

Bayern settle a score

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Manchester

A late goal from Brazilian substitute Paulo Sergio gave Bayern Munich a 1-0 win over Manchester United in their Champions League quarter-final, first leg tie at Old Trafford on



Bayern Munich's Brazilian forward Paulo Sergio is ecstatic after netting the winner against Manchester United.

Tuesday. In a replay of the epic 1999 final between the two teams which United won in dramatic fashion, Sergio's close-range shot four minutes from time gives the English Premiership leaders plenty to do in the second leg in Munich in a fortnight.

United enjoyed plenty of possession but failed to make the breakthrough against a stubborn German defence.

France international goalkeeper Fabien Barthez made three splendid saves to deny the visitors and substitute Alexander Zickler rattled United's crossbar before Sergio settled the match to exact revenge for a determined Bayern side.

United coach Sir Alex Ferguson was unhappy that his side did not listen to the lessons he taught on the training ground.

"I'm disappointed because they scored from a set-piece and we talked about that before the game," said Ferguson.

He refused to throw in the towel, however, and said an early goal for United in the second leg will throw the game wide open.

"We have a good chance if we score a goal in Munich. The whole game can change and they know that," he said.

"It's just disappointing because I thought we played well enough to win it."

"The goal was a bad one to lose. I'd need to see the replay, but it looked like a terrible one to lose."

Ferguson said United failed to match their first half display while the visitors improved as the game went on.

"We didn't do as well in the second half as we did in the first, and they did improve in the second half," he said.

"Zickler came on and gave them some energy up front, and they worked very hard."

Ferguson drew some comfort from the bookings which have ruled Bayern duo Bixente Lizarazu and Hasan Salihamidzic out of the return leg.

But United did not escape unscathed with David Beckham's yellow card ensuring he too misses

the Munich match.

"They've got a couple of important players missing - Lizarazu is a very good player, and so is Salihamidzic - but at the end of the day we'll just have to make sure that we go there and perform properly," he said.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said he was pleased that patience paid off in the end with Sergio's late

goal. "We tried to play compact and not let them have too much space because if you do they can punish you," said Hitzfeld.

"We tried to exploit their nervousness at the back as we knew they could not afford to concede a goal and although we had to wait for our opportunities, we got them at the end."

It was the first meeting between the two teams since that incredible night in Barcelona two years ago when injury time goals from Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer gave the English club a 2-1 win.

Bayern led the final 1-0 deep into injury time at the Nou Camp through a Mario Basler goal before United substitutes Sheringham and Solskjaer snatched victory.

Eleven survivors from that never to be forgotten final at the Nou Camp - five for United and six for Bayern - started the match in front of just under 67,000 fans.

Solskjaer was chosen ahead of Sheringham and Dwight Yorke to partner Andy Cole in the United attack while Bayern skipper Stefan Effenberg returned in midfield after missing out in the last second phase match against Arsenal.

With a quarter of an hour gone Mehmet Scholl's outswinging corner found Patrik Andersson but the Sweden international's downward header was blocked by Paul Scholes three yards from the United goal.

Two minutes later Cole wasted a glorious opportunity when Beckham found him with a probing pass but the United striker miscued his shot and the ball flew over the crossbar.

Solskjaer's intelligent run broke the Bayern offside trap 10 metres from half time but after picking up Cole's brilliant pass the Norway international's path to goal was blocked by a posse of Bayern defenders.

Mikael Silvestre felled Carsten Jancker on the edge of the box a minute after the interval and Effenberg fired a blistering free-kick which whistled inches over the United crossbar.

Tempers began to boil over as the players picked up the pace with Cole and Andersson at each other's throats and Effenberg and Beckham playing out a private duel.

Effenberg and Scholl then carved out an opening for Elber but the Brazilian international's shot was palmed over by the acrobatic Barthez.

Cole's inviting cross into the Bayern six yard box missed the outstretched boot of Scholes after 55 minutes as United went in search of the opening goal and at the other end Barthez comfortably dealt with Elber's diving header.

United responded and Silvestre's stinging low drive was brilliantly parried by Kahn.

Jens Jeremies twice tested Barthez from long range as Bayern grew in confidence and Oliver Kahn saved easily from Solskjaer and Silvestre who both tried their luck from distance.

Eight minutes from time Zickler, on for the ineffectual Jancker, found space in the United penalty area but his powerful shot bounced off the crossbar - a warning the home side failed to heed.

Effenberg and Thomas Linke exchanged passes to free Sergio four minutes later and despite appeals for offside by the United defence the Brazilian stabbed the ball past the helpless Barthez.



MARIO THE MAVERICK: The ultra-prolific Brazilian striker Mario Jardel celebrating his match-winning strike against Real Madrid.

Gallant Galatasaray

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Istanbul

UEFA Cup holders Galatasaray take a slim 3-2 lead to Madrid in two weeks time after a thrilling comeback from 2-0 down against Champions League holders Real Madrid in their quarter-final first leg in Istanbul on Tuesday.

Madrid's two first half goals from Ivan Huelgera and Claude Makelele were cancelled out by a virtuoso second half display by the Turkish side.

A converted penalty from Davala Umit spurring them on before second half substitute Fatih Akyel unlocked the Madrid defence twice to provide goals for Hasan Sas and Mario Jardel which sealed Galatasaray's victory.

In an open first half-hour both sides announced their attacking intentions at the Ali Sami Yen stadium with Italy's shaven-headed referee Pierluigi Collina allowing the game to run smoothly.

After just five minutes Galatasaray's Romanian veteran Gheorghe Hagi caught Real's teenage 'keeper Iker Casillas napping with a surprise 40 metre snap-shot that flew just over the Madrid bar.

Louis Figo had Madrid's first effort but his shot flew just wide after Steve McManaman played him a beautiful cut-back through a packed box on 26 minutes.

The Spaniards opened the scores on 33 minutes when Huelgera rose

unchallenged to meet Figo's free-kick with a perfectly placed towering header that flew past Claudio Taffarel in the Galatasaray goal into the bottom left corner.

Galatasaray could have equalised two minutes later when Jardel



GREATS' SWAPPING: Portuguese superstar Luis Figo (R) exchanging his Real Madrid jersey with Galatasaray's Romanian icon Gheorghe Hagi after their Champions League quarterfinals clash.

UEFA Cup

Final before the final

Football

AFP, Barcelona

Spanish soccer giants Barcelona will be looking to salvage their season, and possibly save the job of their coach Llorenç Serra Ferrer, with a convincing performance against Liverpool in their UEFA Cup semifinal first leg on Thursday.

As good as out of the Spanish championship race, ten points behind league leaders Real Madrid

with ten games to go, and having had an early exit from the Champions League, success in the UEFA Cup is the only thing that could stop Serra Ferrer being given his marching orders before June.

"There is no doubt that this game is now the most important of the season for us," Serra Ferrer admitted to Spanish reporters on Monday.

However, the Catalan club will go into the match against their English Premiership visitors with nagging injury worries despite a morale-boosting 4-1 win over Las Palmas at the weekend.

Three key players - Francesc Arnau, Abelardo Fernandez and Simao Sabrosa - are already out until the end of the season and Barcelona confirmed on Tuesday that their Spanish international midfielder Gerard Lopez will undergo surgery on his right knee, after persistent ligament problems, and not be ready to play again for three months.

The news just kept getting worse and worse for Serra Ferrer on Tuesday.

Barcelona said that Dutch defender Michael Reiziger and Spanish international midfielder

latched on to another deep cross from Sas only to be knocked off balance by his Brazilian compatriot Roberto Carlos.

Instead Galatasaray went 2-0 down when Makelele sliced their defence open again on 43 minutes after running out a clever header from Raul five yards outside the box.

The French international sped into the area before unleashing a right-footed grass-cutting bullet way beyond the grasping fingers of Taffarel.

From the restart Galatasaray went straight for goal winning a penalty when Makelele brought down Sas in a goalmouth scramble. Umit sent Casillas the wrong way on 47 minutes to bring the scores back to 2-1 and give voice to the Galatasaray support.

Madrid refused to sit back, allowing Galatasaray to try and stretch their solid looking defence.

A Jardel header had Casillas sprawling on 49 before the lanky Brazilian had a penalty appeal denied on the hour, tumbling under a Roberto Carlos challenge.

The Turkish side continued to pour forward and were rewarded when second half substitute Akyel broke down the left and played a cut-back for the unmarked Sas to shoot home on 65 minutes for the equaliser.

Jardel got Galatasaray's third on 75 minutes in classic style, rising just behind the penalty spot with a beautifully timed header from Faith's cross after he exposed a weakness down Madrid's right once more.

Jardel had a goal disallowed on 84 and Okan Buruk lobbed Iker Casillas in the dying seconds only to see his effort creep over the bar.

Real coach Vicente del Bosque remained confident that given the calibre and experience of his side they can secure victory at home in two weeks.

"I don't like this result, but we can overcome this given the level of our players," said del Bosque.

"We witnessed an excellent match with impeccable first-half domination by Real. We tried to avoid euphoria at half-time, but in the second half they raised their game and played with the energy of a side who saw themselves being eliminated and this helped them."

Del Bosque's Galatasaray counterpart Marian Lucescu put the early lapse down to a lack of confidence.

"At half time we had a good look at ourselves. We were on the point of losing face. It was a mixture of pride and focus which did the job. We played an exceptional second half and have put ourselves in a position where we can qualify."

"Real scored from two gross errors on our part. But I can't say anything more against our team. We could have scored even more in the second half," he added.

Soap opera delays Barca-L'pool match!

REUTERS, London

Liverpool's UEFA Cup semifinal first leg match against Barcelona in Spain on Thursday has been delayed to allow British fans to watch the climax of a soap opera whodunnit.

The game is to be broadcast live in Britain by the BBC, which is also screening an extended episode of its long-running EastEnders soap on the same channel on the same night.

Viewers are waiting to find out who shot one of its main characters, Phil Mitchell. The identity of his assailant is due to be revealed in Thursday's episode.

BBC spokesman Graham Brown said the company's broadcasting rights contract allowed it to negotiate the kickoff time with the clubs involved.

"We approached Barcelona as the home team to say could we make it an 8.15 kick-off and they were more than happy with that," he said.

"There has been huge interest in this storyline. It's the EastEnders event of the year."

Thursday's game will kick off at 9.15 pm in Spain, which is 8.15 pm British time. Liverpool games screened by the BBC in the past have kicked off at 8.05 pm British time, he said.

EastEnders usually lasts 30 minutes but Thursday's episode will

last 10 minutes longer than normal, necessitating the delay in Barcelona.

The soap opera, set in London's East End, regularly attracts over 15 million viewers per episode.

Giggs signs fresh contract

AFP, London

Welsh international winger Ryan Giggs became the latest Manchester United star to agree a new contract when he signed a five-year deal at Old Trafford Wednesday.

Giggs' new deal starts from July and commits him to United until 2006.

After making his senior United debut 10 years ago as a 17-year-old, Giggs has won every domestic honour with the club and he is looking forward to more success over the next five years.

"I'm really pleased to have agreed a new deal," he said. "I've had a fantastic time at United and I hope to enjoy as much success with the lads in the future as I have in the past 10 years."

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson is thrilled that Giggs has followed Andy Cole and Jaap Stam in committing his future to the club.

"I'm delighted that Ryan has agreed a new contract," he said. "His performances over the years have thrilled the fans and he has played a big part in helping the club achieve consistent success."

Draw and schedule

Draw for the FIFA Confederations Cup on May 30 to June 10: (all kickoff times GMT)

GROUP A	GROUP B
1. France	1. Brazil
2. South Korea	2. Cameroon
3. Mexico	3. Japan
4. Australia	4. Canada

Group A fixtures:	Group B fixtures:
May 30 France v South Korea (0800, Taegu, Korea)	May 31 Brazil v Cameroon (0800, Ibaraki, Japan)
May 30 Mexico v Australia (1030, Suwon, Korea)	May 31 Japan v Canada (1030, Niigata, Japan)
June 1 Australia v France (0800, Taegu)	June 2 Canada v Brazil (0800, Ibaraki)
June 1 South Korea v Mexico (1030, Ulsan, Korea)	June 2 Cameroon v Japan (1030, Niigata)
June 3 France v Mexico (1030, Ulsan)	June 4 Brazil v Japan (1030, Ibaraki)
June 3 South Korea v Australia (1030, Suwon)	June 4 Cameroon v Canada (1030, Niigata)

Semifinals
June 7 B winner v A 2nd place (0800, Yokohama, Japan)
June 7 A winner v B 2nd place (1100, Suwon)

3rd place play-off
June 9 (1000, Ulsan)

Final
June 10 (1000, Yokohama)

Confederations Cup

France-ROK opener

Football

REUTERS, Seoul

Reigning World and European champions France will open next month's FIFA Confederations Cup against Republic of Korea, organisers said on Wednesday.

Mexico, who won the last Confederations Cup in 1999, take on Australia in the other opening day match to kick off the cup, a warm-up for hosts South Korea and Japan ahead of next year's World Cup final.

Brazil will take on Cameroon and Japan meet Canada to complete the opening round of the eight-nation event.

The tournament will run from May 30 to June 10 and include matches in new stadia in the cities of Suwon, Taegu and Ulsan, three of the 10 South Korea is building to host its half of the World Cup.

Japan will stage games at Yokohama and at new stadia in Niigata and Kashima, Ibaraki Prefecture.

FIFA CONFEDERATIONS CUP KOREA / JAPAN DRAW

GROUPING	1	2	3	4
Group A	FRANCE	KOREA	MEXICO	AUSTRALIA
Group B	BRAZIL	CAMEROON	JAPAN	CANADA

FIFA General Secretary Pat Ruffin (R) looks on as an attendant puts Brazil's name on the board during the draw of the Confederations Cup at the Lotte Hotel in Sogwipo, South Korea on March 4.

Pep Guardiola face late fitness tests after getting bad knocks against Las Palmas.

"This game is like the final of the UEFA Cup. We can't afford to screw up," Patrick Kluyvert commented, demonstrating the nervous state of the dressing room at the Nou Camp.

Kluyvert, and his striking companion, the Spanish international Luis Enrique, will also have to be on their guard against any rash acts.

A yellow card will see them suspended for the second leg in two weeks time at Anfield.

Liverpool, by contrast, will go into the game in a much calmer state after Saturday's outstanding 2-0 defeat of Premiership leaders Manchester United.

Gerard Houllier is keeping his starting line-up under wraps until the last minute but, in keeping with his philosophy of rotating his strikers, it would be no surprise to see Michael Owen take the field alongside Robbie Fowler, instead of Emile Heskey.

Conventional wisdom has it that England midfielder Steven Gerrard can only play one match a week but the architect of the stunning opening strike against United is also expected to play.

Adding spice to the clash, Liverpool's Jari Litmanen makes his first visit to the Nou Camp after being discarded by Barcelona during the winter transfer window.

The Finnish midfielder will have several points to prove after, in the view of many pundits, being woefully under-used in his 18 months there, following his move in the summer of 1999.

Nevertheless, Houllier has not allowed complacency to creep into the Liverpool camp.

"I'm very worried about Rivaldo (Barcelona's Brazilian striker and the 1999 FIFA World Player of the Year)," Liverpool goalkeeper Sander Westerveld told the Barcelona-based Spanish sports daily El Mundo Deportivo on Tuesday.

"He does things that only he can do and, if you have an off day, he can put two or three goals past you."

"Whoever wins this tie though, will win the UEFA Cup," Westerveld added.

Alaves and Kaiserslauten may be begging to differ with the Dutch international but there is no doubt that either Liverpool or Barcelona will go into the final on May 18 in Dortmund, Germany, as the overwhelming favourites.