

Draw suffices Sri Lanka

HARARE, Dec 9: Sri Lanka were handed a 1-0 win in the three-match Test series against Zimbabwe on Wednesday when the third Test petered out to a tame draw in Harare, reports Reuters.

When day light ended play nine overs before the scheduled close, Sri Lanka were 36-1 in their second innings after Zimbabwe declared on 197-7 leaving the tourists an improbable victory target of 185 in a minimum of 18 overs.

The day belonged to Zimbabwean captain Andy Flower, who scored his fourth half-century of the series in making 70 not out. Flower featured in partnerships of 42 with Murray Goodwin for the fourth wicket and 58 with Alistair Campbell for the fifth.

The rain-affected first Test in Bulawayo was also drawn, but Sri Lanka won the second Test in Harare by six wickets.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the last day of the third and final Test between Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka on Wednesday:

ZIMBABWE: First innings 218 (R Pushpakumara 5-56)
SRI LANKA: First innings 231 (R Arnold 104 not out)

ZIMBABWE: Second innings (48-2 over/night)
G Flower c Dilshan b Vaas 13
C Wishart b Vaas 9
M Goodwin c Arnold b Muralitharan 38
N Johnson c Dilshan b Wickramasinghe 9
A Flower not out 70
A Campbell c Jayawardena b Vaas 27
G Whittall c Arnold b Muralitharan 9
R Price run out (Jayasuria) 4
E Brandes not out 1
Extras: (b-4, lb-4, nb-9) 17
Total: (For seven wickets declared) 197

Fall of wickets: 1-14: 2-28; 3-51; 4-93; 5-151; 6-174; 7-184.

Bowler O M R W
Vaas 22 5 48 3
Pushpakumara 21 6 30 0
Wickramasinghe 21 6 30 1
Jayawardena 2 0 12 0
Muralitharan 35 11 52 2
Jayasuria 8 4 8 0

SRI LANKA: Second innings
Atapattu c A Flower b Brandes 6
Jayasuria not out 16
Arnold not out 14
Extras: 1
Total: (For one wicket) 36

Bowler O M R W
Olunga 4 1 11 0
Brandes 4 4 20 1
Strang 1 0 5 0

Result: Match drawn.
First Test: Bulawayo — Match drawn.
Second Test: Harare — Sri Lanka won by six wickets.
Sri Lanka win series 1-0.

Imran yet to say yes

KARACHI, Dec 9 (Internet report): Former Pakistan captain Imran Khan on Wednesday has not yet accepted nor rejected the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) request to represent the country in the International Cricket Council.

Imran on Tuesday was asked to replace Javed Burki as ICC technical committee member. Imran said it was a consuming job "and I am busy up to my ears."

Imran, however, said if he gets his assistance, he will be available. "I am a servant of the country in any capacity I can," he said.

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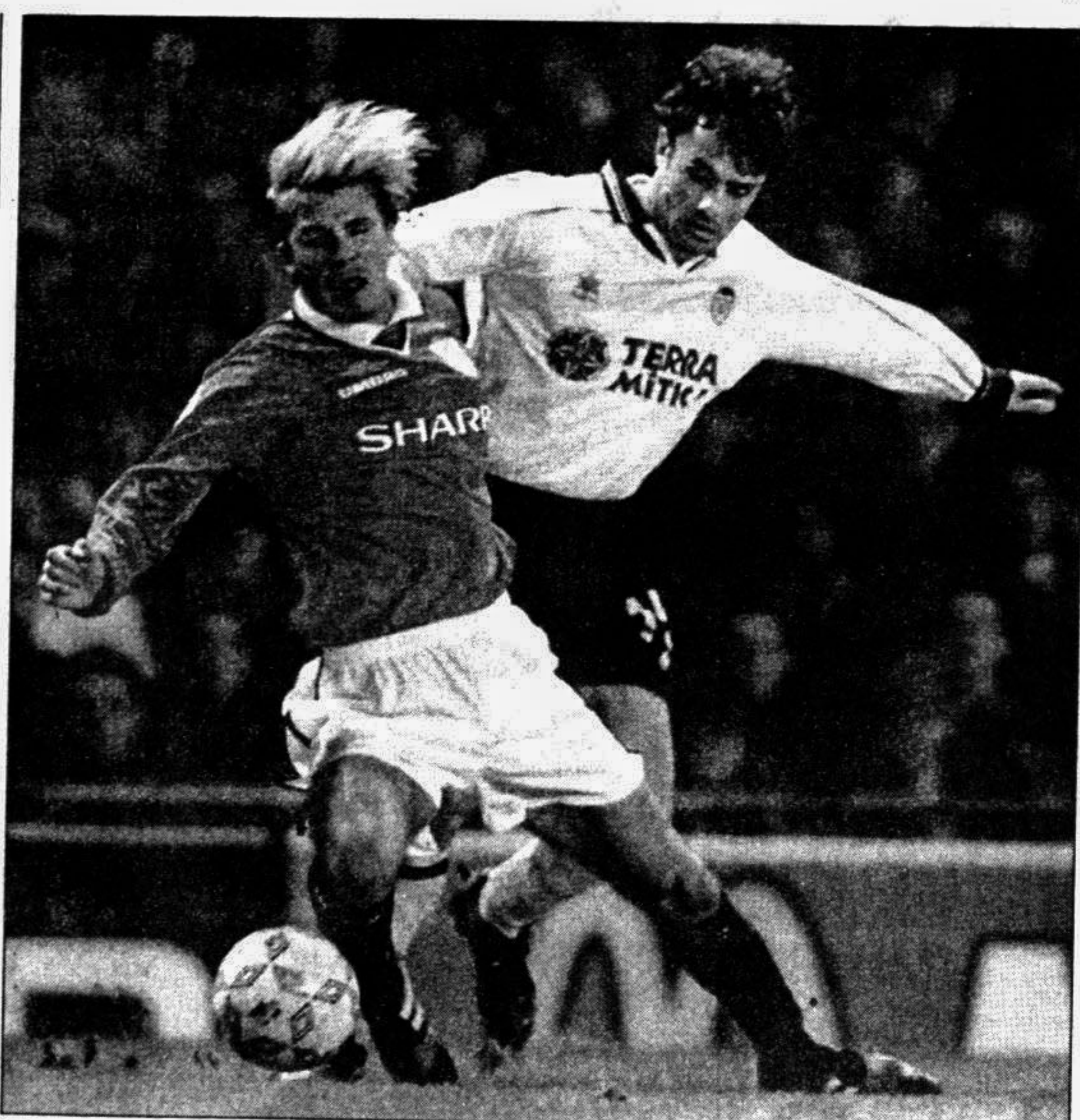
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Manchester United star David Beckham (L) vies with Amedeo Carboni of Valencia for ball during their Champions League encounter at Old Trafford on December 8. — AFP photo

Keane celebrates new contract

United too good for Valencia



MANCHESTER, England, Dec 9: Manchester United gained their first points of the Champions League second phase by beating Spanish side Valencia 3-0 in the Group B match at Old Trafford on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Roy Keane celebrated signing a new four-year contract reportedly worth 50,000 pounds (75,000 dollars) a week by scoring the opening goal after 38 minutes when the Valencia defence failed to clear Gary Neville's chipped pass.

Norwegian international Ole Gunnar Solskjaer added a second from David Beckham's right wing cross two minutes after half-time as United threatened to run riot against a side previously unbeaten in their European campaign this season.

England international Paul Scholes added a third after 69 minutes with a brilliant header which flew into the top corner from Beckham's pin-point free-kick.

Valencia's Argentine striker Claudio Lopez did cause United several problems at the back but the hosts held firm to strengthen their grip on the trophy.

Before the game Keane said: "I am absolutely delighted that my future with the best club in the world is now secure."

"I never wanted to leave Manchester United and the contract that I have now signed in-

stead of me United's desire to remain at the top of world football. "It is a fantastic day for me my family and the club."

However, the news initially appeared to have no positive impact on the pitch with United starting slowly and the Old Trafford crowd a little muted.

Valencia gave the champions an early scare in the first minute but Francisco Javier Farinos shot straight at keeper Raimond van der Gouw when well placed on the edge of the penalty area after some excellent work by Gaizka Mendieta.

United had to wait for 15 minutes for their first real chance when Solskjaer shot tamely at visiting keeper Andy Palop.

Ryan Giggs, who gave Jocelyn Angoloma a torrid time down the left wing, shot wide two minutes later as United slowly began to stamp their authority on the match.

Andy Cole could not quite reach Giggs' knock-down after a glorious cross-field pass by David Beckham, who found him in space in the Valencia box.

Then Solskjaer was again denied by Palop after Cole's shot had been blocked and Giggs fired over after ex-hanging passes with Keane.

Beckham hit the bar on 30 minutes with a spectacular free-kick from 20 yards awarded after Paul Scholes was brought down.

It was somewhat fitting that Keane should put United ahead after 38 minutes when he shot powerfully past Palop after

Neville's chipped pass was only partially cleared by the Valencia defence.

Former French international Angoloma was unlucky not to level the scores four minutes later after combining well with Mendieta down the right but his shot flew inches over the crossbar.

It took United just two minutes after the interval to go further ahead when Solskjaer slotted home Beckham's excellent low right-wing cross.

Valencia almost responded minutes later but Angoloma's powerful shot was splendidly saved by Van der Gouw and Lopez shot over with only the keeper to beat.

The Spaniards began to dominate the exchanges after United's second goal and Lopez was gradually living up to his reputation as the best striker in Spain.

However, after a sloppy spell United weathered the storm and with Beckham showing he might be next to ask for a pay rise after Keane, Sir Alex Ferguson's side sewed the game up.

Scholes made sure of the points heading home Beckham's free-kick with twenty minutes left as United strolled to victory, putting behind them the 2-0 defeat at the hands of Fiorentina a fortnight ago.

Ferguson was quick to pay tribute to Keane after the game: "I am delighted. It's almost like signing a new player."

"I have always had a good relationship with Roy and I always felt that he would decide to stay with the club."

Trapattoni preferred Christian Amoroso to Fabio Rossitto in his only real selection dilemma for the suspended Sandro Cois in midfield.

Johan Micoud should have put Bordeaux ahead in the opening spell with a header but Angelo Di Livio cleared the danger, arguably with his hand. The referee waved play on however.

Moreno Torricelli fired a shot on target for Fiorentina a couple of minutes later but the ball was superbly stopped by Bordeaux keeper Ulrich Rame.

Martins tested Toldo a couple of times during the half and, at the other end, Jorg Heinrich had a header on target and Rui Costa forced a save from Rame.

Aldo Frisciano earned a yellow card just before the teams went in for the break.

Sylvain Wilford fired in a powerful shot from the edge of the box midway through the second half, forcing a good save from Francesco Toldo.

Costa also had a shot on target but it was saved by Rame. At the other end, Lillian Laslandes could have scored with a header but for good work from Toldo.

With 20 minutes to go, Rossitto, who signed from Napoli last summer, replaced Amoroso. And moments later Mauro Bressan came on for a disappointing Chiesa.

Costa had a chance with an indirect freekick, then a header, before earning a yellow card for a foul on Lassine Diabate.

Jean-Christophe Rouviere came on for Martins with about five minutes left and Torricelli earned a caution in the final incidents of note.

Bonfrere back in charge of Nigeria

Lagos, Dec 9: Jo Bonfrere, a Dutchman who led Nigeria to the Olympic title in Atlanta in 1996, was named Wednesday as technical director to the Nigerian national side, reports AFP.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Collated European Champions League results on Wednesday:

Group A
At Barcelona, Spain
Barcelona (Spa) 5 (Kluivert 43, 63, Luis Enrique 45, 78, Guardiola 60) Sparta Prague (Cze) 0

At Porto, Portugal
Porto (Por) 1 (Drulovic 79) Hertha Berlin (Ger) 0

Group B
At Bordeaux, France
Bordeaux (Fra) 0 Fiorentina (Ita) 0

At Manchester, England
Manchester United (Eng) 3 (Keane 38, Solskjaer 47, Scholes 69) Valencia (Spa) 0

Valdano taking his time

MADRID, Dec 9: Former Real Madrid coach Jorge Valdano said late on Wednesday that he would think about club owner Lorenzo Sanz's offer of becoming general manager at the struggling Spanish giants, reports AFP.

The Argentinian, who scored in Argentina's 3-2 win over Germany in the 1986 World Cup final, explained that there were several areas to clear up about his job after holding three hours of talks with Sanz at his home on Wednesday night.

It has been suggested that Valdano, who coached the 'meringues' to the 1995 title before being sacked in January 1996 by Sanz, would be in charge of transfers while current caretaker coach Vicente del Bosque, who took over when John Toshack was sacked three weeks ago, would still run the team.

We discussed things at great length and I asked him several questions but there still remain several points that I want to think about," Valdano said.

"Real are seeking to completely revamp its administrative structure and we are trying to define what role the general manager should have particularly as it is a post that does not exist in Spanish clubs," he added.

Real put aside their miserable league for which has seen them slide to their lowest ever position of 17th just one point away from a relegation play-off, to beat Norwegian outfit Rosenborg 3-1 in Tuesday's Champions League match - in front of just 18,000 fans at the Bernabeu.

Salinas celebrates 400th in style

MADRID, Dec 9: Striker Julio Salinas celebrated his 400th game in the top flight of Spanish soccer with the winner three minutes from time as Alaves beat Racing Santander 2-1 on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

The former Spanish international striker, at 37 the oldest player in the first division, chipped in a cheeky penalty after teammate Javi Moreno had been bundled to the ground.

Racing Santander's Salva Ballester scored his 15th goal of the season in the 51st minute to join Real Zaragoza's Savo Milosevic on top of the First Division goalscoring list.

Van Marwijk to take over Feyenoord

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands, Dec 9: Current Fortuna Sittard boss Bert van Marwijk is set to take over at Dutch champions Feyenoord next season it was announced on Wednesday - he replaces Leo Beenhakker, reports AFP.

Wenger for caution

LONDON, Dec 9: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger warned his players against complacency for Thursday's UEFA Cup match at Nantes following some surprise second leg victories, reports AFP.

Arsenal are 3-0 up in this third round with the La Beaujoire stadium match to come, but might note Lyon were ahead by the same margin yet managed to lose 4-0 at Werder Bremen on Tuesday.

Glasgow Rangers' also fell in Borussia Dortmund although they started their second leg 2-0 up.

He said: "It nearly happened to us because as well because after winning 3-1 away they lost the second leg 2-1 at home to Olympiakos and were lucky not to go out."

"So I don't want it happening to us because, in the circumstances, it would look like a disaster if we went out now."

"Although we finally had a good win against Nantes in the first leg, it was not until the last few minutes that we scored enough goals to feel comfortable."

"But I know Nantes well. They are a funny side, and if we concede an early goal tomorrow we will put ourselves right back under pressure."

Wenger's choices are still limited, though, with injured Dennis Bergkamp, Martin Keown, David Seaman, Ray Parlour, and Matthew Upson not making the trip.

He had planned to rest captain Tony Adams, who in the last two seasons has taken an extended break at this time of year, to allow long-standing back and ankle niggles the chance to fully recover.

But because of Keown's continued absence with a calf injury and with Upson absent certainly out for the season after damaging a cruciate knee ligament last Saturday, Adams has to soldier on in the heart of defence.

Barcelona eat Sparta



BARCELONA, Dec 9: Barcelona turned in another Nou Camp exhibition in the Champions League on Wednesday as they swept to a 5-0 victory over 10-man Sparta Prague in a one-sided Group A match, reports Reuters.

Two goals apiece from Patrick Kluivert and Luis Enrique Martinez, plus a brilliantly taken free kick from Pep Guardiola, made it 15 goals in four home matches for Barcelona in the Champions League this season.

After a bright enough start which saw the Czechs struggle to keep the Barca attack at bay, Louis van Gaal's side were handed the match on a plate on

37 minutes as Sparta defender Martin Hasek was sent off for his second booking.

Sparta coach Ivan Hasek sighed: "We played well in the opening period but it was always going to be difficult for us after the sending-off. It was just a matter of time before the first goal went in."

Hasek's dismissal turned what had threatened to be a tricky night for Barcelona into a rout, as the Catalans launched wave after wave of attack.

Luis Figo, Rivaldo and Guardiola all tested keeper Tomas Postulka before the breakthrough finally came after 44 minutes with two expertly taken goals in the space of 60 seconds.

Kluivert, picking up a pass from Luis Figo after neat work from Rivaldo, turned substitute defender Rene Bolf on his left before lashing in from eight metres.

And Luis Enrique effectively sealed matters when, on the stroke of half-time, he produced a similar finish after finding a gap on the edge of the box thanks to Philip Cocu's pass.

Guardiola's vicious, swinging, low free kick from 20 metres out made it 3-0 after an hour and four minutes later Kluivert scored his second, controlling Frank de Boer's high cross from the left to stab past Postulka.

The Czechs were by this time just happy to sit back and hope to keep the scoring to a minimum, although they did manage a couple of hopeful punts forward to the big centre-forward Vratislav Lokvenc, who was expertly marked by Frederic Dehu throughout.

Barcelona's fifth came courtesy of a superb run by defender Michael Reiziger, who took Kluivert's through ball in his stride before striking at goal.

Postulka managed to beat the show away but Luis Enrique was on hand to tap in for his sixth goal in the competition and complete a highly satisfactory night for the Catalans.

Barcelona striker Patrick Kluivert attempting a bicycle kick during a Champions League match against Sparta Prague at Barcelona on December 8. — AFP photo

Porto tame Hertha



PORTO, Portugal, Dec 9: A driving run the length of the ground by second half substitute Mario Jardel gave FC Porto a clear 1-0 win over German side Hertha Berlin and leave them proudly atop Champions League A on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The Portuguese paid a price, though, losing goalkeeper Vitor Baia to injury and Paulinho Santos to a second yellow card in the 90th minute.

Baia limped from the pitch on 75 minutes after twisting his knee while kicking out the ball and was replaced by Hilario.

Knowing they were out-gunned Hertha chose a strictly defensive line up.

Iranian international striker Ali Daei stayed reluctantly on the bench until the final 10 minutes, leaving captain Michael Preetz as the only striker.

Yet coach Jurgen Rober disagreed afterwards that his strategy was too negative.

"You're always wiser after the event," Rober said. "We've

played several games in the past with just one striker and a couple of attacking guys hanging loose on the left and right. When you are playing a team like FC Porto I think you can afford to do that."

As a result Preetz had his work cut out him - until injury time, when he headed the ball unchallenged on to the outside of the far post.

"That was the chance we had been waiting for all game," Preetz said. "It came in the final minute and I missed it. It's rough."

Hertha had no reason to complain about the defeat though. They clung on in the first half as Porto got up to speed but after the break they were merely riders on the home side's coattails as Deco, Jorge Costa and Drulovic were all denied by Gabor Kiraly's fine goalkeeping.

Kiraly could do little to halt Drulovic in the 79th minute.

Hertha had shifted collectively up-field for a rare poke at goal but lost control of the ball and were caught at the back. Drulovic bolted down the right wing, holding off Hertha's

Andreas Thom in a one-on-one duel.

He could have passed to Capucho, who was standing alone in the middle, but slotted the ball home himself.

Porto ought to have been 2-0 up at that point but a 57th minute Mario Jardel goal was disallowed by an incorrect linesman call.

Jardel was on-side by at least two metres when he accepted a pass in front of goal but the linesman's flag was raised nonetheless.

"We played okay in the first 15 minutes," Berlin's lone striker Preetz said. "We pushed forward and saw that we could apply some pressure to Porto but then we fell back and handed over control of the midfield and it was really only a matter of time before they would score."

Porto now have a perfect record in this second phase after wins over Sparta Prague and Hertha.

Barcelona crushed Sparta 5-0 in Wednesday's other group game at the Nou Camp and trail Porto by two points. Hertha have one point and Sparta none.

Hertha Berlin custodian Kiraly makes a save against Porto during their Champions League fixture at Oporto on December 8. — AFP photo

2002 WC qualifiers

Qatar want to host Group Three

DOHA, Dec 9: Qatar plans to offer to host the Group Three qualification matches for the 2002 World Cup, a Qatari football official said on Wednesday, reports AFP.

"We are going to ask the three other federations if we can host the group three matches," Salem al-Qawari, vice president of Qatar's federation, told AFP.

Qatar are pitted against Malaysia, Hong Kong and Palestine in a tight group. But the Qataris will be confident of advancing after only narrowly missing out on a playoff spot for France 1998.

National team coach Jamal Hajji, a Bosnian, said he feared the climate in Malaysia or Hong Kong for group matches. "Our players are not used to playing in the rain," he said.

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