

Inter interested in Ronaldinho

MILAN, Oct 20: Inter Milan boss Massimo Moratti is considering a move for Brazilian football's latest goings-on prodigy, Ronaldinho Gaucho, despite having Ronaldo and Christian Vieri on his books, reports AFP.

The 19-year-old striker has made a huge impact at home with Gremio and has also sparked on the world stage during the Copa America and more recently in the Confederations Cup in Mexico.

Moratti said: "We liked what he did in the Copa America and now are trying to see how he could be useful to us, were we to buy him."

"He is a pretty gifted player and it's Inter's duty to follow him very closely," he told the Gazzetta dello Sport.

MU fans taken into custody

MARSEILLE, France, Oct 20: Two Manchester United fans were arrested Tuesday night during their team's 1-0 European Champions League defeat here at the hands of Marseille but at midnight no serious instance of crowd trouble had been reported, French police said, reports AFP.

Marseille fans celebrated their team's win good naturedly by sounding their car horns in the centre of the French coastal city.

The two fans were arrested during a minor incident when projectiles were thrown by rival supporters 15 minutes before the end of the match, shortly after Marseille had scored.

Earlier before the match police had to diffuse a stand-off between fans at a brasserie on Marseille's Prado.

Police had mobilised 900 officers to ensure security for the match with 300 on duty since Monday in the vicinity of the stadium and the Old Port area.

There had been fears before the match of a repeat of incidents in June 1998 when England and Tunisian fans clashed before a World Cup match between the two countries in Marseille.

Marseille's fans also have a volatile reputation.

Trapattoni's prepared for Arsenal

FLORENCE, Italy, Oct 20: Arsenal's home advantage will count for nothing when Fiorentina meet them in next week's Champions League showdown, says buoyant Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni, reports AFP.

Fiorentina got back to their winning ways by trouncing Aik Solna 3-0 at the Franchi stadium in Florence while the Gunners were being hammered 4-2 by Group B favourites Borussia Dortmund in London.

Morale is now sky high here, with the Italians believing they can take all three points from Arsenal's men next Wednesday and condemn the Gunners to a place in the UEFA Cup.

"We deserved this result," said Trapattoni. "And now we are going to go to Wembley with everything to play for. Both teams will be on an equal footing, and both will have an equal chance of getting into the next round."

Ntini appeals to court

GRAHAMSTOWN, South Africa, Oct 20 (AFP): Lawyers for South African cricketer Makayha Ntini on Wednesday argued against the bowler's rape conviction, citing inconsistencies in the case.

Ntini, the first black cricketer to play for South Africa, is appealing against a six-year jail sentence and rape conviction imposed in April.

Defence lawyers told the High Court in the Eastern Cape city of Grahamstown that the 22-year-old domestic worker who claimed Ntini had raped her last year had given police different versions of the incident.

Police testimony at the trial could also be unreliable as the investigating officer had lost his notebook detailing the incident, they said.

The 21-year-old Ntini is on bail pending the outcome of the appeal.

The cricketer was accompanied by his fiancée for the hearing, which was also attended by officials of South Africa's United Cricket Board and his club, Border.

The boards have been criticised for supporting the young cricketer, who had been the star of the game's attempt to introduce more black players.

Ntini was the only black player named in the South African team for the World Cup tournament, to be held in May, but he was promptly dropped on his conviction in April.

He has twice broken club orders not to play cricket until the appeal is over and was last month pulled from a provincial game following a public outcry.

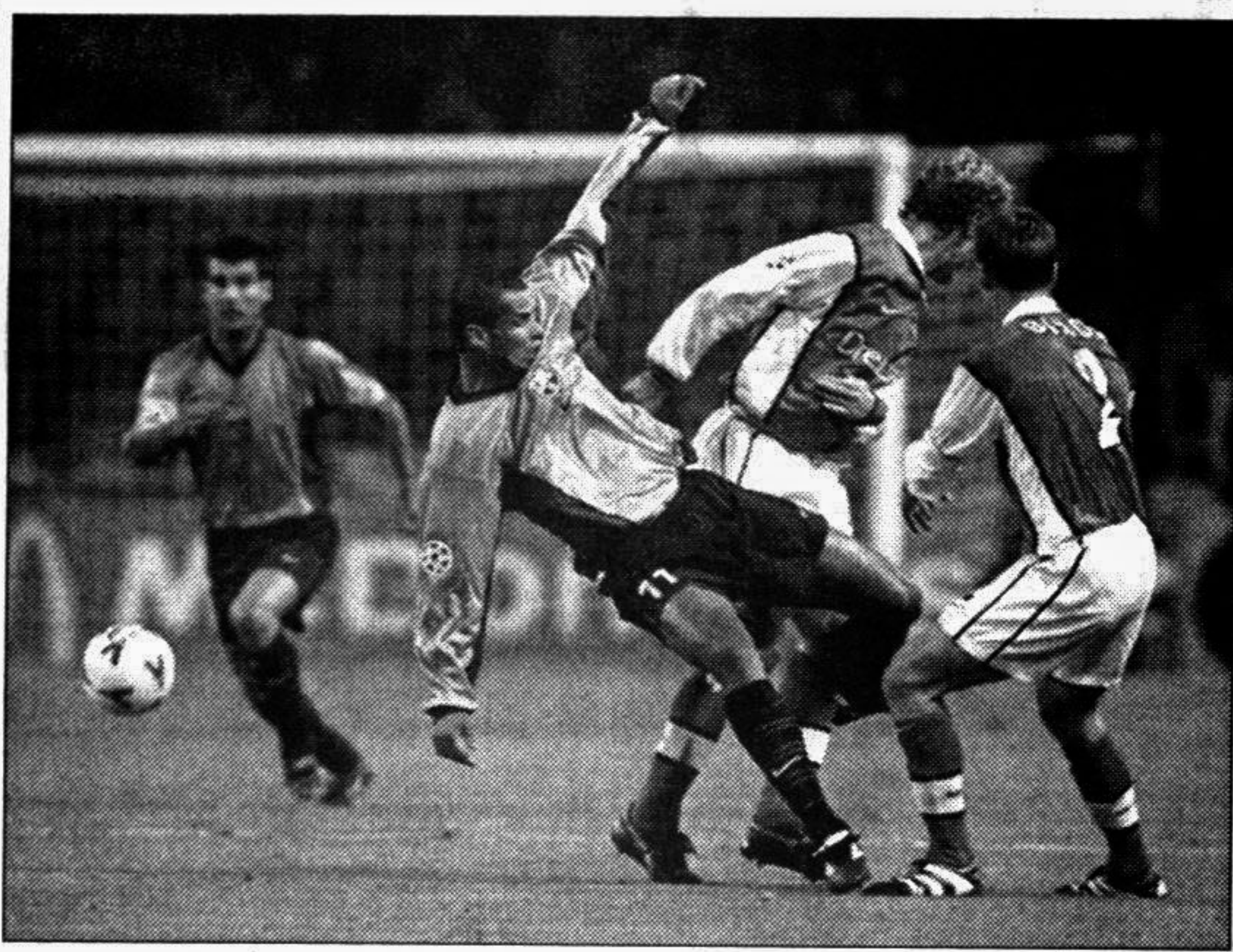
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three-nation Sharjah Cup, played down the newspaper report as being "a speculative leak of the recommendations."

"This is all speculative. We have not received any official word from either the PCB or the president," he said in Sharjah on Tuesday.

Akram was last month appointed captain for the rest of the season by Muejibur Rahman, the chief executive of the PCB. The other players were also cleared to play pending the findings of the judicial commission.



Barcelona's Brazilian superstar Rivaldo is off-balance after a tackle by Arsenal defenders during their Champions' League clash at Wembley on October 19. — AFP photo

Barca too good for Gunners

LONDON, Oct 20: Barcelona sliced Arsenal apart at Wembley on Tuesday, storming to a 4-2 victory which guarantees them a place in the second round of the Champions League, reports AFP.

Brazilian Rivaldo, with a penalty, and Luis Enrique scored in quick succession to put Barcelona 2-0 up inside 15 minutes and Luis van Gaal's side never relinquished their grip.

Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp pulled one back for Arsenal before half-time but second-half efforts from Portuguese international Luis Figo and another Dutchman, Phillip Cocu, sealed Barcelona's win, despite Marc Overmars late second for Arsenal Wenger's side.

The Catalan team now have 10 points from four games, five more than Arsenal and Italian side Fiorentina.

With Arsenal hosting Fiorentina at Wembley in a week's time, Barcelona cannot now finish below second place in Group B.

It was a freezing night in north London but the players quickly warmed to their task as the match started at a furious pace in front of 73,000 fans.

Enrique and Patrick Kluyvert were looking dangerous for Barcelona and after 15 minutes the Catalan side struck twice in less than 60 seconds.

The breakthrough came when Dutch international Phillip Cocu burst forward and Adams was adjudged to have brought him down in the area.

Up stepped Brazilian Rivaldo to strike the ball low into the corner and put Barcelona 1-0 up. Almost immediately it was 2-0.

Keown was off the pitch injured and the Arsenal defence seemed in disarray as, straight from the re-start, Enrique broke down the right behind Nigel Winterburn, beat a stumbling Adams and smacked the ball into the net.

Arsenal hit back and Barcelona keeper Francesc Arnau, a surprise choice in place of Ruud Hesp, twice saved his side.

First he stopped a Marc Overmars shot and then someone turned the follow-up from Adams, who was only five metres out, over the bar.

Van Gaal reserved a special word for Arnau, saying: "He was our fifth choice but he has worked hard and become our second choice behind (Ruud) Hesp who is not very confident at the moment. I knew how important it was to have a confident goalkeeper for this match."

It could have been three-nil when Sergi played in Portuguese forward Luis Figo down the left and his fierce shot struck Seaman's post.

Barcelona were made to pay just before half-time as Nigerian Nwankwo Kanu beat Sergi and crossed for Bergkamp.

The Dutch striker's control and shot were perfect as he beat Spanish Under-21 international Arnau to haul Arsenal back into the match.

It was Bergkamp's first goal in 12 games, a barren run stretching back to August.

The open nature of the match continued after the break and Figo headed just wide from Kluyvert's cross.

Bergkamp was looking the part, though, and Arnau denied Fredrik Ljungberg after some sharp interplay around the edge of the Barcelona area by Arsenal.

But suddenly another defensive error undid all the home side's good work.

Barcelona played a long ball out of defence and Lee Dixon played the ball behind Adams, allowing Figo to slide a low shot past Seaman from 20 metres to make it 3-1 after 56 minutes.

The end-to-end action continued, with Bergkamp firing off target after a fine run by Frenchman Patrick Vieira before Kluyvert wastefully shot wide at the other end when clean through.

But it was Barcelona who scored again on the counter attack. Josep Guardiola played a long ball from the back and Cocu struck a superb early shot past Seaman for Barca's fourth.

Bergkamp and Davor Suker combined to set up Overmars for Arsenal's second with six minutes left but it was too late for Wenger's side.

Four minutes after the break Oliver Neuville equalised again for Leverkusen but just after the hour mark Olexander Holovko restored Kyiv's lead and a late goal from Vladislav Vaschuk made it 4-2 to the Ukrainians, semi-finalists last season.

Italy's Lazio virtually ensured qualification from group A in the European Champions League with a 4-0 crushing of Slovenia's Maribor here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Yugoslavia's Sinisa Mihajlovic hit a left-footed freekick round the wall to score in the top left hand corner to start things off in the 36th minute.

Then Simone Inzaghi put Sven Goran Eriksson's team yet further ahead five minutes after the break in the first of his two goals of the evening.

Yugoslavia's Dejan Stankovic fired in another in the 63rd minute and Inzaghi rounded off the scoring in the 74th minute.

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Fiorentina's Argentine striker Gabriel Batistuta blasts in his team's first goal against Aik Solna during their Champions' League match on October 19. — AFP photo

Fiorentina cruise past Solna

FLORENCE, Italy, Oct 20: Gabriel Batistuta led Fiorentina to their first Champions League victory of the season here on Tuesday night when they beat Group B minnows Aik Solna 3-0, reports AFP.

Fiorentina have five points, the same as Arsenal who lost 4-2 to Barcelona at Wembley, but they go into second spot on goal difference.

The scoring started in the fifth minute with an own goal by Thomas Lagerlof after a Batistuta free-kick. Enrico Chiesa rifled in the second and late substitute Abel Balbo hit the third to put the result beyond doubt.

Fiorentina, unrecognisable from their limp performance here against Arsenal, were quick and aggressive in the opening 45 minutes, before completely losing the thread in the second half.

Solna deserved to lose for their abysmal performance in front of goal, spurning half a dozen chances to score.

Fiorentina coach Giovanni Trapattoni said: "We were very good in the first half, but we should have controlled the second better."

Delighted though with the flying start, he said: "When you get an early goal, it helps psychologically and tactically as well."

Batistuta gave Fiorentina that dream start by blasting in a free-kick which ricocheted off hapless midfielder Lagerlof, wrongfooting Swedish goalkeeper Mattias Asper.

The match was later suspended for four minutes because of a floodlighting failure, but Fiorentina kept up the pressure after the gloom lifted and were rewarded in the 36th minute.

German wingback Jorg Heinrich fed the ball to Chiesa and the Italian drilled home a low, near-post drive from the edge of the penalty area.

Solna's best chance came from a corner just before the break, when Lagerlof trapped the ball acrobatically with his heel but crashed his shot over the bar from around 10 metres.

He made up for the miss soon after the re-start by putting Daniel Tjernstrom clean through, only for his fellow midfielder to steer a shot past Francesco Toldo but just wide of the far post.

Lagerlof was then substituted after a glaring miss in the 54th minute, ballooning his shot over an open goal after swooping on a rebound as Toldo lay helpless on the floor.

Fiorentina finally showed signs of life in the 65th minute. Chiesa broke down the left side of the area, whipped the ball across the face of the goal, beating both Asper and a defender, but Batistuta was just a split-second late arriving at the far post.

Fortunately, Solna continued to squander chances at the other end.

Substitute Daniel Hoch saw a close-range shot blocked by Toldo and defender Kristler Nordin was allowed a free header from a 67th minute corner but amazingly failed to find the target from inside the six-metre box.

Fiorentina recovered their attacking flair in the last 15 minutes and Batistuta tapped the ball into an empty net, only for the pass to be ruled off-side.

However, fellow Argentinian Balbo made no mistake four minutes from the whistle when he collected a through-ball from Portuguese playmaker Manuel Rui Costa and slotted it between the advancing Asper's legs.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Collated Champions League results on Tuesday:
- Group A**
 At Kyiv, Ukraine
 Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 4 (Kosovskiy 4, Shatskikh 36, Holovko 61, Vashchuk 89)
 Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 2 (Kirsten 12, Neuville 49)
 At Maribor, Slovenia
 Maribor (Slo) 0 Lazio (Ita) 4 (Mihajlovic 36, S.Inzaghi 50, Stankovic 63, S.Inzaghi 74)
- Group B**
 At London
 Arsenal (Eng) 2 (Bergkamp 44, Overmars 84) Barcelona (Spa) 4 (Rivaldo 15-pen, Luis Enrique 15, Luis Figo 56, Cocu 69)
 At Florence, Italy
 Fiorentina (Ita) 3 (Batistuta 5, Chiesa 36, Balbo 86) Aik Solna (Swe) 0
- Group C**
 At Dortmund, Germany
 Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 0 Rosenborg (Nor) 3 (Sorensen 17, 58, Winsnes 70)
 At Rotterdam, Netherlands
 Feyenoord (Ned) 1 (Tomasson 76) Boavista (Por) 1 (Timofte 83-pen)
- Group D**
 At Marseille, France
 Marseille (Fra) 1 (Gallas 69) Manchester United (Eng) 0
 At Graz, Austria
 Sturm Graz (Aut) 1 (Kocijan 40) Croatia Zagreb (Cro) 0

Coaching success from the hospital!

KYIV, Oct 20: Dynamo Kyiv head coach Valery Lobanovsky helped his side keep alive their chances of qualifying from European Champions League Group A by guiding them to a 4-2 victory Tuesday over Germany's Bayer Leverkusen from his hospital bed, where he was recovering from a heart attack, reports AFP.

Kyiv revive hope

KYIV, Oct 20: Dynamo Kyiv kept alive their chances of qualifying from European Champions League group A with a 4-2 win against Bayer Leverkusen here on Tuesday night, reports AFP.

Kyiv are now in third place in the group, headed by Italians Lazio who had a 4-0 victory at Maribor of Slovenia.

It only took Dynamo Kyiv four minutes to take the lead against Leverkusen when Vitaly Kossovskiy turned in Serhij Rebrov's cross from close range.

After 12 minutes the Germans equalised when German international striker Ulf Kirsten turned in a rebound also from point blank range.

But nine minutes from the interval Maksim Shatskikh ensured it was 2-1 at the interval to the home team.

Four minutes after the break Oliver Neuville equalised again for Leverkusen but just after the hour mark Olexander Holovko restored Kyiv's lead and a late goal from Vladislav Vaschuk made it 4-2 to the Ukrainians, semi-finalists last season.

Lazio blaze Maribor

MARIBOR, Slovenia, Oct 20: Italy's Lazio virtually ensured qualification from group A in the European Champions League with a 4-0 crushing of Slovenia's Maribor here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

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Yugoslavia's Dejan Stankovic fired in another in the 63rd minute and Inzaghi rounded off the scoring in the 74th minute.

Lazio now have 10 points from four games and have virtually earned their qualification into the second phase.

Boavista hold Feyenoord

ROTTERDAM, Oct 20: Feyenoord missed a golden opportunity to go second in Group C when they were held 1-1 by Boavista of Portugal in their European Champions League match here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Feyenoord now have four points, one behind second placed Borussia Dortmund who lost 0-3 to leaders Rosenborg Trondheim in the other match of the group.

Danish international striker Jon Dahl Tomasson's 76th minute strike put the Dutch side ahead only for a penalty seven minutes later from Romanian Ion Timofte to square the match.

Marseille pay United back



Olympique Marseilles' William Gallas (R) and Manchester United's Andy Cole are in pursuit of the ball during their Champions' League match. — AFP photo

MARSEILLE, France, Oct 20: Marseille's William Gallas hit the only goal of the game for a deserved victory against Manchester United in their European Champions League match at the Stade Velodrome here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Gallas found the net in the 69th minute after an even first half but Marseille began to dominate after the break by

Manchester continued to push forward, and boos from the Stade Velodrome terraces showed the home fans displeasure at their team's unenterprising football.

Marseille, playing with Fabrizio Ravanelli as a lone striker, made little impression in Manchester's penalty area in the first half an hour.

In the 31st minute however United keeper Marc Bosnich showed his ability with a superb save, pushing a Robert Pires shot over the bar.

Pires, playing a one-two with Ravanelli, ran into the box and, with Henning Berg bearing down on him, shot on target, but Bosnich had the ball covered all the way.

Giggs kept trying to penetrate down the left wing but with little success and white shirts converged on him in numbers to stop his march goalwards.

Five minutes before the break, Ravanelli fired in a 30m freekick with his left foot leaving Bosnich well beaten but it just curled wide of the right hand upright.

Tempers flared just before half-time when Scholes was booked for a two-footed lunge at Peter Lucin near the halfway line.

Sebastian Perez was also cautioned after he shoved Scholes, while Ravanelli escaped punishment after he pushed the United midfielder.

After the break, Marseille began to play with more purpose and could have gone ahead when Pires squared the ball to Ravanelli in the box but his shot was saved by Bosnich.

United's midfield were making little impact and wingers Beckham and Giggs were allowed little chance to show their skills.

Gallas, playing a one-two with Stephane Dalmat, planted the ball firmly past Bosnich for a deserved lead in the 69th minute.

With just under half an hour to go, Gallas made a crucial interception which stopped United equalizing.

Giggs surged to the left-hand bi-line and hit a firm cross but Gallas cut in to clear the danger.

It came as little surprise when Marseille made the first change on 64 minutes when they brought Ivan De La Pena's fresh legs on for Frederic Brandt's tired ones.

Marseille kept up the pressure and Dalmat's angled left foot shot was not far from United's right hand upright.

Norway's Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, who scored Manchester's winner in the European Cup final, came on with just under 10 minutes to go.

Until the dying seconds of the match Marseille, playing their 42nd European Cup match, have surpassed St Etienne, who have played 41, kept up the pressure and held on for the victory.

Marseille boss Roland Courbis beamed: "We played a nearly perfect match, a big match by any point of view. It was a deserved victory this evening even if Manchester are stronger on paper than us."

His United counterpart Sir Alex Ferguson, looking forward to their next match at Croatia Zagreb, said: "We hope for a good performance at Zagreb. It will be an important match. We are capable of playing well there."

Mujcin hit the right hand post in the fifth minute for an early scare for Zagreb keeper Drazen Ladice. Shortly afterwards, Ladice had to go off after being injured following a shot by Gyorgy Karsos and was substituted by Tomislav Butina.

Kocijan had a great chance a few minutes before the goal, which he scored after good work from Ivica Vastic.

Rosenborg humble Dortmund



Rosenborg Trondheim players gather after the second goal against Borussia Dortmund in their Champions' League encounter on Tuesday. Rosenborg won 3-0. — AFP photo

ROTTERDAM, Oct 19: Newly crowned Norwegian champions Rosenborg Trondheim out-thought Borussia Dortmund Tuesday evening and consolidated their position at the top of Champions League Group C, reports AFP.

Rosenborg's 3-0 victory was thoroughly deserved as the Norwegians picked up where they left off three weeks ago in

the first leg when Dortmund struggled to a lucky draw.

The Germans' cause wasn't helped by the fact that the first of Jan Sorensen's two goals after 17 minutes ought to have been flagged offside but, as Dortmund's coach Michael Skibbe attested, there were no excuses for the home side on an evening when every Dortmund player performed below his customary level.

Rosenborg's six feet six striker John Carew was astonishingly quick and - as was the case last month - led veteran German defender Jurgen Kohler a merry dance.

He tapped the ball on to Sorensen for Rosenborg's questionable first goal and deflected Dortmund's defensive markers, no matter how tightly they shadowed him.

Sturm Graz earn first points

GRAZ, Austria, Oct 20: Sturm Graz thanked Tomica Kocijan for their 1-0 win over Croatia Zagreb here on Tuesday for their first points in the European Champions League, reports AFP.

Kocijan stormed through, and, under pressure from Croatia Zagreb's Edin Mujcin of Bosnia, found the net five minutes before the break to win this group D match.

The Austrians must play group leaders Marseille and defending champions Manchester United in their last two matches so realistically they are fighting for third spot and a UEFA Cup place.

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STANDINGS