



Barcelona supporters celebrate late into the night after their triumph in the final of the Champions League in Paris.

PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona erupts in ecstasy



REUTERS, Barcelona

For 76 minutes, Barcelona seemed like a ghost town, silence hanging heavy as fans watched their beloved team trail 1-0 to Arsenal in the Champions League final on Wednesday night.

But when Samuel Eto'o equalised with 14 minutes left and Brazilian substitute Juliano Belletti added what proved to be the winner five minutes later, the silence was smashed by a cacophony of car horns, claxons and chants of "Campeones, Campeones, Ole, Ole, Ole!"

"When Arsenal scored my heart sank to my stomach, I couldn't bear it" said Guillem Martin, 31. "It was almost worse when Barca equalised because you never know what can happen but they pulled through like real champions," he said, heading off for an all-night party in the centre of town.

Strangers jumped into each others' arms, scooter riders waved flags and fans stuck in a huge traffic jam leant out of their car windows to hug each other and slap high fives. A group of Dutch tourists wearing their nation's bright orange shirts were caught up in the celebrations, dancing in the tree-lined streets with the Spanish.

They claimed a small part of the victory on behalf of Barca's Dutch coach Frank Rijkaard, who became only the fifth man to win the

European Cup as both a player and a coach.

"When Arsenal scored, I was fine because I was sure we would still win," said 19-year-old university student Xenia Fabregas.

"We're going to dance 'till dawn. Forget class tomorrow. It's not every night that Barca wins the Champions League."

Near Barcelona's Nou Camp stadium club workers had already prepared the open-topped bus that carried the team through the streets only a couple of weeks ago when they won the Spanish League.

For some fans, the double whammy was just the beginning of a trend for the Catalan side.

"The Champions League is the Champions League, it proves we're the best," said Carlos Argregas, 32,

a bank worker.

"Now we're on a winning streak. We have the Champions League and that opens the way for us to win more and more titles."

Even in Madrid, home to Barca's arch-rivals Real, Spaniards took to the streets in celebration.

"OK, we don't like Barca much but we rarely need much of an excuse to party and tonight was another victory for Spain," said Adrian Torres, 28.

"First Sevilla won the UEFA cup, now Barca have won the Champions League. Now all we have left is for Spain to win the World Cup. Time to bring them all home."

'Spirit of L'pool inspired Barca'

AFP, Paris

Samuel Eto'o said Barcelona had drawn inspiration from Liverpool to come from behind and beat Arsenal 2-1 to claim the Champions League title here on Wednesday.

The Cameroon attacker, picked as man of the match, scored the second half equaliser with Juliano Belletti netting the winner after Arsenal, reduced to 10 men, had taken a 37th minute lead.

"We never thought the game was lost," insisted Eto'o.

"After having seen what Liverpool did last year we told ourselves not to throw in the towel.

"We followed Liverpool's example."

Liverpool staged the most remarkable comeback in the competition's history when fighting back from 3-0 down at half-time against AC Milan in Istanbul last year to force the game into extra time and then win on penalties.

"In the final you can't doubt yourselves," Eto'o added.

"The final's played right up to the last whistle. We covered ourselves in the spirit of Liverpool."

Eto'o then tried to sum up what it meant for Barcelona to leave the Stade de France with the European crown tucked under their arms.

"It's incredible. There's no other word to describe it. In a few years, my son, I'll be able to tell him: we won the Champions League and I scored my team's equaliser."

"Tonight is for Barcelona, not for Ronaldinho, Belletti or Eto'o - it's a collective success."

Quizzed at the post-match press conference on Arsenal keeper Jens Lehmann's controversial sending off in the first half Eto'o said: "The referee did what he thought was the right thing at the time."

"We thought he was going to let play go on and that the goal (from Ludovic Giuly) would be allowed. But he blew his whistle before, that's the way it is."

Police raid Juventus

AFP, Rome

Italy's financial police searched the offices of scandal-hit Serie A club Juventus on Thursday in the latest development in the fight against corruption in Italian football.

The houses of former Juventus directors Luciano Moggi and Antonio Giraudo and those of current players Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Fabio Cannavaro were also searched.

Moggi, the central figure in the Italian match-fixing scandal, and Giraudo are under investigation by Turin prosecutors for suspected false accounting and tax evasion.

Swedish striker Ibrahimovic and Italy captain Cannavaro are not under investigation, and it was unclear why their houses were searched.

One aspect of the probe is the sale of Matteo Brihi from Juventus to Parma in 2002.

Moggi is also suspected of abuse of market position and sporting fraud in separate investigations being conducted in Rome and Naples.

The Naples house of Moggi's son Alessandro, who runs Italy's largest company of football agents and is also being quizzed about alleged abuse of market position, was also searched on Thursday.

Juventus, Italy's most successful club, are under suspicion of match-fixing in the 2004-05 season and could be relegated from Italy's top division if found guilty.

Other clubs alleged to be involved are AC Milan, Fiorentina and Lazio.

Jancker signs for Shanghai

AFP, Kaiserslautern

Former German international striker Carsten Jancker has signed a one-year deal with Chinese team Shanghai Shenhua, his team Kaiserslautern announced on Thursday.

The giant former Bayern Munich and Udinese target-man said he was looking forward to a new experience after a season disrupted by injury in which he played only five matches and scored no goals as his team were relegated from the German top flight.

"Three or four European teams were interested in me but the Chinese challenge was too tempting," said the 31-year-old.

Having won the Champions League with Bayern in 2001, Jancker will now go straight into a tilt at the Asian Champions League title as his new side, who finished second in the Chinese League last season, are through to the quarterfinals of the continent's premier competition.

The 1m 94cm, blond-haired and blue-eyed Jancker, who scored 10 goals in 33 appearances for the German national team, will likely cut a striking figure in the Chinese league season which began in March.

British media lament defeat



REUTERS, London

Ten-man Arsenal's gallant 2-1 defeat by Barcelona in a controversial Champions League final was lamented by the British media on Thursday.

"So Brave, So Close" was the back page headline in the tabloid Daily Express, while the front page of The Guardian sports section read "Valiant Arsenal fall at the last".

"Lost in France" was the Daily Telegraph's poetic headline on Wednesday's match in Paris in which Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann was sent off after 18 minutes for bringing down Barca striker Samuel Eto'o.

"Brave Arsenal suffered Champions League heartbreak last night," said the Daily Star beneath a picture of a gloomy Lehmann walking alongside dejected striker Thierry Henry.

The Daily Mirror back page

read: "Kicked up the Barca - Henry accuses ref as Arsenal dream is shattered" in reference to striker Thierry Henry's claim that the referee was "horrendous".

Arsenal took the lead through England defender Sol Campbell after 37 minutes but goals by Eto'o and Juliano Belletti in the last 15 minutes condemned the London side to defeat.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was furious that Eto'o's equaliser was allowed, claiming he was offside.

"Arsenal came close to an unimaginable victory and left with an unforgettable defeat in the European Cup final," said The Guardian. "Barcelona, for all their fame, were desperate before Henrik Larsson came on to rescue them."

The reference was to the 34-year-old Swedish striker, who England will face at the World Cup finals in Germany, after he deftly set up both his team's goals.

The Express also paid tribute to the skilful Swede. "Henrik Larsson drove a knife

through courageous 10-man Arsenal last night as he set up both goals in Barcelona's 2-1 Champions League victory in Paris."

The Telegraph noted: "Europe's dream final turned into a nightmare for Arsenal last night."

"At the final whistle, Arsenal's players stood there, disbelievingly, their shirts stained by the rain and the endless sweat they had given for the cause."

"It was brutal to behold, the utterly sudden change of mood from joy to despair," the paper added.

The Mirror said: "Arsenal had glory ripped from their grasp last night as their Champions League dream was shattered on a night of unbelievable tension."

"Heartbreak" read the back page headline in the Daily Mail, which added: "The Invincibles were minutes away from becoming the Immortals. But they had not taken into account the incredible fighting spirit of the finest attacking force in Europe."

Referee admits mistake

AFP, Oslo

The Norwegian referee in charge of the Champions League final between Barcelona and Arsenal admitted Thursday he was wrong not to have played advantage in a key incident early in the game.

In the 18th minute of Wednesday's final in Paris, which Barcelona won 2-1, Arsenal goalie Jens Lehmann committed a blatant professional foul against Barca striker Samuel Eto'o just outside the penalty area.

As Eto'o crashed to the ground, his teammate Ludovic Giuly took possession of the ball and netted it.

But referee Terje Hauge had blown up as soon as Eto'o was fouled, thus playing no advantage.

So from a position where it could have been 1-0 to Barcelona and a yellow card for Lehmann, it was a free-kick on the edge of the area - from which Barca's Ronaldinho did not score - and a red card for the German keeper.

Hauge's performance has been strongly criticised by the press in Lehmann's home country, Germany, and by the Arsenal side, who claim that Barcelona's actual first goal, an equaliser, should have been disallowed due to an offside position.

Wenger urges Henry to stay

AFP, Paris

Arsene Wenger is planning to sit down with Thierry Henry to try and persuade Arsenal's all-time top scorer to stay at the club.

Speaking after the Gunners' 2-1 Champions League final defeat to Barcelona here on Wednesday, Wenger said: "I will try to talk to him because I have to prepare for next season."

"We have a young team, I feel this team is progressing and it is a future big, big team. We need Thierry Henry to achieve that because he is such a big influence on our side."

Wenger expects the France international to decide in the next few weeks whether he's going to sign a new contract with Arsenal.

He said: "He will sort that out before the World Cup and it's not long to wait now."

Barcelona are regarded as Henry's favoured destination if he does decide to leave the Gunners and he was seen in deep conversation with Barca striker and close friend Samuel Eto'o after Wednesday's final.

Eto'o, when asked what the pair had been discussing, said: "It was a private thing. That's the beautiful thing about football. We're friends, if we'd lost I'd have been sad but happy for him that he'd won."

Henry himself was non-committal when tackled on his future.

"Let me take this in first and then we'll talk about it," he told ITV television.

Barca's Ludovic Giuly, who played alongside Henry at Monaco, believes his former teammate will be at the Nou Camp next season.

"I think he's coming. He will say so when he makes an announcement before the World Cup starts," the France international said last month.

Galasek signs for Nuremberg

AFP, Nuremberg

Veteran Czech international midfielder Tomas Galasek has signed a two-year contract with German first division team Nuremberg, the club announced Thursday.

Galasek, who has scored one goal in 49 international appearances and was selected for the Czech World Cup squad, will join Nuremberg when his contract at Dutch side Ajax expires in June.

"Tomas Galasek is a very experienced player who will help our young players and allow the club to progress," Nuremberg coach Hans Meyer said of the 33-year-old.

It is the second major signing of the close season for Nuremberg, who finished eighth last season, after the capture of Croatian under-21 international Leon Benko.

Barca bury the ghosts



REUTERS, Paris

Barcelona finally laid to rest the ghosts of under-achievement in the continent's elite club competition on Wednesday by beating Arsenal 2-1 in a rain-drenched Champions League final.

Although the Catalans had reached the European Cup final on four previous occasions, their solitary success came at Wembley in 1992 when a piledriver from Dutch defender Ronald Koeman beat Sampdoria in extra time.

That triumph was the crowning achievement for Johan Cruyff's "dream team", a side that dominated Spanish football in the early 1990s by winning four successive league titles and was renowned for its crowd-pleasing attacking football.

When they reached the final again two years later with a side that contained Brazilian goal-machine Romario, they were humiliated 4-0 by Fabio Capello's AC Milan.

In addition to that Athens demolition, Barca have suffered two other defeats in European Cup finals.

In 1961 a side that contained Ballon d'Or winner Luis Suarez and the great Ladislao Kubala slumped to a 2-1 defeat against Benfica while 25

years later a team managed by Terry Venables were edged out on penalties by Steaua Bucharest.

With arch-rivals Real Madrid never missing an opportunity to crow about the nine European Cups that are on display in the trophy room at the Bernabeu, it is easy to see why winning a second continental crown had become a Barcelona obsession.

Coach Frank Rijkaard and president Joan Laporta had been careful to toe the party line and say that their recent league title was just as important because it was a measure of consistency over a season.

But for the club's fans, the Catalan media and most of the players, the Champions League has remained the Holy Grail.

For political, social and institutional reasons, Barcelona and Real Madrid will always be the biggest clubs in Spain, so inevitably European trophies have become the prime measure of their strength.

Still smarting from the disappointment of losing out to Chelsea in the first knockout round of last year's competition, Barca were determined not to make the same mistake when the two sides were drawn together at the same stage this season.

Rijkaard adopted a more practical, patient game plan against Jose Mourinho's men and showed a new-found defensive solidity that gave the Londoners little chance in the tie.

Spain celebrates European double



REUTERS, Madrid

Spain was celebrating a rare European trophy double on Thursday after Barcelona recovered to overcome 10-man Arsenal 2-1 in the Champions League final.

"Spain 2 Europe 0: After Sevilla's UEFA Cup, Barca win the Champions League," said the front page of sports daily AS the morning after Barca's triumph in Paris.

With Sevilla having thrashed Middlesbrough 4-0 in Eindhoven last week it is the fourth time Spanish clubs have won both titles in the same season.

Barca's second European Cup success also means that when added to Real Madrid's record nine wins, Spain have won Europe's top club competition more times than any other country.

King Juan Carlos I and Spanish prime minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero were in attendance in Paris to offer their support to the Primera Liga champions.

Wome joins Bremen

AFP, Bremen

Cameron international Pierre Wome has joined Werder Bremen from Serie A side Inter Milan on a free transfer.

The 27-year-old defender has signed a two-year contract with the Bundesliga outfit.

Wome has played for Cameroon 67 times and scored five goals.

He made 12 Serie A appearances for Inter last season and played in seven Champions League matches.

Wome missed the penalty that cost Cameroon a place in the World Cup finals.

Cameron needed to beat Egypt to qualify for Germany, and with the scores level at 1-1 the match went into injury time.

Cameron were awarded a penalty in timed added on and Wome's kick hit the post.

Inter offloaded another player on Wednesday with veteran defender Giuseppe Favalli joining city rivals AC Milan, also on a free transfer.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Low poker hand	1 Overly proper one
5 Pocket watch chain	2 Emanation
8 Liniment target	3 "Ameri-can"
12 Discourteous	4 Fame tribe
13 —	5 Trawler gear
14 "Take — Train"	6 Hooter
15 Press	7 Feathery accessories
16 Unambitious types	8 Diet doctor
18 Half a winter	9 Robert Moines
20 Piano style	10 Bedspread fabric
21 Tinker's handful	11 Reply weight position
23 Black bird	12 Book-keeper (Abbr.)
24 Sails near the stern	19 — Fifth Avenue
28 Coaster	22 Hum
31 Lubricate	24 Bowl
32 Packs cargo	25 Chart format
34 Shelter	26 Item by item
	27 Administrators an oath to
	29 Always, in verse
	30 —
	33 Wrap of India
	36 Orphaned cattle
	38 Complex, as a problem
	40 "A mouse!"
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	43 Celebrity
	44 Denomination
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	47 Hebrew month
	48 Stench
	50 Pl follower

Solution time: 24 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP
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P Q A D T T R D C P Q R F
D W X K E P C "Z D D O U D O E P U D N!"
Saturday's Cryptquip: DO YOU SUPPOSE GEOMETRY AFICIONADOS MIGHT GET A THRILL OUT OF SEEING A TOTAL ELLIPSE?
Today's Cryptquip Clue: T equals S

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.