

Top guns thru', Celtic stunned



AFP, Paris

AC Milan were on Wednesday among the clubs celebrating advancing to the first group phase of the Champions League, the away goals rule giving them the upper hand when they went down 2-1 to plucky Slovan Liberec.

The Italians, who brought on Brazilian international Ronaldo for a spell late in the match, drew 2-2 with the Czech side to book their ticket alongside city rivals Inter, who went through the previous night.

Also celebrating were Barcelona, who had a late penalty to thank for their 1-0 win over Legia Warsaw. Gaizka Mendietia converted for the Spanish side who, nevertheless won easily 4-0 on aggregate.

Newcastle did their own demolition job on FK Zeljeznicar, scoring four goals on the night to come out 5-0 aggregate winners over the Bosnian champions.

However fellow Britons Celtic, the Scottish champions, waved goodbye to hopes of joining Europe's elite when little FC Basle of Switzerland overturned the Scots' 3-1 first leg advantage to win 2-0 and run out winners in the aggregate stages.

With a slim 1-0 first leg win, AC Milan were forced to take the game to their hosts in what was always going to be a challenging encounter.

However their fears were soon allayed when Filippo Inzaghi, who had been left to his own devices by the Czechs' defence, opened the scoring in the 20th minute after being supplied by Portuguese international Rui Costa.

The visitors then took control of the match which did not really jump to life until the second half when Liberec upped the stakes with a quick goal.

After just a minute of play Liberec drew level when Miroslav



Players of FC Basel are over the moon after their shock win over Glasgow Celtic in the Champions League qualification match in Basel, Switzerland on August 28.

Slepicka made the best of a difficult angle to send the ball home on 46.

However any notion the hosts would be given further leeway was dispelled as the visitors, led by Inzaghi and boosted by Ronaldo when he came on for Rui Costa in the 70th minute, relied on successive counter attacks to unhinge the Czechs.

But the home side battled and in the 88th minute a freekick was sent into the box and David Langer popped up to header home before, in injury time, he was sent off.

Newcastle's path proved much easier.

Kieron Dyer, who scored the only goal in Sarajevo, doubled the aggregate lead with 23 minutes

gone before Lomana Tresor Lua Lua netted a second to give the Magpies a 2-0 interval lead.

Second half strikes from Portuguese signing Hugo Viana and veteran Alan Shearer rounded off a comfortable win for Bobby Robson's men.

Man-of-the-match Dyer said he was relishing the prospect of rubbing shoulders with Europe's elite clubs.

"It's magnificent - we did a professional job and now we are in the biggest club competition in the world," he said.

"It's where you want to be, playing against the Real Madrids and Barcelonas."

Dyer, depending on Thursday's

draw, could also be playing against the likes of Auxerre, the French side who returned to the first-group phase after a six-year absence despite being held to a 0-0 draw at home by Boavista.

Guy Roux's men held on to their slim one-goal lead from Porto two weeks ago to seal their qualification but were still left rueing a number of missed chances.

Djibril Cisse, Olivier Kapo and Khalilou Fadiga all had their chances to copper-fasten qualification early in the night but to no avail in front of 18,000 home fans at the Abbe-Deschamps stadium.

Although chances went a begging for both teams, Auxerre missed four chances at goal in the final 10 minutes before Italian referee Pierluigi Collina blew the whistle to the relief of the crowd.

Roux was a relieved man. "It's always difficult to play with a goal advantage because you don't really know what to do. It was very close. I think that we deserve our qualification," said the veteran coach.

His Boavista counterpart Jaime Pacheco was resigned to defeat.

"Qualification was lost since the first leg. We made a single fault and Cisse took advantage. We did what we could but it slipped by," admitted Pacheco, adding that he felt that the referee was too harsh on them compared to the home side.

Celtic meanwhile will have to make do with UEFA competition after their humbling by Basle, who deservedly won 2-0 and advance on the away goals rule.

With a 3-1 first leg lead going into the match, Celtic failed to tame the Swiss, who were playing in front of 30,000 fans.

Basle forward Christian Gimenez scored the opener in the eighth minute and the hosts got their just rewards for a first half of energetic football when Murat Yakin headed home in the 22nd minute.

But Feyenoord will be just as determined and coach Bert van Marwijk's side will be attempting to maintain the jinx that has seen every Champions League winner lose the Supercup since it was switched to a single match in Monaco five seasons ago.

Team spirit and hard work were the key elements of Feyenoord's success last season and they have proved their potential by reaching the Champions League now.

Feyenoord midfielder Paul Bosvelt believes his team will be inspired in Monaco.

"Real are probably the best team in Europe, but we showed last season what our possibilities are when we face stronger opponents."

"We will give our best in the Super Cup match. As a player it is

always a challenge to play against a team with big names in it like Real, but I've done it before with Feyenoord when I took on Zinedine Zidane in the 1997 Champions League matches against Juventus.

"For us the Super Cup is a prize which we really want to win. And this match will be an opportunity to match up with an opponent of a higher level."

He also played at the 1990 and 1998 World Cup finals and the 1996 Olympic Games.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Results from European Champions League qualifying round, second leg matches on Wednesday. Winners qualify for first-round group phase:

At Bruges, Belgium
FC Bruges (Bel) 1 (Ceh 75) Shaktar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Vorobei 13)

Aggregate 2-2. FC Bruges advance after winning match 4-1 after penalty shots.

At Brondby
Rosenborg (Nor) 3 (Johnsen 30, 73, Brattbakk 79) Brondby (Den) 2 (Jonsen 82, Jorgensen 84)

Rosenborg win 4-2 on aggregate.

At Liberec, Czech Republic
Slovan Liberec (Cze) 2 (Slepicka 46, Langer 88) AC Milan (Ita) 1 (Inzaghi 20)

Aggregate score 2-2. AC Milan advance on away goals rule.

At Warsaw
Legia Warsaw (Pol) 0 Barcelona (Spa) 1 (Mendietia 68-pen)

Barcelona win 4-0 on aggregate

At Moscow
Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 3 (Ignashevich 5, Yevseyev 32, Julio Cesar 44) Graz AK (Aut) 3 (Naumoski 37, Bazina 48, Aufhauser 63)

Lokomotiv Moscow win 5-3 on aggregate

At Kiev
Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) 1 (Cernat 42) Levski Sofia (Bul) 0

Kiev win 2-0 on aggregate

At Athens
AEK Athens (Gre) 1 (Wright 59) Apoel Nicosia (Cyp) 0

AEK win 4-2 on aggregate

At Auxerre, France
Auxerre (Fra) 0 Boavista (Por) 0

Auxerre win 1-0 on aggregate

At Basle, Switzerland
FC Basle (Swi) 2 (Gimenez 8, Yakin 22) Celtic (Sco) 0

Aggregate score 3-3. Basle advance on away goals rule

At Newcastle, England
Newcastle (Eng) 4 (Dyer 23, Lua Lua 37, Viana 74, Shearer 80) FK Zeljeznicar (Bih) 0

Newcastle win 5-0 on aggregate

At Graz, Austria
Sturm Graz (Aut) 3 (Bosnar 11, Szabics 58, Neukirchner 73) Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 3 (Rosso 27, Keise 78, Badir 90)

Maccabi Haifa win 5-3 on aggregate

Juve's last ditch Nesta move

AFP, Rome

Italian Serie A side Juventus are reported to be chasing Lazio's Italian international defender Alessandro Nesta before the closure of the transfer deadline in three days.

Juve bosses approached Nesta at the beginning of the summer before turning their attention to Parma's Fabio Cannavaro, who then joined Inter Milan, and have now rekindled with interest in the Lazio captain.

Gazzetta dello sport reported Wednesday Juve sporting director Luciano Moggi met his Lazio counterpart Oreste Cinquini in Rome along with Massimo Cragnotti, son of Lazio boss Sergio Cragnotti, but no deal was reached.

It is reported that Juve have made a 25 million euro (24.5 million dollar) offer plus midfielder Marco Zanchi, but Sergio Cragnotti has refused demanding 45 million euros (44.1 million dollars) for Nesta.

Vasco Beto's last address

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil's 1994 World Cup-winning striker Beto announced Wednesday he has signed a deal which will see him finish his career with Vasco da Gama.

The 38-year-old has played for the Brazilian outfit twice during his illustrious career and is expected to retire after his contract expires at the end of the season.

"Vasco is a club I have learned to love. I am very happy here and the fans are close to my heart," said Beto.

"I've had offers to play abroad but I prefer to return to Vasco da Gama. I think I'll be available to coach Antonio Lopes in eight to ten days," said Beto.

Club president Eurico Miranda said they were delighted to fulfil the dream of the aging striker.

"Beto always wanted to end his career at Vasco da Gama," said Miranda.

Beto formed the Brazilian national side's front-line with Romario during their fourth World Cup win in 1994.

He also played at the 1990 and 1998 World Cup finals and the 1996 Olympic Games.

Ronaldo, Moratti talk



AFP/INTERNET, Milan

Inter Milan's Brazilian superstar Ronaldo is unlikely to sign for Spanish giants Real Madrid and should stay at least one more season with the Italian Serie A side unless Real have a sensational change of heart.

This according to Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti following his meeting with Ronaldo on Wednesday.

"In any case, there's a 99% possibility that Ronaldo will stay with us, and the club is planning the future with him in the team," said Moratti while talking to the media.

The Inter president termed the failure of negotiations with Real solely as an economic problem and said that time was running out for any new twist in the Ronaldo saga.

"Of course the solution has to be near as August 31 [transfer market deadline] is near," said Moratti.

"The club will not satisfy him just to satisfy him. We must have an economic advantage, otherwise he will stay with us. Real Madrid remained firm at the last offer made to me by Perez, which we did not accept."

"If Ronaldo stays it will depend on his own desires and on his professionalism," continued Moratti.

"The team? The players are mature and coach Hector Cuper knows what he has to do. I repeat, if Ronaldo leaves, the club must gain an economic advantage. We'll wait to see if Real come forward with another offer."

The World Cup's top scorer has maintained that he is determined to leave the club despite the breakdown of his planned transfer to European champions Real.

He reportedly reaffirmed his

desire to leave Italy during the hour-long meeting with Moratti at the Inter boss' home, the first since the Brazilian expressed his wish of a transfer.

The 25-year-old Ronaldo arrived at the meeting in a car driven by a club chauffeur and left without comment.

According to the Italia 1 television station the meeting ended with both men embracing and allowed them to clarify when the Brazilian would rejoin the team.

Moratti had stood by Ronaldo during his long fightback to fitness after two career-threatening leg operations.

Ronaldo has been training alone in preparation for the first match of the Italian season, having said that he was prepared to sit it out and wait for his chance to play in Spain.

The start of the Italian league season has been delayed until September 15 by a dispute over pay-per-view television rights.



El Hadji Diouf, Liverpool's Senegal international, in a tussle with Blackburn Rovers' Martin Taylor (R) during their Premiership game at Ewood Park, Blackburn on August 28.

Premiership Rovers deny Liverpool



AFP, London

Liverpool moved up to second in the English Premiership behind Arsenal on goal difference despite being held to a 2-2 draw at Blackburn Rovers on Wednesday.

A win for Liverpool would have taken them to the summit after taking maximum points from their first two matches.

Italian striker Corrado Grabbi pounced just seconds after coming on as a substitute seven minutes from time to earn a point for Graeme Souness's men.

David Dunn had given the hosts the lead in the 16th minute but Danny Murphy and John Arne Riise netted to put the Merseysiders in front.

Man-of-the-match Damien Duff admitted after the game that he was close to signing a new contract at Rovers.

The Republic of Ireland star has been linked all summer with a move to Liverpool or Manchester United.

Asked when he would extend his Blackburn deal, Duff told Premiership Plus: "Probably tonight. It'll be a long night but I am

staying at Blackburn. I love it at Blackburn and I will stay here. I just want to improve as a player."

Rovers manager Graeme Souness was beaming with pride after watching his players push Liverpool all the way.

"We are still learning and we've played against a good Liverpool team and we've been a match - more than a match at times - for them," he said.

Opposite number Gerard Houllier said the game was a great advert for English football.

"To me it was a great spectacle," said the Liverpool coach. "The fans must have enjoyed the game."

"We all feel it was a great game of football so we must congratulate both teams. We thought we were in a position to win it but that happens."

Sunderland and Aston Villa finally hit the back of the net - and secured their first league wins of the season.

Jason McAteer struck seconds after the break to earn Sunderland a shock 1-0 win at Leeds and took some of the pressure off under-fire Black Cats' boss Peter Reid.

And England's Darius Vassell inflicted Manchester City's second defeat in three games on their Premiership return with the only goal of the game after 64 minutes.

New boys Birmingham also hit the target for the first time on their return to the top flight but were denied all three points right at the death by Everton in a 1-1 draw at Goodison Park.

Stern John netted with a 50th-minute spot-kick after the striker had been hauled down by Alan Stubbs.

The former Celtic defender saw red for his challenge but despite being down to 10 men David Unsworth levelled for the Merseysiders in stoppage time.

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, the centre of feverish transfer speculation all week linking him with a move to Barcelona, was replaced at half-time after an inept first-half display as Chelsea scraped a 1-1 draw at Southampton.

Chelsea manager Claudio Ranieri said he took Hasselbaink off to save him for this weekend's London derby at Stamford Bridge.

"Jimmy was a little tired and we have a big game against Arsenal on Sunday for which I wanted him to recover," said the Italian.

"The speculation which has come from the Spanish press has not affected Jimmy."

"He's an animal footballer who when it comes to the game just attacks it."

"Sometimes people don't start the season well but remember he's coming back off a bad injury at the end of last season."

"He's committed to Chelsea and I've never even had to speak to him about Barcelona because I know he will stay with us."

Fabrice Fernandes fired Saints ahead but Frank Lampard levelled for the Blues 10 minutes from time.

Super Cup clash tonight Who will be Europe's Super team?



REUTERS, Monaco

The European Super Cup will have a new name inscribed on it after Friday's final when European champions Real Madrid and UEFA Cup winners Feyenoord both attempt to win it for the first time.

The final could also enter the record books as the first match to be decided after 105 minutes of playing time - which would comprise just one 15-minute period of extra time according to new "golden goal" rules introduced for the first time this season.

UEFA, unhappy with the sudden-death aspect of the old rule in which the match ended as soon as a goal was scored in extra time have brought in a new rule which states that if a "golden goal" is scored during the first half of extra-time, the game will continue until half-time of extra time with the team which scored the "golden goal" winning.

If, after 105 minutes, the scores are still level, a further 15 minutes will be played. In other words, extra-time will last either 15 or 30 minutes and the side which concedes a "golden goal" will, at least, be given a sporting chance of fighting back.

The last time Real Madrid played in the Super Cup final they lost 2-1 to Galatasaray and a Mario Jardel winner in 2000. They have returned to Monaco to try and win the cup at the third attempt. Feyenoord are playing in their first final.

Real's first appearance in 1998 ended in a 1-0 defeat to Chelsea after Uruguayan striker Gustavo Poyet came on as a second-half substitute to score the winner, and two years ago they surprisingly lost to Galatasaray.

Although the match is just the curtain-raiser to the new European season, Real are determined to win

it. "It is the first real test of the season and it is also our bogey trophy," says right back Michel Salgado.

"We are really determined to bring the cup back to Madrid this time."

But Real coach Vicente del Bosque was characteristically cautious about his team's chances of victory over the Dutch team who qualified for the first stage of the Champions League on Tuesday after a 3-0 aggregate win over Fenerbahce of Turkey with Japanese hotshot Shinji Ono in superb form.

"They are a classic team from the Dutch school and also have some very good foreign players. They knocked out some tough teams in

Bucharest on Saturday, with former youth team striker Javier Portillo grabbing the headlines after notching a well-taken double when he came on as a second-half substitute.

The 20-year-old, who has now been promoted to the senior squad, has scored close to 400 goals in official games for the club's youth teams and marked his European debut last season by striking a stunning 25-metre equaliser against Panathinaikos.

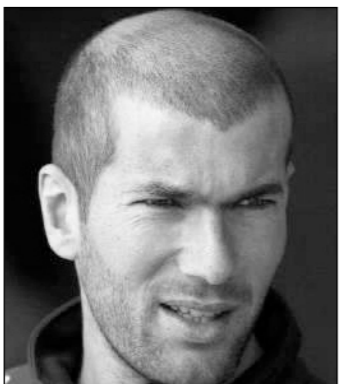
Portillo is clearly being groomed by the club as the future partner for Raul, but senior striker Fernando Morientes is likely to get the nod over the rising star in the starting line-up.

The Spanish international will be

keen to prove a point to the management at Real after he was offered as part exchange in the proposed Ronaldo deal.

With Zinedine Zidane and Luis Figo looking sharper in pre-season than this time last season, Real can look forward with optimism to claiming their first silverware of the season.

"We mustn't forget that we have the option of winning five trophies this season and we are setting out to try and win them all," Zidane said.

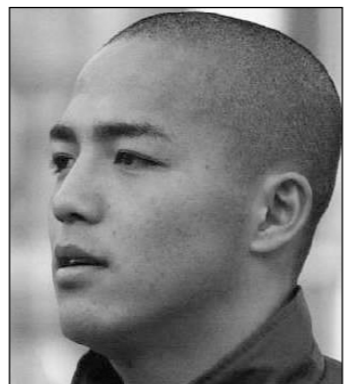


ZINEDINE ZIDANE

last season's UEFA Cup and play very good football."

Real's preparations for Friday's final may have been overshadowed by the saga surrounding the apparent collapse of the attempt to sign Ronaldo from Inter Milan, but the team's recent pre-season performances suggest they will have little problem hitting the target.

Del Bosque's side smashed five past Romanian champions Dinamo



SHINJI ONO

always a challenge to play against a team with big names in it like Real, but I've done it before with Feyenoord when I took on Zinedine Zidane in the 1997 Champions League matches against Juventus.

"For us the Super Cup is a prize which we really want to win. And this match will be an opportunity to match up with an opponent of a higher level."

He also played at the 1990 and 1998 World Cup finals and the 1996 Olympic Games.

U turn for Alex



AFP, Tokyo

Star Japanese midfielder Alessandro Santos will stay with his J-League club for now after he was refused a British work permit, thwarting his deal to play with Charlton, Shimizu S-Pulse said Thursday.

"A contract was never signed, so we can't take any kind of remedial measures," said Shimizu spokesman Kazutake Nishizawa.

Santos' one-year contract with Shimizu therefore continues until next January, Nishizawa said.

The 25-year-old Brazil-born winger played for his adopted country, Japan, in this summer's

World Cup including an impressive performance in their 1-0 second round defeat by eventual third-placed finishers Turkey.

But the British Home Office ruled he has not made the number

of international appearances needed to meet the requirements for a work permit.

Santos was ready to sign a five-year deal with Charlton, with his salary in the first year set at 144 million yen (1.2 million dollars), news reports said.

Santos, or "Alex" as he is more commonly known, and Shimizu managing director Hiroshi Sawari have been in England since August 19, but a date for their return to Japan has not been decided, Nishizawa said.

Italian Serie A side Lazio and Portuguese club Porto were also reported to be interested in Santos, the 1999 J-League Player of the Year, who has scored 42 goals in 157 J-League matches.



ALEX