

Semi-final 1st leg BARCELONA v REAL MADRID

All road lead to Nou Camp



REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona and Real Madrid rejoin European Cup battle after more than 40 years on Tuesday with honours even but Real the clear favourites to reassert their dominance at the highest level.

Barcelona, who host the first leg of the Champions League semifinal at the Nou Camp on the day of Catalunya's patron saint, Sant Jordi, hold the distinction of being the first club to knock Real Madrid out of the European Cup.

That was back in the 1960-61 season, the last time the two fierce Spanish rivals met in Europe, when the Catalans managed to avenge Real's victory on their way to a fifth successive European crown in the previous campaign.

Real won the European Cup for the sixth time in 1996 and took their tally to eight with the Champions League successes of 1998 and 2000.

While they may not enjoy such a clear hegemony these days, Vicente del Bosque's side, featuring the likes of Zinedine Zidane, Luis Figo, Roberto Carlos and Raul, are still the reference point in European football.

Barcelona, whose sole European Cup win came in 1992, have been hit by injuries, with the talismanic Brazilian Rivaldo and inspirational fullback Carles Puyol both expected to miss out.

Even when they have been at full strength Barca have disappointed too often this season but despite Real's greater consistency Carles Rexach's side believe they have a great chance to save their season.

"In this type of game it really doesn't matter what sort of form you're in beforehand," said Barca defender Abelardo. "The tie is at 50-50, but we do know we have to take advantage of the home leg."

Real, who geared up for this match with a 4-1 victory at home to Tenerife, have enjoyed better luck with injuries.

Zidane was rested for the Tenerife match and should be fully recovered from his thigh muscle strain, while Santiago Solari could be back on the left of midfield despite a knee problem.

Fernando Morientes is the one



Barcelona coach Carles Rexach speaking at a media conference in Barcelona yesterday.

certain injury absence (thigh), while Luis Figo will also miss the first leg because of suspension.

In theory, that is a major blow for Real but the absence of the former Barcelona forward, who now inspires such a venomous reaction in Catalunya, will at least mean one fewer distraction for Del Bosque's side, who are promising an aggressive approach.



VINCENTE DEL BOSQUE

"We always go out looking for victory," said French midfielder Claude Makelele. "We don't know how to play for a draw."

"Going out there with a winning attitude will be one of the most important things, even though we'll have to suffer."

Real have had their share of suffering at the Nou Camp. They have not won a league match at Barca's ground in 19 years, although they did have the better of a 1-1 draw there earlier this season.

Zidane was outstanding that night, scoring the Real goal and dominating the midfield for much of the game.

With Rivaldo likely to be missing, the stage could well be set for another night of Zidane magic, although these matches tend to defy predictions.

"All four teams in the semifinals have the same chance," warned Barcelona's Argentine goalkeeper Roberto Bonano.

"There are no favourites and

BARCA v REAL

\* In European Cup matches

April 23, 2002
Barcelona v Real Madrid
Stadium: Camp Nou
Referee: Andres Frisk (Sweden)
Kick off 18.45 GMT

Total 4
Barcelona win 1
Draw 1
Real Madrid won 2

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS CUP

1959/1960
Semifinal, first leg
21.04.1960

Real Madrid 3 (Alfredo Di Stefano 17, 84, Ferenc Puskas 28)

FC Barcelona 1 (Eulogio Martinez 37)

Half time: 2-1, Attendance 120000
Stadium: Santiago Bernabeu, Madrid

Second leg 27.04.1960

FC Barcelona 1 (Sandor Kocsis 89)

Real Madrid 3 (Ferenc Puskas 25, 75, Francisco Gento 68)

Half time: 0-1, Attendance 80000
Stadium: Camp Nou, Barcelona

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS CUP

1996/1997
Second round first leg
09.11.60

Real Madrid 2 (Enrique Mateos 3, Francisco Gento 33)

FC Barcelona 2 (Luis Suarez 27, 87 pen)

Half time: 2-1, Attendance 100000
Stadium: Santiago Bernabeu, Madrid

Second leg 23.11.60

FC Barcelona 2 (Martin Verges 33, Evaristo de Macedo 82)

Real Madrid 1 (Darcy Silveira Canario 87)

Half time: 1-0, Attendance 90000
Stadium: Camp Nou, Barcelona

Another Macedo magic?

AFP, Barcelona

The day of November 23, 1960 is etched into the history books of both Barcelona and Real Madrid, and the man most responsible for its infamy was Evaristo de Macedo.

In their Nou Camp stadium, the Catalans beat their opponents from the Spanish capital 2-1 in their European Cup quarter-final second leg, to go through to the semi-finals 3-2 on aggregate, with the decisive goal coming from a diving header by the former Brazilian international.

The defeat ended Real's reign as the kings of Europe after winning the Cup for its first five years and, in a trip down memory lane, Evaristo will make a rare return visit to the Nou Camp for Tuesday's European Champions League semi-final first leg, which pits the present day Barcelona side against their eternal rivals.

"We want to pay homage to the team that beat Real that famous night," said Barcelona president Joan Gaspart on Monday, after extending the invitation to Evaristo and his old team mates.

Gaspart hopes the presence of Evaristo, who once scored five goals for his country in a 9-0 defeat of Colombia and who was briefly Brazil's coach for six games in 1985, will encourage the Catalans to rise to the occasion nearly 42 years after the two clubs last met in Europe's premier club competition.

Pictures of Evaristo's spectacular 68th minute clincher have been reprinted all over Catalonia during the last two weeks in a bid to bolster the flagging morale of Barcelona, whose Spanish league campaign has gone astray in recent weeks, including a 2-1 loss at Celta Vigo on Saturday.

Ironically, in the summer of 1962, after a five year career on the Mediterranean coast, Evaristo made the rare journey between Barcelona and Real Madrid, where he spent two seasons.

Evaristo, now 68, even played for his new club twice in the early rounds of the 1964 European Cup, in which Real made the final before being beaten 3-1 by Inter Milan.

"However, I've always been more of a fan of Barcelona. The move to Real came at the end of my playing career and I didn't appear in many games for them," Evaristo recently told Spanish reporters from his home in Brazil, where he has been the coach of Vasco da Gama since January.

FIFA to study suspension of Israel

AFP, Riyadh

A request by the Arab Football Federation (FAF) for FIFA to suspend Israel for "its actions against the Palestinian people" will be studied by world football's governing body, according to reports here.

According to the Saudi press agency (SPA), FIFA chief Sepp Blatter has promised, in a letter sent to FAF president Prince Sultan bin Fahd ben Abdel Aziz, that FIFA will study the proposal in two weeks time.

"The suspension of the Israeli football federation (FIF) from FIFA, due to the country's actions against the Palestinian people, is an issue which will be studied during FIFA's executive committee meeting on May 3 in Zurich," according to SPA.

On Saturday, Prince Sultan urged FIFA to "shoulder its historic responsibilities and take a courageous decision to suspend the Israeli football federation to protect the rights of the Palestinian Football Federation, which is a FIFA member and has had its sports infrastructure destroyed and its leaders and sportsmen killed or put to flight."

The federations in Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Syria have already asked FIFA to suspend Israel, which launched a major offensive against Palestinian strongholds on March 29 in response to a series of Palestinian suicide bombings.

Blatter is expected to decide on his next step after his meeting with Ruffinen, the statement added.

Blatter, Ruffinen to settle differences

AFP, Zurich

FIFA president Joseph Blatter and secretary general Michel Zen-Ruffinen were due to have a meeting here on Monday to discuss their differences, world football's governing body confirmed.

Last week, Zen-Ruffinen was quoted in the Swiss press as criticizing the "Blatter system" put in place four years ago, adding he had found several financial irregularities.

Serie A Chievo spoil Inter plans



AFP, Milan

A dramatic late equaliser by Chievo substitute Federico Cossato threw the race for the Italian First Division title wide open Sunday as leaders Inter Milan were held 2-2.

That slip-up benefited Juventus who needed a late goal from Pavel Nedved to overcome Piacenza 1-0 and now move within a point of Inter with two matches to play.

Defending champions AS Roma are still in contention a further point behind despite a disappointing 0-0 draw at the San Siro with AC Milan.

In a series of twists worthy of Alfred Hitchcock, Inter had looked set to move four points clear with two matches to play until two late goals changed the picture.

At Piacenza Czech Nedved's fine effort gave an unimpressive Juventus a 1-0 win over the home favourites.

Seconds later at Chievo's Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi, Cossato struck to grab a point for the hosts and deny Inter victory.

Goals after the interval from Frenchman Stephane Dalmat and Brazilian Ronaldo had looked set to give Inter the spoils after Massimo Marazzina's first-half strike for Chievo.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the table a 1-1 draw with Torino condemned Lecce to relegation as they join Venezia and Fiorentina in Serie B with one more team still to join them.

Inter's Argentinian coach Hector Cuper was understandably dismayed, saying: "I am angry because we had the game won. We had chances to kill the match and did not take them. But Inter are still favourites."

Juventus coach Marcello Lippi, in contrast, was pleased as punch. "We are going to have lots of heart attacks with finishes like this. To think five minutes from time we were five points behind Inter - now we are a point behind them."

Roma's Fabio Capello was disappointed although he admitted it could have been worse.

"The result is disappointing although my boys gave everything," said Capello, who had been given a fond ovation by fans of AC Milan where he had a hugely successful stint as coach. "At least Inter's result means it's all still to play for."

At Verona, Chievo started and finished well and remain on course for a place in the Champions League.

Three minutes before the interval they took the lead. With the Inter defence seemingly distracted Bernardo Corradi fed partner Massimo Marazzina who headed his 12th goal of the season, ending a lean spell that began in February when he made his debut for Italy against the United States.

But Inter hit back. Dalmat struck a fine equaliser from outside the penalty area and then they took the lead when Ronaldo took advantage of a lapse by goalkeeper Cristiano Lupatelli to put his side 2-1 ahead.

Primera Liga Deportivo's Duscher disaster



AFP, Madrid

If England captain David Beckham was watching the Spanish First Division match between Valencia and Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday, which was transmitted live in Britain, he probably managed an ironic smile.

Eleven days after Deportivo's Aldo Duscher broke the Manchester United midfielder's foot in a Champions League clash, it was the turn of the Argentine defender to suffer.

In his first game since the match in Manchester, a shot from compatriot Pablo Aimar deflected off Duscher's right leg and flew past his own keeper Francisco Molina to gift league leaders Valencia a 1-0 victory over the visitors from Galicia.

Deportivo eventually failed to lift the league title, many will undoubtedly point to Duscher's own goal as a decisive turning point.

Valencia however deserved the victory, having nearly opened the scoring in the first half with Miguel Angel Angulo going close on two occasions.

Valencia now have 66 points from 35 matches, with three matches left to play.

Defending champions Real Madrid, who thrashed bottom club Tenerife 4-1 on Saturday, lie second on 65 points while Deportivo lost ground on the leading pair but stay in third with 61 points.

Real Betis revived their challenge for a spot in the top four, and a place in next season's European Champions League, with an emphatic 3-0 win over strugglers Real Sociedad.

Betis' first win in their last six games came thanks to two goals a few minutes either side of the break from their Portuguese striker Joao Tomas, both blasted in from just inside the area.



Inter Milan's Ronaldo celebrates his strike against Chievo at Chievo's Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi on April 21.

It was a nightmare moment for Lupatelli who is still co-owned by Roma for whom he featured in last season's Scudetto-winning campaign. Cossato's late strike spared his blushes however.

Lazio boosted their Champions League hopes with a 5-4 win over Verona although they conceded the first goal of the day when Lieke Martens international striker Mario Frick struck for Verona.

But 19 minutes later Lazio pulled level when their Dutch defender Jaap Stam volleyed home a cross by Argentinian Claudio Lopez.

Three minutes later Lopez put Lazio in front from the penalty spot and with the interval looming Yugoslav Dejan Stankovic made it 3-1 for the hosts.

Stankovic struck again after the break and then Argentinian substitute Hernan Crespo made it 5-1.

After Dutchman Stam was dismissed goals from Leonardo Colucci, Michele Cossato and Brazilian Adailton saw Verona pull it back to 5-4 although the equaliser would not come.

Lecce's survival fight had a lift when Romanian defender Gheorghe Popescu put them in front at the Stadio Dell'Alpi against Torino but by the time Uruguayan Jose Franco levelled for Torino to make it 1-1 it was clear that results elsewhere had already doomed the southerners.

Chilean David Pizarro's penalty gave beleaguered Udinese a 1-0 win over Venezia while at Brescia Roberto Baggio lived up to his mantle as saviour.

Second-half replacement Baggio added two goals to Luca Toni's opener as Brescia beat Fiorentina 3-0 to boost their survival fight.

Parma's French midfielder Johan Micoud gave his club a late lifeline when he grabbed a 1-1 draw after Atalanta's Gianni Comandini had put his side ahead from the penalty spot six minutes before the interval.

Bologna's Champions League hopes dipped when Brazilian Ze Maria gave Perugia a 1-0 victory from the penalty spot.

Table: Serie A's top six. Italian First Division table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points): Inter Milan, Juventus, AS Roma, Chievo, Lazio, AC Milan.

McAllister taking over Coventry

AFP, London

Gary McAllister indicated Monday that he expected to be named manager of English First Division Coventry City.

Scotland midfielder McAllister, currently with Liverpool, has emerged as the favourite to succeed Roland Nilsson, sacked last week.

It would be a popular choice with Coventry fan who remember McAllister, 37, from his days as a player with the Midlands club during the 1990s.

"I have been on the telephone non stop trying to organise things," McAllister told the Daily Record.

"I accept that, as a new manager, I am going to need the right help. Now I am waiting for the certain things to fall into place and then we will take it from there."

Coventry were in England's top flight for 34 consecutive years, a remarkable feat for a club with a small fan base and no major benefactor, but were relegated to the First Division at the end of last season.

McAllister's fellow Scot Gordon Strachan, the manager who took Coventry down, stayed in the Highfield Road hot seat for the opening weeks of the season.

But the former Manchester United midfielder, now in charge at Premiership Southampton, was shown the door and replaced by former Sweden defender Nilsson who became the club's player coach.

But despite also bringing on board experienced manager Jim Smith, following his departure from Premiership strugglers Derby, as director of football, Coventry did not make an immediate return to England's top league.

West Brom secure Premiership berth

AFP, London

West Bromwich Albion were promoted to the English Premiership for the first time in their history after beating Crystal Palace 2-0 at the Hawthorns on Sunday.

The club, from the English Midlands, join First Division champions Manchester City in the top flight next season.

The last time West Brom were in the top flight was in 1986, six years before the Premiership was formed.

Premiership Freddy fires Gunners



AFP, London

Arsenal returned to the top of the English Premiership and moved Ipswich a step closer to relegation after beating George Burley's men 2-0 at Highbury on Sunday.

Ipswich, battling to stay in the top flight, gave Arsenal several scares before Sweden international Freddy Ljungberg calmed the home side's nerves by drilling in the opening goal in the 68th minute.

Ljungberg added a second 10 minutes later from close range - his 10th league goal of the season - to seal a priceless win for the north London club.

Victory for Arsenal sees them leapfrog Manchester United and Liverpool who both won on Saturday.

The Gunners top the table with 75 points from 34 matches and have a game in hand on both their title rivals.

Ipswich remain in serious trouble, five points adrift of fourth bottom Sunderland.

Ljungberg paid tribute to Ipswich who belied their lowly position in the table with a very determined performance.

"It was a tough game today," said man-of-the-match Ljungberg. "They defended very well and they dropped very deep and gave us very little space to play in."

"But in the end we kept on going and got the goal and just kept possession at the end," he told Sky Sports.

Ljungberg saluted the home fans for their patience as the Gunners struggled to break down the stubborn visitors.

"The fans were brilliant today," he said. "We didn't score as early as we usually do but they were behind us all the time."

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was pleased to regain pole position in the race for the title, but insisted he was only concerned with their next Premiership fixture.

"The only plan we have is to win our next game, against West Ham (on Wednesday)," he said. "We have shown a lot of mental strength and motivation and we will show that until the end of the sea-

son." Ipswich striker Martin Reuser could not conceal his disappointment after a defeat which edged his side closer to the First Division.

"We're gutted. We had to get a point at least here and we're frustrated," he said.

"We had our chances and we always looked dangerous going forward - but that's the way it goes. "We're going home empty-handed again - it's going to be very difficult for us now."

"Credit to all the lads we worked very hard but a team like Arsenal have so much quality and the quality showed."



FREDDY LJUNGBERG

Tony Adams partnered Martin Keown in defence for the first time since last September as Arsenal attempted to surge back to the summit.

With Sol Campbell injured, Wenger turned to the two 35-year-olds to shore up his defence.

Arsenal came close to taking the lead in the 20th minute but Thierry Henry's thunderous 20-yard drive was fingertipped over the bar by Ipswich goalkeeper Andy Marshall.

But as Arsenal spurned chance

after chance Ipswich grew in confidence and the visitors almost edged in front just before half-time.

Finidi George raced down the right wing, leaving Lauren in his wake, before picking out Reuser with a pinpoint cross.

The Dutchman rose and headed the ball down firmly only to see it strike the bottom of David Seaman's right-hand post.

In the 47th minute Dennis Bergkamp conjured up a piece of magic which almost broke the deadlock.

The Holland international moved forward menacingly before unleashing a 20-yard angled shot which hit the inside of Marshall's far post.

In the 65th minute Ipswich almost silenced the home crowd, but Marcus Bent headed the ball over Seaman's crossbar with the England goalkeeper stranded.

Bergkamp and Adams went close, throwing themselves bravely to connect with close-range headers but the anxiety in the stands was growing by the minute as chance after chance was squandered.

It looked as if they would never score especially when Ljungberg rattled the Ipswich crossbar in the 67th minute, but 60 seconds later the Swede broke the visitors' stubborn resistance.

A Patrick Vieira cross was touched by Keown to Ljungberg who, with his back to goal, swivelled neatly to place a right-foot shot past Marshall's dive.

Ljungberg put the game out of Ipswich's reach 10 minutes later, bundling the ball past Marshall who had parried the Arsenal midfielder's first effort.

Premiership's top six

English Premiership table after Sunday's match between Arsenal and Ipswich (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Table: Premiership's top six. Arsenal, Liverpool, Man Utd, Newcastle, Chelsea, Leeds.