

Inzaghi inspires Milan



AFP, Milan

Filippo Inzaghi's two goals in a superb four-minute spell earned AC Milan a 2-1 victory over Lens in their Champions League Group H match at the San Siro Stadium on Wednesday.

Inzaghi's goals in the 57th and 61st minutes, surprisingly as Lens had looked rock solid in defence till then, meant Carlo Ancelotti's men got back into winning ways in this competition after a year's hiatus.

Daniel Moreira pulled a goal back for Lens late on but it was not enough to stave off defeat.

Milan, five-times European champions and last in 1994 when they thrashed Barcelona 4-0 in the final, fielded Rivaldo and Italy international Inzaghi up front with Rui Costa and Andrea Pirlo just behind.

Lens coach Joel Muller decided on just one striker up front in Moreira with Olivier Thomert and Antoine Sibierski in supporting roles. Jacek Bak of Poland was back in the starting 11 after missing the weekend's French League match against Rennes.

Midway through the half, Clarence Seedorf hit a spectacular overhead kick just to the right of the goal in an impressive individual move.

Milan were stroking the ball around with great technical skill, overshadowing the northern French club on many occasions, but still were having problems finding the breakthrough.

Rivaldo was looking fresh and dangerous on the edge of the box having played just the final 20



AC Milan superstar Rivaldo (L) trying to outwit RC Lens's Senegalese international Ferdinand Coly in Milan on September 18.

Barca brave Bruges



AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona sealed a 3-2 victory over Belgians Bruges in a golden spell just before half-time as they got back into their Champions League victory groove here on Wednesday.

Barcelona dominated the opening spell with entertaining, attractive football and managed to keep Bruges on their toes as they continually changed the pace and pattern of this Group H game. It was simply vintage Barcelona.

The hosts had many chances against a Bruges side who were hardly poor but were made to look severely second-rate in the opening exchanges.

Luis Enrique sparked early celebrations at the Nou Camp after just five minutes with a volleyed goal that set success set the tone for the night.

Bruges, less glamorous than their illustrious opponents but



Javier Saviola (L), Barcelona Argentinian star, shoots while holding off Club Brugge's Marek Spilar at the Nou Camp stadium in Barcelona on September 18.



ROY IS ROYAL: Deportivo La Coruna's Dutch striker Roy Makaay (L) scores his second goal past a despairing Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn at the Olympic Stadium in Munich on September 18.

Van Hooijdonk Hoodini act



REUTERS, Rotterdam

Pierre van Hooijdonk's late free kick has earned Feyenoord a 1-1 home draw with Juventus in their Champions League group E opener.

The Dutch side had trailed to Mauro Camoranesi's 32nd minute strike but van Hooijdonk levelled in the 74th minute with his third attempt from a free kick after both Salvatore Fresi and Pavel Nedved had been booked for encroaching.

Juventus were left to rue a series of missed chances, although coach Marcello Lippi said he was satisfied with the result.

"We played a good match. My defenders were very good, it was a pity that the strikers did not finish it off completely," Lippi said.

Juventus, without French striker David Trezeguet, looked dangerous early on and deservedly went ahead when Camoranesi latched on to van Hooijdonk's headed clearance to

send a volley beyond goalkeeper Edwin Zoetebier.

Feyenoord, the UEFA Cup holders, missed captain Paul Bosvelt, who did not play after his father died on Monday, but they gradually worked their way back into the game without really threatening their Italian visitors.

Marco Di Vaio wasted a great chance to decide the match in the 52nd minute when he shot inches wide of the far post after being played in by Nedved.

Feyenoord coach Bert van Marwijk replaced defender Christian Gyan with striker Mariano Bombarda in the 70th minute and two minutes later they were level.

Van Hooijdonk was given three chances with his free kick and on the third occasion he made no mistake to record his ninth European goal.

Van Marwijk was content with the point, although he said his side took too long to get into the game.

"This was the maximum we could get out of the match," he said. "We showed more guts as the game went on."

Magpies shot down in Kiev



AFP, Kiev

A timid Newcastle got their Champions League Group E campaign off to the worst possible start in Ukraine on Wednesday, bowing 2-0 to experienced campaigners Dynamo Kiev.

Dynamo coach Olexiy Mykhaylychenko, who took over after long-time incumbent Valeri Lobanovskiy died last May, did what his predecessor could not manage five seasons ago, when Newcastle managed a 2-2 draw.



MAURO RAMOS DE OLIVEIRA

Another Brazil great passes away

INTERNET, Sao Paulo

Brazil's 1962 World Cup winning captain Mauro Ramos de Oliveira passed away on Wednesday after a long struggle with cancer.

Oliveira, who had been undergoing treatment for stomach cancer, died at the Santa Casa de Misericordia hospital in the city of Pocos de Caldas, 125 miles north of Sao Paulo.

The 72 years old was a double World Cup winner having been a member of the 1958 squad that lifted the world title in Sweden.

The former Sao Paulo and Santos defender played for Brazil in 26 official games and took part into 4 World Cups ('50, '54, '58, '62.). In the last years of his playing career, Ramos left Brazil and went to play in Mexico.

Ramos' death comes a day after another great Brazilian and Rosa's teammate Edvaldo Alves de Santa Rosa, better known as Dida died from liver and respiratory problems at the age of 72.

Even that proved insufficient to qualify - and this season is unlikely to bring any more cheer for Sir Bobby Robson's side on this evidence with trips to Juventus and Feyenoord still to come.

Maksim Shatskikh broke the deadlock with a rasping freekick in the 18th minute after Newcastle had made the busier start without looking like scoring.

And just after the hour mark Aleksandr Khatskevich made it 2-0 with a header after Shay Given was unable to hold an effort from Olexandr Melaschenko.

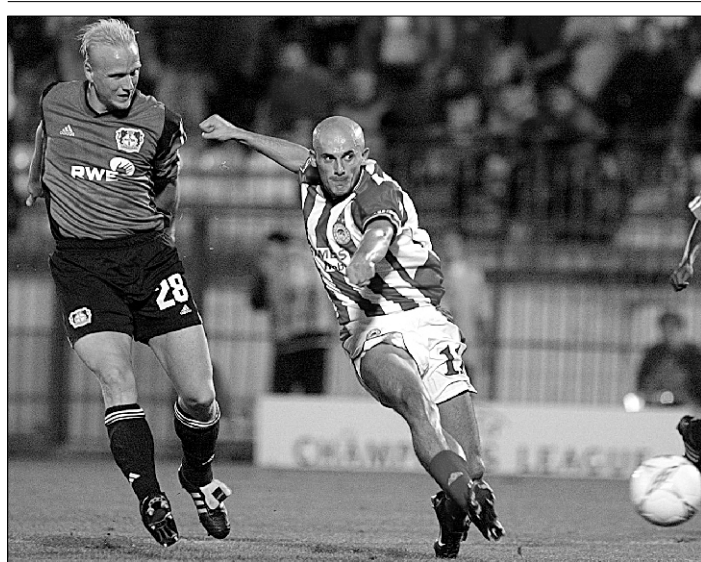
Newcastle skipper Alan Shearer needed treatment after an early clash of heads before resuming in attack alongside fit again Craig Bellamy.

FIFA for Afghanistan

AFP, Zurich

World governing body FIFA will contribute 40,000 dollars to help ease the financial burden faced by Afghanistan when they make their return to international football at the Asian Games later this month.

FIFA decided to help out the cash-strapped Afghans who will be playing in their first top level soccer tournament since 1984 when the Games get underway in the South Korean city of Busan on September 28.



DEADLY: Hatrick hero Predrag Djordjevic (C) of Olympiakos Piraeus scoring while Bayer Leverkusen's Carsten Ramelow (L) looks on in Athens on September 18.

Munich falls to Deportivo



AFP, Munich

Four-times European kings Bayern Munich went into Wednesday's Champions League Group G encounter with Deportivo La Coruna having not lost a home tie in 29 outings.

But reputations meant nothing to Deportivo, who promptly floored the Bavarian giants 3-2 with Dutchman Roy Makaay scoring a first-half brace and completing his hat-trick after a spirited German fightback.

Bayern had to go through the relative indignity of qualifying for the group phase but their league form has been impressive and they stand at the top of the Bundesliga with four wins in five games.

Gothenburg were the last team to beat Bayern in European competition at the Olympic Stadium in December 1997 - but the run ended with coach Ottmar Hitzfeld's

options squeezed in the injury absence of playmakers Sebastian Deisler and Mehmet Scholl as well as Paraguayan striker Roque Santa Cruz.

Michael Ballack, a runner up with Bayer Leverkusen last May, did start for the hosts having recovered from an ankle knock but it was not one of the attacking midfielder's more effective nights.

Deportivo, who beat Manchester United home and away in the group phase last season, shocked Bayern, the 2000 champions, by going for the jugular from the outset.

Juan Carlos Valeron fed Makaay for the opener on 12 minutes and the Dutchman raced past Thomas Linke to whip a low strike past home keeper Oliver Kahn.

Deep into first-half stoppage time, Makaay struck again after latching on to a cross from Hector.

Former Germany and Bayern coach Franz Beckenbauer, now Bayern president, was livid and told German television at half-time: "We started as if we were in a training

session - we're standing too far off our opponents."

But Bayern were a team transformed after the break following the introduction of England international Owen Hargreaves and after 57 minutes they were back in the hunt, Bosnian striker Hasan Salihamidzic netting from inside the six yard box after a surging run from Peruvian Claudio Pizarro.

Giovane Elber then had the 40,000 crowd on their feet with a 64th-minute equaliser, heading in from a Hargreaves corner.

But Makaay had the last laugh 13 minutes from time as Valeron again set him up with the through ball for another text book low finish past the despairing Kahn.

Bayern midfielder Jens Jeremies said Bayern had to recognise where they had gone wrong.

"We made too many simple mistakes and got punished. A pity we lost it after initially pulling back the deficit," said Jeremies, whose side must now recover lost ground at French side Lens next Tuesday.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Champions League results on Wednesday:

GROUPE

At Rotterdam, Netherlands Feyenoord (Ned) 1 (van Hooijdonk 75) Juventus (Ita) 1 (Camoranesi 32)

At Kiev Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) 2 (Shatskikh 17, Khatskevich 62) Newcastle (Eng) 0

GROUP F

At Manchester, England Manchester United (Eng) 5 (Giggs 10, Soljkskaer 35, Veron 46, van Nistelrooy 54, Forlan 89- pen) Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 2 (Katan 8, Cohen 85)

At Athens Olympiakos (Gre) 6 (Kleine 27-og, Giannakopoulos 38, Djordjevic 44, 64- pen, 73, Zetterberg 87) Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 2 (Schneider 22, 78- pen)

GROUP G

At Milan AC Milan (Ita) 2 (Inzaghi 57, 61) Lens (Fra) 1 (Moreira 75) At Munich, Germany Bayern Munich (Ger) 2 (Salihamidzic 57, Elber 64) Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) 3 (Makaay 12, 45, 77)

GROUP H

At Barcelona, Spain Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Luis Enrique 5, Mendieta 40, Saviola 44) Bruges (Bel) 2 (Simons 22- pen, Englebort 85)

At Moscow Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 0 Galatasaray (Tur) 2 (Sarr 72, Arif 81)

Henry escapes FA action

AFP, London

Arsenal and France striker Thierry Henry will not be disciplined by the Football Association (FA) for alleged use of an elbow on Charlton midfielder John Robinson, the English game's governing body confirmed Wednesday.

In a statement the FA said: "The matter has not been referred to the video advisory panel and the investigation is now closed."

Television pictures suggested Henry had caught Robinson during champions Arsenal's 3-0 Premiership win at The Valley on September 14.

But Wales international Robinson later spoke out in support of Henry saying there was nothing malicious about the challenge.

The FA's announcement came after England captain David Beckham was not even investigated for his part in a similar incident with Leeds' Lee Bowyer because the referee in that match, Jeff Winter, saw what had happened and ruled it accidental.

MU find form



AFP, Manchester

Manchester United survived an early scare to get their Champions League campaign off to a positive start with a 5-2 win over Israeli champions Maccabi Haifa here on Wednesday.

What was ultimately a fairly comfortable evening's work for Alex Ferguson's side was capped by Uruguayan striker Diego Forlan finally scoring his first goal for the club, in what was his 27th appearance in a United shirt.

Furlan's frustrating run came to an end with an 89th-minute penalty after Nigerian defender Eric Ejiakor had pulled down David Beckham on the right of the area.

With Ruud van Nistelrooy rediscovering his touch in front of goal and Juan Sebastian Veron returning to claim his first Champions League goal, United boss Alex Ferguson declared himself satisfied with his side's performance.

"Some of our attacking play

"We made mistakes and we paid the price. We could do much better than we did today."

United had made a bright start to the match with Veron, back in the side after the groin injury that forced him to miss the weekend defeat at Leeds, allowed plenty of time and space to test Dudu Awate from 25 yards in the seventh minute.

But any sense of complacency in the United ranks was shattered immediately when Maccabi mounted a swift counter-attack down the right that left the home defence totally exposed.

The impressive Yaniv Katan rounded off the move in style -- and earned himself a place in Israeli football history -- with a cool finish past Fabien Barthez.

The Israelis' taste of the Champions League high life was to prove frustratingly brief, however. United needed only two minutes to get back on level terms, the lively Ryan Giggs getting on the end of a Phil Neville cross to score with a rare header.

It was one-way traffic for the rest of the opening period, but the lack of a cutting edge which has contrib-

pass behind the Israeli back line for Solskjaer to score.

Veron should have scored two minutes from the break, when he sidefooted straight at Awate from 12 yards.

But the Argentinian made amends within a minute of the restart after a strong run by Beckham down the right. The England captain's cross was allowed to fly across the Maccabi defence allowing Veron, unmarked beyond the far post, to ghost in and hammer the ball home with the outside of his foot.

Van Nistelrooy put the result beyond doubt eight minutes later, pulling the ball down on his thigh inside the box and clipping it past Awate.

It was the Dutchman's third goal in Europe this season, putting him on track to overhaul the club record of ten he notched in last year's campaign, as well as providing a riposte to the critics who say defenders have realised how to contain him.

With the match over as a contest, Ferguson threw on Furlan for the last half hour.



HOW DID HE SCORE? Maccabi Haifa custodian Dudu Awate (L) and defender Alon Harazi (R) lumb dounded as Manchester United's Argentinian midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron celebrates his goal at Old Trafford on September 18.

tonight was terrific," the Scot said. "Maybe we took our foot of the pedal a bit when they scored their second goal but they also showed their ability."

Despite the upbeat assessment, United's failure to convert a string of first half chances, and the way they conceded two goals to a Maccabi side that is clearly out of its depth at this level will, not quite have eradicated the memory of successive Premiership defeats to Bolton and Leeds.

Maccabi coach Itzhak Shum was bitterly disappointed with the way his side performed on their debut in the league phase of the tournament.

uted to United's faltering start to the season was once again in evidence as a string of chances went begging.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, who was also brought on in the closing stages for his first competitive appearance in a United shirt.

It was not the happiest of starts for the Spanish keeper, who was unable to react as a lapse of concentration by his defence allowed Rafi Cohen in to score five minutes from time.

That might have left a sour taste in the mouth but Furlan's late goal ensured United finished on a high note.

Leverkusen's lesson in Greek



AFP, Athens

A hat-trick by Yugoslav midfielder Predrag Djordjevic helped Olympiakos destroy Bayer Leverkusen 6-2 Wednesday in their opening Group F Champions League clash.

Djordjevic, who was a doubtful starter because of a high fever, struck twice in the first half and again after the interval as the Greeks coasted to an easy win over last season's beaten finalists.

Bayern, struggling this season in 13th place in the Bundesliga, had got off to a flying start when they took the lead in the 22nd minute

after a right-wing cross from Bernd Schneider slipped past Dimitris Eleftheropoulos in the Greek goal.

A defensive mistake by the Germans then enabled Olympiakos to hit back five minutes later when a corner kick by Djordjevic bounced off defender Thomas Kleine and past goalkeeper Frank Juric.

Olympiakos took the lead in the 38th minute when a cross from Djordjevic was slotted in by Stelios Giannakopoulos and one minute before half-time the Yugoslav scored his first goal converting a perfect pass from Christos Patsatzoglou.

The home team continued its surge in the second half when Djordjevic was brought down in

the penalty box in the 64th minute. He picked himself up and scored into the left hand corner to make it 4-1.

Nine minutes later, Djordjevic broke away from his marker to blast the ball past Juric to notch his hat-trick and give Olympiakos a 5-1 lead.

Bayer Leverkusen added a consolation second goal in the 78th minute when Brazilian Lucio was tripped up by defender Stelios Venetidis and Schneider scored from the spot.

However, the Greeks completed the scoring three minutes from time when Swedish defender Par Zetterberg cleverly executed a free-kick from outside the box.