SPÖRT

Barca, Leverkusen laugh last



AFP, Leverkusen/Barcelona

Traditional giants Barcelona and Germany's rising power Bayer Leverkusen earned their spurs on Tuesday in an exciting night of European Champions League football as both clubs reached the

Javier Saviola scored the clinching goal in Barcelona's 3-1 win, 3-2 on aggregate, over Greeks Panathinaikos to complete a fightback following the conceding of an early goal.

Legends Liverpool were just six minutes from reaching the semifinals, in their first campaign since losing the 1985 final to Juventus, but a goal by Brazilian Lucio gave the German league leaders a 4-2 lead they hung on to for a 4-3 aggregate victory.

LEVERKUSEN 4; LIVERPOOL Liverpool manager Gerard

Houllier's ambition of being regarded as one of the Anfield greats will have to wait as the English side's 1-0 first-leg quarterfinal lead crumbled in the face of a Leverkusen onslaught at the BayArena.

Leverkusen's victory - the first time a German club has beaten Liverpool since Borussia Monchengladbach in 1978 - kept them firmly on course for a remarkable treble of a first ever league title, the German Cup and Champions League and maintained their extraordinary home record this season in which they have beaten Juventus, Deportivo La Coruna and Barcelona.

The result could have been very different if out-of-sorts England striker Michael Owen hadn't missed two gilt-edged second-half opportunities when one-on-one with Leverkusen keeper Jorg Butt.

"On a good night, Michael could have had a hat-trick," said Houllier.

Two goals from German international Michael Ballack, a Dimitar Berbatov knock-in and the crucial 84th-minute shot between the legs of Liverpool goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek by Brazilian Lucio saw Leverkusen through to a semi-final against Manchester United or Deportivo La Coruna.

Liverpool notched two away goals from Portuguese defender Abel Xavier and Finnish striker Jari



attempt knocked off the line by

unconscious for a few moments and

was taken off on a stretcher, also

suffering from a cut lip, and later

word came from hospital that he

was to be kept in overnight for

Bonano had been knocked

Carlos Puyol.

SEE YOU NEXT TIME! Bayer Leverkusen's Brazilian international defender Lucio puts the game beyond Liverpool as he volleys home his team's fourth goal at the BayArena in Leverkusen on April 9.

the summer, said yet again Bayer had exceeded expectations.

"Of course scoring two goals for me is the best thing in the world, but this match was about more than that it was about team spirit and all of us played like that tonight.

"No-one expected us to make the quarter-finals and now we are in the last four... it is unbelievable!"

The English side had looked dead and buried after Bulgarian international Berbatov had put Leverkusen 3-1 up on the night.

He knocked in a shot from Oliver Neuville that was blocked by Liverpool defender Stephane Henchoz on the line but fell kindly to him yards out and he dispatched it firmly into the net.

But Litmanen put Liverpool back in the lead overall when a dribble and shot across the penalty area seared past Leverkusen 'keeper Jorg Butt in the 79th minute

However the Germans, who had attacked brilliantly throughout the evening, did not let their heads drop and came back even stronger. Lucio struck after seizing on a

superb through ball from Neuville and with the Liverpool defence appealing for offside he slotted the ball through Dudek's legs to send a sellout 27,000 crowd wild

As Toppmoller had promised, his side had started the match with all give a joyous high-five to Houllier and Liverpool's assistant manager Phil Thompson.

Owen fired against the post in the early minutes of the second half when the ball ran to him following a mistake from Argentinian Diego Placente and missed badly again minutes later when released into another one-on-one with Butt.

But Ballack's header in the 64th minute set the momentum Leverkusen's way while Berbatov's tap-in seemed to have wrapped it

Litmanen threw Liverpool a new lifeline before Lucio negotiated the tight angle to send Toppmoller's side into the last four of Europe's top club competition for the first time in

BARCELONA 3; PANATHINAIKO uis Enrique handed the 1992

European champions a 3-2 aggregate win and kept them on course for an all-Spanish semi-final with Real Madrid, should the latter overcome a 2-1 deficit to Bayern Munich in Madrid on Wednesday.

Barca's come from behind victory also brought to an end the glorious run of Sergio Markarian's giantkillers whom many originally thought would never make it past the first group stage.

However it was the Greeks who



PHOTO: INTERNET

Barcelona's Luis Enrique (Top) heads the second goal against Panathinaikos at the Nou Camp on April 9.

Litmanen but it was not enough as Klaus Toppmoller's side came back each time with a goal.

Toppmoller, who chainsmoked throughout the pulsating match, said he had decided to throw caution to the wind at half-time despite going up against a defence that has the best Premiership record with just 26 conceded in 33

"It is hard to believe as Liverpool rarely concede that amount of goals," he said.

"I decided at half-time to go for broke and pour everything into attack.

"Thus I brought on Oliver Neuville and Berbatov and all the players showed an incredible desire to win,'

he added. Houllier congratulated Leverkusen, but said his side had

had the opportunities to win the match. "Our only regret is that we had

chances to win the game. We had the opportunity to be 3-1 up after 20 minutes of the second half." said the Frenchman, who was accompanying his team abroad for the first time since life-saving heart surgery in November. "But I am proud of my players. They have played 17 games in Europe, including the (European) Super Cup and the qualifying rounds but we lost twice. once to Barcelona at home and once tonight and both of those teams are in the Champions League semi-finals which shows their quality," he added.

Houllier also paid tribute to Heskey, who he revealed had a slight hamstring injury, leading to his

first-half replacement by Litmanen. "He had to go to Antigua for his grandmother's funeral but he came

back on Sunday." Leverkusen's goal hero Ballack, who is due to join Bayern Munich in

However the first chance was Liverpool's when Michael Owen released John Arne Riise on the left whose cross found Heskey in space, but the England international's hesitation allowed a defender to block.

Then in the 16th minute, Ballack cut across Steven Gerrard and, unchallenged, fired a superb 25yard shot past Dudek, who despite getting a hand to it could do nothing to stop it going into the net.

The veteran Ulf Kirsten could have added a second when the ball rebounded to him, but he did not

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Collated Champions League quarter-final, second leg results on

At Barcelona Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Luis Enrique

23, 49, Saviola 61) Panathinaikos Gre) 1 (Konstantinou 8) * Barcelona win 3-2 on aggre-

At Leverkusen, Germany Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 4 Ballack 16, 63, Berbatov 68, Lucio

84) Liverpool (Eng) 2 (Abel Xavier 12, Litmanen 79) * Bayer win 4-3 on aggregate

have the time to get power into his

Five minutes later, Owen was passed into space but couldn't find the angle to beat Butt.

Liverpool's breakthrough came from a corner fired in by Danny Murphy, which Xavier rose to meet with a glancing header to beat Butt.

The man who had been a late inclusion in the squad after a hamstring injury sprinted over to

looked favourites to go through when Cypriot Michalis Konstantinou opened the scoring in the eighth minute after getting the better of Barca defender Frank De Boer and hitting a 30m right foot shot past Argentina keeper Tito Bonano.

Carles Rexach's side were stung into action and in the 22nd minute, Saviola, nick-named the 'Little Rabbit' lobbed Panathinaikos' defence to set up Luis Enrique, who had only just beaten the offside trap to shoot past keeper Antonis Nikopolidis.

Three minutes later Nikopolidis had to kick away a vicious shot from Brazil's 1999 World Player of the Year Rivaldo.

Barcelona brought Dutch striker Patrick Kluivert into the action for Italian defender Francesco Coco seconds before the break which gave Barcelona more attacking punch.

A Saviola slip meant he could not take advantage of Nikopolidis letting go of the ball after a shot by Rivaldo but soon afterwards in the 49th minute Luis Enrique had scored his and Barcelona's second

Rivaldo fired in a free kick, won by Marc Overmars, on to Luis Enrique's head to once more get the better of Nikopolidis.

In the 61st minute, Saviola brought the 100,000-strong crowd to their feet after making the most of good work from Xavi to beat the Greek keeper for the third time on the night for the clinching goal in the

The Greeks refused to give up and, in the 80th minute, Barcelona keeper Bonano came well out of his goal to confront Nigerian-born Polish international Emmanuel Olisadebe and Goran Vlaovic made the most of it to feed Nikos Liberopoulos but the striker saw his

Ze Roberto **Bayern bound**

AFP, Berlin

Brazilian midfielder Ze Roberto is set to turn his back on German league leaders Bayer Leverkusen in favour of German champions Bayern Munich, according to press reports Tuesday.

"I've come to an agreement with Munich," Ze Roberto told popular daily Bild, before pointing out the other Leverkusen players who had taken the same route.

"Jorginho, Sergio, Robert Kovac and Michael Ballack (who is still at Leverkusen but will join Bayern for next season) among other Leverkusen players have done the same thing in the past," Ze Roberto told the paper.

The news will come as a shock to Leverkusen who offered the former Flamengo player, who arrived in Germany in 1998, an improved deal to run until 2005 last week amid rumours that a host of clubs were ready to step in for him.

Leverkusen manager Reiner Calmund told German press agency SID the player's eventual destination will only be known at the end of "We've had four offers: two from

Italy, one from Spain and one from Bayern. We'll do everything we can to keep Ze Roberto here on an extended deal." said Calmund. SID have reported those clubs to

be Barcelona, Juventus and Italian champions AS Roma, with a 12 million euro deal thought to be likely.

Is it over for Romario?

Scolari's team 90 percent complete



Former national hero Romario has been dumped on the World Cup scrapheap by Brazil coach Luis Scolari after failing in a bid to make the World Cup squad for a match against Portugal next week.

Scolari announced his full squad for the April 17 friendly here on Tuesday without Romario's name on the list, leaving the 36-year-old Vasco De Gama striker's dreams in Fervent appeals have been

made for Romario's inclusion but Scolari's latest gesture seems to have condemned the prolific striker to staying at home this summer. Apart from Brazil's friendly in Lisbon, Scolari's World Cup con-

tenders have only one more friendly, against a Catalan select, in which to hone their team before flying off to The chances of Romario, who was the hero of Brazil's triumphant

1994 World Cup campaign but who is regarded as controversial because of his apparent love of life off the park, being called up now seem beyond hope. "Romario has shown his desire to

go to the World Cup," said Scolari at a press conference on Tuesday. "We can understand this. But his

desire is the same as those of all the other players who haven't been

"We understand when players want to make the squad, but they have to understand that, as coaches, we have to pick the best

team possible to do the job." In an attempt to close the chapter on the Romario saga, which saw the player and Brazilian Federation



SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Marcos (Palmeiras/Bra), Rogerio Ceni (Sao Paulo/Bra)

Defenders: Anderson Polga (Gremio/Bra), Cafu (AS Roma/Ita), Junior (Parma/Ita), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid/Spa), Roque Junior (AC Milan/Ita), Lucio (Bayer Leverkusen/Ger), Edmilson

Midfield: Gilberto Silva (Atletico Mineiro/Bra). Kleberson (Atletico Paranaense/Bra), Juninho Paulista (Flamengo/Bra), Emerson (AS Roma/Ita), Rivaldo (Barcelona/Spa), Djalminha (Deportivo La Coruna/Spa) Forwards: Edilson (Cru-

zeiro/Bra), Luizao (Gremio/Bra), Ronaldo (Inter Milan/Ita), Ronaldinho Gaucho (Paris St Germain/Fra), Denilson (Real

(CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira make recent public appeals, Scolari appeared adamant.

'The issue is closed - as much as concerns Romario as those players who, up until after the match against Portugal, have not been selected, added Scolari, who announced Tuesday he had picked "90 per cent" of his World Cup squad for the upcoming friendly.

Scolari's determination to ignore the talented veteran, who was instrumental in Brazil's 1994 World Cup win, comes despite a tearful appeal by Romario last week, which was followed by an appeal by Brazilian federation (CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira on Monday.

"I am going to do everything I can from the possible to the impossible to earn the right to play in the finals,' announced Romario last week.

That was followed on Monday by Teixeira's appeal.

Teixeira said in 13 years at the helm of the CBF he had never heard a complaint against the 1994 World Cup star, who missed the 1998 finals through injury and is desperate to play this time.

"In all these years, I have never heard of any problems with Romario at any level," Teixeira told Jovem Pan radio station.

"And, as CBF president, I consider myself a well-informed per-Instead. Scolari has included two

new faces in the squad of players he announced here on Tuesday -Fluminense defender Paulo Cesar and Romario's club teammate Tuesday's announcement by

Scolari involved only those players playing for Brazilian clubs, the coach having announced last week his selection of players plying their trade in Europe.

SEMI-FINAL 2ND LEGS

Uphill task for Milanese



The city of Milan's hopes of seeing both its teams meet in a longawaited UEFA Cup final will need a miracle touch on Thursday when the second leg of the competition's semifinals kick off.

While Inter Milan have a good chance of keeping their part of the bargain, for San Siro neighbours AC Milan the task seems almost impossible.

Brazilian Marcio Amoroso's hattrick for Borussia Dortmund in a 4-0 home victory over AC Milan in the first leg means Carlo Ancelotti's men are virtually out of the competi-

Though Inter only trail Dutch side Feyenoord 1-0, they don't have home advantage in the second leg like their city rivals and Inter coach Hector Cuper knows only too well their backs are against the wall.

AC MILAN V DORTMUND Amoroso's finishing - from a penalty, great individual skill, and a farpost header - have virtually guaranteed Dortmund their place in the May 8 final in Rotterdam even before the second leg is played.

Ancelotti at least recognised where they went wrong last week and will surely hope to give Amoroso less space in which to operate this time round. "He's a fine attacker as we saw."

Ancelotti said after the game. "But we did give him far too much room." It is unlikely that the 27-year-old Amoroso's exploits will make him a contender for Brazil's World Cup

squad, due mainly to a host of

existing talent such as Edilson, Denilson, Luisao and Ronaldinho. But at the Westfalenstadion, Amoroso's current form makes him indispensable

Ancelotti's opposite number at Dortmund Matthias Sammer said the tie was not yet over despite their first-leg advantage "We're in a very good position now which does not necessarily

mean that it is enough," he said rather unconvincingly. Good news for Sammer is that midfielders Dede of Brazil and Lars Ricken are both available after injuries though German striker Giuseppe Reina has a muscle tear

in his right thigh and will not feature. Ancelotti is set to rest veteran defender Paolo Maldini and fitagain centre forward Filippo Inzaghi, no doubt with his sights set on earning the fourth and last qualifying spot in Italy for next vear's Champions League.

Dortmund the 1997 Furonean Champions League winners, are still on for a UEFA Cup/German league double as they lie second in the Bundesliga, four points behind leaders Bayer Leverkusen, with four matches left to play.

INTER MILAN v FEYENOORD only a 1-0 deficit, are under just as much pressure as their city neighbours in their crunch tie against Feyenoord.

Inter's Uruguayan star Alvero Recoba before boarding the plane for Rotterdam stated " when you loose two games in a row its normal to feel the tension. However if you take it positively could help you for the following matches. We are leaving to Holland being a little short in back, but we'll just have to score a few extra goals against our

'Our goal average is pretty high, just in the last two games we were not able to conclude. Hopefully things will change starting tomorrow. Lets not forget that we are in first place and a step away from the Uefa Cup final."

Inter will be at full strength with

Recoba, Christian Vieri and Brazilian superstar Ronaldo all on the team rooster.

Inter's president Massimo Moratti puts an end to all the gossips about Ronaldo and the possibility that he could be lent to a Brazilian club. Moratti has guaranteed that he has never had such thought in mind. "Ronaldo is part of Inter, he is very important for us, especially at the end of the league. I am also confining in him to win the scudetto" has declared the president after today's meeting with Alexandre Martins, Ronaldo's agent. Motivated by this news, Ronaldo had an impressive practice session yesterday and looked to have overcome his recent injury

Feyenoord coach Bert van Marwijk knows he is less than a month away from bringing home Rotterdam's first European trophy in nearly 30 years with the final in their own city on May 8.

Ivan Cordoba scored Feyenoord their first leg lead over Inter and van Marwijk thought his side should have got a second to give them a better cushion for the return match. Cote d'Ivoire striker Bonaventure

Kalou is likely to remain on the

sidelines for the Inter game after

missing Sunday's Dutch league match against NAC Breda with a thigh injury. Central defender Glenn Loovens is also out of the match after suffering concussion and the centre backs are likely to be Kees van

Wonderen and Patrick Paauwe if

the latter shakes off an ankle knock. Feyenoord twice lost at the semifinal stage during the 90's in their efforts to add to their continental title victories - in 1970 with the European Cup and their 1974 UEFA Cup win.

Van Marwijk will be hoping to break the hoodoo, and add a longawaited European trophy to their boardroom cabinet.

CUP CORNER



Some 1,000 Japanese police, kitted with new shields, steel-plated armour and spray guns, practiced combating hooligans on Wednesday, just 51 days ahead of the football World Cup.

Despite the enthusiastic preparations at the 72,000-seat International Stadium Yokohama Japan's biggest football venue, local shopowners said "We assume that 90 percent of the fans will come just to enjoy themselves and will not cause a problem." said Yasuo Niimi, senior superintendent of

security at the National Police Agency. control promptly."

The three-hour drills involved "kata" or ritualized exercises in which shieldand staff-wielding police subdued opponents with a single blow. In three life-like scenarios officers dealt with bombs, dangerous chemicals and a mob of unruly fans

Police also demonstrated an array of weapons -- including a new backpackmounted water cannon, which when fired at close range can knock a rioter off Truck-mounted water cannons, hooks to trip up opponents, attack dogs and

ear-stunning sound bombs were also all used in the drills In one, a team of 180 officers faced off against 150 bottle-throwing, firecracker-setting, bike-riding hooligans and blasted out -- in German, French, English, Portuguese, Japanese and Spanish -- "Quiet down!", and later "Ar-

rests begin now. In the two drills against rowdy mobs, police focused on encircling the crowd and then pushing their wall of clear plastic shields together to squash the

England World Cup star Michael Owen was in an injury scare Wednesday with Liverpool saying he may have broken a foot in the Champions League defeat

The club's official website said that the striker had taken a kick on his foot

ture, but he will have a scan later today and we will have a better idea then." Liverpool lost 2-4 to the German side to crash out of the Champions League

Coach Cesar Maldini has named five European-based players in his 22-strong squad for the World Cup prepartion match against England at Liverpool next

They include veteran goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert, who plays for French Second Division side Strasbourg, Bayern Munich striker Roque Santa Cruz and AEK Athens defender Carlos Gamarra.

American side following two draws against Bolivia (2-2 on Febuary 13 in Ciudad del Este) and Nigeria (1-1 on March 26 in London). And it will be Paraguay's penultimate match before heading for South Korea

ahead of a game against Sweden on May 17 in Stockholm. Maldini said that he was disappointed that he would have only a day and a half to work with his full squad before flying out for England on Sunday. Twelve

But he said the Liverpool game would be an important test for his side as it was against one of the best sides in the world and a candidate to win the World

SQUAD

José Luis Chilavert. Ricardo Tavarelli. Francisco Arce. Pedro Sarabia. Celso Ayala, Carlos Gamarra, Estanislao Struway, Jorge Campos, Gustavo Morinigo, Carlos H. Paredes, Carlos Bonet, José Cardozo, Diego Gavilan, Daniel Sanabria, Denis Caniza, Roque Santa Cruz, Victor Quintana, Richart Baez, Mauro Caballero, Justo Villar, Roberto Acuna, Julio Caceres,

BONUS BOOST FOR JAPAN BOOTERS

Japan's World Cup players will be rewarded with an estimated 75,000 dollars each if they advance to the last-16 round of the World Cup finals on their home

The Japanese Football Association executive board decided to reward the 23 players if they made the knock-out round but refused to say what size the bonuses would be, the Jiji Press news agency reported.

"We don't wish to depress the motivation of reserve players," an association official was quoted by Jiji as saving

history to bow out in the group stage, The association also plans to pay an estimated 300,000 yen (2,270 dollars)

each to players who compete in a first-round match and an additional 750,000 yen (5,680 dollars) each if they win.



Superstar Ronaldo (R) skips the challenge of a team-mate during a practice session at Inter Milan's Appiano Gentile

OWEN WORRY

during the game and was to undergo a scan later Wednesday to determine the extent of the damage. "Manager Gerard Houllier was quoted as saying: "We hope it is not a frac-

on an aggregate score of 3-4. MALDINI NAMES TEAM FOR ENGLAND GAME

It will be former Italy coach Maldini's third match in charge of the South

of his players play for club sidse outside of Paraguay.

Paraguay are grouped with Spain, Slovenia and South Africa for the World Cup

turf in June, a press report said Tuesday.

However Jiji estimated, based on earlier proposals, that the rewards would be little below 10 million yen (75,760 dollars) each for players, including those

The 2002 finals, opening on May 31, will be co-hosted by Japan and South The Japanese are determined not to become the first hosts in World Cup