

Guti the Real star



REUTERS, Rome

European champions Real Madrid have begun their title defence with an emphatic 3-0 win over AS Roma in the Champions League as striker Guti scored twice.

Real, heavy favourites for their tenth title in the competition, were almost casual in their dismissal of one of the strongest teams in Italy's Serie A in the group C clash.

After enduring some heavy first-half pressure from Roma, the Spaniards went ahead with their first shot on target in the 41st minute, Guti finishing off a devastating counter-attack.

Raul added the second 11 minutes after the restart when he was set up by Guti, who then sealed the win with an excellent strike in the 74th minute to complete a performance that will offer little hope to those plotting to steal Real's crown.

Roma, without the suspended Gabriel Batistuta and Francesco Totti, were totally outclassed in the second half by a Real side who are still without their new signing Brazilian Ronaldo, who is not yet fully fit.

Real had created the illusion of settling for a draw in the opening stages but their deadly finishing, incisive counter-attacks and then their almost intuitive possession play were a reminder of their deserved status in the game.

Roma coach Fabio Capello sprung a surprise with his team selection, giving debuts to defenders Leandro Cufre and Traianos Dellas and his side, still smarting from Saturday's league defeat to Bologna, began in an aggressive and positive manner.

The Italians went close as early



An ecstatic Real Madrid forward Guti (R) being congratulated by Roberto Carlos after scoring one of his two goals against AS Roma at Rome's Olympic Stadium on September 17.

as the sixth minute when Christian Panucci headed a corner just wide with Emerson scrambling for a potentially decisive touch at the back post.

But for all Roma's determined efforts chances were scarce and it was not until the 38th minute that the Italians really threatened Iker Casillas's goal again.

Panucci whipped over a cross from the right and young striker Antonio Cassano passed back across the goal but, faced with a rising ball, Damiano Tommasi was unable to keep his head down.

A minute later the lively Cassano wasted a good opportunity, rushing his shot as he volleyed an Emerson

cross high and wide from an inviting position 10 metres out.

Roma were to pay for that missed chance as Real promptly delivered a perfect example of the football that makes them the most feared side on the continent.

Luis Figo fed Raul in midfield, who ran at a back-peddalling Roma defence, feigned to pass to Zinedine Zidane but opted for Guti wider on the left. He cut inside and beat Francesco Antonioli with a perfectly angled right-foot shot.

That was the end of Roma's challenge and, apart from a half-chance for Cassano, they were totally outclassed after the interval. The Real front two combined

again for the second goal, 11 minutes after the break, when Guti slipped the ball to Raul whose piercing shot whistled into the bottom corner.

Guti might not even make the Real team when Ronaldo gains full fitness but he demonstrated his skill again as he made it three in the 74th minute, dancing past two Roma defenders before another pinpoint strike -- this time with his left foot.

Real then added to the torture for their former coach Capello's side by playing keep-ball for the final quarter of an hour as the Roman crowd flooded out of the stadium and left the champions to their celebrations.

'Were you watching Ronaldo?'

REUTERS, Rome

Real Madrid striker Guti says he is ready to challenge Ronaldo for a place in the European champions' forward line after scoring twice in his team's 3-0 defeat of AS Roma in their opening Champions League match.

"I know that Ronaldo will soon be in to play, but I'm ready to compete with him," Guti was quoted as saying in Italian daily *Corriere dello Sport*.

"With these two goals I think I've demonstrated that I have all the qualities to play in a great team like Real Madrid."

Guti's first goal in the 41st minute of the group C match broke the deadlock at the end of a half in which Roma had looked more likely to score.

He added a second goal 16 minutes from time after Raul had made it 2-0 11 minutes after halftime.

Guti's performance left Real in the enviable position of having to decide whether to use him or new acquisition Ronaldo in future Champions League fixtures.

The Brazilian World Cup winner, who signed from Inter Milan just before the transfer deadline, is recovering from a leg injury.

He watched the game on television in Spain and was impressed by Guti's performance.

"Guti amazed me again," Ronaldo was quoted as saying by *Corriere dello Sport*. "I don't know him very well, but it seems he has remarkable technical ability."

FIFA world rankings France go second

AFP, Paris

European champions France made up some lost ground after their World Cup flop by regaining second spot in the FIFA world rankings released Wednesday.

The 1998 world champions had dropped to fourth position after failing to defend their title in Asia and now share second with Spain behind leader Brazil.

World Cup runners-up Germany moved up one spot to fourth ahead of Argentina who slid three spots into fifth.

Meanwhile Turkey, third in the World Cup, continued their progression entering the top ten for the first time at seventh, along with the United States who reach an historic eighth position.

The top mover of the month is Libya who jump 16 spots to 104th.

FIFA'S TOP 20

- Brazil 858 points, 2= France 774 (up 2 places), Spain 774, 4. Germany 770 (+1), 5. Argentina 760 (-3), 6. Mexico 730, 7. Turkey 721 (+4), 8. United States 720 (+1), 9. England 718 (-2), 10. Italy 717 (-1), 11. Portugal 712 (-4), 12. Netherlands 708 (+2), 13. Denmark 703 (-1), 14. Republic of Ireland 701 (-1), 15. Cameroon 682 (+2), 16. Paraguay 680 (+3), 17. Czech Republic 676 (+4), 18. Colombia 675 (-3), 19= Belgium 672 (-1), Yugoslavia 672 (-4)

Crespo double not enough



AFP, Trondheim

AC Milan's Hernan Crespo hit a late equalizer to salvage a 2-2 draw at Norwegian club Rosenborg on the opening day of European Champions League action here on Tuesday.

Crespo, a close-season signing from Lazio to replace Madrid-bound Ronaldo, scored the opener and the final goal of the game for Hector Cuper's men against a team making its eighth consecutive appearance in the competition.

It was a battle between two qualifiers with Rosenborg having to get the better of Danish champions Brondby to earn their Group D berth and Inter getting past Sporting Lisbon.

Inter, who had not played in the competition since 1999 when they were beaten in the quarter-finals, had an early chance with Crespo clean through but keeper Arni Gautur Arason saved with his legs.

Crespo had another chance when he fired over after being set up by a header from strike partner Christian Vieri as he continued to make his presence felt.

He finally found the net in the 33rd minute after beating a defender and shooting into the net with the help of a deflection.

Azar Karadas equalized for the hosts seven minutes after the break with Crespo's help. The Italian knocked the ball on, unintentionally away from keeper Francesco Toldo, and the striker made no mistake.

Karadas even put Rosenborg ahead in the 65th minute after a good cross from the left by Odd Inge Olsen as the home side gained in confidence to put Hector Cuper's

men under pressure.

Meanwhile, Fabio Cannavaro, making his Champions League debut for Inter, was sent off in the 69th minute after bringing down Karadas for his second yellow card to make the situation even more difficult for Inter.

Cuper brought Alvaro Recoba on for the final spell as they pulled out all the stops to try to salvage something from the game.

The substitution proved to be inspired as just two minutes after coming on, Recoba sets up the equalizer in the 79th minute. Crespo rifled a left-foot shot into the roof of the net following a Recoba freekick to earn a valuable point.

An exhausted Crespo was substituted with two minutes left though Recoba could have added another goal as he continued his superb form up front till the final whistle.

Serious stuff from now on



AFP, Paris

The second-tier UEFA Cup gets into full swing on Thursday with the main bulk of its first round matches and a number of top European clubs aiming for European glory.

The bigger clubs have been seeded so that they don't meet each other meaning upsets could be at a premium.

Italians Parma face a difficult trip to CSKA Moscow while Blackburn coach Graeme Souness faces

Bulgaria's CSKA Sofia at home. Scottish club Aberdeen have been paired with one of the toughest sides in the competition in the shape of Hertha Berlin of Germany.

Celtic, who host FK Suduva of Lithuania, are without Johan Mjallby who is out of action for about three months with cartilage damage to his right knee.

It had been hoped Mjallby would be back after a fortnight or so but doctors have told him he will need to go under the knife and earmark a period of rehabilitation afterwards.

Leeds United, who reached the semi-finals of the increasingly dominant Champions League in 2001, take on little-known Ukrainian side Zaporizhya and England's other representatives, Fulham, have a tough draw against leading Croatian club Hajduk Split, and Chelsea host FK Viking of Norway.

Spanish club Alaves, who lost 5-4 to Liverpool in the thrilling final of 2001, begin their campaign with a trip to Ankaragucu of Turkey. Lazio's international midfielder

Fabio Liverani will be out for several weeks with a calf problem and misses their home game against Xanthi of Greece.

Lazio coach Roberto Mancini will have to reshuffle his side with midfielder orchestrator Stefano Fiore perhaps dropping back into a deeper role than usual.

With key players Alessandro Nesta and striker Hernan Crespo sold to AC Milan and Inter Milan in the summer, Lazio may have trouble reaching the form which took them to the 1999/2000 Italian league title.

Schalke 04 must do without their international left back Jorg Bohme who has been ruled out for several weeks with a left thigh problem for their trip to Belarus side FC Gomel. Schalke had only sneaked into the competition having won the 2001/02 German Cup.

Paris Saint Germain, whose form in recent years has not matched their status as a big European club, host Ujpest of Hungary in their first fixture.

Wenger's Bergkamp dilemma



AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is contemplating a U-turn on his policy of not playing plane-phobic Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp in away matches in the Champions League.

The 33-year-old may be in the twilight of his career but his influence within the Arsenal team is currently as high as it ever has been and Wenger admits he is tempted to take advantage of the relatively short distances the club has to travel in group A.

Away matches at PSV Eindhoven, Borussia Dortmund and Auxerre in France, are all within reach for Bergkamp, who has a fear of flying and will only play matches he can reach by road or rail.

Wenger has, at times, been less than sympathetic to Bergkamp's phobia and eventually lost patience

and announced it was better for the club to do without him for all the away matches in Europe rather than have him exhaust himself with marathon overland trips.

But Arsenal's poor performances away from Highbury in recent seasons, coupled with Bergkamp's current rich vein of form, mean he is

rethinking his position. "Who would not be tempted?" Wenger admitted. "But I have not decided yet, so I don't know."

Bergkamp, who was often driven to European matches by his father-in-law before Wenger initiated his current policy, reiterated that he was ready to do whatever is necessary to get to matches. "It is up to the manager to decide," he said. "I am always available, whether it is a short trip or a long trip."

With Arsenal facing a trip to Eindhoven in Bergkamp's native country next week, he is clearly hoping to be involved.

"It is out of my hands, but at least I know the way to Eindhoven," he joked.

Bergkamp did not figure in any of Arsenal's away matches last season, although he did make the journey by road to Leverkusen only to be left on the bench.



DENNIS BERGKAMP

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

European Champions League results on Tuesday:

GROUP A
At London
Arsenal (Eng) 2 (Bergkamp 62, Ljungberg 77) Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 0
At Auxerre, France
Auxerre (Fra) 0 PSV Eindhoven (Ned) 0
GROUP B
At Valencia, Spain
Valencia (Spa) 2 (Aimar 20, Baraja 38) Liverpool (Eng) 0
At Basel, Switzerland
Basel (Swi) 2 (Yakin 50, Rossi 55) Spartak Moscow (Rus) 0
GROUP C
At Rome
AS Roma (Ita) 0 Real Madrid (Spa) 3 (Guti 41, 74, Raul 56)
At Genk, Belgium
Genk (Bel) 0 AEK Athens (Gre) 0
GROUP D
At Trondheim, Norway
Rosenborg (Nor) 2 (Karadas 52, 65) Inter Milan (Ita) 2 (Crespo 33, 79)
At Amsterdam
Ajax (Ned) 2 (Ibrahimovic 11, 34) Lyon (Fra) 1 (Anderson 84)

Ibrahimovic Ajax's hero

AFP, Amsterdam

A Zlatan Ibrahimovic double earned Ajax a 2-1 European Champions League victory over Lyon at the Amsterdam Arena here on Tuesday in an impressive display of attacking football.

Goals from the Swedish striker in the 11th minute and 34th minutes were enough to earn the Dutch champions maximum points in their opening Group D match.

Good wing play earned Ajax plenty of chances as they continually unlocked Lyon's defence though Lyon's Brazilian striker looked dangerous for most of the match and pulled a goal back in the 84th minute.

Ibrahimovic set the tone of the match with his early goal. He ran past two defenders before easily beating Lyon keeper Gregory Coupet to give the home supporters an early cheer.

Ibrahimovic added a second goal in the 34th minute after a great move on the right which split open Lyon's defence, leaving him with an easy chance to knock the ball home after good work from Victor Sikora.

Lyon piled on the pressure in the final stages and Ajax's goal was in constant danger.

The French champions have scored 16 goals in seven French league matches and finally their workrate paid off with a piece of Anderson skill.

The ball came high into the box and Anderson's first touch beat the defence and a second lobbed the ball into the net.

Brazil legend Dida no more

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Former Brazil and Flamengo star Edvaldo Alves de Santa Rosa, better known as Dida, died aged 68 on Tuesday from liver and respiratory problems.

Dida, who had been hospitalised a week ago, was a team-mate of the then 17-year-old Pele in Brazil's World Cup-winning side in 1958 when they beat hosts Sweden in the final.

He also won Rio league titles with Flamengo in 1953, 1954 and 1955, scoring 244 goals for the club - a total bettered only by Zico, who notched 508 but who never managed to collect a World Cup winner's medal.

UEFA CUP RESULTS AT A GLANCE

UEFA Cup first round, first leg results on Tuesday:

At Prague
Viktoria Zizkov 2 (Pikl 7, Straceny 60) Glasgow Rangers (Sco) 0
At Arnhem, The Netherlands
Vitesse Arnhem (Ned) 1 (Peeters 62) Rapid Bucharest (Rom) 1 (Iencsi 90)
At Bordeaux, France
Bordeaux (Fra) 6 (Sommeil 23, Dugary 36, Feindouno 61, Pauleta 67, Vavrik 77-og, Darcheville 88) Puchov (Svk) 0
At Matosinhos, Portugal
Leixoes (Por) 2 (Brito 4, Detinho 52) PAOK Salonika (Gre) 1 (Kurielka 25)
At Aberdeen, Scotland
Aberdeen (Sco) 0 Hertha Berlin (Ger) 0
At Vienna
Austria Vienna (Aut) 5 (Janocko 31, 35, Feitoza 44-pen, Helstad 85, 87) Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Bielik 16)

Valencia too good for L'pool



AFP, Valencia

Spanish champions and current league leaders Valencia again tormented English clubs in their own Metastalla stadium with a convincing 2-0 win over Liverpool in their opening European Champions League Group B match on Tuesday.

The last time they were beaten in front of their home fans by an English team was 1967 and two

second half, by finding the net after 20 minutes.

The Argentine international sidefoceted the ball beyond the reach of Liverpool goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek after picking up a defence-splitting pass from Ruben Baraja.

Baraja put himself on the score-sheet seven minutes before the break with a curling right foot shot from just outside the area and also nearly scored another after 70 minutes.

The Spanish international midfielder unleashed a vicious long-range thunderbolt which required an

Valencia goalkeeper Santiago Canizares.

However, Heskey's shot skimmed along the goal line and past the far post, only to be scooped up and cleared by the Valencia defenders as there were no men in red on hand to provide what would have been a simple tap-in.

Houllier sent on Michael Owen at half time to spice up the strike force, instead of an impotent El-Hadij Diouf, but the England forward could do no better than his Senegalese counterpart.

"I left Michael to start with



THAT'S A GOAL FOR SURE! Valencia's players get inside the post to celebrate after Ruben Baraja scored their second goal against Liverpool at Metastalla stadium in Valencia on September 17.

seasons ago, on their way to the Champions League final, Valencia's victims included Arsenal and Leeds United.

This time around it was the Merseysiders who had no answer to the inspiration provided by nearly 49,000 baying Valencia fans.

Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier had a mixed response to the defeat.

"Valencia demonstrated clearly they were the better side but we should have done better. I'm not happy, this was not the real Liverpool that normally is on display," said the Frenchman.

Pablo Aimar shrugged off his recent fitness doubts, although he limped off midway through the

outstanding flying save from Dudek to turn it over the bar.

Valencia coach Rafa Benitez gave his typical undemonstrative response to his side's authoritative display.

"I was hoping that things would go as well as this. It's a good start but it too early to start talking about the second phase because Basel are a difficult side to face," said Benitez.

"But the reason Liverpool didn't play well has to be down to my men. They knew what to expect and responded," added the Spaniard.

Liverpool's best chance came shortly after Aimar had opened the scoring, when Emile Heskey dodged around the oncoming

because I felt had to sacrifice a striker and put more men in the middle of the field as I expected a physical game," said Houllier.

Nevertheless, it was Liverpool who were the team who were most prone to losing their composure.

The Reds' Jimmy Traore was deservedly booked for a wicked two-footed tackle on Francisco Rufete and the visitors' miserable night was completed 13 minutes from the whistle when Dietmar Hamann was sent off for his second bookable offence.

The German midfielder got his marching orders after clashing with Valencia striker Mista Ferrer, who had come on for Aimar and was also booked.

Perfect Gunners night



AFP, London

Arsenal got their Champions League campaign off to a flier here on Tuesday with a 2-0 win over Borussia Dortmund that was capped by a goal from Freddie Ljungberg in his first match since undergoing hip surgery after the World Cup.

Ljungberg, who had made just one appearance for the reserves before being plunged back into action on club football's biggest stage, had only learned on Tuesday morning that he would be in the team and manager Arsene Wenger admitted including him had been a gamble.

"All the tests we had done showed he was physically ready but of course he had only played 70 minutes in the reserves.

"But I felt Freddie is a winner and a fighter, and that would get him through the game."

Wenger was delighted with what he felt was a mature performance from his side, who were frustrated for over an hour by the German champions but never lost their cool.

"I think we made a big step," Wenger said. "We showed great teamwork, great and I'd say great maturity tonight."

The English double-holders never quite demonstrated the kind of cutting edge they have displayed in the Premiership this season.

But after Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp had put them ahead just after the hour mark, Wenger's men killed off the Group A match with a goal that will have sent alarm bells ringing around Europe.

The breathtaking pace and simplicity of the move finished off by Ljungberg was an eloquent reminder of why this Arsenal team have become the dominant force in the English game.

Like so many Arsenal goals, England goalkeeper David Seaman started it, confidently gathering a Dortmund corner and immediately sending Sylvain Wiltord sprinting free down the right.

There followed a sweeping cross-field pass that Thierry Henry met with the deftest of touches to direct the ball into the box and the path of Ljungberg.

The Swede looked like he had never been away as he skipped round Jens Lehmann and slotted home in the 77th minute.

Seaman spared the home fans a nervous climax with a fine save to keep out Evanilson's long range effort two minutes from the end, but Arsenal were well worth their three points.

The English double holders had

started the match at a frenetic pace, apparently anxious to live up to Wenger's prediction that they are ready to conquer Europe.

But for all the sound and fury, Lehmann was untroubled until the 26th minute, when Wiltord collected a clearance from a Dortmund corner and sent Thierry Henry racing through the inside right channel.

The French striker's low drive across goal was bound for the bottom corner before the towering Lehmann got down impressively well to his right.

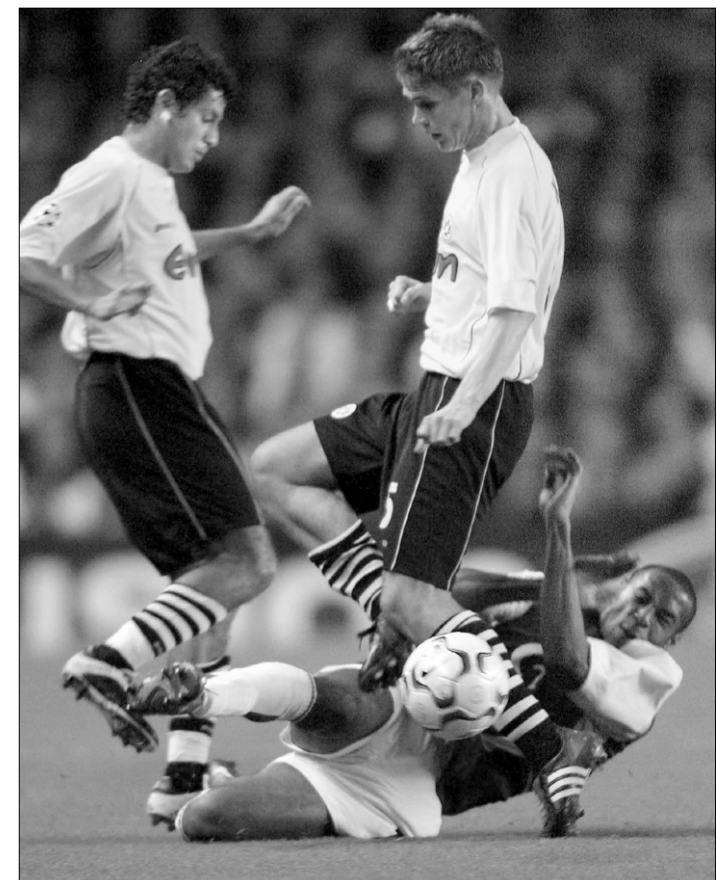
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Arsenal striker Thierry Henry (Bottom) gets sandwiched between Borussia Dortmund defenders Juan Ramon Fernandez (L) and Sebastian Kehl at Highbury in London on September 17.

with Wiltord to set up Henry, who sliced wide from a near identical position to his first chance.

The best chance of the half fell to Wiltord in the 32nd minute, after typically tenacious work on the left by Ljungberg.

The Swede worked the ball on the half-way line and wriggled free of his marker to leave the Dortmund defence exposed. Ljungberg found Henry who in turn picked out Wiltord, but the Frenchman's first touch gave Lehmann the time to get off his line and block his shot.

It was not all Arsenal however. Oleg Luzhny had to scramble a

to be a night of frustration for Wenger's men and the 34,907 crowd.

But relief was finally forthcoming in the 62nd minute after a sweeping sequence of passes started by Wiltord on the right touchline. Bewildered by the fluidity and movement of the Arsenal frontline, Dortmund's defence left Bergkamp with time to turn on the edge of the area.