

Ba ban makes history

MILAN, Sept 23: French winger Ibrahim Ba made Italian soccer history on Wednesday when he earned a four-match ban for head-butting an opponent to the floor on his debut for Perugia last weekend, reports AFP.



Fiorentina's Christian Amoroso (R) staves off the challenge from Barcelona's Spanish international Luis Enrique during their Champions' League fixture at Nou Camp on September 22.

'Animal' popular for the wrong reasons

RIO DE JANEIRO, Sept 23: Brazil international striker Edmundo has long had to live with a reputation for being a party animal but the Vasco da Gama forward is now also having to come to terms with being a gay icon for Brazil's homosexual community, reports AFP.

Edmundo, a heterosexual who earned the nickname "animal" for his well-documented hedonistic approach to life, has topped a poll in a Brazilian gay magazine as the man the readers would most likely to see posed naked. The magazine poll came in the wake of Sao Paulo coach Cesar Carpeggiani announcing that he would sack his reserve goalkeeper Roger, who posed nude for G Magazine, if the photos are published.

Barca too hot for Fiorentina

BARCELONA, Sept 23: Barcelona raced to the top of Champions League Group B on Wednesday with an impressive 4-2 win over Italy's Fiorentina to give the Catalan club a maximum six points from two games, reports AFP.

Although Gabriel Batistuta pulled one back five minutes after the break following a neat freekick routine, Brazilian playmaker Rivaldo scored a third for Barca on 68 minutes with a penalty and then scored again with a solo run to wrap up the points for the Spanish league champions. The penalty came after Luis Figo had been brought down by Tomas Repka and Pasquale Padalino. Enrico Chiesa's 79th-minute strike for Fiorentina was mere window-dressing for the dejected Italians, who were held at home in their first match by Arsenal.



Dennis Bergkamp takes a shot at the AIK Solna keeper Mattias Asper in their Champions' League match on September 22.

Peru turn to Maturana

LIMA, Sept 23: Francisco Maturana, who resigned his post as coach of Costa Rica earlier this month, has been appointed manager of the Peruvian national team through 2002 World Cup qualifying, Lander Aleman, president of the Peruvian federation's national team commission announced, reports AP.

Magpie in Boro's nest!

WORTHING, England, Sept 23: A fan of English soccer club Middlesbrough was facing the shock of his life on his return from honeymoon on Wednesday after friends painted the outside of his house in the colours of local rivals Newcastle United, reports AFP.

Arsenal leave it very late

LONDON, Sept 23: Goals in stoppage time by Thierry Henry and Davon Suker gave Arsenal a dramatic 3-1 victory over Sweden's AIK Solna at Wembley in Group B of the Champions' League on Wednesday.

Arsenal totally dominated the first half and took the lead with a 27th-minute goal by their own Swede Fredrik Ljungberg only for AIK captain Kristian Nordin to produce a shock 52nd-minute equaliser for the Swedes, who are coached by Englishman Stuart Baxter. Just as the visitors looked to have earned a point, French substitute Henry, who scored superb late winner against Southampton on Saturday, drilled in Arsenal's second.

Draw keeps Rosenborg atop

TRONDHEIM, Sept 23: Norway's Rosenborg Trondheim remained just ahead of Germany's Borussia Dortmund at the top of the Group C table after a 2-2 draw with Feyenoord in their Champions League clash, reports AFP.

Less than six minutes later, Cote d'Ivoire striker Bonaventura Kalou put the Rotterdam outfit back in front but two minutes later Carew struck again. AIK had little to offer in attack, a wayward cross-cum-shot from ex-Newcastle striker Andreas Andersson just before half-time proving their best effort of the opening period. But the Swedes silenced Wembley seven minutes after half-time when they scored out of the blue. The Arsenal defence spurred several chances to clear before Ola Andersson slipped a simple ball through to Nordin who calmly beat Arsenal's Austrian keeper Alex Manninger from 10 metres.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Collated results of European Champions League matches played Wednesday: Group A At Rome Lazio (Ita) 2 (Negro 70, Salas 71) Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 1 (Rebrov 68-pen) At Maribor, Slovenia Maribor (Slo) 0 Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 2 (Zivkovic 82, Kirsten 90) Group B At Barcelona Barcelona (Spa) 4 (Luis Figo 6, Luis Enrique 10, Rivaldo 68, 70-pen) Fiorentina (Ita) 2 (Batistuta 50, Chiesa 79) At London Arsenal (Eng) 3 (Ljungberg 27, Henry 90, Suker 90) AIK Solna (Swe) 1 (Nordin 52) Group C At Dortmund, Germany Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 3 (Moller 40, Bobic 53, 65) Boavista (Por) 1 (Bento 44) At Trondheim, Norway Rosenborg Trondheim (Nor) 2 (Carew 21, 24) Feyenoord (Ned) 2 (Tomasson 12, Kalou 22) Group D At Zagreb Croatia Zagreb (Cro) 1 (Sokota 64) Marseille (Fra) 2 (Bakayoko 5, Perez 77) At Graz, Austria Sturm Graz (Aut) 0 Manchester United (Eng) 3 (Keane 17, Yorke 32, Cole 33)

Leverkusen blank Maribor

MARIBOR, Sept 23: Slovenian giants Maribor put up another brave display only for Germany's Bayer Leverkusen to snatch the spoils with two late goals in their Champions' League Group A match on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Marseille edge Croatia Zagreb

ZAGREB, Sept 23: A superb volley from Sebastian Perez put Marseille into the driving seat in Champions League Group D here on Wednesday, wrapping up a 2-1 win at Croatia Zagreb after the tightest of tussles, reports AFP.

With games against holders Manchester United to come, Marseille, who began with a 2-0 home success over Sturm Graz of Austria, had to ensure they maintained their good start with an away success and Perez's tremendous strike set the best possible seal on the evening for the visitors. Marseille made the perfect start, Stephane Dalmat, a summer signing from Lens, haring down the left and sending in a perfect low cross for Ibrahim Bakayoko to sweep home from 12 metres after 5 minutes. Graz drew level on 64 minutes through substitute Tomislav Sokota, who fired home from close range.

Beckham awaits his fate

LONDON, Sept 23: Manchester United midfielder David Beckham could yet be punished for his apparent kick at Sturm Graz's Tomislav Kocijan during Wednesday's Champions League game in Austria, reports AFP. The England international caught Kocijan with his right boot during the second half of the Treble winners' 3-0 win in the Arnold Schwarzenegger Stadium because the Sturm midfielder had obstructed him. Referee Alfredo Trentalanga took no action at the time, but if the Italian official includes the incident in his match report to the ruling body UEFA, then Beckham could be censured. A UEFA spokesman said today: "It's possible that something could happen if the incident is included within the referee's match report. Referees must submit their reports within 24 hours of the game and it is something that he has written something. If he has then the matter will be considered by our disciplinary committee, which meets weekly for Champions League games." Beckham could also be sanctioned if Sturm complain within 24 hours of the game, but that seems unlikely because coach Ivica Osim was at pains to play down Beckham's kick. The UEFA spokesman said: "If one of the clubs makes a report within 24 hours it will be considered, but otherwise if nothing is mentioned by the club or the referee the matter will be closed." Beckham, who was widely criticised in the British media today over the incident, has been dogged by suggestions that he has a suspect temperament ever since he landed out at Argentina's Diego Simeone at last year's World Cup and was sent off.



Manchester United skips over a lunging tackle by Sturm Graz's Franco Foda during their Champions' League encounter at the Arnold Schwarzenegger Stadium on September 22.

United storm Sturm Graz

GRAZ, Austria, Sept 23: Holders Manchester United made up for their dropped points against Croatia Zagreb by steamrolling Austria's Sturm Graz 3-0 here on Tuesday to take a huge step towards a place in the second phase of the Champions League, reports AFP. Graz made a bright start in the Group D encounter, pushing United back into their own half as the Austrians set about banishing memories of their poor showing in last week's 2-0 defeat by Marseille. United kept them at bay before taking the lead against the run of play after 16 minutes. David Beckham drove a freekick awarded for a foul by Franco Foda on Dwight Yorke, but Irish midfielder Roy Keane, on hamstring and knee trouble, reacted quickest to despatch a ferocious half-volley into the net off the bar past Sturm keeper Kazimierz Sidorczuk. Yorke headed home the second on the half-hour to knock the stuffing out of the Austrians following a Beckham corner. Within two minutes the Trinidadian international had fired Andy Cole on the counter-attack for the third as United completely overpowered the Austrian defence to rub salt in the wounds.

with aplomb to make it 3-0 as the reigning champions began to swagger against opponents who were clearly unable to draw any strength from playing at their Arnold Schwarzenegger Stadium as United played the Terminator role to perfection. United coach Sir Alex Ferguson was delighted with the victory. "We're pleased to get our first win and I thought the first half was very good. I thought our attacking play was great and I thought Yorke and Cole were excellent. They were always a threat to them," Sir Alex enthused. "It gets us off the mark and we have now got four points," he added. "Now we need another seven from our four games to qualify." Sturm, who had taken a solitary point from their previous seven Champions League games, were determined to make life difficult for their illustrious visitors - and with more luck could have gone ahead after six minutes. Gunther Neukirchner broke down the right and crossed to the back post where Tomislav Kocijan forced a decent stop from Raimond van der Gouw, who was preferred once again to Mark Bosnich. That mini crisis averted, United turned the game around completely to leave the Austrian double winners training in their wake.

Sturm rallied briefly with a shot on the run from Jan-Pieter Martens which failed to trouble Van der Gouw, who then had to react smartly to push away an Ivica Vastic free-kick for a corner before flipping a Roman Mahlich effort over the bar. After the action-packed first-half the second period proved an anti-climax but United were untroubled as Ferguson's men held on to their solid lead to kickstart their campaign after the frustration of the goalless draw with Zagreb. There was an ugly moment at the start of the second half when Beckham appeared to aim a kick at Tomislav Kocijan but Ferguson claimed he did not see the incident and Sturm coach Ivica Osim claimed he did not have a good view of the incident. Osim said "I didn't really see the incident at the beginning of the second half but I think it's just part of the game and it actually helped stimulate our team and the spectators as well." Ferguson pointed the finger at Graz's Roman Mahlich over a later incident which resulted in him and Beckham getting booked. "I think the lad tried to go for him (Beckham) and tried to get him booked and the referee knew he had to balance it after booking the Sturm Graz player by booking Beckham as well."

'El Matador' Lazio's hero

ROME, Sept 23: Lazio substitute Marcelo "El Matador" Salas lived up to his nickname here on Wednesday night, scoring the winner as the Italians roared back from a goal down to beat Dynamo Kyiv 2-1, reports AFP. Salas provided the killer touch as a deadlocked tie in Group A saw three goals in the space of four minutes midway through the second half. Dynamo striker Serhii Rebrov drove home a 68th minute penalty, but defender Paolo Negro rose to head Lazio's equaliser in the 70th and Salas rifled home the winner just two minutes later.

After drawing 1-1 with Bayer Leverkusen last week, Lazio are looking good for a place in the second round, joint top on four points with Germans. "I'm pleased with our position in the group table now," said Lazio coach Lazio coach Sven Goran Eriksson. "We've got Maribor at home next Wednesday week and we have to try to win it." Salas was on a similar wave-length, saying: "I'm happy. This was a really difficult match and we won it. The coach has decided who plays and who doesn't - the important thing is to be ready." Lazio, playing their first home European Cup tie in the club's history, had most of the

early possession but failed to find their rhythm or keep their temper - four of them being booked in the first-half. But they turned on the style in the second half and Dynamo, though well-organised at the back, eventually cracked under the pressure. The hosts' first chance came in the 16th minute when Yugoslav super-boot Sinisa Mihajlovic blasted in a trademark 22-metre free-kick which goalkeeper Olexandr Shovkovsky tipped onto the crossbar and Pavel Nedved, Lazio's most enterprising player, was the next to try his luck but a low drive flashed wide of the post. He missed a golden opportunity in the 29th minute when Roberto Mancini deftly headed a long ball into his path and the Czech midfielder ballooned his shot from about six metres. But Nedved was back for more five minutes before the break, curling a shot just beyond the right post with Shovkovsky at full stretch. Dynamo's sole chance of the half came in injury-time, when defender Kakha Kaladze steered a powerful free-kick over the Lazio wall and keeper Marco Ballotta just managed to palm the ball over. Lazio showed a lot more fight when they came out for the second half, and were nearly rewarded immediately. Alen Boksic gave the Ukrainians a fright after two minutes when Mancini pounced on a defensive error and hooked the ball over to the far post where the Croatian's header was turned round the post for a corner. Two minutes later, Yugoslav Dejan Stankovic latched onto Nedved's overhead kick but his tightly-angled shot at an near-open goal hit the base of the post and flew into the side-netting. Mihajlovic, whose free-kick goal last week earned Lazio their draw at Bayer Leverkusen, tried again on the hour but his effort cannoned back off the Dynamo wall. Sergiy Kononov won a dubious penalty when Mihajlovic was judged to have brought him down in a sliding tackle and Rebrov tucked the spot-kick into the left-hand corner in the 68th minute. For the home fans, though, the nightmare scenario lasted just two minutes, when Mihajlovic chipped the ball into the penalty area and Negro's glancing header sent it past Shovkovsky and inside the right-hand post. The Olympic stadium exploded, and the celebrations had barely subsided when Boksic broke down the left and crossed to the far post where Salas chested the ball down before hammering it past the keeper.

STANDINGS

Standings in Groups A-D of European Champions League for, against, points): Group A Bayer Leverkusen 2 2 1 1 0 3 1 4 Lazio 2 2 1 0 0 3 3 4 Maribor 2 2 1 0 1 1 2 3 Dynamo Kiev 2 2 0 0 2 1 4 0 Remaining matches: September 29: Lazio v Maribor Teatonic Bayer Leverkusen v Dynamo Kiev October 19: Maribor Teatonic v Lazio Dynamo Kiev v Bayer Leverkusen October 27: Lazio v Bayer Leverkusen Maribor Teatonic v Dynamo Kiev November 2: Bayer Leverkusen v Maribor Teatonic Dynamo Kiev v Lazio Group B Barcelona 2 2 0 0 6 3 6 Arsenal 2 1 1 0 3 1 4 Fiorentina 2 0 1 1 2 4 1 AIK Solna 2 0 0 2 2 5 0 Remaining matches: September 29: Barcelona v Arsenal AIK Stockholm v Fiorentina October 19: Arsenal v Barcelona Fiorentina v AIK Stockholm October 27: Barcelona v AIK Stockholm Arsenal v Fiorentina November 2: AIK Stockholm v Arsenal Fiorentina v Barcelona Group C Rosenborg 2 1 1 0 5 2 4 Borussia Dortmund 2 1 1 0 4 2 4 Feyenoord 2 0 2 0 3 3 2 Boavista 2 0 0 2 1 6 0 Remaining matches: September 29: Rosenborg Trondheim v Borussia Dortmund Boavista v Feyenoord October 19: Borussia Dortmund v Rosenborg Trondheim Feyenoord v Boavista October 27: Rosenborg Trondheim v Boavista Borussia Dortmund v Feyenoord November 2: Boavista v Borussia Dortmund Feyenoord v Rosenborg Trondheim Group D Marseille 2 2 0 0 4 1 6 Man Utd 2 1 1 0 3 0 4 Croatia Zagreb 2 0 1 1 1 2 1 Sturm Graz 2 0 0 2 0 5 0 Remaining matches: September 29: Croatia Zagreb v Sturm Graz Manchester United v Olympique Marseille October 19: Sturm Graz v Croatia Zagreb Olympique Marseille v Manchester United October 27: Croatia Zagreb v Manchester United Sturm Graz v Olympique Marseille November 2: Manchester United v Sturm Graz Olympique Marseille v Croatia Zagreb