



Raul, the Real Madrid ace, being congratulated by team mate Guti after scoring the first goal against Galatasaray at Madrid on April 18.

Real-ity strikes Galatasaray



AFP, Madrid

Defending champions Real Madrid thrashed Galatasaray 3-0 at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium here on Wednesday to reach the semi-finals of the European Champions League. Striker Raul scored two and Ivan Helguera earned the other to put the legendary Spanish club through at the expense of the Turks 5-3 on aggregate.

Madrid, voted team of the century by football's world governing body FIFA last year, stay on course for a possible ninth title. Madrid now meet Bayern Munich in their May 1 and May 9 semi-final with the first leg at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in a repeat of last year's match at the same stage.

For Galatasaray Emre Asik came in for the suspended Gheorghe Popescu, while Real's Fernando Hierro started in defence despite a hamstring problem. Influential Real striker Fernando Morientes missed out through injury.

The match, at least for Real, was regarded as a grudge encounter after they lost to the Turks last August in the European Super Cup.

But as Real coach Vicente Del Bosque celebrated, his Galatasaray

counterpart was all excuses. "I have to say that Real deserved victory but the referee definitely favoured the home side. We were also missing crucial players such as Popescu and (Carlos) Capone, and we had to literally invent a new back four," lamented Romanian Mircea Lucescu.

Real coach Del Bosque was adamant, however, that his side fully deserved the win despite the Turks' second half spoiling tactics.

"To try and say that we didn't deserve to win is untrue," said Del Bosque. "We were easily the best side in the first half, and although our rivals fought hard and tried to provoke us in the second period, we fully deserved to win."

Real got on the scoresheet early on, in the 15th minute, while Turk Sas Hasan was claiming a foul, England's Steve McManaman fed right back Michel Salgado who got to the by-line and crossed.

Raul proved to be quicker off the mark than Brazilian keeper Claudio Taffarel to put Real ahead from the near post.

Taffarel was forced to make a good save from Helguera just five minutes before the player got on the scoresheet. Portugal international Luis Figo fired in a corner in the 28th minute and Helguera rose above the Turkish defence to fire home with a firm header.

Helguera was again involved in the 37th minute when he fed

McManaman on the left flank. The England international put in a fabulous pass to Raul who hit a first time shot past Taffarel for his seventh Champions League goal.

The Turks tried to hit back through Okan Buruk and Bulent Korkmaz but Buruk's shot was too weak and Korkmaz's header skimmed the crossbar.

In the second half, Emre Belozoglu was in an ideal position but wasted his chance by preferring to feign a foul and claim a penalty.

From then on nothing really troubled Real though in the first leg, at Galatasaray's imposing home stadium known affectionately as 'hell', the Turks had managed to score three goals in 45 minutes to win the match.

The match degenerated with neither side particularly motivated to add to the scoreline.

With less than 20 minutes to go, the ball went out of play and could not be found. An exasperated Taffarel eventually found it behind an advertising board.

Real's notorious Ultra supporters responded by throwing all sorts of projectiles on to the pitch and the match had to be temporarily stopped.

Real could now be punished by European football's governing body UEFA for their fans' behaviour, but that will prove a formality after fulfilling their main objective of qualifying for the semi-finals.

Spanish the tune in Europe



AFP, Paris

Spain took a firm grip on the European Champions League with high-scoring Real Madrid going through at the expense of Galatasaray to join Valencia, more miserly on the goal front, in the May semi-finals.

Defending champions Madrid, who beat the Turks 3-0 on Wednesday night and 5-3 on aggregate now play Bayern Munich, who got the better of Manchester United 2-1, and 3-1 on aggregate.

Madrid could even play Valencia in a repeat of last year's final which has never happened since the first competition in 1956. Last year was also the first time two teams from the same country have competed in the final.

Valencia defeated Arsenal to qualify for a semi-final match up against English club Leeds who held on against Deportivo La Coruna in Tuesday night's matches.

Italy, the top European nation during the 90's, did not even have a quarter-finalist whereas Spain had three and there is no hint on the horizon of the Spanish armada weakening.

The Spanish clubs left in contention have different philosophies but are nonetheless effective. Madrid's almost reckless scoring machine ensures many goals scored and conceded though Valencia are just the opposite, few goals scored and few let in.

Madrid have scored 34 goals in 14 matches on their way to the semi-finals, way above any of the other teams in contention, but, on the other hand, have let in 20.

Wave after wave of attacks, with the likes of players such as Luis Figo, Steve McManaman, Raul and Fernando Morientes ensure the opposition's goal will always be under threat.

On the down side, gaps at the back means they concede goals but who cares? They win and the spectacle is a treat for their notoriously demanding spectators.

Hector Cuper, who led Real Mallorca to the last ever European Cup Winners Cup final in 1999, gets nervous whenever his side concedes just one goal. Statistics clearly tell the story of how their way of playing contrasts with Madrid. Up to the semi-finals, Valencia scored 19 goals but let in just eight.

When you consider they beat Sturm Graz 5-0, with four of those goals coming when the Austrians had a player sent off, Valencia have scored on average about once on every outing.

Real and Bayern have met five times in Europe. Their first ever clash was in the 1976 European Cup

semi-final, the year Bayern completed a hat-trick of consecutive victories.

In 1987, they faced each other at the same stage with Bayern again winning, 4-2 on aggregate, but the following year it was Real who had the upper hand 4-3 on aggregate in the quarter-finals.

Bayern beat them twice last year in the group stages, but Real went on to beat them over two legs in the semi-finals.

Valencia coach Cuper must feel reasonably confident of making the final. In 17 matches in Europe at their Mestalla stadium in near 10 years they have won 15 times and are unbeaten.

Leeds realistically will have to score freely in the first leg if they want to get through after the second leg in Valencia.

Cuper was content they would be facing the northern English side.

"We know all about Deportivo so we're happy to be facing Leeds. That's not to say we wanted Depor to go out, though, and we're aware that Leeds will be a very difficult rival," he said after sealing their semi-final place.

Real Madrid plays Bayern on May 1 and May 9 with the first leg in Spain, and Leeds host Valencia first in their May 2/May 8 clash.

Bayern bury ghost of '99



AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich beat Manchester United 2-1 at the Olympic stadium here on Wednesday to qualify for the European Champions League semi-finals and gain revenge for the 1999 final loss.

The Germans go through 3-1 on aggregate after winning the first leg in Manchester a fortnight ago and will play holders Real Madrid in the final.

Giovane Elber's close-range strike gave the home side an early lead before Mehmet Scholl's low drive doubled Bayern's advantage five minutes before half-time.

Ryan Giggs' delicate lob pulled one back for United just after half-time, but despite enjoying the lion's share of the possession in the second period Ferguson's side failed to score again.

The win erased painful memories for Bayern who lost the 1999 final to United in dramatic fashion. Leading 1-0 thanks to Mario Basler's strike after six minutes, United snatched victory from the jaws of defeat with two goals in injury-time from second-half substitutes Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said afterwards: "You can't play for a draw against a team like Manchester and we decided to attack from the kick-off. We got the result we deserved even if Manchester never gave up."

United coach Sir Alex Ferguson blamed poor defending for his side's exit from Europe's elite competition.

"I felt we contributed to their victory" he said. "An early goal against us was the last thing we wanted, it was a real killer for us."

Ferguson had underlined the importance of not conceding an early goal in Tuesday's press conference but his worst fears were realised after five minutes.

"You can't give sides like Bayern that kind of start," he said. "We have to look at our defending as the reason why we are not in the next round."

United played with a handicap as winger and essential balls-provider David Beckham was suspended. Also suspended were Bayern pair Bixente Lizarazu and Hasan Salihamidzic.

England captain Beckham, who did not travel to Munich, was replaced in United's midfield by international colleague Nicky Butt.

But lined up alongside United captain Roy Keane in central midfield while Paul Scholes was moved out to the right flank.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld chose Michael Tarnat and Frenchman Willy Sagnol to fill the two wing back positions left by France international Lizarazu and Bayern's second goal handed



Bayern's Brazilian hot-shot Giovane Elber (R) puts his side into the lead at Munich on April 18.

Bosnian Salihamidzic.

However there was no place in the Bayern line-up for Brazilian Paulo Sergio, who came on as a substitute to score the late winner for Hitzfeld's side in the first leg.

United barely had time to settle as Bayern stormed into the lead after just five minutes.

German international Scholl found Tarnat free on the left wing and he delivered a low cross into the box for Elber and the Brazilian international blasted the ball past Fabien Barthez into the roof of the net.

United could have fallen further behind three minutes later when Carsten Jancker escaped his marker inside the United penalty area but the big striker's powerful volley rattled the underside of the crossbar.

The visitors almost gifted Bayern a second goal when a mistake by Wes Brown gave Jancker an easy chance but he failed to lift the ball over Barthez's outstretched hand.

Jancker picked up an injury just after the half hour mark and was replaced in attack by Alexander Zickler.

The home crowd were on their feet again five minutes before half-time when Bayern increased their lead.

Jens Jeremies went on a surging run past two United defenders before crossing into the box for Elber. The Brazilian found Zickler who teed up Scholl and he slammed a low drive past the static Barthez.

Bayern's second goal handed

the near-impossible task of scoring three times to advance to the last four.

United went close seconds before the interval but Cole's fizzing drive struck Kahn's hands and fell onto the roof of the net.

Ferguson's men hauled themselves back into the match minutes after the restart.

Four minutes into the second half Giggs threw United a lifeline when he pulled a goal back to make it 2-1 on the night.

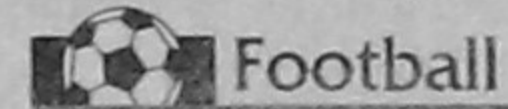
The Welshman raced onto Scholes' volleyed through ball, his blistering pace taking him clear of the Bayern defence, and coolly lobbed a left-footed shot over the advancing Kahn.

Giggs almost grabbed a spectacular equaliser for United on the hour, unleashing a curling left-foot volley that looked destined for the top right corner but Kahn, at full stretch, tipped it over at the expense of a corner.

With United increasing the pressure, Bayern brought on Roque Santa Cruz for Elber while United replaced Yorke with Teddy Sheringham to bolster their attack.

With Bayern looking nervous Cole, Scholes and Sheringham all went close for United as they continued to keep the hosts on the back foot but the Germans held out to erase the memories of 1999, and grab a much-coveted place in the semis against the formidable Real Madrid.

Serie A Lazio's lucky victory



AFP, Rome

Defending champions Lazio grabbed an 1-0 win over visitors Parma to stay in the race for the Scudetto thanks to an own goal from Parma defender Lilian Thuram here on Wednesday.

With eight matches to go the capital side remain in third spot but only seven points behind leaders AS Roma and three behind second-placed Juventus.

Lazio were missing influential Argentine playmaker Juan Sebastian

Veron, who is suspended, but managed to dominate Parma in the first half, with Thuram's own goal in the 12th minute lifting Lazio coach Dino Zoff's spirits, and maintaining his dream of defending the title.

Thuram's error came after Lazio forward Diego Simeone fired a shot goalbound and Parma keeper Gianluigi Buffon's save rebounded off the France international and into the net.

In the second half Lazio threatened to add a second when Czech Republic playmaker Pavel Nedved fired goalwards but hit the post.

Parma themselves threatened to upset the Romans' title dream when Fabio Cannavaro fired wide.



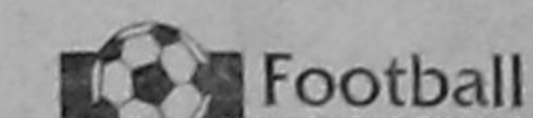
Parma's Lilian Thuram (R) tussles with Lazio striker Claudio Lopez at Rome on April 18.

Serie A's top six

After match played on Wednesday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

AS Roma	26	18	5	3	50	23	59
Juventus	26	16	7	3	45	21	55
Lazio	26	16	4	6	47	27	52
Parma	26	12	7	7	39	22	43
Atalanta	26	10	10	6	31	21	40
AC Milan	26	10	10	6	41	35	40

Portugal Friendly Djorkaeff back in French fold



AFP, Paris

Coach Roger Lemerre on Thursday recalled leading goalscorer Youri Djorkaeff to the French squad for the friendly match against Portugal at the Stade de France on April 25.

The 33-year-old Djorkaeff, a member of the French teams that won the World and European titles in 1998 and 2000, was last on international duty in the 1-1 draw against England on September 2.

Injuries kept the Kaiserslautern

player out of the last six friendlies played by France. Among current players he is France's leading goalscorer with 26 goals in 69 matches.

Lemerre once again selected an experienced squad as he prepares for the Confederation Cup matches in Japan and South Korea in June.

Only three players out of the 18 -- Willy Sagnol of Bayern Munich, Claude Makelele of Real Madrid and Mickaël Silvestre of Manchester United -- were not members of the French Euro 2000 squad.

Only two players -- reserve goalkeeper Ulrich Rame of Bordeaux

and Paris St Germain striker Nicolas Anelka -- are with French clubs. Seven are with English clubs and four with Italian sides.

Among those left out are Bordeaux striker Christophe Dugarry, Middlesbrough midfielder Christian Karembou and Parma midfielder Johan Micoud.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Fabien Barthez (Manchester United/Eng), Ulrich Rame (Bordeaux).

Defenders: Lilian Thuram (Parma/Ita), Marcel Desailly

(Chelsea/Eng), Vincent Candela (Roma/Ita), Mickael Silvestre (Manchester/Eng), Bixente Lizarazu (Bayern Munich/Ger), Willy Sagnol (Bayern Munich/Ger).

Midfielders: Zinedine Zidane (Juventus/Ita), Patrick Vieira (Arsenal/Eng), Emmanuel Petit (Barcelona/Esp), Claude Makelele (Real Madrid/Spa), Youri Djorkaeff (Kaiserslautern/Ger).

Forwards: Thierry Henry (Arsenal/Eng), Sylvain Wiltord (Arsenal/Eng), David Trezeguet (Juventus/Ita), Robert Pires (Arsenal/Eng), Nicolas Anelka (Paris SG).

Keane wants a Real-like MU



AFP, Munich

Manchester United captain Roy Keane on Wednesday said the English champions need to follow the example set by Spanish giants Real Madrid if they are to conquer Europe once again.

The English champions were bundled out of the Champions League after losing 2-1 to Bayern Munich in the quarter-final second leg at the Olympic Stadium in front of a sell-out 60,000 crowd.

The Germans, who lost the 1999 final to United, went through 3-1 on aggregate having won the first leg 1-0 in Manchester a fortnight ago and will play holders Real in the semi-finals.

Real, nine-time European champions, booked their place in the next round after beating Turkish champions Galatasaray 3-0 on the night and 5-3 on aggregate.

"Great teams always come back but we are not a great team, we are an average team," said Keane.

"Our benchmark should be Real Madrid because they won the Champions League last season and they went further than us this time."

The Republic of Ireland international said that every member of the team should take responsibility for the defeat and that he would not be surprised if new faces come in for the next campaign.

"Every player's future is in jeopardy," he said.

Keane may well have been referring to Real's undying hunger for success. Despite being crowned European champions last year, the Spanish champions refused to rest on their laurels and splashed out 55 million dollars on Luis Figo in a bid to help tighten their grip on the trophy.

Sir Alex Ferguson's face told its own story after watching his United side crash out of Europe at the same stage as they did last season.

A glum-looking Ferguson could not hide his disappointment after watching his side's woeful defending gift Bayern an early goal.

"Our defending in the first half



TOO HARD TO SWALLOW: Roy Keane, the Manchester United captain is all dejection after his team were sent packing by Bayern.

cost us the game," he said. "It was a terrible start."

But Ferguson felt that his side dominated the second-half and that had they scored an equaliser with time to spare, would have gone on to win the match to advance to the last four.

"In the second half we did begin to express ourselves in the way you would expect from a Manchester United side and we were unlucky in the end," said the Scot.

"In the end it was Bayern who were glad to hear the final whistle."

Ferguson praised Keane who played a captain's role by refusing to give up the fight.

"His energy was commendable," said Ferguson. "He plays with the desire that all great players have and deserved to be on the winning side."

The United coach said going out

of Europe overshadowed his side's championship triumph last weekend, their seventh title in nine seasons.

"This has taken away the joy of winning on Saturday and I think this is disappointing," he said.

"We look at the European challenge as the challenge we need to progress as a football team. We have failed and that's a disappointment."

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld refused to view the victory as revenge for the 1999 final.

"It wasn't really about getting revenge and it was only about our sporting objective of reaching the next round," he said.

"We had to play Manchester United in the quarter-finals and we were just thinking about getting a place in the semi-finals."

"I'm proud of my team and that

for the second time we have defeated Manchester United."

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Ryan Giggs' delicate lob pulled one back for United just after half-time, but despite enjoying the lion's share of the possession in the second period Ferguson's side failed to score again.

The win erased painful memories for Bayern who lost the final in dramatic fashion two years ago. Leading 1-0 thanks to Mario Basler's strike after six minutes, United snatched victory from the jaws of defeat with two goals in injury-time from second-half substitutes Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.