

# Celta through, Ajax out



AFP, Paris

Spanish side Celta Vigo made the last 16 of the Champions League at the first attempt on Tuesday but their 2-1 defeat of AC Milan was overshadowed by the Italian champions fielding a second-string side because they are playing the Inter Continental Cup this weekend in Japan.

Celta's joy was Bruges's misery as despite an excellent 2-1 defeat of Dutch giants Ajax the Belgian side finished a point adrift of the Spaniards and can feel aggrieved at missing out on the lucrative knockout stages even though they have a UEFA Cup place as consolation.

Elsewhere Manchester United's Dutch marksman Ruud van Nistelrooy equalled legendary Red Devils striker Denis Law's European record of 28 goals as the English champions beat VfB Stuttgart 2-0 and won Group E.

Ajax were not the only giant to miss out on further European competition this season as Lazio went down 1-0 to Sparta Prague to finish bottom of Group G - the Czechs' delight was doubled with the news they had leapfrogged Besiktas into second after Chelsea defeated the Turks 2-0 in Gelsenkirchen.

Scottish champions Rangers too missed out on a UEFA Cup spot. Needing just a point at home to Greek side Panathinaikos they allowed a 1-0 lead to turn into a 3-1 home defeat.

A weakened Real Madrid side held Porto 1-1 but the result was

academic as both had already qualified for the last 16 - Marseille took the UEFA Cup spot and probably saved coach Alain Perrin's job for the moment as a 1-1 draw with Partizan Belgrade gave them third in Group F.

However AC Milan's decision to go with a second-string side albeit with players of the quality of Rui Costa and Brazilian Kaka will probably have the biggest fallout.

Kaka gave them the lead with a stunning strike but terrible defending on two occasions allowed Celta to secure their place in the last 16 as Jesuli and Ignacio scored - Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti compounded the controversial decision of the starting XI by taking off a further three players at half-time.

"We made a few changes and instead of improving things we played worse," said Ancelotti.

"We took Alessandro Costacurta off and changed from a back four to a back three without much effect. Our wing-backs didn't get forward enough and we came under a lot of pressure."

Van Nistelrooy headed home his record-equalling goal in first half stoppage time.

He then set up Ryan Giggs for United's second to ensure Sir Alex Ferguson's side will be seeded for Friday's draw for the knockout phase.

The Dutchman said he was moved to have been placed on the same pitch as Law.

"That's fantastic," said van Nistelrooy.

"I am proud to be level with a player like him and I couldn't imagine how quickly it would come as I have only been here two-and-a-half years.

"I don't know why I am so effective in the Champions League but I think there is a bit of a difference between the Champions League and other games and we have played a lot of good games in it and I am usually at the end of the good work."

Marek Kincl scored the decisive goal for Sparta Prague in stoppage-time, outjumping Angelo Peruzzi in the Lazio goal to head Karel Poborsky's chipped free-kick into an unguarded net and left the Italians without even a UEFA Cup place.

Lazio coach Roberto Mancini blamed his side's profligacy for their exit which has cost the cash-strapped club dear.

"We are sorry because we had the game in our hands and wasted an incredible number of chances," he said. "We really needed more concentration."

At Ibrox, Panathinaikos stormed back after Michael Mols had scored for Rangers and eased home thanks to fine strikes by Raimondas Zutautas, Angelos Basinas and Michalis Konstantinou making it a miserable second anniversary in charge for Gers coach Alex McLeish.

"We showed our inexperience," said McLeish. "All we can do is go on to the next game and be positive and not look back."

Chelsea had already qualified for the knockout phase of the competition but garnered another confidence-boosting victory thanks to late goals from Jimmy-Floyd Hasselbaink and Wayne Bridge.

Chelsea coach Claudio Ranieri said his side had thrived on the atmosphere created by the 51,000

mainly Turkish fans in Schalke's stadium which hosted this game after it was moved from Turkey following the bomb attacks in Istanbul.

"This is a big step for us. We increased the tempo to dominate the opponent and showed character with 50,000 fans against us," Ranieri said.

"I think step by step we are improving and that is very, very important knowing that this competition restarts in February."

With both sides assured of a place in the last 16 and Porto needing a hefty victory to knock Real off top spot, there was little urgency on a damp night at the Bernabeu.

Santiago Solari put Real ahead in the ninth minute after Luis Figo's run had opened up the Porto defence.

Porto equalised 10 minutes before halftime when Deco was bundled over in the penalty area by Michel Salgado, Derlei smacking the penalty into the roof of the net.

The second half was of limited appeal, as both sides appeared to settle for a result that left Real, nine-times European Cup winners and favourites again this year, assured of avoiding the other group winners in the next round.

The proceedings were briefly enlivened when a protestor handcuffed himself to the Real Madrid goal 10 minutes after the break and had to be cut free by security guards before being bundled away.

With little at stake, Real coach Carlos Queiroz opted to leave David Beckham, Raul, Ivan Helguera and Iker Casillas out of his starting lineup but there was still plenty of quality on show.

The 28,000 fans who braved the Madrid weather for the final group game were almost rewarded with a spectacular goal after five minutes as Real took up where they had left off in Saturday's 2-1 win over arch-rivals Barcelona at the Nou Camp.

French playmaker Zinedine Zidane, a surprise presence in the side given Real's punishing schedule, produced a precise pass for Ronaldo to collect and smash just over the bar.

The opening goal followed soon enough, with Figo the architect. The Portuguese forward carried the ball from the centre of midfield and passed out wide, with Ronaldo dummifying the home defence.

Solari collected the ball on the right and worked his way back into the area to score with a shot back across Porto keeper Vitor Baia.

Real were looking comfortable but they showed little intent going forward and were punished when English referee Stephen Bennett gave what appeared to a harsh penalty for Salgado's challenge on Deco.

After the brief drama of the security breach early in the second half, the match reverted to its leisurely pace.

Figo and Ronaldo had both gone off at halftime but Real did raise their game for a brief spell in which Zidane twice went close with a free kick and a smart overhead that flashed wide.

Porto, not to be outdone, came close to snatching a win in the final five minutes, Jose Bosingwa forcing a great tip-over from Real's second-string keeper Cesar with a 30-metre blast.



SHOOTING 'EM DOWN! Chelsea's Dutch striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (L) celebrates scoring against Besiktas at Gelsenkirchen on December 9.

# Perugia target German starlet

Football

AFP, Rome

Luciano Gaucci, the outspoken president of Italian first division side Perugia, said Tuesday he is close to signing a female footballer to play alongside the men in Serie A.

Gaucci is determined to have a woman in his team for next year and spent months trying to persuade Victoria Svensson and Hanna Ljungberg to take up the challenge.

But the pair, both strikers for Sweden's national women's team, spurned his advances saying they could not compete with the likes of Paolo Maldini and Alessandro Nesta.

Gaucci, however, refused to give up his search and is confident he can lure German World Cup winner Birgit Prinz to Italy following the collapse of the Womens League in

America (WUSA) where she has been playing.

"We've already met with Birgit Prinz in Rome last week and she wanted a few days to think things over," he said. "Next week we will try and work out the final details."

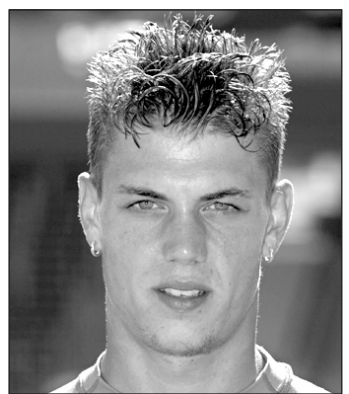
"I saw that she has real enthusiasm for this adventure and I hope she will train with the Perugia squad before Christmas so she can take to the field in January."

Perugia made headlines in June by signing Libyan international Saadi Kadhafi on a one-year contract. The son of Libyan leader Moamer, Saadi Kadhafi tested positive for the anabolic steroid nandrolone last month.

The Umbrian club also hired disgraced sprinter Ben Johnson to take charge of pre-season training. Johnson was stripped of his 100 metres gold medal for testing positive for the steroid stanazolol at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.



BIRGIT PRINZ



ALEXANDER WALKE  
U-20 custodian tests positive

AFP, Dubai

Germany goalkeeper Alexander Walke has tested positive for cannabis at the world under-20 championships here, world soccer's governing body FIFA said Tuesday.

The Werder Bremen keeper's urine sample revealed traces of tetrahydrocannabinol, a cannabis metabolite, FIFA said.

Both Walke and the German federation have refused to have a B sample tested.

"This is the first positive doping case in a FIFA competition for high on 10 years and it is highly unfortunate that such a player has tested positive," FIFA general secretary Urs Linsi said.

Walke played in all three group games and was tested after the match against the USA on December 2.

Germany failed to qualify for the group stages, finishing fourth in their group behind the USA, Paraguay and South Korea.

Walke has been suspended from all national and international matches until further notice.

The FIFA disciplinary Committee will examine his case within the next 30 days.

# Dudu carries Brazil



AFP, Dubai

A golden goal from Dudu earned Brazil a 2-1 win over Slovakia on Tuesday and a quarter-final meeting with Japan in the world under-20 championships.

Australia meanwhile crashed out of the tournament at the hands of the host nation as the captain of the United Arab Emirates side, Ismail Matar, scored one minute from the final whistle to secure a 1-0 win in Sharjah and crush the Young Socceroos' hopes.

Brazil had been trailing after a Filip Sebo header put the Slovaks ahead after 61 minutes, but Dudu claimed the equaliser seven minutes from the whistle and wrapped up the tie with a golden goal in the first half of extra time.

The South Americans had wasted a string of chances in the first half but Sebo's header spurred Brazil into action and 22 minutes later Dudu connected with a cross from Daniel Carvalho to score the equaliser.

With the scores level at full time, Dudu collected a pass from Carlos Alberto to score the winner. Brazil will meet the Japanese on Friday.

A second-half goal from Barcelona's Sergio Garcia after 66 minutes gave Spain a 1-0 win over Paraguay and a last eight matchup against Canada on Friday.

Colombia made sure five teams out of the Americas when they beat Ireland 3-2 with a golden goal from Erwin Carrillo after 104 minutes of play in Al Ain.

Ireland staged a remarkable fightback after trailing 2-0 following goals from Edixon Perea and Victor Montano.

Irish substitute Kevin Doyle scored in the 85th minute and Paddy McCarthy equalised in the final minute of normal time but Carrillo won the game just before the end of the first period of extra time after he was fed the ball by Abel Aguilar.

Colombia will play UAE on Friday in Dubai for a place in the semi-finals.

## RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Final matchday results in Champions League groups E to H on Tuesday:

Group	At	Score
Group E	Manchester United (ENG) 2	(Van Nistelrooy 45, Giggs 58) Stuttgart (GER) 0
	Rangers (SCO) 1	(Mols 28) Panathinaikos (GRE) 3
	Zautautas 32, Basinas 62, Konstantinou 80	
	At Glasgow	
Group F	At Belgrade	Partizan Belgrade (SEM) 1 (Delibasic 80)
	Marseille (FRA) 1	(Mido 61)
	At Madrid	Real Madrid (SPA) 1 (Solari 9) FC Porto (POR) 1 (Derlei 35-pen)
Group G	At Gelsenkirchen, Germany	Besiktas (TUR) 0
	Chelsea (ENG) 2	(Hasselbaink 77, Bridge 85)
	At Prague	Sparta Prague (CZE) 1 (Kincl 90)
	Lazio (ITA) 0	
Group H	At Bruges	FC Bruges (BEL) 2 (Lange 27, Saetermes 85)
	Ajax (NED) 1	(Sonck 42-pen)
	At Milan	AC Milan (ITA) 1 (Kaka 41)
	Celta Vigo (SPA) 2	(Jesuli 42, Ignacio 71)

## STANDINGS

Final European Champions League standings in Groups E to H after final group stage matches on Tuesday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Group	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	
Group E	ManUnited	6	5	0	13	2	15
	Stuttgart	6	4	0	2	9	6
	Panathinaikos	6	1	1	4	5	13
	Rangers	6	1	1	4	4	10
Group F	Real	6	4	2	0	11	5
	Porto	6	3	2	1	9	8
	Marseille	6	1	1	4	9	11
	Belgrade	6	0	3	3	3	8
Group G	Chelsea	6	4	1	1	9	3
	Prague	6	2	2	2	5	5
	Besiktas	6	2	1	3	5	7
	Lazio	6	1	2	3	6	10
Group H	Milan	6	3	1	2	4	3
	Celta	6	2	3	1	7	6
	Bruges	6	2	2	2	5	6
	Ajax	6	2	0	4	6	7

Note: First-placed teams will be seeded in draw for second phase on Friday.

# Espanyol want Rivaldo

AFP, Madrid

Espanyol have made a bid to sign Brazil World Cup winner Rivaldo who was released by his Italian club AC Milan last week.

Daniel Sanchez Llibre, president of the Barcelona club which is bottom of the Spanish league, said Rivaldo would get back to them within 48 hours.

"The sticking point is the financial deal," he admitted.

The 31-year-old was reported to be on 215,000 euros (258,000 dollars) a week at Milan.

Rivaldo's agent Jorge Gama, who said last week they had had three offers from English Premiership clubs, says he has already turned down an offer of one million dollars a month to play in Qatar.

The former FIFA World Player of the Year joined Milan from Espanyol's city rivals Barcelona after Brazil's World Cup triumph in Japan.

But Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti limited him to just 16 Serie A matches, and eight Champions League games last season, when he only made the bench in the Champions League final against Inter Milan.

This season has been even worse for Rivaldo, who has made only one substitute appearance in the Champions League, and has not played in Serie A.

But he has kept his place in the Brazil team, playing five internationals for the World Champions, including four World Cup qualifying matches.



PHOTO: AFP

TIME TO TAKE ON POVERTY: Real Madrid's Brazilian superstar Ronaldo (L) and French ace Zinedine Zidane show the jerseys they will wear during The Match Against Poverty at a press conference in Madrid yesterday. As good will ambassadors of the United Nations, Ronaldo and friends will play Zidane and friends on 15 December in Basel, Switzerland. A host of top-flight players from around the world, including the duo's Real Madrid colleagues David Beckham, Roberto Carlos and Luis Figo, Bayern Munich's Michael Ballack, Manchester United striker Ruud van Nistelrooy, Thierry Henry of Arsenal and Lazio's Dino Baggio are expected to play in the match. German Formula One world champion and amateur player Michael Schumacher will also make a guest appearance. The game will take place a few hours after world football governing body FIFA unveils its player of the year at the annual World Players' Gala in Zurich.

# A kick in the B...?

AFP, Manchester

England midfielder Nicky Butt is facing the exit door at Manchester United after infuriating manager Sir Alex Ferguson by going public with his frustration over a lack of first-team chances.

The normally taciturn Butt has voiced fears that his place in the England team could come under threat if he is not starting regularly for his club, and admitted that he could be forced to move to prevent his career from stalling.

That clearly irritated Ferguson, who bluntly contradicted the 28-year-old's claim that he had spoken to him about the issue.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Ferguson replied when asked if he felt any sympathy for Butt's situation.

"He has not said anything to me about it. I cannot comment on something he's never spoken to me about."

Past experience indicates that players who get on the wrong side of Ferguson tend to find themselves offloaded quickly, Jaap Stam being the most notable example.

The Dutch defender was sold in the summer of 2001 after incurring Fergie's wrath by publishing an autobiography containing a number of minor indiscretions about life at Old Trafford.

Butt has made only nine starts this season, largely as a result of Phil Neville's recent conversion from utility defender to Ferguson's first choice enforcer in midfield.

The return of Paul Scholes from injury and the summer signings of Eric Djemba-Djemba and Brazilian World Cup winner Kleberian have further reduced Butt's opportunities.