

# Nantes conquer Lazio, Real on fire

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Paris

Lazio coach Dino Zoff was sacked after the Italians crashed to French outfit Nantes while Real Madrid maintained their impressive start to the Champions League with a fiesta at the Bernabeu on Wednesday.

Zoff could only watch in horror as his star-studded side were ripped apart by the French Champions in the Group D tie at the Olympic Stadium.

The defeat signalled the inevitable for the former Italy coach and 1982 World Cup-winning captain as Lazio struggle to find their feet in both Serie A and Europe.

Only a sharp improvement in fortunes can save Lazio - but the writing might already be on the wall. Lazio owner Sergio Cragnotti was an unimpressed spectator as Nantes ran riot, leaving his seat in the VIP box before the end.

Zoff, who in the build-up to this match had to cope with reports that former AC Milan boss Alberto Zaccheroni had already been lined up as a replacement, said grimly: "As for my fate that will be decided tomorrow."

Regarding the match he admitted: "We started badly but then we got a grip, but after that, it was a debacle. The team disintegrated, losing its lucidity, even if the desire was still there."

Nantes were full value for their win. An early goal by their Argentinian defender Nestor Fabbri was cancelled out by Lazio's Portuguese stopper Fernando Couto.

But second-half efforts from Sylvain Armand and Stephane Ziani ensured the visitors won the day and German referee Herbert Fandel's final whistle was greeted by a chorus of boos by Lazio fans.

Nantes' win left the Canaries sitting pretty at the top of Group D with six points following their 4-1 drubbing of PSV Eindhoven. Lazio however are now deep in trouble after losing 1-0 to Galatasaray last week.

Incredibly Nantes have been in dreadful form at home, rooted to the bottom of the French First Division without a win from seven games.

"We can't ask any more of the team. We played this match without any pressure ... I think that's why we're able to do so well compared with our results in the French league," Nantes' keeper Mickael Landreau explained.

Dutch side PSV Eindhoven defeated Turkey's Galatasaray 3-1 in the group's other match Wednesday.

Like Nantes, Spanish giants Real Madrid are also suffering on the home front having slipped into the relegation zone following a 3-1 defeat to Real Betis last weekend. But like Nantes, Real continue to carry all before them in Europe.

Last week's impressive 2-1 away win at Roma in Group A was followed by a 4-0 thrashing of Russia's Lokomotiv Moscow on Wednesday.

The growing band of Real followers who believe the Spanish champions are a more settled side without world record signing Zinedine



PHOTO: AFP

TOO HOT TO HANDLE: Lokomotiv Moscow's Jacob Lekseto (L) having a tough time in containing Real Madrid's Luis Figo at Madrid on September 19.

Zidane would have been given further ammunition as the Muscovites were overwhelmed.

With Zidane still serving a UEFA suspension, the creative class came once again from Portuguese superstar Luis Figo. Real's win sees

them top of the group with two wins out of two.

Goals from striker Pedro Munitis, Figo, Roberto Carlos and his fellow Brazilian Savio wrapped up an emphatic win at the Bernabeu.

Real had dominated throughout,

Figo testing Ruslan Nigmatullin in the Lokomotiv goal early on with a strike from the edge of the area.

Savio also had an effort on goal but his shot soared over the bar after good work from Michel Salgado down the right.

Although Real dominated the early exchanges they were often thwarted by the deep-lying Lokomotiv defence.

The visitors almost took a shock lead after a rare foray upfield just after the 20 minute mark, when James Obiorah was played in by strike partner Dmitri Loskov only for his shot to be well-blocked by Iker Casillas.

Figo, playing in a central role in the absence of Zidane, shouldered the burden of Real's creative work.

He lit up the Bernabeu with one run from midfield run on 25 minutes but his disappointing shot was well wide of the Lokomotiv goal.

Savio forced Nigmatullin into another good save when his low shot was blocked. A quick free-kick saw Munitis scamper forward but this time it was Igor Chugainov to the rescue with a saving tackle.

Nigmatullin made further fine saves from Roberto Carlos and Spanish international Raul but eventually the Real pressure told and on 40 minutes the home side took the lead.

Raul's cross found Munitis and the striker blasted into the top corner to the relief of the Bernabeu fans.

Nigmatullin was again called into action shortly before half-time, parrying a Figo shot on to the bar and blocking a vicious effort from Roberto Carlos.

Real doubled their lead nine minutes after the break. Munitis again had the Lokomotiv defence in trouble and when Yuri Dzordov hauled him down referee pointed the spot. Figo stepped up to make it 2-0.

Figo's spotkick signalled the opening of the floodgates and Nigmatullin worked overtime to thwart the rampant Real attackers.

The 26-year-old pulled off impressive stops from Figo, Savio and Roberto Carlos as shots rained in on goal.

Real finally made it 3-0 when Roberto Carlos jinked in from the right onto his deadly left-foot and lashed in a superb shot in the 81st minute.

Savio made it 4-0 with an easy 87th minute strike.

Real's group rivals AS Roma and Anderlecht battled out a drawn 0-0 draw in Brussels in a physical battle.

In Group B meanwhile, Gerard Houllier's Liverpool are continuing to make slow progress up the Champions League learning curve after 16 years absence from Europe's top competition.

The English Premiership giants were held 0-0 by Germany's 1997 Champions League winners Borussia Dortmund at the

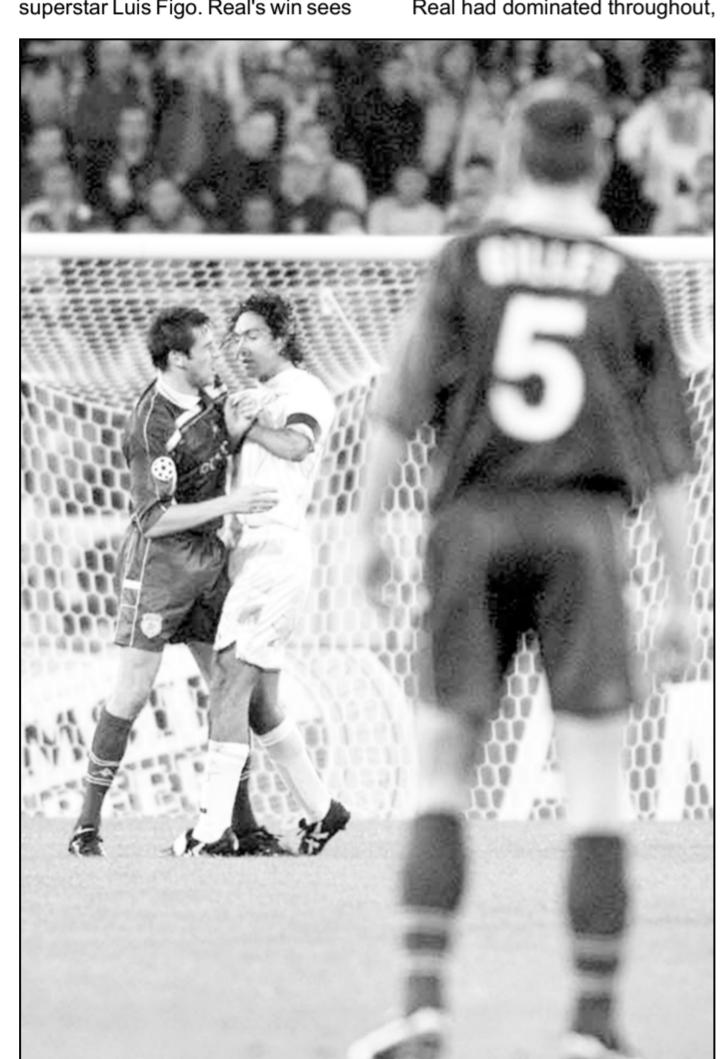


PHOTO: AFP

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FIGHTING! Lazio captain Alessandro Nesta (C) locked in a row with Nantes' Andre (L) at Rome on September 19.

Westfalen Stadium.

"We wanted to get something out of the game tonight and it's a good point," said Houllier. "It's a very open group and we're still in it."

"Maybe we could have done better at times when we broke. The service to our front two didn't go right tonight and the final ball was not always the best," Houllier told television.

Portugal's Boavista are setting the pace at the top of Group B after defeating Dynamo Kiev 3-1 in Porto. Borussia Dortmund are level on 2 points behind them with Kiev bottom.

While Liverpool are still awaiting their first win, English rivals Arsenal bounced back from their 1-0 loss against Real Mallorca last week to defeat Schalke 04 3-2 in a five-goal Group C thriller at Highbury.

The Gunners stormed into a 2-0 lead with first half goals from Swede Freddy Ljungberg and France international Thierry Henry before Marco van Hoogdalem reduced the deficit just before the interval.

A controversial penalty restored Arsenal's two-goal advantage a minute after half-time when Schalke goalkeeper Oliver Reck was harshly judged to have brought down Henry. The France international

## Results at a glance

Collated Champions League results on Wednesday:

### Group A

At Brussels Anderlecht (Bel) 0 AS Roma (Ita) 0  
At Madrid Real Madrid (Spa) 4 (Munitis 39, Luis Figo 64-pen, Roberto Carlos 81, Savio 87) Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 0

### Group B

At Porto, Portugal Boavista (Por) 3 (Sanchez 4, Silva 11, Duda 30) Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) 1 (Ghioane 5)  
At Dortmund, Germany Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 0 Liverpool (Eng) 0

### Group C

At London Arsenal (Eng) 3 (Ljungberg 33, Henry 35, 47-pen) Schalke 04 (Ger) 2 (van Hoogdalem 43, Mpenza 59)  
At Athens Panathinaikos (Gre) 2 (Vlaovic 25, Konstantinou 29) Real Mallorca (Spa) 0

### Group D

At Eindhoven, Netherlands PSV Eindhoven (Ned) 3 (Bruggink 38, Faber 53, Kezman 90) Galatasaray (Tur) 1 (Umit Karan 68)  
At Rome Lazio (Ita) 1 (Couto 6) Nantes (Fra) 3 (Fabbri 3, Armand 63, Ziani 86)

stepped up and calmly slotted home the spot-kick to restore the Gunners' two-goal advantage.

Belgian international forward Emile Mpenza headed Schalke's second to keep Arsenal on their toes and only dogged defending by the home side kept their lead intact.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was pleased to get a win under his belt in what he believes is a very difficult group.

"I believe our group is very strong. Schalke finished last year one minute from winning the championship in Germany - and Bayern Munich went on to win the European cup," he said.

"Tonight we have made a big step forward, because we had to win - and that is never easy when you are under pressure."

Panathinaikos are emerging as the surprise package from the group. The Greeks maintained their 100 percent record with an efficient 2-0 win over Real Mallorca in Athens.

Croatian Goran Vlaovic and Cyprus international Michalis Konstantinou got the goals which leave the Greeks top of the group with six points. Arsenal and Mallorca are level on three points, with Schalke bottom.

## STANDINGS

Champions League tables after Wednesday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

### Group A

Real Madrid	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Anderlecht	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
AS Roma	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Lokomotiv	2	0	1	1	1	5	1

### Group B

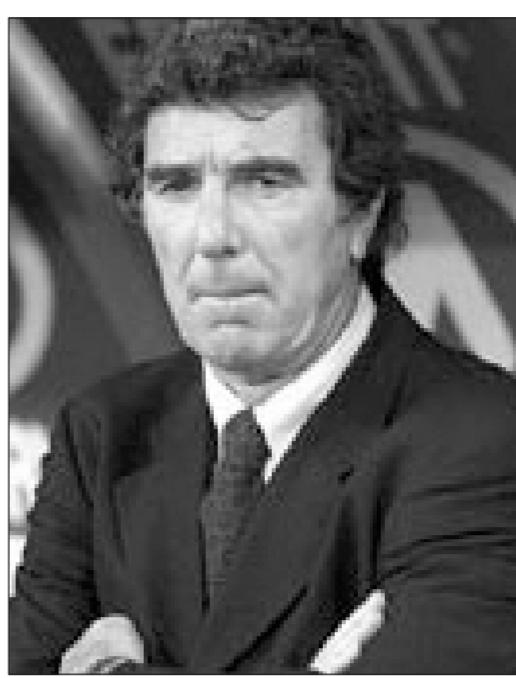
Boavista	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Dortmund	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Liverpool	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Dynamo Kiev	2	0	1	1	3	5	1

### Group C

Panathinaikos	2	2	0	0	4	0	0
Arsenal	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Mallorca	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Schalke 04	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

### Group D

Nantes	2	2	0	0	7	2	6
PSV	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Galatasaray	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Lazio	2	0	0	2	1	4	0



DINO ZOFF



ALBERTO ZACCHERONI

## Zoff out, Zacc in

### Football

REUTERS, Rome

Dino Zoff has been sacked as coach of Lazio and replaced by former AC Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni.

Zoff said in a statement that

Zoff had been invited to become club president but had rejected the offer, saying it was not "practical" at this time.

"Faced with the disappointing performances of the team, culminating with the defeat at home to Nantes which seriously compromises Lazio's prospects in the Champions League, the president has taken the opportunity to relieve Dino Zoff of his charge," the statement said.

The Rome club added that Zaccheroni has signed a contract keeping him with Lazio until June 2004.

Lazio, Italian champion in 1999-2000, is without a win from its opening five games of the season, drawing all three Serie A matches as well as losing both their Champions League games.

General manager Massimo Cragnotti said Wednesday after the team's 3-1 defeat against Nantes that he hoped Zoff would continue to play some role at the club.

Zoff took over as Lazio coach for the second time in January when Swede Sven Goran Eriksson left to become England coach, initially making a good impression as Lazio moved back into the title race and eventually finished third.

But the summer sales of Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved and Chilean striker Marcelo Salas to Juventus and Argentine midfielder Juan Veron to Manchester United badly weakened the squad.

Lazio spent US\$41 million on Spanish international midfielder Gaizka Mendieta from Valencia, but

the blond-haired Basque player has struggled to settle in Italy and was booted off the field Wednesday.

Zoff, the former Juventus and Italy goalkeeper, was previously Lazio coach between 1990 and 1994, but he failed to win the title despite huge investment from club president Sergio Cragnotti.

Zoff then moved "upstairs" to become club president before becoming Italy coach after the 1998 World Cup final.

Zaccheroni has worked his way up from the lower divisions, making his name at Udinese before moving to AC Milan where he won the Italian title in his first season in 1999.

## Brazil lesson for T&T



AP, Aacolet, Tobago

A fast Nigeria team beat the United States 2-0 in the under-17 FIFA World Championships in Tobago on Wednesday, quashing U.S. hopes to end the tournament with at least one victory.

Also on Wednesday, in a Group A game, Caetano scored a hat-trick as Brazil whipped home team Trinidad and Tobago 6-1.

Many of the 7,500 fans at the

stadium supported the U.S. team by wearing red, white and blue in honor of the victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. But the Super Eagle