

Reds red-faced, contrasting Milanese



AP, London

Hungarian champions Zalaegerszegi produced one of the biggest upsets in the

Champions Cup history on Wednesday by downing mighty Manchester United 1-0 in the first leg of the qualifying round.

By contrast, four-time winner Bayern Munich looks like cruising into the group stage after a 3-0 victory at Partizan Belgrade.

Five-time winners AC Milan looked shaky as it edged Slovan Liberec at home thanks to a 68th-minute strike by Filippo Inzaghi, cross-town rival Inter Milan, playing without Brazilian World Cup superstar Ronaldo, held hosts Sporting Lisbon scoreless in a 0-0 draw in Portugal, FC Barcelona got three goals past visiting Legia Warsaw of Poland, a strike by England World Cup midfielder Kieron Dyer gave Newcastle United a 1-0 victory at Zvezdnicar in Sarajevo while Scottish champions Glasgow Celtic fell behind after 90 seconds against FC Basel but fought back to win 2-1 at Parkhead.



BROUGHT DOWN ON KNEES! Manchester United superstar David Beckham kneels on the pitch during their Champions League third round qualifying match against Hungary's Zalaegerszeg in Budapest on August 14.

ankle injury after five minutes, which Ferguson described as "serious". They were already without Rio Ferdinand, their 30-million British record signing and French international keeper Fabien Barthez.

AC MILAN 1; SLOVAN LIBEREC 0

With newly signed Brazilian superstar Ronaldo watching from the stands, AC Milan struggled to a home victory against Czech underdog Slovan Liberec.

Striker Filippo Inzaghi kicked in AC Milan game winner in the 68th minute, taking advantage of a decisive mishap of Czech goalkeeper Zbynek Hauz.

As Hauz could only slap a low cross by Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf, Inzaghi scored his 34th career goal in European cups, avoiding the Italian soccer powerhouse a poor figure on its season debut at San Siro stadium.

Before Inzaghi's goal, AC Milan's defence was often put in trouble by the quick attacks of the Czech team which had the best scoring chances in the match.

In the 11th minute, a low shot by striker Jan Nezarv hit the post and bounced into the hands of goal-

keeper Christian Abbiati. Nezarv missed another good opportunity 10 minutes later.

Inzaghi's goal was an almost extreme prize for the Milan team, which had a less than impressive performance and was at times booed by the home fans.

In the closing minute, Ukrainian star Andriy Shevchenko hit the bar of the Czech net following a personal action and a powerful shot.

During the match AC Milan had to replace Brazilian defender Roque Junior with Martin Laursen and goalkeeper Abbiati with Brazilian Dida due to injuries.

Seedorf was a second-half substitute for a lackluster Serginho.

AC Milan's coach Carlo Ancelotti said it was "a good result against a dangerous opponent with a tight defense."

"We played poorly in the first half and definitely better in the second when [Portuguese midfielder] Rui Costa took command of play. It was important not to allow any goal," Ancelotti said.

The Milan team, a five-time Champions League titlist, is going through a qualifying round after finishing fourth in the Italian Serie A last season.

Rivaldo, the Brazilian star signed by Milan a few weeks ago, was not fielded as he still was in questionable form. He was expected to be fielded in Sunday's Berlusconi Trophy match against Juventus.

About 35,000 fans watched the match, two weeks before the start of the Italian league campaign.

Slovan's Bohuslav Pilny and Milan's Serginho and Ivan Gattuso were cautioned by the referee for rough play.

CELTIC 2; FC BASEL 1

Celtic hit back from conceding a goal inside 90 seconds to beat FC Basel and take a big stride towards qualifying for the group stage.

Basel silenced the 60,000 home fans by taking the lead in the second minute when Christian Gimenez shook off two defenders in a run into the penalty box and rolled the ball past goalkeeper Rob Douglas.

The Scottish champion drew level two minutes later when Stylian Petrov was dragged down by Marco Zwyssig while about to shoot and Henrik Larsson drove home the penalty spot.

Gimenez almost put the Swiss team ahead before half time but his low, first time shot shaved the far post.

But Chris Sutton made it 2-1 in the 52nd minute when he met Neil Lennon's goalbound shot and audaciously backheeled the ball into the net.

Larsson had another penalty saved by the outstretched boot of Pascal Zuberbuehler.

Basel worked hard to try and gain an equalizer and Douglas twice made good saves to foil the busy Murat Yakin.

But Momo Sylla netted Celtic's third two minutes from the end with a superb volley and the Scottish champion must be favorite to hold on to that two goal lead in two weeks time and reach the group stage.

BAYERN MUNICH 3; PARTIZAN BELGRADE 0

Bayern made a huge step toward the Champions League berth by trouncing Partizan Belgrade.

Michael Tarnat opened the score for Bayern in the 22nd minute when he picked up the ball on the left edge of the penalty zone and fired a shot into the opposite side of Partizan's net.

Jens Jeremies made it 2-0 in the 71st minute with a header from some 10 meters (yards) after a long curving cross by Mehmet Scholl. Claudio Pizarro netted Bayern's third in the 78th minute from a point blank range, connecting a perfect pass by Michael Ballack.

The young Partizan team, supported by some 30,000 fans at the packed Yugoslav Peoples' Army stadium, controlled the ball for most of the match. However, the much more experienced German side was much more dangerous on counter-attacks.

Partizan's best chance in the first half came in the 24th minute as Zvonimir Vukic picked up a deflection from Bayern goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, but failed to push the ball into an empty net from a close range.

Bayern fielded its expensive summer signing from Bayer Leverkusen, Michael Ballack. But aside from setting up Bayern's third goal, the talented midfielder - who was named Germany's player of the year Wednesday by the Kicker magazine - failed to shine.

INTER MILAN 0; SPORING LISBON 0

Inter Milan, playing without Ronaldo, produced a dull performance but held on for a goalless draw at Sporting.

Inter made little headway against a Sporting team which held firm in midfield and went on quick breaks, placing the Italian club under pressure for long periods but failing to make its possession tell.

Inter, which reached the UEFA Cup semifinals last year but has failed to make the Champions League for the past four seasons, traveled to Lisbon without Brazilian star Ronaldo.

Sporting was without key players Mario Jardel, the top scorer in Europe last season who says he is too depressed to play after his divorce, and Joao Pinto, the Portuguese midfielder who punched a referee in a World Cup game and was banned for four months.

Inter looked set to take the lead after 20 minutes with a quick succession of three shots from Christian Vieri, Domenico Morfeo and Sergio Conceicao but Portuguese goalie Tiago Ferreira was quick to block their moves.

For a brief spell the Italian outfit appeared to find its rhythm as Vieri and Mohamed Kallon linked up neatly on the edge of the area but the Sierra Leone striker sliced his shot.

From then on it was mostly Sporting's game, mainly thanks to Portuguese international midfielder Pedro Barbosa.

In the 35th minute, Barbosa went face-to-face with Francesco Toldo but passed the ball when he should have chipped over the Italian goalie.

He broke through again just before the break, slaloming past three defenders, but hadn't the energy to poke the ball past Toldo.

Another Barbosa shot forced Toldo to tip the ball wide soon after the restart.

Morfeo almost scored an opportunist goal near the end but Chilean defender Pablo Contreras cleared the ball off the line, and Vieri missed a tap-in in the final minutes.

BARCELONA 3; LEGIA WARSAW 0

Goals by Frank de Boer, substitute Juan Roman Riquelme and Philip Cocu gave Barcelona a home victory over Legia Warsaw.

Dutch international defender de Boer swept home majestically from a ninth-minute free kick on the edge of the area to give his side the ideal start.

Yet for all its effort, Barcelona had neither the fortune or the accuracy to extend its lead until the 80th minute when Riquelme, a 60th-minute replacement for forward Luis Enrique Martinez, eased its worries.

The recent Argentine signing from Boca Juniors, whose arrival was greeted warmly by a Camp Nou crowd beginning to show its frustration, fired in a low shot off goalkeeper Radostin Stanew's left post from the edge of the area.

Cocu appeared to kill off the Polish side's hopes of reaching the group phase when he headed home from a corner in the last minute.

Louis van Gaal's side dominated the encounter with Patrick Kluijvert in good form.

Legia had cause to rue three good chances through Moussa Kahyachy in the first half and Cezary Kucharsky and substitute Radoslaw Wroblewski after the interval.

Elsewhere, Dynamo Kiev gained a 1-0 victory at Levski Sofia, another Ukraine club, Shakhtar Donetsk, was held 1-1 at home by Belgium's Club Brugge, Norway's Rosenborg topped visiting Brondby of Denmark 1-0 and Lokomotiv Moscow won 2-0 at Grazer AK of Austria.

In Tuesday's games, UEFA Cup holder Feyenoord took a step toward a group berth with a 1-0 victory over Turkey's Fenerbahce.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Results from the European Champions League third qualifying round, first leg matches on Wednesday:

- At Donetsk, Ukraine**
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Aghahowa 49) FC Bruges (Bel) 1 (Simons 87-pen)
- At Sofia**
Levski Sofia (Bul) 0 Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) 1 (Cernat 6h)
- At Sarejevo**
FK Zvezdnicar (Bih) 0 Newcastle United 1 (Dyer 55)
- At Belgrade**
Partizan Belgrade (Yug) 0 Bayern Munich (Ger) 3 (Tarnat 22, Jeremies 71, Pizarro 78)
- At Milan**
AC Milan (Ita) 1 (F.Inzaghi 68) Slovan Liberec (Cze) 0
- At Graz, Austria**
Graz AK (Aus) 0 Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 2 (Lekceho 5, Loskov 41)
- At Budapest**
Zalaegerszegi (Hun) 1 (Koplarovics 90) Manchester United (Eng) 0
- At Glasgow**
Celtic (Sco) 3 (Larsson 4-pen, Sutton 52, Sylla 82) Basle (Swi) 1 (Gimenez)
- At Trondheim, Norway**
Rosenborg (Nor) 1 (Brattbakk 53) Brondby (Den) 0
- At Barcelona**
Barcelona (Spa) 3 (De Boer 8, Riquelme 80, Cocu 90) Legia Warsaw (Pol) 0
- At Lisbon**
Sporting Lisbon (Por) 0 Inter Milan (Ita) 0

*Second leg matches on August 27 and 28

Fergie blasts everything!

INTERNET

Sir Alex Ferguson blamed everything but his own players last night as Manchester United endured a disastrous start to their Champions League campaign.

The faces of Ferguson and David Beckham reflected the despair of a defeat that could cost the club in excess of £15million and see them competing in the UEFA Cup this season. United conceded a 90th-minute goal to lose the first leg and their misery was compounded by an injury to Wes Brown which will keep the England defender out for at least a month.

Brown suffered tendon damage in the second minute and his absence deepened the defensive crisis facing Ferguson with Gary Neville and Rio Ferdinand already out.

"It's an ankle injury, quite a bad one," Ferguson said.

Fergie blamed the referee, the state of the pitch and the swirling wind for his team's defeat but refused to acknowledge their clear failings against the Hungarian champions.

Fergie said: "The referee was young and weak. The pitch was very bumpy, we'd have to make that a possible reason for the standard of our passing. It's disappointing," he said.

"They changed their system, but that's the only thing. They played five at the back and allowed us all the possession.

"But we should break that down, we've played against that many times. It was a real shock for us to lose a goal so late but sometimes that happens in football.

"It's a shock result in the sense that they never had a kick of the ball in the second half," Ferguson told the club's website after the game.

"That's a surprise -- one attack, one goal. But we've only ourselves to blame, we had some good chances but we just didn't manage to take them when we should. When you are away from home you expect your opponents to raise their game, and that's precisely what they did.

"We are very hard to beat at home and we believe we can get the job done at Old Trafford in the second leg in two weeks' time."

Zalaegerszeg coach Peter Bozsik accused United of taking his team too lightly.

"Maybe Manchester United took the game a bit too easy," said Bozsik.

"I said before that out of 10 meetings between the sides, they would win nine and the other would be a draw. Tonight was the 11th game.

"Our chances of qualifying have improved - from 2 per cent to 5 per cent."

Scolari says 'no thanks'

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil's World Cup winning coach Luis Felipe Scolari has turned down an offer to manager Brazil first division side Palmeiras once his contract with the national team comes to an end.

The post became vacant this week when former boss Wanderley Luxemborg moved to Cruzeiro.

A disappointed Palmeiras' director Sebastiao Lapola told the press Wednesday: "It would be a real dream to have Felipe here. I've already spoken to him but we weren't successful."

According to Lapola, Scolari, who guided Brazil to their fifth World Cup triumph this summer beating Germany 2-0 in the final, wants to take time out with his family.

"Felipe has decided to rest a little, and we respect that," he said.

Popstar Diego!

AFP, Buenos Aires

Former football giant Diego Maradona launched a new career Wednesday, as a song he recorded hit the stands in Argentina.

But Maradona, 41, will not be singing all the way to the bank. Proceeds from a compilation that includes Madonna's singing will go to the Buenos Aires Children's Hospital.

To showcase his cracked voice, Maradona chose a song originally written as a tribute to him: "The Hand of God."

Maradona's version is somewhat more somber than the version sung by its author. Rodrigo penned it in honor of the soccer player after Argentina beat England in a 1986 World Cup game when Maradona put the ball into the net with his fist.

The referee allowed the goal and Maradona attributed the score to "the hand of God."



Diego Maradona

Showdown soon?



AFP/INTERNET, Madrid

The fate of Brazilian superstar Ronaldo will be decided this week-end during a meeting on the Balearic Islands between Real Madrid president Florentino Perez and his Inter Milan counterpart Massimo Moratti, the sports daily Marca reported here Thursday.

The two clubs have already ironed out much of the details of the transfer to the Spanish giants and all that remains is for the two men to meet to seal the Brazilian World Cup winner's fate, the newspaper said.

Perez is currently on holidays in Palma de Mallorca, while Moratti regularly travels to nearby Formentera and it is reported that the meeting will take place on one of the Balearic Islands.

Reports hinted that Real are prepared to stump up 48 million euros for Ronaldo in addition to one or two other players - a long way off the 100m price tag Inter have placed around the star's neck.

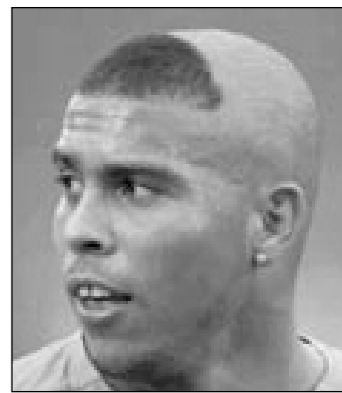
However Marca reported that Inter are prepared to reduce their asking price for the player who has made it clear he wants to leave Italy.

"It is not me who will call Florentino," Moratti told the newspaper.

"At present Ronaldo is worth 100 million euros, anything can happen in the future. We will see what happens in the coming days."

Meanwhile, Inter's website reported that at the end of his training session on Wednesday, Ronaldo telephoned the Inter squad in Lisbon and pledged to work with coach Hector Cuper and Moratti in future.

Ronaldo will leave for Brazil on Thursday and will return to Italy immediately after fulfilling his duties with the Brazilian national team in a friendly international against



Ronaldo

Paraguay at Fortaleza.

At the end of the club's Wednesday's Champions League qualifying match at Alvalade stadium in Lisbon, Inter president Massimo Moratti commented on the Ronaldo situation.

Moratti said: "Ronaldo has left for Brazil with the permission of the club, Cuper and all the staff. It was more logical like this. The situation is calm. If nothing new happens, the situation is tranquil."

Speaking to journalists at the end of Inter's 0-0 draw with Sporting, Cuper didn't duck the usual questions about Ronaldo.

"At this moment my mind is just on this two-legged clash with the Portuguese," he said. "After the return leg on 27 August, we will have time to resolve the Ronaldo case."

Cuper continued: "The fact that it is said that I don't want him in the team because he's Brazilian and I'm Argentinian is completely silly."

"A lot has been said about this matter and in most cases mistakenly, but it's part of the game and we have to accept it. My wish is that this whole matter is resolved, neither in favour of Ronaldo nor Cuper, but only in favour of Inter, as it should be."

Voeller's faith in the tried



REUTERS, Berlin

Germany coach Rudi Voeller has called up newcomer Arne Friedrich to his squad for a friendly international against Bulgaria next week.

Defender Friedrich, 23, has just joined Hertha Berlin from promoted Arminia Bielefeld and played his first Bundesliga match in Hertha's 2-2 draw with defending German champions Borussia Dortmund last Friday.

Bayern Munich's Thomas Linke was another surprise inclusion in the 20-player squad announced.

The 32-year-old, who gained his 41st cap in Germany's 2-0 loss to Brazil in the World Cup final, told Voller last month he was retiring from international football to spend more time with his eight-month-old son.

But the defender changed his mind after meeting Voller on Tuesday.

"I feel that we need him he'll be there," said Voller after the tete-a-tete.

Voeller is relying mostly on familiar faces for Germany's first outing since the World Cup final on June 30 in Yokohama.

The former international striker included 15 members of Germany's World Cup squad in the 20-strong group he unveiled on Thursday for the match next Wednesday in Sofia.

Defender Ingo Hertzsch and

midfielders Daniel Bierofka and Paul Freier missed the trip to South Korea and Japan but all had been tested prior to the finals.

Bayern's striker Alexander Zickler also returns after recovering from the calf injury that ruled him out of the World Cup.

Voeller has to make to do without several injured players, among them midfielder Sebastian Deisler and defenders Jens Nowotny and Christian Woerns, for Germany's last warm-up game before they kick off their Euro 2004 qualifying campaign away to Lithuania on September 7 in Kaunas.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Oliver Kahn (Bayern Munich), Jens Lehmann (Borussia Dortmund)

Defenders: Arne Friedrich (Hertha Berlin), Ingo Hertzsch (Hamburg SV), Sebastian Kehl, Christoph Metzelder (both Borussia Dortmund), Carsten Ramelow (Bayer Leverkusen)

Midfielders: Michael Ballack, Jens Jeremies (both Bayern Munich), Daniel Bierofka, Bernd Schneider (both Bayer Leverkusen), Joerg Boehme (Schalke 04), Paul Freier (VfL Bochum), Torsten Frings (Borussia Dortmund), Dietmar Hamann (Liverpool)

Strikers: Gerald Asamoah (Schalke 04), Carsten Jancker (Udinese), Miroslav Klose (Kaiserslautern), Oliver Neuville (Bayer Leverkusen), Alexander Zickler

Di Livio goes down!



REUTERS, Milan

Italy international Angelo Di Livio, a World Cup player two months ago, has chosen to play fourth division football next season.

Di Livio, 36, has signed a two-year contract with Serie C2 team Fiorentina Viola, the club who have replaced fallen Fiorentina as the team of the city of Florence.

The former Juventus midfielder, who has won 40 caps for Italy, was captain of the ill-fated Fiorentina last season.

Fiorentina were relegated from Serie A and have since ceased to exist as a sporting entity after they were refused a place in Serie B due to their acute financial problems.

With the newly-founded club Di Livio will earn less than a tenth of the salary he picked up in Serie A last season, but says pride and loyalty were more important than cash.

"It wasn't a difficult decision. In life there are more important things than money," Di Livio told the daily Corriere della Sera.

"I didn't want to be remembered as the captain of a team that was relegated and a club that went bankrupt. Florence has shown me



Angelo Di Livio

so much affection and this is a way to repay that," added the midfielder.

Di Livio has played one season in Serie C2 in his career - winning promotion with Perugia in 1988 before moving on to Padova and Juventus.

With Juventus, Di Livio won three Italian league titles and the European Cup in 1996.

His last competitive game was a substitute appearance in Italy's 'golden goal' defeat to co-hosts South Korea in the second round of the World Cup.

His next match will be against Forli in Serie C2 Group B on September 1.

Bergkamp relishing the prospect



AFP, London

Arsenal's Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp has warned potential title challengers that the Gunners are stronger than last season and in no mood to give up their Premiership crown.

"Now we are a stronger squad and I believe we can successfully defend the title this time," he said in his diary notes at www.icons.com.

"During our pre-season tour in Austria and in the Community Shield (win over Liverpool last week), I saw a real hunger in the team.

"No-one here is resting on their laurels, we mean business and we're out for another title."

Bergkamp admitted Arsenal have had problems retaining their title

when they've defended it in the past, but believes the team now have the experience to handle the pressure of expectation.

"When Arsenal have won the league the last three times, the club has found it hard to defend the title," he said.

"The only time I experienced that first-hand was after our 1998 championship.

"What is sometimes forgotten is how close we came to repeating the triumph.

"But however long the road ahead, I think you saw in the Community Shield that this Arsenal team are ready and raring to go.

"Watch out for us, I feel we're going to win a few things this year."

Bergkamp believes France's early exit from this summer's World Cup and the non-participation of the Dutch will benefit Arsenal this season.

"Usually, after a World Cup, a team as big as ours will have many players who went all the way in the competition," he said.

"This was the case four years ago. After winning the league title in England our French, Dutch and even English players went to play at France '98 and were tired when they came back.

"But this time, I didn't play in the competition and the French boys left the competition early. This is great for Arsenal, as they'll be fresh."

Bergkamp is looking forward to the new season and to taking three points from their first match, against new boys Birmingham, on Sunday.

"Every year at this time, there is excitement in the air," he added.

"The sun is still shining, the new season is within touching distance."

"The training ground is full of players focussed on the challenge ahead, with their new summer

haircuts raising a few laughs. Anticipation is everywhere.

"How we would adore a good result this Sunday against Birmingham City, but we know it won't be easy.

"They will have nothing to lose and it will be a big day for their players and fans. You won't catch us taking the game lightly."