

Sport

Leverkusen bow out

BERLIN, Oct 26 (Reuters/Internet): Even Rudi Voeller could not save Bayer Leverkusen from going out of the Champions League.

The former Germany striker, who stepped in as coach last Saturday after Christoph Daum resigned following a positive drugs test, maintained his perfect coaching record with a 1-0 victory over Spartak Moscow on Wednesday.

But the German side needed to win by more than two goals after losing 2-0 to the same opponents in Russia.

They will now finish third in Group A, whatever the outcome of their last match away to Sporting Lisbon on November 7, and will have to be content with a berth in the third round of the UEFA Cup.

"It wasn't really a victory, but more like half a defeat, because we're out," said Voeller, who has led Germany to three victories in as many matches since his appointment as national coach on a caretaker basis last July.

Leverkusen also beat Borussia Dortmund 2-0 for their first match under him last weekend and Voeller has now won his five games as coach, with 10 goals scored and only one conceded.

Voeller, expected to stay on as national coach after his contract ends in May next year, admitted that Spartak, who joined group leaders Real Madrid in the second phase of Europe's showcase club competition, deserved to go through.

"If you look at their two matches against us they were clearly the better team," he said.

Lyon keep alive hopes

HEERENVEEN, Netherlands, Oct 26: French side Lyon kept their European dreams alive in Group C with a 2-0 away win at Dutch side Heerenveen on Wednesday night, reports AFP.

The French struggled in the first half coming alive during the second period to revive their flagging chances of a Champions League second phase place after just two wins following five matches.

Lyon must beat Olympiakos in their final match by at least 1-0 or have a two goal cushion to oust the Greeks - 1-0 winners over already qualified Valencia from the next round.

The Dutch had the upper hand during most of the first half and it was only thanks to good work by Lyon goalie Gregory Coupet that kept the French in the game.

Coupet deflected a strike in the second minute from Mika Nurmiela and a header from Talan in the 19th.

Heerenveen's Daniel Jensen missed a shot down the right by Nurmiela, and Coupet was again called to save the day keeping out two strikes by Anthony Lurling in the 29th and 42th.

Lyon lost striker Sonny Anderson to injury and his replacement by Steed Malbranque revived their campaign.

After half time the French lifted their game and developed their forward offensive.

Heerenveen kept up the pressure and Harris Huizingh struck in the 53rd.

But Lyon opened the scoring in the 68th when Malbranque found the net from a shot by Tony Varela and ten minutes later Malbranque set up the winner when he fed Steve Marlet.

Lyon are second last in Group C with six points, six points behind already qualified Valencia on 12 and second-placed Olympiakos of Greece on 9 points. Heerenveen, on three points, are out.

Mihajlovic says sorry

ROME, Oct 26: Lazio's Yugoslav defender Sinisa Mihajlovic Wednesday publicly apologised for insulting Arsenal's French midfielder Patrick Vieira in last Tuesday's Champions League clash between the two teams, reports AFP.

Mihajlovic, who last week admitted insulting Senegalese Vieira, but denied the remarks were racist although he acknowledged referring to his opponent's colour, made his statement before Lazio met Shakhtar Donetsk of Ukraine in a B clash.

Mihajlovic, wearing a suit as he is currently suspended because of the incident, took to the field to make his statement.

"I know I made a mistake last Tuesday and I want to take advantage of this European night to apologise to all people of colour who were justifiably offended by the expressions I used in a particularly tense moment on the field," said Mihajlovic.

"But I want to deny the racist label that has been applied to me."

He then appealed to the fans, a large section of whom who barracked all of Arsenal's black players during last week's 1-1 draw, not to repeat the abuse henceforth.

"Please stop for ever the racist chants against players of colour," he said.

Mihajlovic went on to claim that former colleagues when he was at Sampdoria Ruud Gullit, Clarence Seedorf and Christian Karembeu - all black players - would confirm his good character.



Real Madrid's Albert Celades (C) trying to evade a sliding tackle from Sporting Lisbon's Sa Pinto (L) during their UEFA Champions League fixture at Madrid on October 25. -AFP photo

Real simply too good



MADRID, Oct 26 (Reuters/Internet)

Even the normally impassive Real Madrid coach Vicente del Bosque managed a smile as he said that he was highly contented by his team's comfortable 4-0 Champions League Group A victory over Sporting Lisbon on Wednesday.

"Well, I am very pleased for two reasons. First because we have won now the group and second because the concentration and level of interest of the players and the rhythm at which they played was excellent."

Del Bosque said that the victory, which saw them score their 500th goal in Europe's elite football competition, reflected their present level of form.

"We gave a demonstration of our control and authority, and that is always good. We seem to be capable of maintaining last

year's European domination and we are now showing much greater confidence in our home matches."

After first half goals from Gutierrez and Savio the Real coach said he was glad to be able to rotate some of his players. He highlighted the role played by substitute Fernando Morientes who returned from a long-term injury to score Real's last two goals.

"Real Madrid deserved to win. We came into the match with a lot of hope and expectation, but we just made too many errors."

The first goal really hurt us and although I tried to change things round in the second half Real's next two goals completely sank us."

Inacio highlighted two key problems faced by his team.

"On the one hand we were unable to open up the Real defence and on the other we lacked concentration on our own defence. I hoped for more from my team, but it just wasn't our night."

McManaman appeared as a 52nd minute substitute in place of Luis Figo and played well in only his second Champions League match of the season after being otherwise sidelined for Spanish league games.

Newspaper reports have linked him with a loan move to Rangers in Scotland, but Del

Boque said that the key problem was faced by his team.

"The home side had rarely ventured into the Rangers half of the field but with 20 minutes gone they punished the Scots with an expert display of counter-attacking football."

Ronald de Boer was dispossessed in the middle of the pitch and just two passes later, Yuran was bearing down on the Rangers goal with only Barry Ferguson tracking back.

A dip of the shoulders was enough to wrong-foot both debutant keeper Jesper Christiansen and Ferguson allowing the Russian striker to tap the ball into an empty net.

Billy Dodd took the place of Rod Wallace for the final 20 minutes of the match as Rangers chased the goal which would have made their Champions League progress so much easier.

But they suffered another set-back after 85 minutes when Numans was ordered off the pitch and just two passes later, Yuran was bearing down on the Rangers goal with only Barry Ferguson tracking back.

With virtually the last kick of the ball, Prilasius coolly slotted the ball into the corner of Christiansen's net with the Rangers defence all at sea.

Seven minutes after half-time Arsenal grabbed a fourth. Henry glided into the penalty area after dancing past two defenders and his cross was turned in by Kanu.

Arsenal, in total control, should have added to their total but squandered numerous chances to score more goals and Rosicky made the scoreline for the visitors by scoring a brilliant solo effort moments before the final whistle.

Ten minutes from the break Arsenal went further in front. Novotny tripped Nwankwo Kanu 20 metres from goal and the Gunners scored from the resulting free-kick.

Postulka ought to have held Henry's initial shot which was clipped over the wall, but he spilled it at the feet of Dixon.

Before Sparta had a chance to draw breath, Arsenal doubled their lead.

Frenchman Thierry Henry's neat touch sent compatriot Robert Pires speeding to the by-line and his low cross was coolly converted by Lauren, arriving late into the penalty area.

It could have been three in the 10th minute when Jiri Nowotny rolled an intended

back-pass into the path of Henry.

The former Juventus striker skipped past the onrushing Postulka but was forced wide and could only cut his shot into the set-netting.

Sparta composed themselves and came within inches of hauling themselves back into the contest when Parlour conceded a free-kick, just outside the Arsenal box, in the centre of the pitch.

Vladimir Labant swerved the set-piece over the wall towards the top corner but David Seaman sprang to his right to divert the shot onto the underside of the bar. The ball bounced back into play and Dixon thumped it to safety.

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STANDINGS

PARIS, Oct 26 (AFP): European Champions League first phase tables on Wednesday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

GROUP A

Real Madrid (Spa)	5	4	1	0	15	7	13
Spartak Moscow (Rus)	5	3	0	2	8	3	9
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)	5	2	0	3	9	12	6
Sporting Portugal (Por)	5	0	1	4	5	15	1

GROUP B

Arsenal (Eng)	5	4	1	0	11	5	13
Lazio (Ita)	5	3	1	1	12	4	10
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr)	5	1	0	4	7	15	3
Sparta Prague (Cze)	5	1	0	4	6	12	3

GROUP C

Valencia (Spa)	5	4	0	1	6	3	12
Olympiakos (Gre)	5	3	0	2	6	4	9
Lyon (Ned)	5	2	0	3	7	6	6
Heerenveen (Ned)	5	1	0	4	2	8	3

GROUP D

Sturm Graz (Aut)	5	3	0	2	7	10	9
Galatasaray (Tur)	5	2	1	2	8	11	7
Glasgow Rangers (Sco)	5	2	1	2	8	5	7
Monaco (Fra)	5	2	0	3	11	8	6

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

PARIS, Oct 26 (AFP): European Champions League first phase results on Wednesday:

Group A

Leverkusen, Germany
Bayern Leverkusen (Ger) 1 (Ballack 52) Spartak Moscow (Rus) 0

Real Madrid (Spa) 4 (Guti 12, Savio 42, Morentes 62, 69) Sporting Lisbon (Por) 0

Group B

Arsenal (Eng) 4 (Parlour 5, Lauren 8, Dixon 35, Kamu 52) Sparta Prague (Cze) 2 (Labant 41, pen, Rosicky 90)

Group C

Lazio (Ita) 5 (Claudio Lopez 48, 68, 90, Favalli 54, Veron 56) Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Vorobey 41)

Group D

Monaco (Fra) 4 (Contreras 6, Bonnai 18, Simon 22, Nonda 26) Galatasaray (Tur) 2 (Unsal 25, Bulet 63)

Graz, Austria

Sturm Graz (Aut) 2 (Juran 20, Prilasius 94) Rangers (Sco) 0 (Malbranque 68, Marlet 78)

Lazio turn on the style

ROME, Oct 26: Lazio booked their place in the second phase of the European Champions League.

Wednesday, recovering from a first-half sucker punch to deliver a 5-1 knockout blow to Shakhtar Donetsk of Ukraine at the Olympic Stadium, results AFP.

The visitors stunned their hosts by taking the lead through Andri Vorobey after 41 minutes with a rare foray into Lazio territory.

But goals in the second period from Claudio Lopez (flat-trick), Giuseppe Favalli and Juan Sebastian Veron ensured that the Roman outfit progress from pool B alongside England