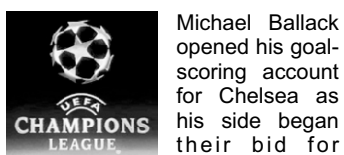




Chelsea midfielder Michael Ballack is about to score from the penalty spot against Werder Bremen during their Champions League match at Stamford Bridge in London on Tuesday.

Chelsea off to a perfect start

AFP, London



Michael Ballack opened his goal-scoring account for Chelsea as his side began their bid for Champions League glory with a 2-0 win against Werder Bremen on Tuesday.

Germany midfielder Ballack calmly converted a second half penalty after Michael Essien had given Chelsea the lead before the interval at Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has insisted before the Group A game that his team faced a tough task to qualify from a group also containing European champions Barcelona.

But success in Europe is of paramount importance for Mourinho this season after the clubs heavy investment to sign experienced stars Ballack, Andriy Shevchenko and Ashley Cole.

And, although the English Premiership champions had to

survive a few nervous moments against their German opponents, they emerged unscathed to begin their Champions League campaign in the perfect fashion.

Essien has been Chelsea's most impressive player so far this season, comfortably outshining some of his more famous teammates, and he drove forward after 10 minutes before flashing a long-range effort just wide.

Mourinho believes Werder are the best of the competitions third seeded teams but, although they were comfortable in possession, Thomas Schaafs team were let down by a ponderous defence.

Chelsea looked capable of scoring whenever they went forward and finally made the breakthrough in the 24th minute as Essien got his reward for a dominant display.

The Ghana midfielder's prodigious work-rate is allied to excellent technique and he was in the right place to punish a mistake by Werder defender Pasanen.

Frank Lampard surged into the

penalty area and, when Pasanen stumbled as he tried to clear, the ball fell invitingly for Essien to sweep his shot past Andreas Reinke.

Warders Miroslav Klose was top scorer at the World Cup and can pose a real threat with his aerial power. But he wasted a glorious chance to equalise in the 54th minute when he headed Torsten Frings cross over the bar from no more than six yards out.

Ashley Cole, making his first start since his acrimonious transfer from Arsenal last month, was providing good width down the left and the England defender's deep cross on the hour set up Didier Drogba for a volley that was only narrowly off-target.

Werder were a more dynamic attacking force after the break and they went desperately close to drawing level in the 65th minute.

Frings swung over a cross from the right and Klose muscled his way between Carvalho and Khalid Boulahrouz to direct a header onto the bar with Petr Cech well beaten.

But just as the Germans were

beginning to make a game of it they fell further behind after a controversial decision from Greek referee Kyros Vassaras.

There appeared to be little wrong when Werder defender Clemens Fritz jumped with Drogba to contest Essien's cross in the 68th minute, but Vassaras immediately blew for a penalty.

Lampard had been Chelsea's regular penalty-taker, but after missing from the spot against Charlton on Saturday and also for England at the World Cup, he handed the duty to Ballack.

The Germany captain gratefully accepted the chance to score his first goal for Chelsea since his pre-season move from Bayern Munich and drove his penalty into the top corner.

Lampard was denied by a post as Werder began to lose heart in the closing stages and Chelsea were able to stroll to a club record tenth consecutive home win in all competitions.

Makelele will answer France call

AFP, Paris

Chelsea midfielder Claude Makelele says he has no option but to answer his country's call again if France coach Raymond Domenech picks him for the next batch of Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Despite announcing his retirement from international football after the World Cup Makelele was selected by Domenech for this month's Euro 2008 qualifiers against Georgia and Italy.

Domenech threatened to invoke FIFA's harsh penalties if Makelele refused to play, prompting Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho to suggest the France boss was treating his player like "a slave".

Makelele, speaking to French television station Canal + on Tuesday, said: "It's quite delicate but after talks with my club if I'm picked I'll have to go."

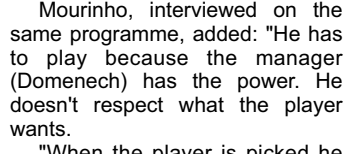
"When I'm on the pitch I give my maximum. It's quite normal when I'm with the French team that I give everything."

Mourinho, interviewed on the same programme, added: "He has to play because the manager (Domenech) has the power. He doesn't respect what the player wants."

"When the player is picked he plays with his heart, that's normal, afterwards I've got to deal with him as he recovers. We have to work like that."

Caneira shocker for Inter

AFP, Lisbon



Sporting Lisbon had a goal from Marco Caneira to thank for a crucial 1-0 Champions League Group B win over Italian giants Inter Milan, who had Patrick Vieira dismissed for two yellow cards.

Central defender Tanel picked out full-back Caneira in an advanced position in the 64th minute, and showing all the skills of a striker, he chested the ball down past Inter counterpart Maicon and blasted in an unstoppable long-range volley beyond goalkeeper Francesco Toldo.

The hopes of Sporting, returning to the Champions League after a six-year absence, were aided by the sending-off of Vieira for two bookable offences with 22 minutes still to play at the Jose Alvalade stadium.

Vieira was also sent off in his Champions League debut for Juventus.

Mourinho hints at hidden agenda

AFP, London

John Terry, Frank Lampard, Joe Cole and Didier Drogba were booked against Werder in Tuesday night's Champions League opener, and the key quartet are now one booking away from a ban.

The Chelsea boss suspects UEFA have a hidden agenda against him but chose his words carefully as he checked the statistics from the first round of matches.

Mourinho said: "I don't want to speak about this, because I spoke lots over the last three years. But the reality, when you look, is Barcelona have no yellow cards, Bayern Munich one yellow card, Liverpool no yellow cards, Valencia

one yellow card, Roma one yellow card, Chelsea four yellow cards.

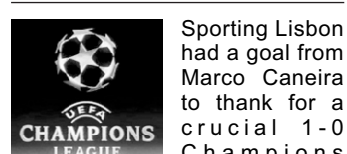
"Do you think it is violence? No." Valencia actually had two players booked -- Edu and Roberto Ayala -- and Mourinho overlooked the fact that Inter Milan had four booked away to Sporting Lisbon.

Terry, Lampard, Cole and Drogba must now tiptoe through the rest of the group games, knowing that another booking will mean an automatic one-match ban.

The Blues are away to Levski Sofia before back-to-back Group A games against Barcelona next month.

Kuffour caught on camera

INTERNET, undated



Samuel Kuffour has been slapped with a three-match ban after video evidence showed him striking former Roma teammate Christian Panucci.

The Ghanaian defender, now playing at Livorno, elbowed Panucci during Saturday's 2-0 defeat at the Stadio Olimpico.

As the referee and linesman did not witness the off the ball incident, which took place as they were waiting for a corner kick to be played, video evidence was considered admissible.

"The gesture was voluntary and clearly intent on causing physical harm to the opponent," explained the Disciplinary Commission report.

Kuffour has become the first player of the 2006-07 campaign in Serie A to be punished using video evidence.

after referee Hamer showed him a yellow card -- the first in his five-year Inter career -- after he asked the Luxembourg official to book a Sporting player.

Just before half-time, Sporting goalkeeper Ricardo was forced into two smart saves from playmaker Adriano.

The Brazilian latched on to a Luis Figo through ball and tested Ricardo with a fierce shot first off, and then saw a header off a high Ibrahimovic cross fall into the keeper's arms.

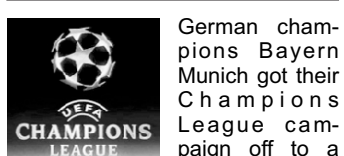
And Nani kept the excitement high, the Sporting striker forcing Toldo into a good save with a 25-yard shot as the whistle went.

Nani's teammate Liedson of Brazil had an excellent chance 18 minutes into the second-half, but the Brazilian could only blaze his effort from a Yannick pass into space over the bar.

Inter brought on Hernan Crespo to add some flair to its attack but it was all to no avail, even though Ibrahimovic saw a grasscutter from 30 yards drift just inches wide of the post with two minutes to play.

Too easy for Bayern

AFP, Munich



German champions Bayern Munich got their Champions League campaign off to a winning start with four second-half goals helping them to a comfortable 4-0 group victory over Spartak Moscow at the Allianz Arena on Tuesday.

The visit of the Pope had Bavaria in party mood before the game and the celebrations continued on the pitch as Bayern got last season's disappointment -- when they crashed out 5-2 to AC Milan at the last 16 stage -- out of their system.

ing the midfield with the gameplan clearly to try and come away from Munich with a draw.

As expected Bayern dominated possession but it was Spartak who had the best openings in the first half.

Just eight minutes in Czech defender Martin Jiranek had a free header following a corner from the left but he mistimed his jump and the ball came off the top of his head and over the crossbar.

In the 36th minute lone striker

Roman Pavlyuchenko then forced a fine save from Oliver Kahn and the goalkeeper was scrambling across his area minutes later after Clemente Rodriguez went close with a clever chip.

Bayern were harmless going forward but that all changed in the second half with Pizarro cutting inside from the right before drilling a shot into the corner for his 11th Champions League goal.

Spartak, back in this competition after a three-season absence,

conceded again three minutes later with Santa Cruz firing a great first time shot into the bottom corner after a neat turn.

Schweinsteiger then showed his shooting prowess in the 71st minute with a great volley into the corner to make it 3-0 and Salihamidzic got a tap in minutes after coming on as a substitute.

Bayern's next group match is arguably one of their most difficult with a testing trip to Italy to face Inter Milan on September 27.

Lucio banned for three games

AFP, Frankfurt

Bayern Munich's Brazil international Lucio was suspended for their three next cup matches by a German Football Federation (DFB) disciplinary commission on Tuesday.

The defender was sent off during Bayern's 2-1 win over St Pauli in the cup at the weekend for throwing an elbow at an opponent.

The ban means the centre-half, a World Cup starter for Brazil, will not be available for Bayern, winners the last two years, until the semi-final stage.

Toldo 'can't work out' Nerazzurri

INTERNET, undated

Francesco Toldo was beaten by a fantastic goal, but the Inter goalkeeper is increasingly frustrated by his team's inconsistency.

"It was a great goal, even if I wish I could've gotten a stronger touch to it," he said of Marco Caneira's stunning half-volley under the bar.

"The shot took a strange swerve and there was nothing I could do. Apart from that, Inter didn't play well enough and we had only a few shots on goal."

The Nerazzurri began their Champions League campaign with a disappointing 1-0 defeat away to Sporting Lisbon a far cry from their 3-2 victory at Fiorentina this weekend.

"You never can tell with this side. We seem to go from mouth-watering performances to terrible ones and I can't figure out why we're so inconsistent. We try to pass the ball around quickly to get towards the goal, but in the Champions League that's not so easy."

Toldo remained at San Siro despite seeing the goalkeeping gloves handed to Julio Cesar, although he was in goal this evening due to the Brazilian's back pain.

"I was about to retire this summer, but dearly departed President Giacinto Facchetti offered to extend my contract by three years. I try to bring my experience and relax my teammates when matters get tense. A great team comes from a strong defence and that includes the goalkeeper."



Inter Milan midfielder Patrick Vieira (C) receives a red card during their Champions League match against Sporting at the Jose Alvalade stadium in Lisbon on Tuesday.



Bayern Munich midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic (C) jumps on the shoulders of striker Lukas Podolski after scoring the fourth goal, as Ali Karimi (L) looks on during their Champions League match against Spartak Moscow in Munich on Tuesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	35 Cabbie	37 Got smaller	40 Pond carp	41 Lummo	42 Gilbert & Sullivan's ship	47 Oil-cartel acronym	48 Covers partially	49 Desire	50 Golf prop	51 Supplement, with "out"	DOWN	1 Kipling title	23 Narrate	24 "Zounds!"	25 Alpine cottages	28 Make a mistake	29 Salty solution	30 Discoverer's cry	32 Competitor	34 Feed the hogs	36 Take the wheel	4 Introduced by stages	5 Willy Wonka's creator	6 Judge Lance	7 Erstwhile private	8 Tame	9 Andy's pal	10 Georgia or Cal	11 "Puppy Love" singer	13 Milky gemstone	19 Model hero	2 Individisible	20 Cee follower	21 Monster	22 Caution	23 Opine	25 Eccentric one	26 Story	27 Put your foot in it	29 Cereal choice	31 Half a yr. before	33 Hut's roof material	34 Suffocate	36 Fly like the eagles	37 Flooding	38 Kachina worshipper	39 Regrets	40 Footballer's sore spot	43 "Got a Secret"	44 Acorn, in the future	45 Deli bread	46 Curvy letter
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Solution time: 24 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP
 H Z J U P W R U X B S W K W A U
 D L P H M H C A W D L P U K H J A J C D M,
 H J L E E U J W D W S U L M X
 K W C M M B R W P U K A - H Z H W X.
Saturday's Cryptquip: WHEN A PERSON'S JOB IS JUST PHYSICAL LABOR, WOULD YOU SAY THAT HE EARNS A MANUAL INCOME?
 Today's Cryptquip Clue: W equals E
 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.