

Shevchenko shoots Real down



AFP, Milan

AC Milan striker Andriy Shevchenko said he had emerged from a nightmare period after scoring the goal which sent holders Real Madrid crashing to a 1-0 defeat in the Champions League here on Tuesday.

Shevchenko, preferred in attack to the competition's joint leading goalscorer Filippo Inzaghi, netted with a low drive five minutes before half-time to settle the sides' opening second-phase Group C contest at a rain-drenched San Siro stadium.

It was a triumphant return for the Ukrainian who has struggled to regain his first-team place at Milan since returning from a knee ligament injury.

"I put all my desire into this goal," said Shevchenko. "It marks the end of a difficult period for me.

"Tonight I was playing not to score but to prove my qualities. It's important that every player has a chance to play.

"That's why I was disappointed by the rumours that I might leave when the transfer window opens.

"But I thank all the supporters

and my teammates for always having supported me."

Nine-time European champions Real could have gone down to a much heavier defeat to the Italian league leaders had it not been for the splendid form of goalkeeper Iker Casillas.

Aside from some moments of magic from Real playmaker Zinedine Zidane, Milan, who themselves have won European football's top prize five times, rarely looked in danger of conceding with veteran Paolo Maldini imperious in defence.

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti was overwhelmed by his team's performance which followed their 1-0 victory over Inter in Saturday's Milan derby.

"We were truly magnificent," he said. "I have to compliment my team because playing against Real is not easy."

The former Italy international did however point out one flaw in Milan's performance.

"We lost control of the midfield briefly at the end of the first-half and that allowed Real more space.

"But we composed ourselves after the break and continued to press and had them under pressure for long periods."

Real's Brazilian star Ronaldo

stayed at home because of flu while skipper Fernando Hierro and French midfielder Claude Makelele were also ruled out because of ankle injuries.

Zidane, who missed the 0-0 draw against arch rivals Barcelona on Saturday because of a bad back, passed a late fitness test and lined up behind a front pairing of Raul and Fernando Morientes.

Milan started with plenty of purpose and almost had the lead in only the second minute.

Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf, a former Real player, burst into the 18-yard box and his brilliant low drive was superbly blocked by Casillas.

The hosts maintained the pressure and Casillas was called into action once again to save Shevchenko's angled shot.

A sweeping move orchestrated by Zidane almost brought Real a goal against the run of play in the 26th minute.

The French master picked out the intelligent run of Morientes who should have done better than fire straight at Dida with just the Brazilian keeper to beat.

But just as Real appeared to be having the better of things Milan went in front.

Portuguese playmaker Manuel

Rui Costa struck a brilliant 40-metre pass from his own half to send Shevchenko clear, and the former Dinamo Kyiv marksman beat Casillas at full stretch with a low, hard drive from just inside the box.

The driving rain made it difficult for both sides in the second-half but despite the adverse weather Milan still enjoyed the better of things.

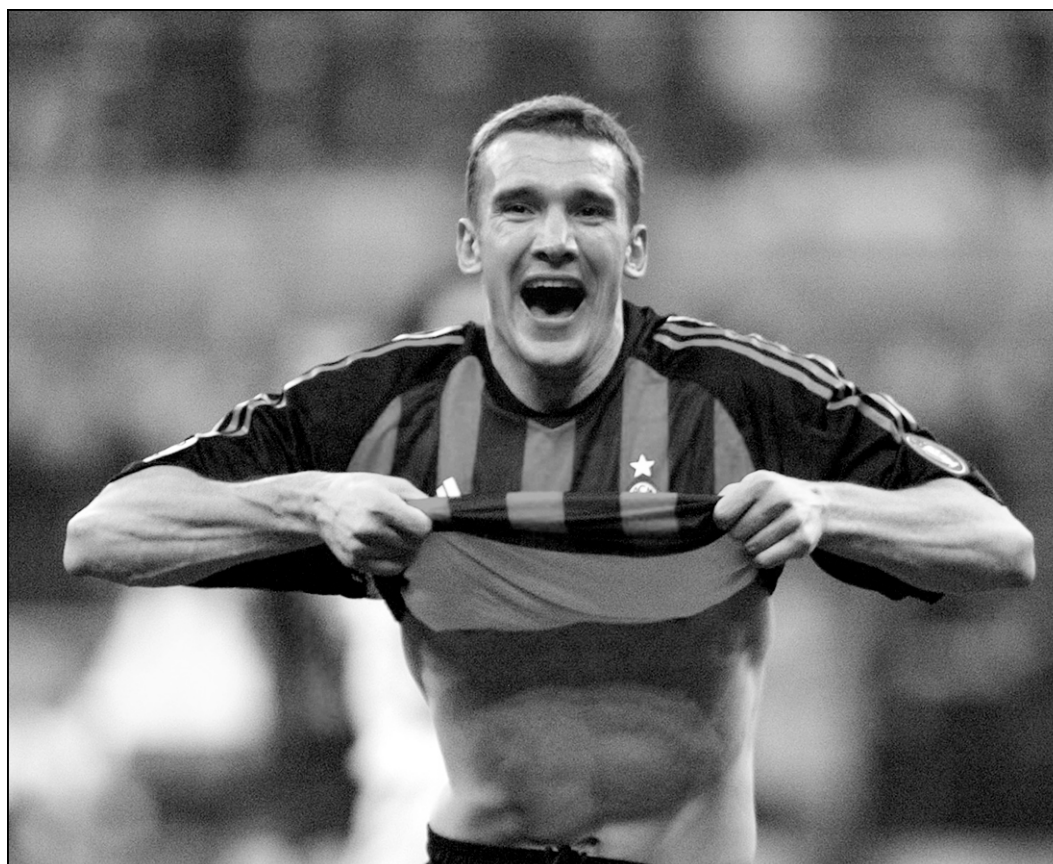
Only further heroics from Casillas prevented Milan from doubling their advantage in the 51st minute.

Rivaldo, Milan's Brazilian World Cup winner, fed Rui Costa 25 metres from goal and his rasping effort was heading for the top corner until Casillas threw himself across goal to tip the ball over the bar.

Milan pressed for a second goal as the weather deteriorated but in the end one was enough to condemn the Spaniards to a narrow defeat.

Madrid coach Vicente del Bosque said afterwards. "It was a very intense match with both attacking sides but our defence was not up to scratch and I think we could have played better.

"We may have had many players out injured but we were simply beaten by a better side on the night."



AC Milan striker Andriy Shevchenko is over the moon after scoring against Real Madrid at the Maezza Stadium in Milan on November 26.

Dortmund derail Lokomotiv

AFP, Moscow

German champions Borussia Dortmund made a winning start in the European Champions League second group stage by beating Lokomotiv Moscow 2-1 in their opening Group C match here on Tuesday.

Borussia's goals came from Torsten Frings and Czech international striker Jan Koller, while Russian international defender Sergei Ignashevich was on target for Lokomotiv.

Lokomotiv's Nigerian forward James Obiorah had a clear chance for an opening goal seven minutes into the game when he stole the ball from Borussia's Brazilian defender Dede but he failed to lob it into the empty net over keeper Jens Lehmann.

The home side, inspired by winning their first ever Russian title last week, dominated the play in the opening half hour, keeping Borussia's defence on their toes, but failed to capitalise on their chances.

The visitors replied with threats on the counter-attacks, relying mainly on the power of the giant Koller.

In the 31st minute the home side's South African defender Jacob Lekcetho released Lokomotiv striker Ruslan Pimenov who dribbled into the box and fed teammate defender Ignashevich, who fired the ball into the net.

But two minutes later Frings pulled the scores level when he headed in Tomas Rosicky's precise cross from the right to beat Lokomotiv goalkeeper Sergei Ovchinnikov from seven yards out despite tight marking.

Koller silenced the Lokomotiv supporters when he put Borussia 2-1 up, sweeping the ball in from the edge of the six-yard box after Dede's cross from the left only two minutes before the break.

Advantage Berlin, PSG

AFP, Berlin



Hertha Berlin will take a slim lead into the second leg of their UEFA Cup clash against Fulham in two weeks' time after beating the English club 2-1 in the third round tie here on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Paris Saint Germain, reduced to 10 men for an hour, beat Portugal's Boavista 2-1 at the Parc des Princes in their third round first leg clash.

Fulham, the London-based Premiership side managed by former French international Jean Tigana will take heart from a battling performance and a valuable away goal achieved in a sparsely populated Olympic Stadium in the German capital.

Hertha took the lead just before the half-hour mark when Stefan Beinlich net a Marcelinho corner at the near post to head past the diving Edwin van der Sar.

With 10 minutes of a dull half remaining, Fulham's Steed Malbranque produced a neat turn to shoot and produce a neat save from keeper Gabor Kiraly.

Fulham equalised eight minutes into the second half when Martin Djotou met Malbranque's cross with a header which hit the post. French international Steve Marlet reacted fastest and nodded the rebound in from close range.

But Hertha scored the winning goal when Fulham's Argentinian striker Facundo Sava sliced a curling free kick into his own net, giving van der Sar no chance in the 68th minute.

In Paris, PSG, sixth in the French league and just about within reach of the leading group, had a morale-boosting win with the second leg in two weeks' time.

PSG opened the scoring in the 17th minute. From a long free kick from the left by Andre Luiz, Ghanaian Alex Nyarko, positioned on the edge of the area, got the ball and ran away from his marker Cafu, before shooting a fierce left foot shot past Boavista keeper Ricardo for his first goal for the club.

After that, PSG were being overwhelmed and were even down to 10 men in the 32nd minute after Frederic Dehu had received two yellow cards within a three-minute spell for two undisciplined challenges.

Although Luis Fernandez' team were down a man, PSG doubled their score just before the break thanks to a right-footed sidefoot from Fabricio Fioress, well served by a pinpoint accurate long pass from Nyarko.

Claudio scored with a quarter-hour to go with a header for a valuable away goal but Boavista were not able to add to their score for the equalizer.



Basel's Christian Gimenez (L) watches the ball deflecting off him into the Manchester United goal past a hapless custodian Fabien Barthez at St. Jakobs Park in Basel on November 26.

MU leave best for 2nd half



AFP, Basel

Manchester United recovered from a goal down here on Tuesday to beat FC Basel 3-1 in their opening Champions League second phase match thanks to two goals in two minutes from Ruud van Nistelrooy.

The first Swiss side ever to reach this stage of Europe's top club competition often seemed capable of repeating their thrilling performance against Liverpool two weeks ago that saw them qualify, but United raised the attacking tempo in the second half.

Manchester went down to a goal after just 33 seconds from Christian Gimenez after Basel piled on the pressure straight from the kick-off.

Quinton Fortune first cleared a Hakan Yakin shot off the goal line after a 23rd second corner but the ball spun out to Australian midfielder Scott Chipperfield at the edge of the penalty area, whose

diagonal shot across the goal mouth was prodded in by Basel's Argentine striker.

Basel dominated the first ten minutes, with their Argentine striking duo of Gimenez and Julio Hernan Rossi repeating the incisive performance against Liverpool.

Rossi almost put Basel two up in the eighth minute with a chip which toppled tantalisingly onto the bar with Fabien Barthez left lunging in mid-air.

The Manchester goalkeeper made amends ten minutes later pulling off a superb diving save from a Hakan Yakin free kick from outside the penalty area.

The match then evened out, with both sides narrowly missing dangerous chances up front.

Basel again piled on the pressure in the opening minutes of the second half, with Gimenez and Ivan Ergic seeing efforts scrambled aside by Barthez in quick succession.

But Manchester United appeared more composed and

finally broke through in the 61st minute, capitalising on Basel's fragile back four.

Van Nistelrooy's running paid off when he surged between two defenders to head in a lofted cross from Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

The Dutch international striker again caught the Swiss defence napping a minute later when he sneaked in a shot from an apparently impossible angle.

Solskjaer added to Swiss woes in the 68th minute, running into space on the right and coolly slotting his shot between Basel goalkeeper Pascal Zuberbuehler's legs to make it 3-1 for United.

Basel appeared dispirited afterwards, with Hakan Yakin well short of the inspired passing form he showed during his commanding performance two weeks ago against Liverpool.

But the Swiss side never looked totally outclassed and Basel can take heart from another strong showing by Ivan Ergic - on loan from Champions League group rivals Juventus - in midfield.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Champions League second group phase collated results on Tuesday:

Group C In Moscow: Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 1 (Ignashevich 31) Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 2 (Frings 33, Koller 43) In Milan: AC Milan (Ita) 1 (Shevchenko 40) Real Madrid (Spa) 0

Group D In Basel, Switzerland: FC Basel (Swi) 1 (Gimenez 1) Manchester United (Eng) 3 (Van Nistelrooy 62, 63, Solskjaer 68) In La Coruna, Spain: Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) 2 (Diego Tristan 8, Makaay 11) Juventus (Ita) 2 (Birindelli 38, Nedved 57)

STANDINGS European Champions league tables after Tuesday's second group phase matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Group C: Dortmund 1 1 0 0 2 1 3, Milan 1 1 0 0 1 0 3, Lokomotiv 1 0 0 1 1 2 0, Real 1 0 0 1 0 1 0. Group D: United 1 1 0 0 3 1 3, Juventus 1 0 1 0 2 2 1, Deportivo 1 0 1 0 2 2 1, Basel 1 0 0 1 1 3 0.

Barcelona identify culprits



AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona officials have identified several fans who pelted Real Madrid midfielder Luis Figo with objects and caused the bad-tempered match at the weekend to be temporarily halted, the club said on Tuesday.

But Barcelona said it objected to the Spanish football federation's ultimatum giving the club three days to fully explain the incidents which soured the match at the Nou Camp on Saturday.

The federation said it had "opened disciplinary proceedings against Barcelona for the very serious incidents", but the Catalan club insisted there was no danger to the players, including Figo, who Barcelona fans have never forgiven for joining Real.

"The physical wellbeing of the players and the referee was never in danger," insisted the club.

Halfway through the second half, Portuguese international Figo was targeted from the stands with projectiles ranging from mobile phones to a pig's head while he was trying to take a corner.

The fans' behaviour forced a 10-minute stoppage of play and both teams were led to the dressing rooms despite calls from players for the fans to calm down.

Barcelona, who said a "provocative" Figo was to blame, have until Friday to present their defence to the committee.

The Catalan club risks being suspended from the Nou Camp, or a heavy fine.

Roma punished

AFP, Rome

AS Roma will play next month's home league match against Reggina on a neutral ground following violent incidents involving their fans at Parma at the weekend.

The one-match ban was enforced by the Italian football disciplinary commission in response to the unruly behaviour of visiting supporters at the Ennio Tardini stadium on Sunday.

Roma, who were also slapped with a heavy fine, were due to play Reggina at the Stadio Olimpico on Sunday December 15.

FIFA to let Anelka go

AFP, Zurich

FIFA said on Tuesday it will take no action over French striker Nicolas Anelka despite calls from the French Football Federation to suspend him after he snubbed a call-up to the national team last week.

The English Football Association turned down the French request to ban Anelka for two matches with his club Manchester City because he had not been given the required 15 days notice to turn up to the training camp for last Wednesday's friendly against Yugoslavia.

Anelka played for City in their English Premier League defeat to Middlesbrough at the weekend. Football's world governing body rejected calls to suspend the controversial striker because it said "both parties had to be in agreement when a player was selected and in this case it appeared to be a "last-minute call-up."

France coach Jacques Santini had drafted in Anelka to replace injured Lyon striker Sidney Govou.

FIFA said such cases could be avoided by naming a bigger squad of up to 30 players and then reducing it in the final days before the match.

However Anelka could still face punishment from the French federation, whose disciplinary committee is meeting on December 5 to discuss the case.

Juve deny Deportivo



AFP, La Coruna

Juventus bounced back from going two goals down after 11 minutes to draw 2-2 at Deportivo La Coruna in their Champions League second round Group D match on Tuesday.

The Italians seem to specialise in making their fans sweat, coming from behind to split the points for the second time in four days after their 1-1 league draw with Bologna on Saturday when their equaliser came five minutes from time.

This time they didn't leave it so late, with Pavel Nedved finally getting the visitors back on level terms after 57 minutes before grinding out the remainder of a match which had started brightly but turned scrappy in the final half hour.

"Actually, we could have won the game with the opportunities we had," lamented Juve coach Marcello Lippi, whose side also had a goal disallowed.

"After the torrid first 15 minutes, when frankly we weren't in the game, I was proud of the way we fought back mentally and physically," added Lippi.

Deportivo attacked from the start and quickly discovered that Juventus had left their defensive

strategy in the dressing room. Joan Capdevila tormented Juventus during the opening skirmishes and after eight minutes the Spanish international was given space to march down the left wing.

His cross found Diego Tristan, who edged in front of his marker Alessandro Birindelli to head Deportivo ahead.

Juventus clearly didn't learn their lesson because they were punished in a similar fashion just three minutes later when Capdevila found Roy Makaay open in the box.

The Dutch striker, currently the Spanish First Division's leading scorer, slotted the ball home from close range to take his tally to eight goals in seven Champions League outings.

However, Juventus rarely give up without a fight and they responded in typical fashion. Birindelli made up for his earlier error on 38 minutes by blasting the ball past Deportivo goalkeeper Juanmi Garcia from almost 30 metres out.

Nedved then clinched Juve's equaliser 12 minutes after the break. Juanmi again left grasping air as the Czech unleashed a left-foot thunderbolt from just beyond the edge of the area.

"We were a bit unlucky and on several occasions we could have gone 3-1 up just before half time. That might have finished them off.

However, I have to give Juventus credit for coming back at us. If we had gone 2-0 down like that, I'd have been hanging my head (in shame)," reflected Deportivo coach Javier Irureta.

"The Italians finished the game better and I think they had more stamina than us," added Irureta, who has often said that top clubs in Spain have to play too many matches.

Irureta added that he had almost considered leaving the prolific Makaay out of the starting lineup because he had looked tired at times in recent games, a problem that returned after the break.

The Dutchman contributed little during the 17 minutes of the second half he played before being replaced by Victor Sanchez.

Nevertheless, Deportivo had several chances to get back in front after Nedved's strike, with another second half substitute Alberto Luque going especially close late in the game but Juventus had tightened up at the back after their initial mistakes.

The point will prove precious for the Italians, especially after their 2-0 defeat in Deportivo's Riazor stadium at the same stage of last season's Champions League, in what should be a three-way battle with Deportivo and Manchester United for the two quarter-final spots.



Juanmi, the Deportivo La Coruna goalkeeper, goes full stretch to thwart Juventus forward Marco Di Vaio in La Coruna on November 26.



LEARN IT FROM THE FIFA BOSS! FIFA President Joseph Blatter shows off his ball juggling skills as some local children look on during the inauguration ceremony of a training centre in Guatemala City on November 26.

Violence worries Blatter

AFP, Guatemala City

FIFA president Sepp Blatter said here on Tuesday the level of violence in football worldwide was reaching alarming levels.

Football's top official told a press conference that though the situation was becoming a problem, the cause was not necessarily the sport itself.

Blatter said: "If we do not do something about violence in football, I will be very anxious about the future of the sport. Although the situation has not become terrible, it is none the less alarming.

"We must take the necessary measures," said Blatter, without saying what they were.

He added that it was not simply violence increasing in football, but a worldwide problem which was getting worse in society in general, and, as a consequence, in football stadiums.

Blatter is in the Central American country to inaugurate the FIFA Goal programme which will promote the sport in Central and North America and the Caribbean.