



Players of Hapoel Tel Aviv arrive on the pitch before their UEFA Cup match against Paris Saint-Germain at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Tragedy strikes soccer

AFP, Paris

The race to reach the UEFA Cup last 32 on Thursday was overshadowed by the death of a French fan who died from gunshot wounds after a clash with police in Paris.

The tragedy happened outside the Parc des Princes stadium following Paris Saint Germain's 4-2 defeat to Hapoel Tel-Aviv of Israel.

Police sources told AFP that a police officer had gone to the aid of a Hapoel fan who had been set upon by a gang of around 150 Paris supporters in the streets outside the famous ground.

The officer fired tear gas to disperse the mob before firing two shots.

The unnamed policeman, who was in custody Friday morning, fired his handgun into a threatening crowd near the Parc des Princes stadium late Thursday after seeking to defend an Israeli fan from attack, police and witnesses said.

A 24 year-old man was killed and a 26 year-old who was wounded is in serious condition in hospital, police said.

Five fans were in police custody Friday morning and face possible charges for "racist and anti-Semitic insults", police said.

"(The officer) fired in legitimate self-defence in order to protect his physical person. He had come to the aid of a man in accordance with our rules of engagement, and he had no choice but to shoot," said Patrice Ribeiro of the Synergie police union.

"A fan asked for help, and this Caribbean colleague of ours came to his assistance. He took refuge in a McDonald's restaurant and saw this horde of savages come at him," said Joaquin Masanet of the UNSA-police union.

"I am sorry that there is a dead PSG fan but one has to say that these people are racists who attacked a police officer because

he was a man of colour," he said.

Fans interviewed on French radio said the officer was not wearing an identifying arm-band and fired his gun in panic.

A hard core of PSG supporters is known for its far-right allegiance, and several have been banned from the club's matches. Thursday night's violence followed a humiliating 4-2 defeat for the French side.

Philippe Broussard, a journalist at L'Express magazine specialising in football violence, witnessed the events and described what happened on the publication's website.

"At around 10:55 pm when I arrived at Porte de Saint-Cloud metro station the first incidents erupted. Several hundred Paris supporters, mostly very young, were looking to attack opposing fans," he wrote.

Broussard saw a crowd turn its attention to a "black man of about 30, quite tall, wearing a beige woollen sweater. He has a tear gas

grenade in his hand and is facing a crowd that is increasingly hostile. He is apparently trying to protect someone ... and keeps saying 'Stay behind me.'"

The man sought to take refuge in a McDonald's restaurant "to avoid being lynched." Outside the restaurant, "there is a movement of the crowd as if the 'fugitive' has been caught by his attackers ... Several people shout, 'He's got a gun,' and then suddenly a shot rings out," Broussard wrote.

When they realised the man was a police officer, several in the crowd began chanting, "Dirty nigger" and "France for the French," according to Broussard's account.

"Only one thing is sure: several dozen people were rushing towards him and wanted to attack him because of the colour of his skin," Broussard wrote.

Police reinforcements arrived

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Marquez gets Spanish passport

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona's Mexican-born defender Rafael Marquez obtained dual Spanish citizenship on Friday, freeing the club to sign another player from outside the European Union.

Spanish Football Federation rules allow Primera Liga clubs only three non-European Union players in their squads. Barca's other two are Brazilian Ronaldinho and Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o.

"It's good news for us because we now have the opportunity to try and fill that place, but we are not going to rush into a decision," Barca coach Frank Rijkaard told a news conference on Friday.

With forwards Eto'o, Lionel Messi and Javier Saviola all sidelined with injuries speculation has focused on the possibility of Barca looking to sign a player in the January transfer window.

One option being touted in the press is for the club to promote highly-rated Mexican youngster Giovanni dos Santos from the youth teams to the first team.

The European and Spanish champions, who top the Primera Liga by a point from Sevilla, play Villarreal at home on Saturday.

Hleb Belarus' best player

AFP, Minsk

Arsenal midfielder Alexander Hleb was on Friday named Belarus Player of the Year, the country's sports weekly Press Ball announced.

The 25-year-old Belarus international received 711 points in a poll among the Belarus football specialists and journalists to clinch the title for the fourth time in his career.

Ukraine's side Dnepropetrovsk striker Sergei Kornilenko finished second with 422 point, while Russia's Tomsk side midfielder Alexander Kulchy was third with 200 points.

Santos wants Germany stay

AFP, Munich

Paraguayan international midfielder Julio Dos Santos has urged Bayern Munich not to send him out on loan outside of the Bundesliga saying he is happy in Germany.

"I have heard of this interest from abroad but I want to continue playing in the Bundesliga," explained Dos Santos. "It is better if I stay here."

"I am happy in Munich but it is always difficult when you are not playing."

The 23-year-old Dos Santos has hardly featured since joining from Cerro Porteno 11 months ago and Bayern said they wanted to loan him out to get some games under his belt.

Bolton won't sell Anelka

AFP, Bolton

Bolton manager Sam Allardyce insists France striker Nicolas Anelka is not for sale.

Anelka has been linked with a move to French champions Lyon after failing to make any impression since his club record eight million pounds move to the English Premiership club in August.

Former Real Madrid star Anelka has yet to score a Premiership goal for Bolton, with his solitary strike coming in the League Cup against Walsall.

But Allardyce, who claimed there had been no approach from Lyon, is determined to get the best out of Anelka and will not consider selling him when the transfer window opens in January.

He said: "If the president of Lyon did say he was interested in Nicolas without speaking to us, then he is out of order."

"We have had no contact with anyone about Nicolas. Even if we did, the answer would be no."

Bolton face one of Anelka's many former clubs on Saturday when Arsenal visit the Reebok Stadium and Allardyce backed his player to rise to the occasion.

"Nicolas' overall contribution has been very good but because we are not winning matches people are bound to make more of the fact he has not scored," he said.

"It would be a fantastic game for Nicolas to score his first Premiership goal for us against Arsenal."

"But if he gets one it has to be the winner, otherwise it does not mean anything."

British armada sail on

AFP, Paris



Newcastle, Tottenham, Blackburn and Glasgow Rangers all reached the UEFA Cup last 32 on Thursday but French giants Paris Saint Germain saw their season hit a new low after a 4-2 defeat by Hapoel Tel-Aviv.

At St James's Park, Stephen Taylor headed an 86th-minute winner as Newcastle came from behind to beat Celta Vigo 2-1 and secure their progress to the knock-out rounds.

But the win did little to lighten the mood on Tyneside with the stadium barely half-full, an indication of fans' frustrations with their team's woeful Premiership form.

Ernesto Canobbio gave Celta an eight-minute lead but Antoine Sibierski levelled with his third European goal of the season in the 36th minute.

Newcastle grabbed the winner when Albert Luque's left-wing corner fell for Taylor to head past goalkeeper Estean Suarez to settle the Group H clash.

Tottenham booked their place in the last 32 with a 1-0 Group B win over Bayer Leverkusen in Germany.

All eyes were on the returning Dimitar Berbatov, who joined Tottenham from Leverkusen in May for 10.9 million pounds, and the Bulgarian international duly delivered, scoring the winning goal against his old employer.

It was a third successive European win for Tottenham -- following victories over Besiktas and FC Bruges -- and the English side wrapped up qualification with one game to spare.

Mark Hughes's Blackburn are also safely through after a 0-0 draw at Feyenoord in Group E.

"I'm delighted with the performance -- it was a good professional European performance tonight," said Hughes.

"It's a difficult place to come, they are a vociferous crowd and decent opposition but I thought we controlled the game for long periods."

Rangers, keen not to be outdone by Celtic's progress to the last 16 of the Champions League, kept their season alive with a 2-2 draw at Auxerre in Group A.

Striker Kris Boyd proved the hero for the Glasgow giants with a late equaliser after Daniel Niculae's

76th minute strike had cancelled out Nacho Novo's leveller to an early goal from Irenusz Jelen.

"It's a good result, especially as we're qualified from tonight. I'm happy, the players battled throughout," said Rangers coach Paul Le Guen.

"We're playing better and better, but we still have to work on our finishing. When you have four or five chances in a match you can't afford to miss them."

Le Guen's French compatriot Guy Lacombe, the embattled coach of PSG, was left fighting for his job after the 4-2 defeat to Israeli side Hapoel sent them to the foot of Group G with just a point from two games.

Salim Toama gave Hapoel a 2-0 lead inside the first six minutes before Pierre-Alain Frau and Pauleta pulled PSG level.

Walid Badir restored Hapoel's one-goal advantage on the stroke of half-time before Elyaniv Barda fired home the fourth just before the hour.

Holders Sevilla saw off Sporting Braga 2-0 to stay alive in Group C while fellow Spanish side Espanyol crushed Zulte-Waregem of Belgium 6-2 in Group F with Luis Garcia grabbing a hat-trick.



PHOTO: AFP

Newcastle's Steven Taylor celebrates his strike during their UEFA Cup encounter against Celta Vigo at St James' Park in Newcastle on Thursday.

Tiger's 7th Grand Slam



AFP, Kauai

Tiger Woods fired a six-under-par 66 here Wednesday to surge past Jim Furyk and defend his title in the one million-dollar Grand Slam of Golf.

Woods, the world's No. 1 player, captured his seventh title in eight appearances in this unofficial postseason event.

He finished with a 36-hole total of eight-under 136, two shots better than Furyk, who carded a 71.

Woods started the round three strokes off the pace but quickly applied pressure with birdies at the second and third holes. In difficult, windy conditions, Woods said that quick start was important.

"I certainly hit it better than I did yesterday. Gave myself some chances," Woods said. "I putted well

again. But more importantly, I got the three shot lead that Jim had on me down to one for the first three holes."

"The conditions being that tough, I thought that was probably the most ideal start I could have had, is to be able to pick up two shots that fast," Woods added.

Furyk maintained his slim lead as both he and Woods birdied the par-five sixth.

Winner of the British Open and PGA Championship this year, Woods, caught Furyk when he chipped in for a birdie from left of the green at the ninth -- which he called "a lot of luck".

He took the lead when Furyk missed a six-foot par putt for his first bogey of the tournament at the par-four 10th.

Amid some rain at the oceanside Poipu Bay Golf Course, Woods made a 15-foot birdie at the par-four 15th, where Furyk missed a six-

footer for birdie and fell two shots back.

Woods won 500,000 dollars. While Woods's birdie at 15 seemed to seal Furyk's fate, Woods said it was his putt to save par at the fifth that keyed his round.

"I just birdied two and three. I missed a short one there at four. I didn't want to give any shots back that soon after I just picked up two shots on Jim. I was able to knock that one in. That basically got me going."

Furyk, meanwhile, couldn't get anything going.

"I really struggled," he said. "I struggled with my ball striking quite a bit. My swing was not quite as good as I would like it to be. I scrambled well, got the ball up and down well, I putted pretty well for two days. I didn't putt nearly as well today as I did yesterday, but still got it in the hole."

"I managed to go through 36 holes only making one bogey, so I did a lot

right. But I just wasn't hitting the ball well enough and giving myself enough opportunities to make enough birdies," Furyk concluded.

US Open champion Geoff Ogilvy of Australia began the day one shot off the lead but carded a two-over 74 and finished at 142.

That was three shots better than Canadian Mike Weir, who also had a 74.

The event is supposed to feature the winners of the year's majors. But Masters champion and 2004 winner Phil Mickelson decided not to participate and was replaced by 2003 Masters champion Weir.

With Woods winning two majors, Furyk was given a berth for finishing second on the PGA Tour money list. He won his only previous appearance here in 2003 -- the year he won the US Open.



PHOTO: AFP

US superstar Tiger Woods poses with hula girls after winning the PGA Grand Slam of Golf at the Poipu Bay Golf Course in Poipu Bay in Hawaii on Wednesday.

The big showdown looms

REUTERS, London



Manchester United and Chelsea meet at Old Trafford on Sunday for a match where the symbolism, rather than the points, will count for much in the Premier League title race.

United, who dominated domestic football in the 1990s but who have been champions only once in the last five seasons, are very much back in business this term.

The familiar swagger has returned to Old Trafford, where Wayne Rooney, Louis Saha and Cristiano Ronaldo represent a formidable strike force, ably supported from midfield by the ever-green Paul Scholes.

Top of the table and three points clear of Sunday's opponents, they have also won their last three home league games, scoring seven goals without reply.

In Alex Ferguson, still firmly in control after 20 years at the club, they boast the English game's most successful manager since the dawn

of professional football in 1888.

But for Chelsea fans, United are precisely that -- history.

The Blues, backed by the wealth of their Russian billionaire owner Roman Abramovich and the astute management of Jose Mourinho, have become the new dominant force in English football.

Bidding this season for a hat-trick of league titles, having won the first two with little real difficulty, Chelsea have an impressive blend of England regulars in skipper John Terry, Ashley Cole, Frank Lampard and Joe Cole, plus a classy foreign elite.

Drogba and Ballack suffered injuries in Bremen but Drogba is expected to recover for Sunday.

He has been in exceptional form this season, with his 14-goal haul in all competitions including two hat-tricks and a candidate for goal of the season with his matchwinner against Liverpool.

Chelsea will also take heart from the fact that while Old Trafford is indeed a fortress, it is not impregnable.

Arsenal were 1-0 winners there in September, when United strug

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FIXTURES

(1500GMT kick-off unless stated)
Saturday
Aston Villa v Middlesbrough, Bolton v Arsenal (1715), Charlton v Everton (1245), Fulham v Reading, Liverpool v Manchester City, West Ham v Sheffield Utd
Sunday
Manchester Utd v Chelsea (1600), Newcastle v Portsmouth (1330), Tottenham v Wigan

Barca feeling the heat

AFP, Madrid



Injury-hit Barcelona must put aside their fears of Champions League elimination and concentrate on facing Villarreal at the Nou Camp in the Spanish League on Saturday.

Barcelona have a one-point lead over rivals Seville after eleven matches, but their exertions at home and in Europe are beginning to take their toll as Frank Rijkaard's side try to retain the titles they won last season.

Wednesday's win at Levski Sofia followed a 4-1 mauling of Mallorca last weekend, but Villarreal will look to damage Barca's title ambitions two short weeks before a daunting final Champions League group match against Germany's Werder Bremen, whom they must beat.

"We're not even thinking about getting dumped out of the competition," said striker Andres Iniesta, who scored in Mallorca and who was on target again along with Ludovic Giuly in Sofia.

The absence of Lionel Messi and Samuel Eto'o through the New Year at least means Rijkaard has to shuffle his pack, but with the likes of Iniesta and Icelandic Eidur Gudjohnsen among the goals and

with Santiago Esquerria also proving a competent force in attack Barca are coping.

"A few of the lads came back with knocks (from Sofia) and if we didn't play that well still did what was required of us so I'm optimistic," said Rijkaard.

Italian media reports suggest Rijkaard may well feel the time is ripe to move on at the end of the season and AS sports daily quoted Italian media reports as saying AC Milan could be his ultimate destination.

The 44-year-old Dutchman, who should be able to find fit-again defenders Juliano Belletti and Rafa Marquez Saturday, as well as midfielder Thiago Motta, starred in the all-powerful Rossoneri side of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Villarreal, ninth but targeting at least a UEFA Cup place, will have to revamp their system after losing Turkish forward Nihat Kahveci with

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