

Barca class too much

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool got their Champions League second phase campaign off to a disastrous start going down 3-1 to classy Spanish giants Barcelona at Anfield on Tuesday.

Michael Owen put the English Premiership leaders ahead with a smart finish before Patrick Kluyvert levelled the scores for Barca just before half time after cleverly springing Liverpool's offside trap.

Brazilian youngster Fabio Rochemback, 20 in December, put the Catalans ahead with a stunning 20-metre shot before Dutch international Marc Overmars wrapped things up six minutes from time after a delightful 30-pass move.

Such was the superiority of the La Liga side, the supporters at Liverpool's famous 'Kop' end applauded the Barcelona players as they headed for the tunnel on the final whistle.

Barcelona coach Carlos Rexach was glad to give his doubters something to think about after his side's victory.

"We have started slowly this season and we really needed a big result against a top side to show what we are really capable of," he said.

"A win like this can only give us confidence for the rest of the season."

But Rexach played down talk that the win would be a turning point in Barcelona's season.

"Between heaven and hell there is one short step," he added. "We are keeping our feet firmly on the ground."

Liverpool's temporary coach Phil Thompson made no excuses for his team's poor performance and instead praised the masterful Spaniards.

"What you saw today was a fantastic team - they are stronger than last year and must be one of the favourites to go all the way," he said. "Whether in space or under pressure they look so composed, so comfortable."

"It says it all when our fans, who are knowledgeable about the game, applaud off the opposition."

Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier watched the game on television while he recovers at home from heart surgery and so assistant coach Thompson continued in charge.

In a repeat of last season's UEFA

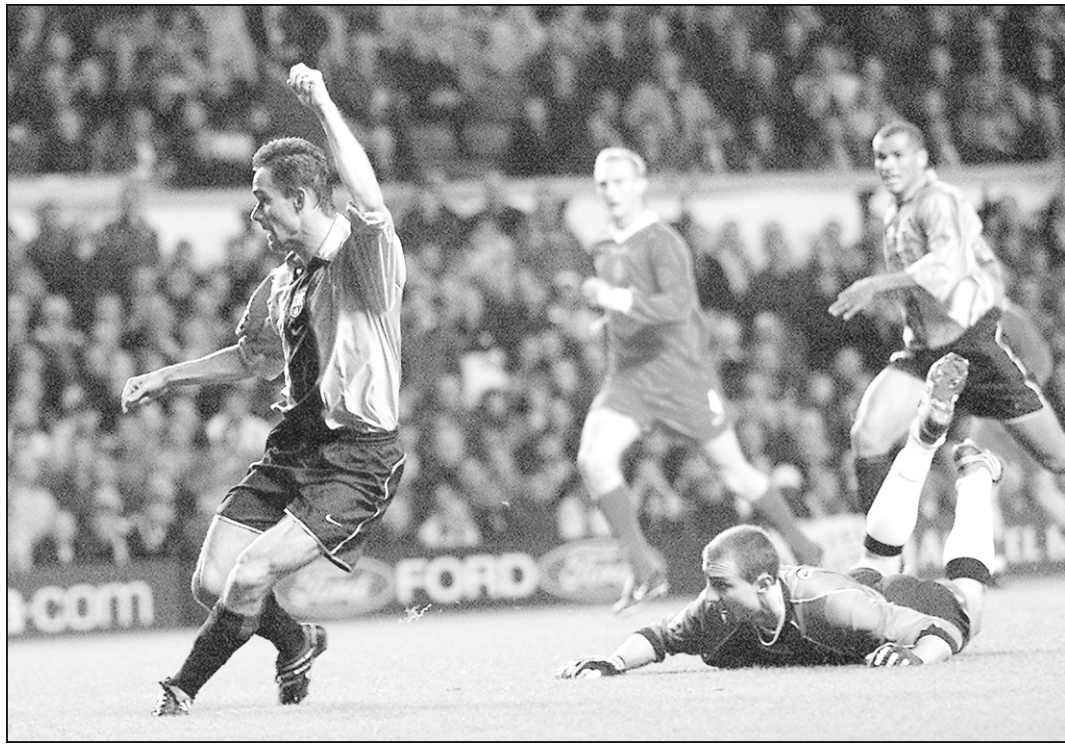


PHOTO: AFP

IT'S ALL OVERMARS! Barcelona's Dutch winger Marc Overmars (L) scores his team's third goal after rounding off Liverpool custodian Jerzy Dudek (on the ground) at Anfield on November 20.

Cup semi-final, which Liverpool won 1-0 on aggregate before going on to win the trophy, the tie also brought together former rivals Thompson and Carlos Rexach.

Thompson scored for Liverpool when they met Barcelona at Anfield in the second leg of the UEFA Cup in 1976 only to see his effort cancelled out by Rexach.

The Reds went through 2-1 on aggregate to the Nou Camp in the first leg.

Suspensions deprived both teams of key midfielders on Tuesday. Liverpool were without Germany international Dietmar Hamann and Carlos Puyol missed out for Barca.

In a bright opening between two of Europe's most famous clubs, Rivaldo tested Liverpool goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek with a free-kick from distance and at the other end Steven Gerrard's pilderiver flashed wide.

Barcelona were forced into making an early substitution when Luis Enrique hobbled off with what appeared to be a hamstring injury and was replaced by former Arsenal winger Overmars.

Liverpool enjoyed the better of the early chances and it was no surprise when they made the break-

through their pressure deserved after 26 minutes.

England international Gerrard fed Vladimir Smicer on the halfway line and his slide rule pass picked out Owen who danced round Argentine Roberto Bonano in the Barcelona goal before tucking the ball home.

The home side then had a great opportunity to double their lead but Philip Cocu's outstretched boot stopped Emile Heskey's fierce shot from crossing the line.

The Dutchman's clearance proved crucial as the Spaniards drew level three minutes from half time.

Overmars skinned Jamie Carragher and crossed for the ever-dangerous Rivaldo. The Brazilian's sublime flick fell into the path of Kluyvert who escaped Liverpool's offside trap to fire a crisp volley past Dudek.

A minute before the break, Overmars almost gave the Spaniards the lead but his low shot rolled inches past Dudek's right-hand post with the Liverpool defence in disarray.

Barcelona, lifted by their equalizing goal, should have gone 2-1 up four minutes after the interval when Overmars threaded a beautiful pass

into Kluyvert, but the giant Dutchman's effort was blocked by Dudek's legs.

The usually reliable Owen should have restored Liverpool's lead on 61 minutes but the England marksman, with a gaping goal to aim at and Bonano stranded, lofted the ball wide.

That miss cost Liverpool dear as the visitors went in front six minutes later.

Brazilian youngster Rochemback, on for the disappointing Gabri, let rip a rising drive from the edge of the area which sailed high above Dudek and into the back of the net.

Worse was to come for Liverpool when they failed to learn their lesson from Barcelona's first goal and tried to catch Overmars offside.

The linesman's flag stayed down and the Dutchman, completing a brilliant spell of possession, collecting Xavi's through-ball before easing past Dudek and slotting home the third goal.

With Barcelona keeping possession and Rivaldo showboating, the stylish Spaniards cruised to a comfortable victory.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Champions League second phase results on Tuesday:

GROUP A
At Munich Bayern Munich (Ger) 1 (Sergio 87) Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Van Nistelrooy 74)

At Porto Boavista (Por) 1 (Sanchez 24) Nantes (Fra) 0

GROUP B
At Istanbul Galatasaray (Tur) 1 (Perez 22) AS Roma (Ita) 1 (Emerson 90)

At Liverpool Liverpool (Eng) 1 (Owen 27) Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Kluyvert 41, Rochemback 65, Overmars 84)

Ronaldo, Vieri rested for Ipswich trip

AFP, Appiano Gentile, Italy

Inter Milan left Italy for England Tuesday to prepare for Thursday night's UEFA Cup third round tie with Ipswich Town - but without star strikers Ronaldo and Christian Vieri.

Argentinian coach Hector Cuper omitted both men but all the signs are that he will play both against Fiorentina on Sunday - the first time the two megastars have played together in two years.

"Cuper and I decided this together," said Brazilian Ronaldo. "I will stay at Milan so I can work to get ready for Sunday's match."

Vieri is expected to play the full 90 minutes against Fiorentina while the Brazilian is likely to play one half.

Trouble in Montevideo

AFP, Montevideo

Uruguay's 0-1 World Cup defeat at the hands of Australia in Melbourne Tuesday got an angry reception back home with 55 people arrested here following the match.

Thirty thousand Uruguayan supporters gathered in the city centre to watch the match on television, but the atmosphere turned nasty after the penalty-goal 12 minutes from time which gave the Australians victory in the disturbances.

Boavista start bright

AFP, Porto

Boavista made a winning start to their Champions League second phase on Tuesday, beating French champions Nantes 1-0 in Portugal.

Boavista, who qualified in second place behind Liverpool from their first phase group which included 1997 champions Borussia Dortmund, took the lead rather than the run of play on 24 minutes at the Bessa Stadium.

Bolivian forward Erwin Sanchez smacked in a wicked left-foot dipping volley for his third goal of the tournament after 24 minutes, but Nantes keeper Mickael Landreau was very much at fault, letting the ball spin out of his grasp and over the line.

Nantes' coach Raynald Denoueix said he could only hope for improved fortunes in the five

matches to come.

"It wasn't the best of starts to the second phase. I hope that we will get back into our first-phase rhythm. Boavista defend collectively very well and don't give you time or room to manoeuvre," Denoueix said.

Boavista counterpart Jaime Pacheco was delighted his men had shown the discipline required to hold on.

"Having got our noses in front it was important to stay there. We have a chance to create a surprise or two."

With games against reigning champions Bayern Munich and 1999 winners Manchester United to come, both sides had every incentive to put early points on the board, particularly the Portuguese with their home advantage.

The hosts were without suspended midfielder Armando Goncalves Teixeira while the French were missing injured Romanian forward Viorel Moldovan.

Emerson denies Galatasaray

AFP, Istanbul

Brazilian star Emerson struck an injury-time equaliser to give AS Roma a share of the spoils in a 1-1 draw against Galatasaray as the second phase of the Champions League got underway on Tuesday.

He scored with a wonderful overhead kick in the second minute of time added on after a mistake by Colombian keeper Faryd Mondragon in the Turks' goal.

Galatasaray looked on course for all three points when former Blackburn Rovers and Marseille defender Sebastian Perez gave them the lead in the 22nd minute.

They had gone into the match not having conceded a goal in the first stage of the competition at their home Ali Sami Yen Stadium and they dominated from the start.

They deservedly took the lead when Hasan Sas played a short corner to Ayhan Akman. He beat Cafu before releasing a pass to Perez, who slotted the ball past Francesco Antonioli from six yards out.



PHOTO: AFP

AS Roma's Brazilian international Emerson (L) puts pressure on Galatasaray's Hasan Sas (C) at Istanbul on November 20.

Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta was back in the Roma side after a month out of action through injury and he had a chance just before half time to equalise.

Damiano Tommasi broke away from the pack and crossed into the path of Batistuta who was just inches wide of the mark.

Emre Asik was having a torrid time keeping tabs on the Argentinian and he was booked for a foul on the striker just before the interval.

Roma coach Fabio Capello brought on Antonio Cassano for Tommasi at the start of the second half and he almost inspired an equaliser for the Italians in the 56th minute.

He coolly put Cafu in on goal, but the Brazilian defender wasted the opportunity to level.

The Italian champions then enjoyed their best spell. Cassano hit the ball over the top after a fine pass

from Francesco Totti and then, on the hour, Aldair headed wide from a cross from Cafu.

As torrential rain began to fall, the Turks were forced onto the back foot but managed to frustrate the Italians who were looking increasingly menacing and they got their reward when Emerson hit his dramatic equaliser.

Capello said he would take the one point.

"It was a tough game for the referee to handle because both teams were very aggressive - but I prefer masculine football, not girls' football," he smiled.

"We played well in the first half but made a bad mistake for the goal. "After the break we created more chances and showed we are a team that is confident in its own abilities," Capello added.

Defence again MU's bane

AFP, Munich

Manchester United's defensive hoodoo struck again here Tuesday when a late slip up saw Bayern Munich claim a 1-1 draw in their Champions League Group A clash.

"However before the game I think we would have settled for the draw. It's just disappointing we lost a goal so late," he added.

"It's a disappointing part of the game for us. We defended really well until then. But we've given the ball away, they've come into the penalty box and they've scored ... it's disappointing," an unhappy Ferguson said.

to have escaped with a point.

"We could have lost and it's important that we won a point. It would have been very tough to lose our first home match," said Hitzfeld.

"We were the better side in the first half but we couldn't re-establish our rhythm in the second and Manchester United were able to come back in the game," said Hitzfeld, sidestepping questions about United's enduring defensive troubles.

"Manchester are a very powerful team. They defended well and they scored a wonderful goal from Ruud van Nistelrooy.

"They have got a real invention in midfield with Veron and I think they have improved a lot from last season," said Hitzfeld, who earlier this week ruled himself out as a possible successor to Ferguson.

Earlier, United had spent the first half happy to sit back and absorb the pressure from Bayern, who had all the play but only seriously tested Barthez once in the opening 45 minutes.

With United's defence a problem area all season, Ferguson clearly was in no mood to take any chances against Bayern.

Skipper Keane acted as an effective shield just in front of centre-halves Brown and Blanc, with Paul Scholes and Argentine star Juan Sebastian Veron in central midfield.

United's 4-1-4-1 formation held up well under the early Bayern pressure, although inevitably van Nistelrooy cut an isolated figure as the lone striker.

Bayern's first effort came on 13 minutes, Brazilian attacker Giovane Elber firing a shot from the edge of the area directly at Barthez.

The German champions' best chance of the first half came on 23 minutes when Barthez punched away Bosnian international Hasan Salihamidzic's glancing header from a Willy Sagnol corner.

United's defence were under the cosh shortly afterwards when Barthez was adjudged to have taken longer than the allowed six seconds for a clearance, Swedish referee Anders Frisk awarding an indirect freekick a couple of yards inside the Red Devils' area.

Stefan Effenberg's shot from the setpiece rebounded off the United wall though, and his follow was off target.

United did finally register their first attempt on goal 10 minutes before the break.

England captain David Beckham curbed in a freekick from the right and Quinton Fortune, a late replacement for injured Ryan Giggis, rose to head wide.

United came out for the second half more positively, Ferguson substituting Dennis Irwin at fullback for the more adventurous Silvestre.

And the move looked like being a tactical masterpiece when Silvestre's run and cross created van Nistelrooy's opener. But Bayern were in no mood to be beaten and Sergio's leveller saw them escape.



PHOTO: AFP

BUILDING BRIDGES! Bayern Munich's Brazilian striker Giovane Elbar (L) and Manchester United defender Wes Brown go for the ball at Munich on November 20.

United had been set for a famous victory after Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy put the English giants 1-0 up just 16 minutes from time at the Olympic Stadium.

But a pass from Bayern's Alexander Zickler helped on by Carsten Jancker caused hesitation between United defenders Wes Brown and Laurent Blanc, allowing Brazilian Paulo Sergio to steal in and equalise in the 88th minute.

United might even have lost late on and had French 'keeper Fabien Barthez to thank for a stunning late save from a fierce Owen Hargreaves shot from just inside the area.

United will be relieved to have come away with a point, but Sir Alex Ferguson's was left bitterly disappointed that his side could not wrap up the win against the defending champions.

"It was a game I think we should have won," Ferguson said afterwards. "We conceded a late goal and that's very disappointing for us."

United's goal came on 74 minutes. Breaking out swiftly from defence, the ball was moved to second-half substitute Mikael Silvestre sprinting down the left flank.

The French international full-back's whipped in cross was met perfectly by van Nistelrooy, who sidefooted a volley home from close range past Bayern 'keeper Oliver Kahn.

Bayern, who had dominated the first half but struggled to make any impression in the second when United upped the tempo, fought back to level.

United could have made it safe when leading 1-0 but skipper Roy Keane's long-range shot was tipped onto the bar five minutes from time by Kahn.

"That save stopped them from losing. It was a world class save," Ferguson said.

Ferguson's counterpart at Bayern Ottmar Hitzfeld was happy

UEFA Cup First leg wins for Tel Aviv, Bordeaux

AFP, Paris

Israel's Hapoel Tel Aviv, conquerors of Chelsea in the previous round, take a 2-1 first-leg lead to Russia after a UEFA Cup third round win over Russia's Lokomotiv Moscow on Tuesday.

Milan Osterc gave the Israelis the lead three minutes before the break and Asi Domb came up with an 89th-minute winner after Marat Ismailov had pulled one back for Lokomotiv nine minutes after the restart.

Tel Aviv ousted Chelsea 3-1 on aggregate after winning the first leg in Israel 2-0 when Chelsea had fielded a weakened side after six key players declined to travel to the Middle East because of security fears.

In Tuesday's other match French side Bordeaux, who were finalists five seasons ago, beat Dutch outfit Roda JC Kerkrade 1-0 at home with Brazilian forward Miranda heading the only goal from a David Jemmal cross five minutes into the second period.

Bordeaux, without injured France international forward Christophe Dugarry, applied almost constant pressure but they foundered aside from Miranda's contribution on a stout Dutch defence.

Garba Lawal might have snatched a shock equaliser in the closing stages but Bordeaux's French international shotstopper Ulrich Rame made an alert stop.

"In Europe, the priority is not to concede a goal at home. We lacked a bit of impulsiveness but we will have more space over there, I think, and we tend to get a goal away," said Bordeaux coach Elie Baup.

Strike action set for December 1

AFP, London

A strike by the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) is set to hit the English game early next month after the organisation's chief executive Gordon Taylor said Tuesday that talks aimed at averting action had broken down.

Taylor said the players' union and the Premier League had been unable to reach agreement and that meant strike action was likely to take place on the weekend of December 1 and 2.

Taylor said that all league games with cameras present - live or recorded - would be affected.

He told Sky Sports News: "It's time to protect the very future of the union. We feel we have been left with no alternative."

"We just feel we have been left with no choice. We feel it is not a fair reflection on the job that we do - there is plenty of need for the money."

The PFA have demanded a five percent stake of the 1.5 billion pounds (2.3 billion dollars) television deal the Premier League recently negotiated with Sky and ITV, with the latest offer of 50million over three years having been rejected last week.

STANDINGS						
Champions League second phase tables after Tuesday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):						
GROUP A						
Boavista (Por)	1	1	0	0	1	0 3
Bayern Munich (Ger)	1	0	1	0	1	1 1
Man United (Eng)	1	0	1	0	1	1 1
Nantes (Fra)	1	0	0	1	0	1 0
GROUP B						
Barcelona (Spa)	3	1	1	0	0	3 1
AS Roma (Ita)	1	0	1	0	1	1 1
Galatasaray (Tur)	1	0	1	0	1	1 1

FIFA world rankings Argentina now second

AFP, Paris

Argentina have moved ahead of Brazil to second place in the latest FIFA world rankings for the first time since 1993.

The Argentinians easily topped the South American zone qualifier for the World Cup finals, while Brazil struggled all the way before finally ensuring the fourth and last qualifying slot.

Argentina have 798 points, just one point ahead of Brazil and 13 behind the world's top-ranked team, World and European champions France who drew 1-1 away to Australia in their latest friendly game.

Biggest mover of the month was Belgium who advanced 13 places to 20th thanks to their World Cup European Zone play-off win over the Czech Republic.

Germany moved up three places to 11th, one behind England, while Ireland are up two spots to 18th.

Curiously five teams who failed to make the World Cup finals were in the top 20 - Colombia, Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Czech Republic and Romania.

FIFA TOP 20

1. France	811 pts
2. Argentina	798
3. Brazil	797
4. Portugal	741
5. Colombia	736
6. Italy	735
7. Spain	731
8. Netherlands	722
9. Mexico	713
10. England	712
11. Germany	710
12. Yugoslavia	709
13. Czech Republic	699
14. Paraguay	694
15. Romania	687
16. Sweden	676
17. Denmark	675
18. Ireland	672
19. Croatia	671
20. Belgium	666
United States	666