

Arch foes reach last eight Group B wide open



AFP, Paris

Old rivals Manchester United and Bayern booked their tickets into the quarter-finals of the European Champions League on Wednesday as Liverpool kept their hopes alive with a gritty draw at Barcelona.

English champions United and holders Bayern played out a dull 0-0 stalemate in their Group A game at Old Trafford, a point for each side securing their passage into the last eight.

The two teams progressed after French champions Nantes, already eliminated, held Boavista to a 1-1 draw at the Stade Beaujoire, ending the Portuguese team's slim hopes of progressing.

MAN UNITED 0; BAYERN

United boss Alex Ferguson said he had expected a tight match against holders Bayern.

"It was a predictable result and a predictable game but I am satisfied with the result," he said. "The important thing is to qualify."

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld agreed with Ferguson that there was little to choose from between the two teams.

"Both sides showed great respect for each other and were therefore extremely cautious," he said.

"The first-half was tactical but United were far more dangerous in the second and we had Oliver Kahn to thank for keeping us in the game."

"Towards the end we tried to slow the game down and play on the counter-attack but a 0-0 at Old Trafford is a sign of a good defence."

United finish their programme with an away match at Boavista and Ferguson will demand they finish the schedule with a flourish with Bayern set for three home points against Nantes.

"We've got to win that game now. We tried to win the match tonight and it was important to win the match, but two very good teams and overall you can't complain."

NANTES 1; BOAVISTA 1

Nantes and Boavista of Portugal drew 1-1 at the Nantes' Stade Beaujoire.



Liverpool's Steven Gerrard (R), tries to stop Barcelona maestro Rivaldo by pulling his jersey at Barcelona on March 13.

But Boavista, still clinging on to a faint hope of qualification at the start of play, fought back and levelled through Joaquim da Silva Martelinho, who latched on to a long ball and fired past Mickael Landreau in the Nantes goal.

However, the stalemate means neither side can progress to the last eight following the Old Trafford draw between Manchester United and holders Bayern Munich.

A win would have left the Porto-based side with seven points and still able to catch the leading pair. Instead, the profligacy of Duda meant it was not to be.

But while the qualifying picture was settled in Group A, there is still everything to play for in Group B, where four teams - AS Roma, Galatasaray, Barcelona and Liverpool - can all qualify.

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AS Roma's Brazilian veteran Cafu (R) celebrates his equaliser against Galatasaray with team-mate Francesco Totti while Galatasaray's Colombian custodian Farid Mondragon stands stunned at Rome on March 13.

Viorel Moldovan gave the French league champions a 43rd-minute lead as he took advantage of a mix up in the Portuguese defence resulting from a mishit Jorge Silva clearance to slot the ball calmly past keeper Pereira Ricardo.

ROMA 1; GALATASARAY

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Turks call it 'fascism'

police were seen moving in to try and restore order but it was several minutes before players and officials of the Turkish side could leave the field as the Roman crowd howled in protest.

Cem said that prior to the match there had been fears of violence from among sections of the notoriously difficult AS Roma fans.

"Unfortunately what we had feared would happen to us did," he said, adding that Turkey would present an official note of protest to the Italian authorities.

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit also told a press conference in Ankara that he regretted the scuffles at the match.

"I was greatly saddened by the attacks against Galatasaray players and officials," he said.

Galatasaray official Abdur Rahman Albayrak said that several of his team's players had sustained injuries after being struck by police batons.

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RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Table with 2 columns: Group, Match details (Team, Score, Venue). Includes Group A (Manchester United 0, Bayern Munich 0, Nantes 1, Boavista 1) and Group B (Barcelona 0, Liverpool 0, AS Roma 1, Galatasaray 1).

ice with Barcelona coach Charly Rexach.

"Liverpool only seem to be a threat from freekicks and corners. We dominated the game for the first 15 minutes and were unlucky not to score. In truth we had three or four clearcut chances, but perhaps we would have needed 10 to get a goal."

The best chance at the Nou Camp fell to Barcelona after 68 minutes, when French international defender Philippe Cristanval hit the post and Philippe Cocu could not pounce on the ball quick enough to stab home the rebound.

By contrast, Liverpool's best chances came in the first half, with Emile Heskey going close after nine minutes and then Steven Gerrard glancing a header past the post of Barcelona goalkeeper Roberto Bonano midway through the first period.

Liverpool's central defenders Sami Hyypia and Stephane Henchoz again proved that they are one of the most efficient partnerships in Europe and stifled most of the Barcelona attacks without a minimum of difficulty, helped by Rivaldo struggling throughout the game.

The price of the book will differ from country to country, Yano said.

The official World Cup programme, available at 20 stadiums in South Korea and Japan, and the review in July will be produced by the same company.

"It is important to give fans more information about such a fantastic event like the World Cup and their opponents," Japan's head coach Philippe Troussier said.

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CUP CORNER



AFP, Tokyo

Japanese music fans have shown the red card to an official World Cup song for Japan and South Korea, which will co-host the World Cup finals from May 31 to June 30.

"We have virtually no reaction at all," Yasuhiro Takahashi said Thursday, a clerk at the huge HMV music store in Shinjuku, one of the busiest districts in Tokyo.

"We put up the big display promoting the song so that people would notice it, but our sales figures showed just the opposite," Takahashi said, adding his shop had only sold 20 copies of the CD single "Let's Get Together Now", a day after the song went on sale.

The poor response was in spite of a massive marketing effort including radio airtime and expensive full-page advertisements in national newspapers featuring the participating Japanese and South Korean artists.

"As a newly released CD, this is really a low sale," Takahashi said.

Priced at 1,020 yen (eight dollars), "Let's Get Together Now," a pop-call for reconciliation between longtime foes Japan and Korea, includes versions in both languages, but the CD is sold only in Japan as there is no market for CD singles in South Korea.

Defstar Records Inc., which markets the CD, said the company has yet to decide whether to sell it overseas. Defstar Records is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

Defstar said it aimed to sell one million copies of the song, and maintained the company had received positive feedback on the song from record shops nationwide.

"Sales are really good," a company official said, although she said she had no precise figures so far. "On the first day of sales, the song ranked top in a daily hit chart."

The song is about loving and understanding each other. South Korean duo Brown Eyes, US-based Korean Lena Park, Japanese female vocalist Sowetu and Japanese duo Chemistry teamed up for the project.

The official guidebook for the World Cup will go on sale Friday in the host countries Japan and South Korea, its publisher and the Japan Football Association said Thursday.

The book, which includes the pictures and details of 576 players from 32 participating countries, will also be available in more than 60 countries and in 20 languages within a month.

It will be the first time the official guidebook will be distributed on that scale, its editor Toru Yano of publisher Kodansha said.

"So far as I know, it was put on sale in only five or six countries in the past. Each country can use 10 percent of the pages for their own team. The Japanese edition has more pages for Japan," Yano said.

The book, priced at 1,500 yen (11.6 dollars) in Japan, features special stories of French star Zinedine Zidane, the most valuable player at the 1998 World Cup, and Italian striker Alessandro Del Piero.

The Japanese edition has its own pages for star midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata, while the Korean edition carries a story on Seol Ki-hyeon.

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Premiership Jimmy buries Spurs



AFP, London

Dutch striker Jimmy-Floyd Hasselbaink blasted a superb hat-trick as Chelsea dished out a second 4-0 drubbing in four days against hapless London rivals Tottenham at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

Hasselbaink struck two wonderful 25-yard curlers and netted a powerful header to take his personal goal tally for the season to 27.

Adding to Tottenham and former Chelsea boss Glenn Hoddle's woes was a red card for Mauricio Taricco, dismissed for a wild challenge on Graeme Le Saux. The two players had clashed in Sunday's FA Cup game, with Le Saux being red-carded.

Frank Lampard made it 4-0 in the final minute as Claudio Ranieri's team repeated their FA Cup quarter-final success.

The result meant Chelsea moved into fifth place, five points behind Newcastle who currently occupy the last automatic Champions League place open to English clubs.

Ranieri admitted the Blues now had their sights on closing the gap with Newcastle and seizing a Champions League berth.

Ranieri hopes to make up the five-point gap to Newcastle and steal fourth spot, the final berth for entry to the Champions League.

"It's important we have the mentality to try and get into fourth place. We must always try and win because the Champions League is still far away," the Italian said.

"At the beginning of the season, my target was to improve on last season, when we finished sixth. It's very important for us to win games now as I want to try and get in the Champions League.

"We must always try and win, because if we lose or draw one, there'll be too few games left to get to the Champions League.

"I said to the players before the game tonight I wanted another good performance and it was important for us to play both with passion and the head.

"I have good players and everybody works very hard. We've had a lot of good performances, but now I've forgotten them and want to look forwards."

Ranieri also hat-trick hero Hasselbaink, whose trio of strikes

contained two candidates for goal of the season.

"He scored three fantastic goals. I think it's the best season of his career and don't think only about the goals, as he works very hard for the team.

"He's a special man and wants to score special goals. It's important when you hit the net - and all his goals tonight were fabulous," he said.

Hasselbaink's goal fest began in the 23rd minute when his first long-range effort gave Spurs Scotland

steer the club out of the Premiership relegation zone.

The former Manchester United striker, a 7 million pounds (9.94 million dollars) buy from Old Trafford, signed off in style - he starts a three-match suspension on Sunday.

Cole grabbed the second goal of the game after Damien Duff's superb solo effort.

Ipswich responded through striker Marcus Stewart but couldn't level as they went down to their fourth straight defeat.

Blackburn opened the scoring after 19 minutes. Duff received the ball up on the left, cut inside and beat three Ipswich players before beating Matteo Sereni with a shot from the edge of the area.

Blackburn added a second goal in the 43rd minute thanks to another flowing move, Cole rounding off after neat play by Tugay and David Dunn.

In the 55th minute Ipswich hit back when Stewart found space to head in a Mark Venus corner.

But that was as good as it got for the "Tractor Boys", who despite a great post-Christmas fightback are now just one place outside the relegation zone, level on points with third from bottom Bolton.

"I think we deserved the three points tonight - and it's a big three points for us," said relieved Blackburn boss Graeme Souness.

"We sat back for 45 minutes but I thought for the first 45 we were excellent.

"We got the goals and then became nervous - but that's understandable."

Ipswich manager George Burley added on Sky Sports News: "I'm very disappointed we did not get something out of the game.

"But you cannot afford not to start until the second half.

"We have got to go and compete and play and we did neither in the first half which is disappointing."

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JIMMY-FLOYD HASSELBAINK

keeper Neil Sullivan no chance.

Down to 10 men after Taricco's 59th minute dismissal, Spurs were 2-0 down 10 minutes later when Jesper Gronkjaer's cross was headed home by an unmarked Hasselbaink.

The forward saved his best for last with a sublime strike, cutting in from the right wing before letting fly with a left foot curler that arched into the top corner. Lampard lashed in the fourth in the final seconds.

In Wednesday's other Premiership match, League Cup holders Blackburn boosted their fight against relegation with a 2-1 win over fellow strugglers Ipswich at Ewood Park.

Andy Cole, an England reject when Hoddle was in charge of the national team, scored his seventh goal in 15 games for Blackburn to

Premiership's top six

Table with 2 columns: Team, Points. Arsenal 30, Man Utd 29, Liverpool 30, Newcastle 29, Chelsea 29, Leeds 29.

Cuper's advice for Scolari



AFP, Apiano Gentile

Inter Milan's Argentinian coach Hector Cuper said Wednesday that Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari would be well advised not to pick Ronaldo until he had played for Inter.

On Tuesday Scolari called up the 25-year-old hitman for the friendly for Yugoslavia just 24 hours after the player returned to Italy from Brazil where he has been recuperating from injury - and made it clear Ronaldo would play.

The call-up raised eyebrows