

# A galactic grinding



AFP, Leverkusen

Nine-time European champions Real Madrid started the 2004/05 season as favourites to win the Champions League but a 3-0 drubbing by Bayer Leverkusen here on Wednesday night could see their odds lengthened.

Real splashed out 47 million euros on England international Jonathan Woodgate and Argentine international Walter Samuel to shore up their defence but Leverkusen showed there was more football than the colour of money.

Goals from Polish international Jacek Krzynowek, Brazilian Franca and Bulgarian striker Dimitar Berbatov condemned Madrid.

It was Real's biggest Champions League defeat for four years when another German side, Bayern Munich, triumphed 4-1 over the Spaniards in March 2000.

"Bayer play the mighty Madrid off the park," lauded magazine Kicker. German daily Bild described Bayer's display as "galactic" in a jibe at Madrid's expensive collection of stars who have been dubbed 'Los Galacticos'.

"Horror" was the press reaction to

"Real trampled underfoot," said sports daily Marca.

"Real lost more than a match, they lost their credibility," said the AS sports daily.

"Bad in defence, disorganized in midfield, toothless in attack."

Madrid coach Jose Antonio Camacho dragged off French playmaker Zinedine Zidane, Portuguese winger Luis Figo and Brazilian World Cup winner Ronaldo at the interval.

The trio were all below par and Camacho must have wished he had more than three substitutions to replace his other outfield players with David Beckham, Roberto Carlos and Raul all cutting forlorn figures.

"Bayer Leverkusen steamrolled us from the first minute," admitted Camacho. "We only pulled ourselves together in the last 30 minutes.

"I take full responsibility for the defeat. I clearly did not manage to send my players out with the right attitude."

Leverkusen midfielder Carsten Ramelow claimed before the match that "sometimes passion is more important than ability" and his verdict proved spot-on as Madrid's multi-millionaires were humbled by a club almost relegated from the Bundesliga 15 months ago.

"Madrid humiliated in Leverkusen," bemoaned Marca. "Madrid did nothing to improve their image and now have a deep wound that will take some time to heal."

Real face Italian side Roma at the Santiago Bernabeu in their next Champions League match on September 28 knowing victory is essential.

"We have to make up for this awful start in our next match against Roma," added Brazilian defender Roberto Carlos.

While gloom was the order of the day for Madrid credit is due to Leverkusen for an attacking brand of football reminiscent of that which helped them to the 2002 Champions League final.

Madrid defeated Klaus Toppmoller's side 2-1 in the Glasgow final but that reverse was avenged in some style at the BayArena.

"It's not the moment to say whose fault it is. Today all we can feel is sadness by the result," he said.

"Leverkusen were superior and deserved to win. They were better in almost all areas and have to be congratulated."

Real's problems were compounded when the club later revealed that they could be without Zinedine Zidane for at least three weeks after the French star injured his shoulder in a collision with Roque Junior.

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