

# 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 semi-finals.

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 semi-finals, 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 quarter-final 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 shut 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



PHOTO: INTERNET

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 cylinders firing.

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 up.

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 their history.

## BARCELONA 3; PANATHINAIKOS

Luis 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

attempted knocked off the line by Carlos Puyol.

Bonano had been knocked 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 observation.

"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.

Ze Roberto Bayern bound

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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 this month.

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# Is it over for Romario?

## Scolari's team 90 percent complete



AFP, Rio de Janeiro

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 tatters.

Everent 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 contenders have only one more friendly, against a Catalan select, in which to hone their team before flying off to Asia.

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 called up (to the squad).

"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



ROMARIO

## 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 (Lyon/Fra)

**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 (Cruzeiro/Bra), Luizao (Gremio/Bra), Ronaldo (Inter Milan/Ita), Ronaldinho Gaucho (Paris St Germain/Fra), Denilson (Real Betis/Spa)

(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 person."

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 Euler.

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



AFP, Paris

The city of Milan's hopes of seeing both its teams meet in a long-awaited 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 hat-trick 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 competition.

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 far-post 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 fit-again centre forward Filippo Inzaghi, no doubt with his sights set on earning the fourth and last qualifying spot in Italy for next year's Champions League.

Dortmund, the 1997 European 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

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 semi-final 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 long-awaited European trophy to their boardroom cabinet.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Superstar Ronaldo (R) skips the challenge of a team-mate during a practice session at Inter Milan's Appiano Gentile base on April 9.



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 matches.

"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 25-yard 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 attack.

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.

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have the time to get power into his shot.

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## RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Collated Champions League quarter-final, second leg results on Tuesday:

**At Barcelona**  
Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Luis Enrique 23, 49, Saviola 61) Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 (Konstantinou 8)  
\* Barcelona win 3-2 on aggregate

**At Leverkusen, Germany**  
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 4 (Ballack 16, 63, Berbatov 68, Lucio 84) Liverpool (Eng) 2 (Abel Xavier 42, Litmanen 79)  
\* Bayer win 4-3 on aggregate