to do at Ewood Park after going down 3-1 to Genclerbirligi in Turkey.

Souleymane Youla, the leading scorer in the Turkish league this season, was on target twice and Josip Skoko grabbed the other goal.

Only a second half reply by Australian Brett Emerton gave Rovers some hope.

"We didn't play in the first half and we only started in the second --

but by then we were already 2-0 down," Souness said.

"I thought some of our players approached the game thinking it was going to be easy and we just didn't perform and we conceded three very poor goals."

Southampton's return to European competition after a 19-year absence could be also short-lived after they were held 1-1 at home by Steaua Bucharest.

Claudiu Raducanu gave the 1986 European Cup winners the lead after 20 minutes before Kevin Phillips levelled.

Newcastle banished memories of their poor start to the Premiership season by destroying Breda, with Craig Bellamy scoring twice in the Magpies first home win of the season.

Titus Bramble, Alan Shearer and substitute Darren Ambrose added to Bellamy's first half double as Bobby Robson's side gave the Newcastle fans something to cheer at last.

"It was an important win bearing in mind the start we have had to the season," said a delighted Robson.

"It was always going to be a question of time, patience and support and everything clicked in the game."

European big guns AS Roma, Barcelona, Borussia Dortmund and Valencia will all expect to sail into the next round.

Roma rested five first-team regulars and still thrashed Vardar Skopje of Macedonia 4-0 at the Olympic Stadium.

Barcelona had to battle for a 1-1 draw at Slovak side Puchov, Patrick Klivert's second-half goal being equalised in the final minutes, while 1997 European champions Dortmund beat Austria Vienna 2-1 away with goals from Otto Addo and Lars Ricken.

Valencia scored a 1-0 away win over AIK Solna of Sweden.



AFP, AP

Liverpool's Michael Owen (L) scoring past goalkeeper Borut Mavric, of Olimpija in Ljubljana on September 24.

## Gerard's sin!

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona midfielder Gerard Lopez found himself benched for his club's UEFA Cup first round, first leg 1-1 draw at Matador Puchov of Slovakia after coach Frank Rijkaard caught him using his mobile phone just before kickoff.

Dutch disciplinarian Rijkaard, three times a Champions League winner as a player with AC Milan and Ajax, immediately brought in compatriot Marc Overmars and dropped Lopez.

"I hope he will have understood this signal and that there won't be a repeat in future," said Rijkaard.

Barca had to settle for a draw as Milan Jambor cancelled out Patrick Klivert's opener in injury time.

## Kahn might quit

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn says he will hang up his gloves if he doesn't feel he is playing at the top of his game.

But the German national goalkeeper believes he has a few more years left in him at 34.

Kahn has conceded ten goals in six games for Bayern this season but quashed suggestions he was on a downward spiral.

"I will only continue to play if I turn in top performances," Kahn told Kicker magazine.

"If that is not the case I will be the first to call it a day."

Kahn was quick to point out a wonder save against Japanese and SV Hamburg forward Naohiro Takahara earlier this season.

"I take one percent of the criticism seriously but the other 99 percent I ignore because it is from people who do not know anything about goalkeeping," declared Kahn.

"I made a mistake against Wolfsburg," he acknowledged. "However, against Hamburg I saved a shot from Takahara that no-one else in the world would have."

Appearances at the Oktoberfest in Munich have prompted the media to accuse Kahn of improper conduct off the pitch but he claims everything is blown out of proportion.

"Since matters about my private life have become public I have not been taken seriously as a sportsman," explained Kahn.

"The world has become perverse to a certain extent. If I drink a beer at the Oktoberfest it immediately means that I was out all night again."

## Inzaghi blow for Milan

AFP, Rome

AC Milan striker Filippo Inzaghi has been told to rest for up to 10 days following the neck and jaw injuries he suffered at the weekend, the Italian Serie A club confirmed Wednesday.

That rules the in-form Italy international out of Milan's league match at home to Lecce on Sunday and next Wednesday's Champions League match away to Spanish side Celta Vigo.

The 30-year-old forward collided with Perugia goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac in Sunday's 1-1 draw and was stretchered off before being rushed to hospital.

# Stunning samba women



AFP, Washington

Brazil scored two goals in each half as they stunned Olympic champions Norway 4-1 in the first-round action in the Women's World Cup.

The young Brazilians, who now lead Group B, dominated the match from the opening kickoff to the final whistle, many times running past the experienced Norwegians.

Norway are now lying second in the group, and finishing there could put them into a quarter-final against archrivals the United States.

"I don't think anyone, including the United States, will be looking forward

to meeting us after that performance," said 18-year-old Daniela, who was voted player of the match after scoring one goal and creating another before a crowd of 16,316 at RFK Stadium.

The rare Norwegian loss was the country's worst defeat since a 5-0 drubbing by China in the semi-finals of the 1999 edition.

"I must congratulate Brazil," Norway coach Age Steen said. "They were faster than us and were the best team today. We are much better than that."

But Brazil coach Paulo Gonçalves, whose team outlasted Norway in penalties in the third-place match at USA '99, felt the result would mean nothing if Brazil didn't take home the trophy on October 12.

"It is important that we win the World Cup, because if we come second or third it means nothing in Brazil," he said.

Norway tried physical tactics in an attempt to intimidate and slow down the more skillful and speedier Brazilians, fouling their foes seven times in the first 13 minutes.

It didn't work. Daniela ran down the middle of the pitch before unleashing a right-footed blast from 22 yards that eluded goal-keeper Bente Nordby in the 26th minute.

Brazil doubled the score 11 minutes later as fullback Rosana, who had free reign on the left side, headed in an eight-yard shot off a Daniela free kick with the South Americans having only 10 players on the field.

The Norwegians thought they had made a game of it when Marianne Pettersen knocked in a six-yard header of her own just seconds before the end of the first half.

They came out strong in the second half, but a 12-yard goal by 17-year-old Marta, her second of the competition, against the run of play silenced them, for all intents and purposes, in the 60th minute.

Katia closed out the rout with her third goal of the Cup, a five-yard head shot off a left-wing cross by Formiga in the 68th minute.



PHOTO: AFP

Brazil's Katia (top) celebrates a goal against Norway with teammates at the RFK Stadium in Washington on September 24.

In Columbus, Ohio, forward Birgit Prinz scored twice and Sandra Minnett added one goal as Germany took the Group C lead.

Despite the defeat, Japan still can advance with a draw against Canada in Foxboro, Massachusetts, on Saturday. The Japanese lead the Canadians by goal differential, the first tie-breaker, three to zero.

From the Japanese perspective, the Germans were creative enough in front of a crowd of 15,490 at Columbus Crew Stadium.

Germany struck first in the 23rd minute when Minnett put the rebound of Maren Meinert's header off the crossbar into the top right corner and past goalkeeper Nozomi Yamago.

Stefanie Gottschick started the second scoring sequence in the 36th minute, stealing the ball and passing it to Meinert, who found Prinz. Prinz fired a right-footer into the right side of the

Latham was involved in the first goal as she beat two players before being fouled in the penalty area by Mariela Coronel. Hooper converted the ensuing penalty in the 19th minute.

Latham put the match out of reach with two goals in the space of three minutes. She knocked home a rebound of her own head shot for a 2-0 lead in the 79th minute and scored in a goalmouth scramble in the 82nd minute past goalkeeper Romina Ferro.

In Thursday's action, North Korea meets Sweden in a Group A confrontation that is expected to decide which team qualifies for the quarter-finals, while the defending champion United States tussle with physical Nigeria.

In Group D matches, Russia plays Ghana while China take on Australia.



MARTIN KEOWN



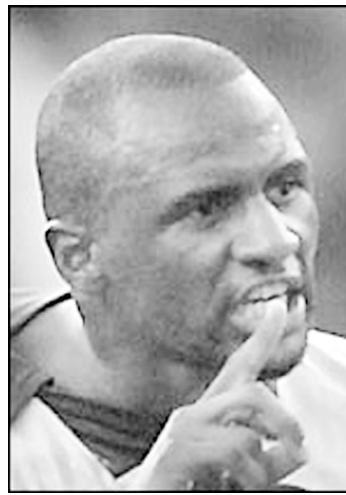
LAUREN



JENS LEHMANN



RAY PARLOUR



PATRICK VIEIRA



ASHLEY COLE



RYAN GIGGS



CRISTIANO RONALDO

# FA take tough stance



AFP, London

The English Football Association has thrown the book at Arsenal and, to a lesser extent, Manchester United over the clashes that erupted at the end of their goalless draw at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Arsenal took the brunt of the blame for the chaotic scenes that followed a dramatic finale to the match in which Arsenal skipper Patrick Vieira was sent off and Ruud van Nistelrooy missed an injury time penalty.

A total of six of the London club's players were charged by the FA on Wednesday over their individual behaviour, three of them with violent conduct linked to the brutal jostling of van Nistelrooy after the final whistle.

The club itself faces a hefty fine or possibly even the deduction of points after being charged with misconduct for failing to control its players.

In 1990, the FA deducted two points from Arsenal and one from Manchester United after a mass brawl during a match at Old Trafford.

Manchester United were not completely absolved of blame for the latest clash with two players, Ryan Giggs and Cristiano Ronaldo, charged with misconduct, and a third, Phil Neville, warned as to his future conduct.

United have called in their lawyers to consider fighting FA charges of misconduct laid against Giggs and Ronaldo.

"We have received the details of the charges from the FA and we are currently reviewing them internally with our lawyers, the manager and the players involved," a statement issued by United said.

"Until that review is completed, the club will be making no further comment."

The Arsenal players charged with violent conduct were defenders Martin Keown and Lauren and midfielder Ray Parlour.

Vieira, goalkeeper Jens Lehmann and England fullback Ashley Cole face lesser charges of improper conduct.

Suspensions are certain for players charged with violent conduct if the charges are upheld after

the two weeks allowed to the clubs to appeal. Those charged with improper conduct could escape with fines.

Arsenal's board of directors hinted that the club could take its own disciplinary measures -- distancing themselves from manager Arsene Wenger, who had defended his players immediately after the match.

"The Club demands high standards both on and off the field and the Board believes these were not met last Sunday," the Arsenal statement said.

It added: "Arsene Wenger has already addressed the players on this issue."

United reacted to the charges against Giggs and Ronaldo by

calling in lawyers to discuss fighting them.

"We have received the details of the charges from the FA and we are currently reviewing them internally with our lawyers, the manager and the players involved," the club said in a statement.

Even if Arsenal avoid having points deducted, the fallout from Sunday's match looks set to have a major impact on their efforts to reclaim the Premiership title from United.

Their hugely influential skipper Vieira is already facing an automatic one-match ban as a result of the red card he received at Old Trafford for kicking out at van Nistelrooy.

That will mean he misses next month's game against Chelsea and

the FA could add a further ban for his failure to leave the field after being sent off, his attempts to confront van Nistelrooy and a verbal exchange with the fourth official.

On top of that, Wenger could find his defensive resources stretched to breaking point if, as seems virtually certain, Lauren and Keown are both banned as a result of the violent conduct charges laid on Wednesday.

England centreback Sol Campbell, who missed Sunday's match, was already facing a ban of up to three games for kicking United's Eric Djemba-Djemba during the Community Shield match last month.

The latest charges have once more turned the spotlight on Arsenal's poor disciplinary record under their French manager Wenger, who has become famous for his repeated failure to see on-the-field incidents in which his players have been at fault.

Since Wenger took over in 1996, Arsenal players have lost 148 games to suspension, more than 20 matches a season. Vieira alone has missed the equivalent of half a season.

In those seven years, they have received 52 red cards, compared to 21 for United in the same period.

Earlier Wednesday, FA chief executive Mark Palios said the game's governing body in England was planning a disciplinary crackdown in the wake of Sunday's scenes with swifter punishment for "unacceptable forms of behaviour" by players.

"The range of punishments for particular types of unacceptable behaviour need to be appropriate and be seen to be appropriate," Palios said.

"Furthermore, the process must be as speedy as justice allows and certainly swifter than it has been in the past. We must concentrate on the time it takes to issue charges as well as to conclude cases."

The conduct of the players involved in Sunday's clashes has prompted a national outcry. Sports Minister Richard Caborn accused them of setting a terrible example which would be copied by children up and down the country.

### THE GUILTY?

AFP, London

List of charges laid by the English Football Association against Arsenal and Manchester United following the clashes that erupted at the end of Sunday's goalless draw between the two clubs at Old Trafford:

**ARSENAL**

**Arsenal** -- club charged with misconduct for failing to ensure the proper behaviour of their players.

**Ashley Cole** -- improper conduct for his involvement in a confrontation with Manchester United player Cristiano Ronaldo after the final whistle

**Martin Keown** -- improper conduct for confronting Manchester United player Ruud van Nistelrooy following the penalty miss -- violent behaviour for striking van Nistelrooy on the back of the head following the final whistle

**Lauren** -- two counts of improper conduct for confronting van Nistelrooy after Patrick Vieira's sending-off, and for confronting Manchester United player Ryan Giggs after the final whistle

-- two counts of violent behaviour, for kicking out at Manchester United player Quinton Fortune following the penalty award, and for forcibly pushing van Nistelrooy in the back following the final whistle

**Jens Lehmann** -- improper conduct for confronting referee Steve Bennett after Vieira's second yellow card and for then persistently seeking to confront van Nistelrooy

**Ray Parlour** -- improper conduct for confronting van Nistelrooy after the final whistle -- violent behaviour grabbing at Manchester United player Gary Neville from behind shortly afterwards

**Patrick Vieira** -- improper conduct for failing to leave the field of play following his sending-off, seeking to confront van Nistelrooy and verbal exchange with fourth official Neale Barry

**MANCHESTER UNITED**

**Ryan Giggs** -- improper conduct for his involvement in a confrontation with Lauren after the match

**Cristiano Ronaldo** -- improper conduct for confronting Martin Keown at the end of the match

**Phil Neville** -- warned as to his future conduct regarding a confrontation with Lauren following Vieira's sending-off

# Wenger ashamed



SPORTINGLIFE, London

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger issued a qualified apology for his players' loss of self-control at Old Trafford but still insisted that the ensuing condemnation of them had been an "over-reaction".

The Football Association have charged Arsenal as a club for failing to control their players, while six members of the first-team squad are also individually charged with misconduct.

That could theoretically mean Martin Keown, Lauren, Ray Parlour, Ashley Cole, Jens Lehmann and Patrick Vieira could face suspensions totalling up to 20 games.

Wenger, meanwhile, has been asked to explain his outspoken post-match criticism of Ruud van Nistelrooy, whose clash with Vieira sparked the angry scenes during last Sunday's goalless draw.

The Arsenal boss had defended his players immediately after the game at Old Trafford and had issued no other public comment until now.

He declared: "I thought we over-reacted after the game and we apologise for that. I think we have to keep control of our behaviour in every situation.

"On the other hand, I think you could say that the media response was an over-reaction as well. It was not in proportion to what happened at all. That is maybe not surprising but also not right."

"We have to be conscious that we didn't behave in a perfect way like we should have, but also not to be too much victimised by what people say."

"If one of my players had tackled someone round the throat or hit somebody in the face during the game, I would feel much more shocked than I am."

"I have been in English football for seven years now and I have witnessed situations that were 10 times worse that were not punished."

"That doesn't mean we were right but it does mean that some people get away here with some things they shouldn't get away with."

While two Manchester United players have also been charged, Wenger seemed aggrieved at the scale - and speed -- of the FA

response against his own club.

"The FA response was quite quick as they react to the media reaction, that's all," he insisted.

"If you could imagine that the game had happened somewhere without Sky TV being there, nothing would have happened."

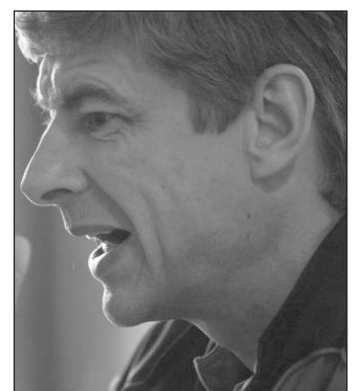
"But between what we've seen on football pitches and in corridors and what happened there, I think the response we got was an over-reaction. The media could be charged with over-reaction as well."

Asked if he was ashamed of any of his players' reactions, Wenger, whose side face Newcastle at Highbury on Friday night, said in a radio interview: "I was surprised at what happened."

"Of course, you try to understand why and how it all went, but none of my players killed anybody."

"It will be a problem if they all get suspended, of course, but we will face that if it happens."

"The players are hurt. There was a big shock for us after the game but we have shown our strength before and we want to win the game on Friday."



ARSENE WENGER