



Liverpool wingback John Arne Riise slides along the ground in ecstasy after scoring the winning goal against Barcelona during their knockout match of the Champions League at the Nou Camp on Wednesday.

Bad boys lift Liverpool

AFP, Barcelona



Only a few days ago, Liverpool's Craig Bellamy and John Arne Riise were battling each other but the pair joined forces to give Liverpool a memorable 2-1 win at Barcelona on Wednesday.

One goal from each man, who were involved in a training camp fracas last week, after Deco had given the current European champions the lead means that Liverpool are the overwhelming favourites to progress to this season's Champions League quarterfinals. The two teams will meet again at Anfield on March 6 in the second leg of the last 16 encounter between the last two Champions League winners.

Bellamy, whose son celebrated his 10th birthday also on Wednesday, said that he had tried to ignore all the bad publicity this week.

"I don't really read them (the newspapers) anyway," said the Welsh international.

"I take the rough with the smooth and its not the first time it has happened. Because it's me it is built up bigger than it is. It (the victory) is even more special because it is my boy's 10th birthday."

Barcelona -- whose only previous home loss to English opposition had also been to Liverpool in 1976 -- started strongly and put the pressure on their visitors from the outset.

Deco opened the scoring after 13 minutes with a glancing header to the bottom corner of the goal, just edging past the outstretched arms of Liverpool keeper Pepe Reina.

The Portuguese international's

second goal in the Champions League this season came after some outstanding work by Gianluca Zambrotta down the left flank.

The Italian 2006 World Cup winner outpaced the static Liverpool defenders before sending over an exquisite left foot cross for Deco to latch onto from just beyond the six-yard box.

Javier Saviola and Deco both had good chances to put Barca further ahead in the next three minutes as Liverpool struggled to get off the ropes after the early blow but the men from Merseyside gradually recovered their composure.

Bellamy, who was a surprise starter after his bust up with Riise, went close to equalising after 39 minutes.

The fiery Welsh left winger found the space to have a decent header on goal from a Steven Gerrard free-kick although the ball went into the side netting.

However, he made no mistake three minutes later with a superb diving header from a Steve Finnan pass, having been left unmarked by the Barcelona defence once again.

Barca goalkeeper Victor Valdes stopped the ball, although Dirk Kuyt hammered it home to make sure Liverpool were back on level terms, but Greek referee Kyros Vassaras judged that it had crossed the line and Bellamy got the credit.

"I knew it was in as I saw it cross the line, though, I thought he had saved it," said Bellamy.

Bellamy then made light of all the lurid reports of his recent behaviour by celebrating with a golf swing, a deliberately ironic and questionable gesture in light of the fact that he apparently assaulting Riise with a golf club.

Liverpool left the field at half time with a more noticeable spring in their stride than they had 45

minutes earlier.

The second half saw them much more organised at the rear, often operating with a six-man defence with their back four helped by midfielders Xabi Alonso and Mohamed Sissoko.

Barcelona looked increasingly impotent against such conservative but effective tactics, much to the frustration of their 93,000 spectators compared to just 5,000 increasing vocal Liverpool fans in the Nou Camp.

The Reds had a great chance to take the lead after 67 minutes when Valdes handled a backpass from Ludovic Giuly but Steven Gerrard's free kick from inside the area wasn't cleanly struck and Barca rode their luck.

The respite didn't last long.

Sensing that Barca were struggling at the back, Liverpool made further forays forward and Riise bagged their second goal after 74 minutes.

The Norwegian defender fired home after Kuylt had his close-range effort only partially blocked by Valdes and Rafa Marquez failed to clear the loose ball.

Bellamy admitted that the story could barely be believed.

"You can't make it up for second goal but then you couldn't make my career up," smiled Bellamy.

Riise said that it had almost been cast in the runes.

"I think it was destiny for both of us. Both me and Bellamy had a hard run up to this game. However we put this (the bust up) behind us very early on," said the Norway international.

The defeat was Barcelona's first in their Nou Camp stadium in any competition this season and their first in the Champions League since April 2003.

Terry out of Cup final

AFP, Porto

Chelsea will be without John Terry for the League Cup final against Arsenal on Sunday and possibly the rest of the season after the England captain hobbled away from the Estadio do Dragao on crutches.

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho could not offer a precise estimate of how long he would be without Terry but admitted he would be forced to use Michael Essien as a stand-in centre-back once more at the Millennium Stadium on Sunday.

Terry lasted just eight minutes of Chelsea's 1-1 Champions League draw with FC Porto before going over on his right ankle, which had been heavily strapped during Tuesday's training session at the stadium.

"He has a problem in his ankle," Mourinho said. "It is ligaments but I cannot say much."

Porto snatched the lead through Raul Meireles while Terry was receiving treatment on the touchline but Chelsea equalised almost as soon as Arjen Robben had replaced the defender, the Dutch winger setting up Andriy Shevchenko for a superbly-taken equaliser.

'Barca need a miracle'

AFP, Barcelona



'Miracle' was a word regularly used by many of the Spanish newspapers on Thursday in the wake of European champions Barcelona's shock 2-1 defeat by their predecessors Liverpool.

Liverpool, the 2005 Champions League winners, inflicted the Spanish giant's first home defeat in any competition this season and their first home defeat in Europe's top club competition for nearly four years.

"There only remains a miracle," commented the Barcelona-based sports daily Sport on its front page.

The mood in much of the Spanish media on Thursday seemed to suggest that Barcelona's interest in this competition is unlikely to extend beyond the last 16 second leg match at Anfield on March 6.

The theme was repeated by the paper's direct competitor El Mundo Deportivo which said, "Now for a miracle."

Marca, the biggest selling newspaper in Spain which is traditionally close to Barca's eternal rivals Real

Madrid, had fun at the Catalan club's expense with a picture of a grinning Liverpool coach Rafa Benitez on its front page.

"A 'madridista' humbles Barca," sneered Marca, making reference Benitez's past as a Real reserve team player and coach.

If history is a guide, then Benitez can start his preparations for the quarterfinals as Barcelona have never recovered from a 2-1 defeat at home in the first leg of a European competition.

Nevertheless, Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard tried to remain optimistic in the early hours of Thursday morning.

"We have to have a big night, everything has got to work, but there is still 90 minutes and anything can happen," said the Dutchman after arguably suffering the most psychologically damaging defeat since he arrived at Barca in 2003.

"We were not very lively. The 2-1 result is now a reality but we can still sort things out in 90 minutes," commented Barca's Spanish international Andres Iniesta.

"But we have to correct our errors and play with intensity for the entire game (at Anfield)," added their Argentine striker Javier Saviola, on a night when few Barcelona players had much to say in the wake of failure to match

Liverpool and rise to the occasion.

Whether Saviola will be playing at Anfield is another matter.

Recalled on Wednesday after the conspicuous drop in form of Icelandic striker Eidur Gudjohnsen, Saviola was a huge disappointment and failed to find the net with either of his two golden opportunities, one coming in each half.

The clamour is growing for Samuel Eto'o to return, even if the player himself admitted on Wednesday that he is still not 100 per cent after his right knee injury.

"Eto'o now is the only hope," commented Sport in an editorial on Thursday.

The three-time African Player of the Year and last season's leading scorer in the Spanish first division was in the VIP seats at the Nou Camp stadium and, dressed all in white, he was easy for the TV cameras to pick out.

He appeared to suffer just like the other 93,000 Barca fans, which dwarfed the generally good-natured 5,000 Liverpool supporters in numbers if not in noise.

Leaping out of his seat when Barca squandered some early chances, Eto'o was perhaps thinking he might have bagged them if he had been on the field.

Lille hit out at United

AFP, Paris

Lille have hit out at being forced to adopt entrenched views in the friction with Manchester United following the crowd trouble at their Champions League game which had echoes of the Hillsborough tragedy.

French riot police used tear gas when they believed an uncontrollable situation was unfolding in a stand behind one of the goals and hemmed-in supporters were coming through a gap in the perimeter fencing.

The disciplinary committee of European football's governing body UEFA will be meeting on March 22 to discuss the issue and Lille director general Xavier Thuillot said the entrenched positions of both sides was not helping the issue.

"We aren't very happy with the polarised nature in this affair," Thuillot told Thursday's edition of L'Equipe. "Clubs like Feyenoord have been strongly punished after the behaviour of their supporters and you can't only have one point of view."

"As we are being attacked, it is making us more entrenched in our views and makes us want to go as far as we can in stating our case. We

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5

Henry accepts supporting role



AFP, London

Thierry Henry insists he understands Arsene Wenger's decision to leave him out for Arsenal's League Cup final showdown with Chelsea.

Henry is used to taking centre stage on the big occasions but the Arsenal captain will be confined to the role of cheerleader when his side face the Premiership champions in Cardiff on Sunday.

It is hard to imagine any other team in Europe would opt to ignore such a formidable talent as Henry when a major trophy is at stake.

But Gunners manager Wenger is set to keep faith with the young players who have shined throughout the London club's impressive League Cup run, which means no place for Henry.

Wenger has played a team comprised largely of inexperienced rookies in the competition this season and the likes of Theo Walcott, Denilson, Jeremie Aliadiere, Armand Traore and Abou

Diaby have rewarded him by beating Everton, Liverpool and Tottenham on route to the final.

It had been suggested that Wenger may include Henry to keep his star player happy, but the France striker believes his manager is right to maintain his long-standing decision to rest senior players in the competition.

"Some people said the boss is snubbing me, but if you look at how many games I have played in the League Cup that will tell you why I am not playing on Sunday," Henry said.

"Since I'm at Arsenal, the boss has always rested players in the League Cup and even in the first rounds of the FA Cup. That is down to us. If we keep on having replays then the boss is going to have to rest players."

"If you look at my stats in the League Cup, since I'm here I've never played in it. I only played last season at home against Wigan because all the strikers were injured."

"I think I played once at Middlesbrough in my first season because I was short of games. It would have been hard if the team

was not playing well, but when you win at Everton and Liverpool and knock out Tottenham in a semifinal, whoever did play you have to say they should play in the final."

Henry has taken great delight in supporting the young Gunners from the sidelines this season and he is convinced he will be celebrating another triumph at the Millennium Stadium.

"It's a competition we don't win very often at Arsenal and it is a great competition," Henry said. "When you look at the clubs who have won it you know that teams take it seriously, even though Arsene sometimes plays the kids."

"I will be cheering. I will be there and will be in the dugout or something like that. The most important thing is to bring the trophy back for the fans."

"Anything can happen. I don't want to call them the youngsters, it's Arsenal, and in the League Cup they have the capacity to beat anyone."

"You know that winning at Everton is never an easy task and winning at Anfield is never an easy task but they did it and did it in style."

Sheva gains Porto draw

AFP, Porto



Chelsea emerged from a Champions League battle with FC Porto as favourites to reach the quarterfinals after a pulsating 1-1 draw in the first leg at the Estadio do Dragao.

But the English champions' night was marred by the sight of their captain and defensive lynchpin John Terry being stretchered off with what looked like a serious injury, four days before the League Cup final against Arsenal.

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho, who was facing the club he took to the 2004 Champions League title, admitted the Terry injury had upset the balance of the side.

"We had to change the system completely because we lost a lot of things when John Terry went off," said Mourinho.

"Michael Essien had to play central defence because we didn't have another option and as he is the heartbeat of the midfield that unbalanced us in terms of service."

"I think we scored a great goal and then we had to change everything at half-time again when Arjen Robben suffered a muscle injury and the circumstances were difficult."

"We got a draw and that is a good result."

A well-struck shot from Raul Meireles allowed a lively Porto side to claim a 12th-minute lead while Terry was receiving treatment on the touchline.

But the home side preserved their advantage for barely three minutes before a vintage piece of finishing from Andriy Shevchenko gave Chelsea the away goal that makes them favourites to progress after the second leg in a fortnight's time.

Chelsea got off to the worst possible start with Terry hopping gingerly to the touchline in the ninth minute following an innocuous-looking challenge by Lisandro Lopez, apparently unable to put any weight on his right ankle.

Things quickly got worse as Porto grabbed the lead through their left-sided midfielder Meireles.

After tenacious work by former Spurs striker Helder Postiga on the left of the box, Claude Makelele's clearing header fell nicely for Meireles in the inside left channel and he lashed a shot into the far corner with the outside of his right boot.

A goal down and with no central defender on the bench, Mourinho opted to redeploy Essien in defence and introduce Robben in what quickly looked like a tactical master-stroke.

The Dutch winger had been on the pitch for barely three minutes before he glided past a couple of challenges and played Shevchenko in behind the Porto back four on the left of the box.

From a tight angle, the Ukrainian produced a left-foot drive into the opposite corner that was a reminder of why he was once regarded as the deadliest finisher on the planet.

It was Shevchenko's 58th goal in European competition. Four more and he will equal Gerd Muller's

record.

Porto quickly worked out how to nullify the threat from Robben and Chelsea's fragility soon became apparent.

Allowed time on the ball on the edge of the area, Postiga played in Argentina's Lopez, whose attempt at a chipped finish was frustrated by a good stop from the advancing Petr Cech.

The Chelsea goalkeeper produced another fine save in the 34th minute, diving to his left to hold Ricardo Quaresma's free-kick as it hurtled towards the bottom corner after piercing the Chelsea wall.

Quaresma's trickery on the left was causing Chelsea increasing problems and Makelele became the first player to be booked after protesting too vigorously that the Porto forward had gone down theatrically under a challenge from Lassana Diarra.

Quaresma continued to be in the thick of things. After striking a superb shot onto the bar from a similar position to the one Meireles had scored from, he was hacked down from behind by Essien, who duly became Swiss referee Massimo Busacca's second booking of the night.

Mourinho sent on John Obi Mikel for the second-half, whose presence on the right helped ensure the policing of Quaresma was significantly tighter after the interval.

Again, Mourinho's tactical judgement appeared astute. Cech did not have a single save to make after the break and Chelsea

SEE PAGE 22 COL 8



Chelsea striker Andriy Shevchenko (R) evades the sliding challenge of Porto defender Pepe to score with a left foot finish during their Champions League clash at the Dragao stadium in Porto on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP