

Elber bemuses champions



AFP, Madrid

Bayern Munich's Giovane Elber produced a thunderous shot from 25 metres out to give the German side a surprise 1-0 victory over Real Madrid in their European Champions League semi-final, first leg match on Tuesday.

The victory puts Bayern firmly in the driving seat in the tie, and they will feel confident that they can hang on to their advantage when the two teams meet again in the second leg in Munich's Olympic Stadium on May 9.

Bayern's coach Ottmar Hitzfeld preferred to view the result as a fair return for his tactical judgement rather than a lucky win.

"From the very beginning I knew that a good defence was necessary and our own defence played magnificently.

"We always believed we could score on the counter-attack because we expected Madrid to risk everything going forward, and so it proved," Hitzfeld said. "Although a 2-0 win would have been unfair."

Hitzfeld paid tribute to his goalkeeper Oliver Kahn for keeping a clean sheet under almost continuous assault from Real Madrid.

Real Madrid, the reigning European champions, will feel dismayed that they were unable to find the net after dominating the match for long periods.

After Elber's 55th minute goal against the run of play, the hosts threw everything they could at Bayern and only heroes from Oliver Kahn in the Bayern goal prevented Real levelling the score, or even clinching victory.

Raul, Michel Salgado and Ivan Helguera all had shots acrobatically saved by Kahn in the final half hour.

Real though will also regret not putting the game beyond Bayern Munich's reach by half time.

The first 45 minutes will chiefly be remembered for the series of missing opportunities by the hosts, who repeatedly prised open the Bayern defence but could not finish off a number of clear-cut chances.

Only four minutes had elapsed



Giovane Elber unleashing a left-footer to score against Real Madrid on May 1.

when Raul shot high and wide when in front of the Bayern goal.

After 15 minutes, Michel Salgado made an outstanding run down the right wing but no one was able to stab his cross into the open goal.

Raul again failed to find the net after half an hour, when he chipped over the prone Oliver Kahn in the Bayern goal from out on the left. However the ball agonisingly trickled along the line and beyond the post.

A fourth chance went begging four minutes before the break when Jose Maria Gutierrez failed by inches to get his foot to an outstanding pass from Ivan Helguera.

After the break, Brazilian Elber then celebrated his goal by kissing the knee which he had operated on just a fortnight ago after they ousted Manchester United.

However, his evening ended prematurely after he tumbled over in the area chasing on a through ball and he had to go off to be replaced by the more cumbersome Carsten Jancker.

The only comfort that Real Madrid will take from the game is that Bayern's influential midfielder and club captain Stefan Effenberg will be missing from the second leg, after picking up a yellow card late in the game for a harsh tackle on Luis Figo.

Real Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque said afterwards: "We had the initiative during the game but the Bayern defence had a solution to everything we threw at them.

"We had the ball most of the time and hardly let them hit on the break but they won. The Germans proved to be very effective and though we

tried we just weren't able to break them down.

"Munitis and Savio (the substitutes) tried hard down the flanks but just did not get through. But I'm not going to be pessimistic and we still have a chance to make the final. We have 90 minutes to play and we will give it our all in Munich."

Real Madrid defender Aitor Karanka said: "It's going to be complicated but we were by far the better team in this game and so there is no reason to believe we cannot win in Munich next week."

"If life was fair this was a game we would have won," Casillas said. "The mood in the dressing room was very sombre after the whistle went, but we'll try to pick ourselves up in the next couple of days. We've got a league match on Sunday to concentrate on and we can still make the Champions League final as well. It's not over yet."

"They didn't attack very much and we knew that was going to be their tactic, but when they did go forward Bayern were very effective and dangerous," the former Spanish international added.

Real Madrid's goalkeeper Iker Casillas, who had an outstanding match but stood little chance of keeping Elber's thunderbolt out of the net, admitted that the Real Madrid players left the field with the hearts in their boots.

"If life was fair this was a game we would have won," Casillas said. "The mood in the dressing room was very sombre after the whistle went, but we'll try to pick ourselves up in the next couple of days. We've got a league match on Sunday to concentrate on and we can still make the Champions League final as well. It's not over yet."

"We have to qualify and we need our best players to do it," he added.

Neither Kewell, who has had an injury-plagued season for Leeds, or Viduka played in the first round matches against Fiji, Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga.

Kewell was awaiting the birth of his first child and has not played for Australia for a year after Leeds refused to release him for friendly internationals.

Viduka said earlier this week he wanted to play in June.

"But we'll just have to see how things go," he added.

Both players star in their biggest club match later Wednesday when Leeds play Valencia in the first leg of their European Champions League semi-final.



FIVE-STAR MACALLISTER: Gary McAllister (C) is the centre of team celebrations once again after scoring against Bradford.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Premiership

L'pool on course



Football

AFP, London

Goals from Michael Owen and Gary McAllister kept Liverpool's hopes of a Champions League place alive as they beat bottom-of-the-table and already relegated Bradford 2-0 at Valley Parade on Tuesday.

The result moved the Merseyside club from fifth to third in the English Premiership table.

Liverpool took the lead two minutes into the second half. McAllister's long ball was chased by Owen - outpacing Gunnar Halle - before squeezing an angled left footer just inside the far post.

Owen got away again five minutes later on to a Danny Murphy pass, but this time keeper Gary Walsh made a spectacular block at the striker's feet.

Bradford clearly had no intention of giving up the ghost, and were presented with a golden opportunity by referee Jeff Winter in the 56th minute.

Premiership's top six

After Tuesday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

	35	24	8	3	77	25	80
Manchester United	35	19	9	7	59	34	66
Arsenal	35	18	8	9	62	37	62
Liverpool	35	18	8	9	54	39	62
Leeds United	36	19	5	12	5	4	4
Ipswich Town	40	62					

Caniggia's up for sale



Football

AFP, Glasgow

Claudio Caniggia has been put up for sale by Dundee and the Argentinian crowd favourite will be allowed to leave if a club meets their valuation, the club said on Tuesday.

The 34-year old striker has made a tremendous impact since arriving on Tayside in October and signed an extended contract in February taking him to June 2003.

But such was his success in the Scottish Premier League that Caniggia realised, or at least hoped that he still had a chance of returning to his national side in time to make next year's World Cup finals.

He and agent Fernando Consentino became convinced that he needed a bigger stage to achieve this with moves to Celtic and especially Rangers almost constantly suggested afterwards.

A Dundee spokesman told the official Scottish Premier League website, scotprem.co.uk: "We can confirm that despite repeated efforts of the directors to persuade him otherwise, Claudio Caniggia has intimated through ongoing discussions that he feels his futures lies away from Dens Park."

"Whilst disappointed with this decision, we have reluctantly agreed to allow him to leave if another club makes an offer of appropriate compensation to Dundee. To date we have had no offer from any club."

Dundee have notified agents throughout the game advising them to make it absolutely clear that clubs interested in securing Claudio's services, that he'll only leave Dens Park if the offer meets our valuation."

That price tag is believed to be more than one million pounds (1.47million dollars) for a player who was listed among the nominations for Scotland's player of the year crown.

Caniggia arrived at Dundee after some gentle persuasion from Dark Blues boss and long-time friend Ivan Bonetti.

However, the Italian did not appear to have been informed about the statement already having been made by the club.

"We don't want to sell him and there is nothing going on," he insisted. "Claudio is playing for Dundee on Sunday and next Saturday as well, he has got three years on his contract he is here and he is a Dundee player."

Vialli takes over Watford

Football

AFP, London