



PHOTOS: REUTERS

(L) Olympique Lyon's Brazilian playmaker Juninho sending Celtic goalkeeper Magnus Hedman the wrong way from the spot. (R) Celtic manager Martin O'Neill is absolutely devastated as his team concede the late penalty at the Garland Stadium in Lyon on December 10.

Celtic hearts broken again

Inter bow out



AFP, Paris

Arsenal wrapped up a remarkable comeback to qualify for the knockout phase of the Champions League on Wednesday but Celtic had their hopes snatched away by a controversial late penalty in Lyon.

An early goal from Robert Pires and a Freddie Ljungberg strike in the second half propelled Arsenal to a 2-0 win over Lokomotiv Moscow at Highbury to complete their climb from last place to top of Group B in the space of three matches.

"Three games ago no one expected to see us here," said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger.

"When you look back to our first match at home, that 3-0 defeat to Inter Milan you have to say we've turned round the situation perfectly."

Celtic needed just a point to go through to the 16-team knockout phase but despite twice coming from behind, they crashed to a 3-2 defeat at Lyon after Juninho stroked in a decisive 86th minute

penalty.

It was awarded when Bobo Balde was adjudged to have knocked the ball away with his arm, but Martin O'Neill said referee Urs Meier was at fault.

"The referee will have to examine his own particular game during the night," O'Neill said. "It sounds like sour grapes but we'll have to deal with it. We are out of the competition, but he'll have to look at his own performance."

Another disputed penalty helped Bayern Munich to go through after a 1-0 victory over Anderlecht ensured the 2001 winners avoided a second consecutive humiliating exit at the first stage.

Claudio Pizarro collapsed under a challenge from Anderlecht defender Michal Zevlakov and Roy Makaay was clinical from the penalty spot.

But as Group A runners-up behind Lyon, Bayern face a tough challenge in the seeded last 16.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said his team would thrive on the pressure.

"I think we can play with less pressure on our shoulders in the last sixteen," Hitzfeld said. "I think

we can

still achieve something in the Champions League this season."

Juventus won Group D handsomely after achieving the biggest winning margin in Champions League history with a 7-0 drubbing of Greek side Olympiakos.

But Inter Milan followed Lazio's failure to qualify on Tuesday as they were held to a 1-1 draw in Ukraine by Dynamo Kiev and, like Celtic, must make do with the UEFA Cup place awarded to teams finishing third.

Inter coach Alberto Zaccheroni blamed his side's earlier defeats, including the 5-1 home thrashing by Arsenal last month, for their demise.

"To say we are disappointed is an understatement," he said.

"Unfortunately our elimination was down to our last two home games against Lokomotiv and Arsenal."

Deporivo La Coruna snatched second place in Group C behind Monaco by avoiding defeat by two clear goals at PSV Eindhoven - the 3-2 win for the Dutch side meant Deportivo went through and Real Sociedad made it a fine night for Spain by taking the runners-up

spot in Group D after a 1-1 draw with Galatasaray.

In London, Arsenal never looked in danger of not winning, in stark contrast to their opening three matches when they gained just one point.

The 1-0 win over Dynamo Kiev at Highbury and the spectacular defeat of Inter in Milan last month resurrected their hopes and they completed the job at Highbury.

Thierry Henry was the instigator of Pires' goal, the French striker dispossessing Lokomotiv captain Dmitry Loskov in the area before spotting his compatriot who smashed a low shot past Sergey Ovchinnikov.

Arsenal guaranteed their place alongside Chelsea and Manchester United in the last 16 when Ljungberg got on the end of Henry's hooked pass and the Swede made no mistake with a decisive touch over the goalkeeper after 67 minutes.

"It would have been a big disappointment not to qualify," said Wenger. "We're a stronger side in Europe now."

In Lyon's Stade Gerland, Celtic fell behind to Giovane Elber's opening goal but John Hartson levelled midway through the first

half.

The game was just six minutes old when Elber regained his goalscoring touch after a fallow month.

Juninho fired a superb, curling freekick to the top right hand corner and it bounced back into the path of Elber who nodded a precise header into the net.

Elber was very close to scoring again after turning on the edge of the box and curling a right-foot shot just wide of the left-hand upright with Lyon keeper Gregory Coupet well beaten.

Neil Lennon earned a yellow card for a high boot on to the thigh of Mahamadou Diarra but moments later the Lyon midfielder had fired a looping header close to the top right hand corner of Hedman's goal.

Then came Hartson's equaliser in the 24th minute. A long ball was headed back to Henrik Larsson by Sutton but his weak left-foot shot was easily blocked by Coupet.

Unfortunately for Lyon, the ball cannoned right into the path of Hartson who lodged the ball firmly into the back of the net through the legs of a home player.

Lyon, who slipped up by losing 1-0 to Anderlecht in their last fixture, went ahead soon after the break in spectacular fashion.

Juninho fired home with a 30-metre shot which dipped and swerved past Celtic's captain Hedman in the 52nd minute.

Then Florent Malouda hit a long ball to Elber who, in a one-on-one with Hedman and looking a good bet to fire home Lyon's third, managed to shoot over the cross-bar.

O'Neill changed his formation midway through the half, bringing on Ross Wallace for Michael Gray and Mohamed Sylla for Hartson.

It was opportunism by Sylla which brought about the half chance from which Sutton scored in the 75th minute.

Defender Jeremie Berthod was surprised by the tenacious tackling of Sylla who dispossessed him on the right and crossed for Sutton to shoot a precise shot into the left hand side netting to the delight of the Celtic fans who had made the trip to the Stade Gerland.

A further dramatic twist was to come however with Juninho's winning goal to break the hearts of those Scottish fans.

STANDINGS

AFP, Paris

European Champions League Groups A-D standings after Wednesday's final group stage matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

GROUP A					GROUP C									
Lyon	6	3	1	2	7	10	Monaco	6	3	2	1	15	6	11
Bayern	6	2	3	1	6	5	Deportivo	6	3	1	2	12	12	10
Celtic	6	2	1	3	8	7	PSV	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Anderlecht	6	2	1	3	4	6	AEK	6	0	2	4	1	11	2

*Lyon, Bayern Munich qualify for second phase

*Monaco, Deportivo La Coruna qualify for second phase

GROUP B					GROUP D									
Arsenal	6	3	1	2	9	6	Juventus	6	4	1	1	15	6	13
Lokomotiv	6	2	2	2	7	7	Sociedad	6	2	3	1	8	8	9
Inter	6	2	2	2	8	11	Galatasaray	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
Kiev	6	2	1	3	8	8	Olympiakos	6	1	1	4	6	13	4

*Arsenal, Lokomotiv Moscow qualify for second phase

*Juventus, Real Sociedad qualify for second phase

Juve, Real top the odds



AFP, Paris

Real Madrid and Juventus are joint favourites at 4/1 for the Champions League after first-phase action concluded Wednesday with four Spanish clubs qualifying for Friday's draw.

Manchester United, third favourites at 5/1, face the prospect of renewing rivalry with Bayern Munich whom they beat in the 1999 final.

The rules for the draw prevent them from playing either of the two other English clubs -- Arsenal or Chelsea -- or the other group winners which include Real, Juventus, holders AC Milan and French sides Monaco and Lyon.

That leaves Bayern as the biggest threat from the group runners-up who include Lokomotiv Moscow, Deportivo La Coruna, Real Sociedad, Stuttgart, Porto, Sparta Prague and Celta Vigo.

However, United will not be drawn against Stuttgart as they qualified from the same group.

Milan are 8/1 and Bayern 14/1 as the competition reaches the knock-out stage which includes two from France for the first time in five years and two from Germany in Bayern and Stuttgart.

Juventus thrashed Olympiakos 7-0 on Wednesday to set a new Champions League record.

Bayern Munich, the 2001 champions who failed to win a match last season, reached the next round after beating Anderlecht 1-0 in a tense Group A game at the Olympic

Stadium.

Dutch striker Roy Makaay grabbed the crucial goal on 42 minutes, driving home a penalty after Anderlecht defender Michal Zevlakov had brought down Claudio Pizarro. It was Makaay's fifth goal in Europe and he leads the scorers' list with Monaco's Croatian striker Dado Prso.

Bayern must feel the 18.75 million euros (23 million dollars) they paid Deportivo for the player well worth it. Progress to the last 16 is worth a minimum of seven million euros which could multiply fourfold if they reach the semi-finals.

The win secured Bayern the runners-up spot in the group behind Lyon, who beat Celtic 3-2 at the Stade Gerland.

And Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld believes they have nothing to lose.

"I think we can play with less pressure on our shoulders in the last sixteen," he insisted. "The pressure will be on the other teams."

Inter Milan, who started the competition with a 3-0 win at Arsenal, crashed out after a 1-1 draw against Dynamo Kiev in Group B.

Lokomotiv Moscow, who had a superior head-to-head record against Inter, advanced to the knock-out phase along with Arsenal, despite losing 2-0 at Highbury.

Arsenal lost two of their first three matches but manager Arsene Wenger believes they have the mental strength to go all the way.

But the bookmakers see Chelsea at 11/2 as a better option than Arsenal who are at 6/1.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Final matchday results in Champions League groups A to D on Wednesday:

Group A
At Munich, Germany
Bayern Munich (GER) 1 (Makaay 42-pen) Anderlecht (BEL) 0
At Lyon, France
Lyon (FRA) 3 (Elber 6, Juninho 52, 86-pen) Celtic (SCO) 2 (Hartson 24, Sutton 75)

Group B
At Kiev
Dynamo Kiev (UKR) 1 (Rincon 85) Inter Milan (ITA) 1 (Adani 68)
At London
Arsenal (ENG) 2 (Pires 12, Ljungberg 67) Lokomotiv Moscow (RUS) 0

Group C
At Athens
AEK Athens (GRE) 0 Monaco (FRA) 0
At Eindhoven, The Netherlands
PSV Eindhoven (NED) 3 (De Jong 14, 90, Robben 48) Deportivo La Coruna (SPA) 2 (Luque 59, Pandiani 83)

Group D
At Turin, Italy
Juventus (ITA) 7 (Trezeguet, 14, 25, Miccoli 19, Maresca 28, Di Vaio 62, Del Piero 66, Zalayeta 79) Olympiakos (GRE) 0
At San Sebastian, Spain
Real Sociedad (SPA) 1 (De Paula 51) Galatasaray (TUR) 1 (Sukur 26)

Pele's polite no

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Pele has turned down an invitation from Ronaldo and Zinedine Zidane to appear in a United Nations fundraising match in Basel, Switzerland next Monday.

The 63-year-old Brazilian legend's spokesman said on Wednesday that Pele was flattered at being asked to play but was committed that day to filming the final scenes in a film about his life which is due to be released in March.

"There is definitely no way he can play," spokesman Jose Fornos Rodrigues told the Terras website.

Zidane had joked that Pele "didn't have to play long" in the match.

The France superstar and his Real Madrid teammate Ronaldo will captain the opposing teams in the friendly, a sell-out with all 30,000 seats at the Jakob Park stadium already snapped up, which is being staged to raise funds to finance UN projects to help the poor in Africa, Asia and south America.



PHOTOS: AFP

(L) AC Milan's Brazilian wing-back Cafu dribbles with coach Carlo Ancelotti watching during his team's training session at the Todoroki stadium in Kawasaki. (R) Boca Juniors' coach Carlos Bianchi (extreme R) chats with his star player Carlos Alberto Tevez after practice in Yokohama yesterday.

Tokyo set for 'Super Sunday'



AFP, Yokohama

AC Milan striker Filippo Inzaghi, defender Alessandro Nesta and Massimo Ambrosini are all injury doubts ahead of their Inter-Continental Cup clash against Boca Juniors, their coach said Thursday.

"I haven't yet decided the starting line-up for Sunday's game, but at least Nesta, Inzaghi and Ambrosini are not certain because of injuries," said head coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"It's a very important match for us. We have prepared for the championship really well. I'm sure we will have a good result."

Inzaghi was the top goal scorer in the Serie A 1996-97 season and is part of the 24-strong squad brought to Japan by Ancelotti.

It will be the sixth appearance in the Inter-Continental Cup for the European champions, who won the world club title in 1969, 1989 and 1990.

The Yokohama Stadium holds happy memories for Milan's Cafu. Brazil's World Cup captain led his side to victory at the ground in the final of the 2002 tournament, 2-0 against Germany.

It is also the home of J-League champions Yokohama Marinos, for whom Cafu once signed a two-

and-a-half-year deal worth an estimated 420 million yen (3.9 million dollars), but scrapped it to join the Italian Serie A club in June.

"When I joined Milan, I tried to play my best with the same goal I had targeted when I was with Sao Paulo 10 years ago," said the 33-year-old defender.

"The Inter-Continental Cup is a rare occasion to play a game between the European champions and the South American champions, and it's been one of our big goals since before we left Italy. I really want to win the Cup."

Boca Juniors coach Carlos Bianchi meanwhile, is ready to unleash rising star Carlos Alberto Tevez against Milan.

Tevez, who has been dubbed the 'new Maradona', picked up an injury just over six weeks ago but has been declared fit to face the Italians for Sunday's.

"He's not yet perfect, but physically OK. He can play Sunday," Bianchi said of the 19-year-old forward.

With Tevez leading the team, Boca swept to victory in this year's Libertadores Cup final to beat Brazil's Santos FC and book a place in what is football's unofficial world club championship.

Bianchi, however, would not reveal his starting line-up for Sunday's game, which will be Boca's fourth appearance in the Inter-Continental Cup.

Three years ago in Tokyo, for-

ward Martin Palermo scored goals in the third and sixth minutes to beat star-studded Real Madrid 2-1 and secure Boca's second world club title, following their 1977 victory.

Boca crashed to a 1-0 defeat to German club Bayern Munich in the 2001 showdown, while Bianchi also guided Velez Sarsfield to victory over AC Milan in the 1994 final.

"AC Milan have many great players. They are a 100 per cent international club and they can make any

formations according to the players," said Bianchi.

"Their defenders are really good and midfielders move well. Their strikers are able to break through a tight defence line and are very dangerous, like Boca Juniors. That's why they became the European champions.

"We played against them before, but I expect them to be different.

"But our team can do what they should do on the pitch. In English, we can play a 'correct' game. Many say our midfielders are especially good, but our defenders and forwards can also play well."

Bianchi acknowledged that while Tokyo was a long way from home, his side had been preparing for this match for five months. "I'd like to show an excellent game Sunday," he added.

Europe against Brazil!



REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

A wave of anti-European sentiment has swept through Brazilian football over Milan's treatment of Rivaldo, FIFA's Player of the Year award and a row over the release of Kaka for next month's Olympic qualifiers.

Brazil's normally diplomatic national team coach Carlos Alberto Parreira led the attack during a conference in Sao Paulo.

"FIFA is getting weaker and weaker against the European clubs," he said. "And they're doing it so that Brazil loses out. They don't want Brazil to go to a fourth consecutive (World Cup) final."

"When Brazil won the World Cup for a second time (in 1962), football changed. In 1966, the Europeans created football based on strength and speed. It was a way to defeat Brazilian football."

"Imagine what it will be like if we win a sixth World Cup title in Germany... They're going to do everything so that we don't achieve it."

Parreira's anger centered on the reluctance of Italy's AC Milan to release midfielder Kaka, one of the Serie A sensations this year, for the Olympic qualifying tournament in Chile in January.

Brazil under-23 coach Ricardo Gomes named 17 of his 20 players for the tournament on Monday but left three places vacant in the hope of working out agreements with European clubs, including Milan.

Parreira said four European clubs had written to the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) saying they did not want to release players for the competition which decides which two South American teams qualify for the Olympic soccer tournament in Athens in August.

"There have to be strong rules," said Parreira.

"I understand their side but when you buy a player like Kaka you must know that he plays for his country. It should be written into his contract."

But it is not just the Kaka situation that has upset Brazilians.

Many cannot understand why Milan splashed out millions of euros on 2002 World Cup winner Rivaldo, only to consign him to the reserve team.

Rivaldo was released from his contract last week and is now looking for a new club.

"Why do they buy Brazilian players if they don't like them?"

asked Mario Zagallo, who coached Brazil in three World Cups.

To add insult to injury, Rivaldo won the "Golden Dustbin" award when he was voted the worst player in Italy by more than 5,000 listeners who took part in a poll conducted by RAI radio's Catersport programme.

"Yes, it made me sad," said Parreira. "It was an act of disrespect to a world champion."

"But Rivaldo shouldn't be worried about this because he knows how valuable and important he is."

The poll prompted Fernando Calazans, football columnist in the Rio de Janeiro O Globo, to say what many Brazilians feel about Serie A, which is shown live on cable television in Brazil.

"Italian football, in general, is a huge bore," he wrote, pointing out that in the last 50 years, Brazil had won five World Cups to Italy's one.

"Making little jokes at the expense of Brazilian players can only be the result of jealousy."

The announcement that two Real Madrid players -- Ronaldo and Zinedine Zidane -- and one from Arsenal -- Thierry Henry -- had been nominated for this year's FIFA Player of the Year award has also caused exasperation, even though Ronaldo is Brazilian.

Many felt that midfielder Alex should have been nominated for the award, which will be announced on Monday, after guiding Cruzeiro to their first Brazilian championship title this year.

"If it was a serious election, a player like Alex would not be forgotten," wrote veteran commentator Armando Nogueira.

"I've been a frequent viewer of the European leagues this year. And, quite sincerely, nothing has excited me as much as the exhibitions of Alex."

"The jury is made up of coaches who ignore, completely, teams beyond European frontiers. Nobody sees games from our championships. For them, Brazil and Argentina are nothing more than suppliers of players."

Former Brazil striker Tostao, who played alongside Pele in the 1970 World Cup team, added: "Pele was perfect. But if the King played with a Brazilian club today, somebody would say he doesn't so spectacular because he doesn't play with one of the big European clubs."

"He wouldn't even be elected the best in the world. Maybe he'd lose out to Henry."

LAST 16

Group winners	Runners-up
Lyon (FRA) - A	Bayern Munich (GER) - A
Arsenal (ENG) - B	Lokomotiv Moscow (RUS) - B
Monaco (FRA) - C	Deportivo La Coruna (SPA) - C
Juventus (ITA) - D	Real Sociedad (SPA) - D
Manchester United (ENG) - E	Stuttgart (GER) - E
Real Madrid (ESP) - F	Porto (POR) - F
Chelsea (ENG) - G	Sparta Prague (CZE) - G
AC Milan (ITA) - H	Celta Vigo (SPA) - H

*Clubs from the same country cannot play each other
**Clubs from same first-round groups cannot play each other
***Clubs who topped their groups cannot play each other
****Clubs who finished second in their group play the first leg at home

Champions League clubs qualifying for the UEFA Cup
Celtic (SCO), Inter Milan (ITA), PSV Eindhoven (NED), Galatasaray (TUR), Panathinaikos (GRE), Marseille (FRA), Besiktas (TUR), Bruges (BEL)

Odds
Real Madrid, Juventus 4/1, Manchester United 5/1, Chelsea 11/2, Arsenal 6/1, AC Milan 8/1, Bayern Munich 14/1, Deportivo La Coruna 16/1, Stuttgart 28/1, Lyon, Monaco, Porto 33/1, Celta Vigo, Real Sociedad, Sparta Prague 50/1, Lokomotiv Moscow 100/1

Can Prinz do it?



AFP, Berlin

Women's World Cup winner Birgit Prinz will not be able to cope with the physical demands of the Italian league according to her club manager at FFC Frankfurt Siegfried Dietrich.

Perugia's eccentric president Luciano Guacci believes German striker Prinz, 26, can pit her wits against the male stars of the Italian top-flight and has held talks with the talented forward about an unprecedented move to Serie A.

However Dietrich feels the superior athleticism of men would prevent the German star from becoming a prince amongst men.

"When it comes down to the sporting aspects I am a bit sceptical," Dietrich told German sports agency SID. "I do not know how realistic it is for a woman to play in a man's team."

"There is the question of athletic disparity between men and women."

Although Dietrich expressed doubts about whether Prinz could cut the mustard in the Italian top-flight he admitted the move would bring women's football into the spotlight more than ever