



PHOTO: AFP

HENRY DISQUIET: A visibly frustrated Thierry Henry is on his knees after yet another missed opportunity during their Champions League clash against CSKA Moscow at the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday.

Gunners fire blanks

AFP, London

Arsenal were left to rue a series of woeful misses as CSKA Moscow rode their luck to earn a 0-0 draw in the Champions League.

Arsene Wenger's side have found it hard to break down defensive opponents at the Emirates Stadium this season.

Cesc Fabregas and Tomas Rosicky were the chief culprits as they wasted golden opportunities to score against a CSKA side who are yet to concede in the competition this season.

Arsenal had left Russia seething at the injustice of their 1-0 defeat against CSKA two weeks ago after an equaliser from Thierry Henry

was wrongly disallowed for hand-ball.

As if to emphasise his desire for revenge, Henry crashed into a first minute tackle that left Yuri Zhirkov pole-axed and earned the Arsenal captain a booking.

Henry's teammates quickly got the message that they had to play at a high tempo and Aleksandr Hleb burst into the penalty area before picking out Robin van Persie, only for the Dutch striker to waste the chance with a tame shot.

CSKA's Brazilian striker Daniel Carvalho had scored the Russian league leaders' winner against Arsenal two weeks ago and he was into his stride early on with a chipped effort that floated just over.

Van Persie was only just wide with a ferocious drive as Arsenal swept forward in a wave of increasingly threatening attacks.

Henry also went close when he side-footed just wide from Justin Hoyte's cross after Rosicky's astute pass had carved open the visitors' defence.

It seemed inevitable that Arsenal would break the deadlock but Fabregas squandered a glorious chance to give his side the goal their play deserved in the 27th minute.

The Spain midfielder exchanged passes with Rosicky before racing onto the return ball and jinking around CSKA goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev. But with the goal at his mercy he shot into the side-netting before slumping to the turf in disbelief.

Wenger's side had CSKA firmly on the back foot and van Persie should have broken the deadlock but he wastefully nudged a shot past the far post after another mesmerising move.

Despite their dominance, Arsenal's lack of composure in front of goal was proving costly and even the normally ice-cool Henry was not immune.

Fabregas's superb long pass sent the France star clear on goal but he stabbed his shot tamely wide with only Akinfeev to beat.

Yet that wasn't the worst miss of the half. That dubious honour fell to Rosicky when the Czech midfielder somehow managed to shoot straight at Akinfeev from no more than four yards, even though the goalkeeper was lying prone on the opposite corner of the goal-line.

Valery Gazzazev's side almost made Arsenal pay for those misses with a rapid counter-attack in the 57th minute.

Brazil forward Vagner Love beat William Gallas to a probing through-ball and forced Jens Lehmann to block and then gratefully dive on the ball as it trickled towards goal.

Wenger sent on teenage striker Theo Walcott in a bid to prise open a CSKA defence that had gradually been able to stem the flow of Arsenal's attacks.

The move almost paid instant dividends as Walcott released Hoyte and the right-back swung in a cross towards van Persie, but he failed to even get his header on target as CSKA held on.

Good news for Eidur

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona striker Eidur Gudjohnsen is set to be back to face Deportivo La Coruna in the Spanish league on Saturday after getting injured in midweek Champions League action.

A scan revealed Gudjohnsen did not suffer a knee ligament injury in Tuesday's 2-2 Champions League draw with Chelsea, the club said.

The Icelander was carried off in the closing stages shortly after putting the Catalan club in front against his former side having fallen awkwardly on his left ankle.

But Barca said he would be back within days although added he would have further tests.

The reigning Spanish and European champions are already without Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o, who is out until at least the New Year with knee trouble.

Tempers fray at Bayern

INTERNET, undated

Unrest and frustration has engulfed Bayern Munich, despite their qualification for the knockout stages of the Champions League on Tuesday night.

A goalless draw at home to Sporting Lisbon saw the Bundesliga champions book their place in the last sixteen of the competition, and keep their fourth successive clean sheet in the competition.

But goalkeeper and captain Oliver Kahn was far from happy, complaining at the lack of work done by the three forwards in coach Felix Magath's 4-3-3 system.

"Things can't work when the three just stand about and look on. One has to help out and work in midfield," he insisted.

Magath also admitted his own reservations about the system. "In principle, I'm no great believer in the three-pronged attack. But due to our situation in midfield I don't see any other option."

Club president Franz Beckenbauer chipped in with his two cents, saying the team was "missing someone like Michael Ballack."

The capacity crowd at the Allianz Arena were similarly discontent, and booed the team off the pitch after the final whistle, while Kahn admitted the game "was not exactly great entertainment."

The Bavarians travel to Gelsenkirchen on Sunday, where they take on title rivals Schalke in an eagerly anticipated clash.

We let Germany down: Doll

REUTERS, Hamburg

Hamburg SV's meek exit from the Champions League let down German football as well as the club and their fans, according to coach Thomas Doll.

Hamburg, the 1983 European champions, saw their faint hopes of progress from Group G extinguished when they lost 3-1 at home to Porto on Wednesday, making it four defeats from four games.

"We represented German football very badly in the Champions League," Doll told reporters after the players were booed from the pitch at the end of their latest defeat.

"We lacked the necessary aggression and the players will have to look at themselves and think about whether they really put everything they had into their performances."

Hamburg fell behind just before halftime to a fabulous strike from Lucho Gonzalez and it was only after Porto had increased their lead in the 61st minute through Lisandro Lopez that the home side showed signs of life.

Rafaël van der Vaart, making his first appearance in the group phase after a long injury lay-off, headed in powerfully from Piotr Trochowski's cross and Hamburg had chances to equalise before substitute Bruno Moraes made the game safe for Porto.

"It's simply not good enough to start playing only after you've gone one or two goals down," Doll said.

"I can totally understand why the crowd were whistling the players." Hamburg have had rotten luck with injuries during the group phase and Doll was hardly helped by the club's decision to sell defenders Khalid Boulahrouz and Daniel van Buyten before the start of the competition.

The team have played poorly in domestic competition, too: they are already out of the German Cup and with nine games played in the Bundesliga they have managed just one win.

Doll said he was satisfied he had sufficient quality in the squad, however, and promised a recovery in the Bundesliga.

"The quality is there and the players have the right character," he said. "They just have to show it."

"We now have to concentrate on the Bundesliga and I'm convinced we can come back."

Celtic crushed at Benfica

REUTERS, Lisbon



Benfica kept their chances alive of reaching the last 16 of the Champions League when they crushed

Celtic 3-0 on Wednesday. The win kept the Lisbon side in third in Group F but they are now on four points, just two behind the Scottish side in second.

Benfica went ahead with an own-goal by Gary Caldwell 10 minutes into the game when the Celtic defender tried to clear a cross from the right by defender Nelson.

In another mistake, Caldwell failed to clear a long pass by goalkeeper Quim, leaving the ball for Nuno Gomes to score after 22 minutes.

Celtic midfielder Stephen Pearson squandered an opportunity

to reduce the deficit when he shot wide six minutes from halftime but Russian substitute Andrei Karyaka made it three when he tapped in a cross from Nelson after 76 minutes.

Celtic coach Gordon Strachan refused to blame Caldwell for the defeat.

"We will review the match. If we had had more possession at the start of the game we would have played better," he said. "We are still favourites to reach the second spot in the group."

But Benfica coach Fernando Santos reckoned his side now have a good chance to progress.

"This win was fundamental for us. If we hadn't snatched the victory we wouldn't be able to fulfil the objective of reaching the last 16," he said.

"We faced some problems at the end of the first half but in the second half we controlled the ball and attacked well without losing our defensive strategy. I think we

deserved to win."

Benfica, who lost by the same scoreline at Celtic two weeks ago, controlled the game throughout with Gomes and Italian winger Fabrizio Miccoli missing several chances to increase the lead.

"It was a great game. We proved that we are a different team than the one that played Celtic in the past," said Simao Sabrosa. "Now we must concentrate on the next game."

Among more than 50,000 fans at the Stadium of Light were 12 Celtic players, led by captain Billy McNeill, who won the European Cup in Lisbon in May 1967.

They came from a goal behind to beat Inter Milan 2-1 in Celtic's greatest triumph to date. The players paid tribute to the feat on Wednesday with a visit to Portugal's National Stadium where the game took place.

AEK end barren run

AFP, Athens



It's taken 22 attempts but AEK Athens finally chalked up their first win in the Champions

League against 10-man Lille here on Wednesday with a 1-0 victory.

The Greek side knew that nothing short of victory, however improbable that was given their miserable record, would suffice to keep alive their slim hopes of making it into the next knockout stage.

And their task was eased after Lille's Greek defender Efsthathios Tavarildis, enduring a stormy and brief return home, was dismissed by English referee Stephen Bennett with 22 minutes played.

The former Arsenal back

picked up his first booking in the opening minutes for a challenge on Nikolaos Liberopoulos and received a second and fatal yellow card when he brought down AEK's Finnish midfielder Perparim Hetemaj on the left side of the penalty area.

Liberopoulos had a shot blocked by Lille keeper Tony Sylva in the 67th minute but the striker who missed out on his country's shock Euro 2004 triumph made no mistake seven minutes later.

The 31-year-old attacker was the toast of Athens when he produced a stunning right-footed shot which escaped Sylva's clutches to lodge into the back of the Lille net.

Lille coach Claude Puel, already having to contemplate life without Tavarildis for the tie against Anderlecht later this month, will also be without Yohan Cabaye after his late challenge on

Bruno Cirillo.

"It's a bad evening and we're frustrated considering the effort put in by the players, they deserved a different result to this," said Puel.

He added: "On a positive note everything's still to play for in this Champions League."

AEK, gaining revenge after their 3-1 defeat at Lille two weeks ago, move up to third place on four points, one shy of Lille with AC Milan five points clear at the top of Group H with two ties remaining.

The Greek side's coach, Lorenzo Serra Ferrer, reflected: "I think this first win will have a major psychological impact. It's only a beginning, but it was a very important win for us, and hugely satisfying for our fans."

Hamburg humiliated

AFP, Berlin



2004 winners FC Porto are in with a great shout of reaching the knockout phase of the Champions

League after an impressive 3-1 away win over SV Hamburg here on Wednesday.

Porto's South American connection came up with the goods with a spectacular volley from Argentine international Lucho Gonzalez followed up by a goal from compatriot Lisandro Lopez.

Hamburg hit back with Dutch international Rafael van der Vaart scoring a minute after Lopez's goal, but Brazilian Bruno Moraes scored three minutes from time to clinch the win for the Portuguese visitors.

Porto are now level on seven points with Arsenal, who drew 0-0 with group leaders CSKA Moscow on Wednesday.

For Hamburg, playing in this competition for the first time since 2001, it has been a brief European adventure with four straight defeats meaning they do not even have a chance to qualify for the UEFA Cup with third place.

"We worked hard for an entire year to come up against the best teams in Europe and we have let ourselves and the whole of German football down with our performances," fumed Hamburg coach Thomas Doll.

"Four defeats in four games shows we have not performed in this competition."

"I am not willing to put the blame solely on my team as I must take some responsibility." Van der Vaart returned in midfield for the hosts after two months out through injury and Argentina captain Juan Pablo Sorin shrugged off a niggling injury to start.

Porto were without their 18-year-old midfielder Anderson, injured in the league match with Benfica over the weekend, but started the stronger with Raul Meireles's fierce drive stinging the palms of Sascha Kirchstien.

Portuguese international Helder Postiga spurned Porto's best chance firing over the crossbar after some fine one-touch passing split Hamburg open.

The home fans were beginning to get on Hamburg's back but lived up in the 20th minute when Danijel Ljuboja, who gave away a stupid penalty in the first match between these two teams, forced a great save from Helton with a downward header.

A moment of magic opened up the game with former River Plate

midfielder Gonzalez striking a sensational 20 yard controlled volley that was in the net before Kirchstien could dive.

Minutes into the second half Postiga should have wrapped up the match after some woeful defending but shot straight into the arms of Kirchstien.

Porto had crushed Hamburg 4-1 in the home fixture and were once again too strong and the underworked Helton was even getting involved in the build-up play coming out of his penalty area.

In the 61st minute Porto doubled their lead with Lisandro Lopez pouncing on a centre from Ricardo Quaresma.

Van der Vaart pulled one back a minute later with a rare header and in the 65th minute the hosts hit the post as Porto wobbled.

However Brazilian Moraes curbed a sweet left-footed shot into the corner late on to ease their nerves and they now go into their next match at group leaders CSKA Moscow on November 21 full of confidence.



PHOTO: AFP

Porto goalscorers Lucho Gonzalez (L) and Lisandro Lopez celebrate the latter's goal in their Champions League encounter against Hamburg at the AOL Arena on Wednesday.



PHOTO: AFP

THE FIRST IS THE SWEETEST: AEK Athens player Nikos Liberopoulos is ecstatic after scoring the only goal that helped his team pull off their maiden victory in the Champions League over Lille at the Athens Olympic Stadium on

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 36 Antileam general money 37 Put your feat in your mouth? 9 Resistance measure 12 Hydrox rival 13 Leave out 14 Born 15 Exact 17 Haley's "Oz" costume 18 Quit 19 Indira Gandhi's father 21 Villainous doctor 22 Mall unit 24 Urban blight 27 Has possibilities 28 Won't shut up 31 Charged bit 32 Sort 33 A Gershwin brother 34 This and that

Crossword grid with numbers 1-34 indicating starting positions for clues.

CRYPTOQUIP

K SBOF AJCCZ AHJKM PB GJIY MYXM K'OF IBWPKEHFHE PKDWKWD GZPFSA JQ ABH QFXIY MYFH XQZ. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NOSTALGIC TOP-TEN TUNE CONCERNING A COUPLE OF NOISY ELECTRIC FANS: "THE WAY WE WHIR." Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals V