



Liverpool midfielder Steven Gerrard (R) is congratulated by striker Peter Crouch (L) after he scored the first goal in their Champions League first-leg clash against PSV Eindhoven at the Philips-Stadion on Tuesday.

L'pool thump PSV

AFP, Eindhoven



Liverpool have one foot in the semifinals of the Champions League after a 3-0 quarterfinal first leg victory over a dismal PSV Eindhoven here on Tuesday. Captain Steven Gerrard, John Arne Riise and Peter Crouch bagged the goals to silence the Philips Stadium. It was no less than Liverpool deserved against a surprisingly negative PSV, whose season is beginning to unravel before them. The Dutch league leaders have been reeled in by Ajax and AZ Alkmaar in their domestic league and need a miracle at Anfield next week to progress to the last four for the second time in three seasons. Gerrard, who was about the only impressive player for England last week in their 3-0 Euro 2008 qualifier defeat of Andorra, said that Liverpool had set out their stall perfectly. "We proved very hard to break down tonight (Tuesday)," said Gerrard. "All we need to do now is to finish it off and be professional

about it." PSV coach Ronald Koeman sprang a surprise before kick off by employing the same tactic that flummoxed Arsenal in the previous round. Koeman played Finnish defensive midfielder Mika Vayrynen as his most advanced player, a role Philip Cocu, who reverted to his holding duties against Liverpool, had occupied in the 1-0 home leg victory over the Gunners. However, what worked in stifling the free-flowing, pacy, passing style of Arsene Wenger's outfit, had little affect against the simple game-plan favoured by Rafael Benitez. PSV produced almost nothing in the first-half while Liverpool relied on the aerial threat of Crouch and the industry of Gerrard and Dirk Kuyt to fashion the odd opening. It was centre-back Jamie Carragher, making his 50th Champions League appearance and breaking the Liverpool record of Phil Neal, who had the first sight of goal, but his header from Gerrard's corner was brilliantly tipped away by Brazilian goalkeeper Gomes. On 23 minutes, PSV did carve Liverpool open and Jan

Kromkamp, who plied his trade at Anfield for eight months in 2006, sent over a teasing cross but Vayrynen's left foot volley bounced into the ground, off Carragher and over the bar. It was the moment that PSV's lack of an out and out striker - such as former Barcelona hitman Patrick Kluivert, who was warning the bench - became abundantly apparent. Four minutes later Liverpool broke the deadlock. Javier Mascherano - deemed not good enough even for struggling West Ham's bench but now starting in a Champions League quarterfinal at the heart of Liverpool's midfield - fed the overlapping Steve Finnan down the right and he sent a sumptuous cross into the box. Gerrard arrived late and climbing above Kuyt buried his header with aplomb. Koeman's tactical acumen came under further scrutiny after the break as he replaced his flying Peruvian winger Jefferson Farfan with Chinese full-back Sun Xiang. After two lucky escapes, PSV shot themselves in the foot on 49 minutes when a wayward clearance from Belgian centre-back

Timmy Simons fell to Riise 25 yards out. The Norwegian needed no second invitation to dispatch a dipping volley into the top corner of the net. Finally Koeman opted to pull on a striker and he replaced Ecuador midfielder Edison Mendez with Kluivert, a winner of this competition with Ajax back in 1995. Liverpool could have scored another on 58 minutes when Gomes spilled Kuyt's cross, but Riise failed to turn in the rebound with his back to goal. The third goal arrived in the 63rd minute. Crouch rose above a PSV defender to head home Finnan's cross from the right and take his tally to four in his last two matches. "I think we probably played better than we expected," said the England striker. "We are perhaps peaking at the right time. It is a fantastic result and to score three goals away from home speaks for itself," he added. PSV started to pour forward and take risks after that but it proved too little too late. The only black spot for Liverpool was an apparent snapped Achilles to Brazilian full-back Fabio Aurelio 17 minutes from time.

Former Togo captain dies

AFP, Lome

Former Togolese international captain Salou Tadjou has died at the age of 33 years following a long illness, his family said Wednesday. Tadjou, who played in defence, competed with several local clubs before continuing his professional career with Esperance in Tunisia and Swiss first division club Servette. He played Togo's first match in combined qualifiers for the 2006 African Nations Cup and the 2006 World Cup against Zambia, but was not selected for the squad who reached the finals in Germany last year.

Domenech wants to keep up motivation

AFP, Paris

France coach Raymond Domenech voiced concern Wednesday over how to maintain motivation among Lyon's international players in the quiet spell between the end of the French league and the next batch of Euro 2008 qualifiers. Domenech's last 23-man squad contained nine members of the Lyon side that is all but assured of capturing a sixth successive league title. And the France manager is taking steps to avoid any lack of motivation between winning the championship and France's Euro 2008 ties against Ukraine on June 2 and Georgia four days later.

"They're going to be crowned champions very quickly and after that there's a month and a half spell without any ambition. "It's not easy to keep the players motivated for such a long time - I'm worried about the risk of lack of ambition. "It's hard to tell them that they have to remain motivated for a month and a half while the rest are taking holidays." He added: "The advantage at Lyon is that we have good relations with all the technical staff. We'll try to set up a programme to prepare them. "I'm going to be going down there to discuss it with them shortly." France are lying second in Group B on the same number of points as surprise group leaders Scotland.

Kanoute spared op

AFP, Seville

Sevilla medical staff hope that the club's star striker Fredi Kanoute can survive until the end of the season without an operation on his persistent groin problem, the club said here on Wednesday. Kanoute, the Spanish first division's leading scorer with 19 goals, has struggled to find his top form in recent games and has been rested where possible in a bid to ease or help cure the mild strain. "After studying all the parameters of this case, we've concluded that the treatment Kanoute is currently undergoing will permit him to finish the season without having to be operated upon," said Sevilla club doctor Adolfo Munoz. Munoz did not comment on whether he believes the French-born Malian international will have to undergo surgery in the summer. Kanoute's groin problems have been compounded by the fact that Sevilla are still contesting three titles and they need his prowess in front of goal. Sevilla are currently second in the Spanish first division, two points behind leaders Barcelona. They have also reached the semifinals of the Spanish Cup and face English Premiership side Tottenham Hotspur in a UEFA Cup quarterfinal first leg tie on Thursday.

Frings Juve bound?

AFP, Berlin

Werder Bremen's German international midfielder Torsten Frings revealed Wednesday that he is considering a move to Italian outfit Juventus. "Juve want me at all costs. They don't want me to be just another midfielder but 'the' playmaker," the 30-year-old Frings told the daily Bild. "I'm thinking a lot about this idea." Werder Bremen sporting director Klaus Allofs said he was surprised by the news. "We're not going to put ourselves under pressure. If Torsten no longer wants to play for Werder I'm not going to force him," said Allofs. "We have in the past always succeeded in finding new talent. We're not dependant on one player, Werder is more important than any player." Juventus are on course for promotion to the Serie A after being demoted last summer and given a nine-point handicap for their role in the Italian match-fixing scandal. Capped 66 times for Germany, Frings signed from Bayern Munich in 2005 and is under contract until 2009. He played for Borussia Dortmund from 2002-2004. He is not the only Bremen player considering his options with striker Miroslav Klose, whose contract runs until 2008, yet to accept his new deal. Werder, who achieved the Bundesliga and Cup double in 2004, are currently second in the league two points behind leaders Schalke 04.

Spurs look for solace

AFP, Paris



Spurs travel to the Spanish city on the back of losing to Chelsea in an FA Cup quarterfinal replay - they had led the Premiership champions 3-1 in the first match - and to bitter north London rivals Arsenal in the League Cup semifinals. Spurs - who have won the trophy twice - are the only remaining British side left in the competition while Spain have three teams remaining, Germany two and Portugal and The Netherlands one each. The Premiership club's in-form Bulgarian international striker Dimitar Berbatov believes that his side can pull off a result against Sevilla, who are bidding to become the first side since Real Madrid in 1986 to retain the trophy. "My record in the UEFA Cup is good and hopefully I can continue that because we want to go all the

way to the final," said Berbatov, who has scored seven times in six UEFA Cup matches this term. "It will be difficult in Spain on Thursday because Sevilla are a good team and play very good technical football. "But if we can take our chances and then score a goal or two there it will be very good for us. "That will be difficult but I am an optimist and I hope we can do that," added the 26-year-old, who would be suspended for the second leg were he to be booked on Thursday. Should Spurs come through Berbatov could well face Bayer Leverkusen, the club where he made his name, as the former Champions League finalists and 1988 winners of the UEFA Cup face unheralded Spanish outfit Osasuna in their quarterfinal. Ironically one of the greatest threats to Osasuna may well come from Leverkusen's highly-gifted wingback Gonzalo Castro, who despite both parents being Spanish

FIXTURES	
(Kick off times in GMT)	
Bayer Leverkusen (GER) v Osasuna (ESP) (1700), AZ Alkmaar (NED) v Werder Bremen (GER) (1845), FC Sevilla (ESP) v Tottenham (ENG) (1845), Espanyol (ESP) v Benfica (POR) (1845)	

Koeman admits defeat

AFP, Eindhoven



PSV boss Ronald Koeman said he would have to come from another planet to believe his side could still progress to the Champions League semifinals following a 3-0 home defeat to Liverpool. Koeman's injury-hit side could not reproduce the controlled performance that saw them eliminate Arsenal in the previous round as they crashed spectacularly in the Champions League quarterfinal first leg at the Philips Stadium on Tuesday night. Goals from Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard, Norwegian John Arne Riise and lanky striker Peter Crouch eased the 2005 champions to a convincing victory that firmly planted one foot in the next round of the competi-

tion. "I don't think it's realistic to think we can win it over there," admitted Koeman. "If I could make the players believe they can make it to the next round then I don't belong on this planet." Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez was a little more guarded, although it was clear that he too believes the tie is effectively over and he can start making preparations for an eventual semi-final against either Chelsea or Valencia. "We knew what to do and that was the key for me. We knew they had (injury) problems and we needed to do the right things," said Benitez. "We made the most of their mistakes and to score three goals and keep a clean sheet is almost perfect. "But we must be careful because we said before the match that there is no room for complacency." Liverpool had made that mistake a



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona president Joan Laporta (R) and Al-Ahly club president Hasan Hamdy pose for a photograph after a press conference in Cairo on Tuesday after setting a date for a friendly encounter between the sides.

Milan remain upbeat

AFP, Milan



AC Milan are confident they can still reach the last four of the Champions League, despite conceding two away goals in Tuesday's quarterfinal, first leg draw at home to Bayern Munich. Bayern have the upper hand in the tie after Daniel Van Buyten's goal in the third minute of stoppage time - his second of the night - secured a precious 2-2 draw for the German visitors. Milan need a victory or a higher-scoring draw in Munich next week, and Carlo Ancelotti believes the six-time European champions are still very much in the tie. "We certainly could have done better tonight and we conceded two soft goals," said the Milan coach who will be without Alberto Gilardino for the

second leg after the striker picked up a yellow card. "But overall I thought we deserved to win. The tie is not over. We have to go there and win and that's not beyond us." Marek Jankulovski was equally upbeat about Milan's chances. "It's not a positive result, but we have it in us to win in Munich," said the left-sided Czech midfielder. Bayern handler Ottmar Hitzfeld was ecstatic with his side's performance. "We played brilliantly for 70 minutes in the manner we controlled Milan," said the veteran coach, whose return to the club after Felix Magath was sacked earlier this season has heralded a resurgence in their form. However, he said that the second leg would be a tough examination. "Milan will be tougher than Real Madrid (their opponents in the last round) because they are more solid defensively and attack more intelli-

gently." Bayern striker Roy Makaay said his team could not take anything for granted. "We know that Milan are very dangerous away from home, and it would be a mistake to think that the job is already done," said the Dutchman. Bayern's result was slightly tempered by the news that French international defender Willy Sagnol - a member of their 2001 Champions League winning side - had suffered a right knee injury that is according to Hitzfeld set to end his season. AC Milan had appeared to be on their way to a controversial win when Kaka, his Brazil international teammate but Russian referee Yuri Baskakov pointed straight to the spot.

However justice was served when Belgian defender Van Buyten popped up right at the death to capitalise on some slack Milan defending and Bayern left the San Siro with two vital away goals. Milan only had a rare headed goal from Andrea Pirlo to show for a first half of intense pressure that should have yielded more for the six-time European champions. Bayern made the hosts pay for their profligacy by equalising in the 78th minute, Van Buyten prodding home from close range after Milan had failed to deal with Hasan Salihamidzic's cross. Bayern host the second leg in Munich on April 11, and the winner will play either Roma or Manchester United in the semifinals.



PHOTO: AFP

A combo of pictures show AS Roma star Francesco Totti miming a pregnancy during a training session in Trigoria. Totti's wife Illyria Blasi is pregnant with their second child.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

34 Branch

35 Rev the engine

4 Nerdy sort

8 Morass

12 Yuletide beverage

13 Plankton component

14 Radius' neighbor

15 Puccini opera

17 List-end-ing abbr.

18 "Tristram Shandy" author

19 "Undeniably"

21 "— the fields we go"

22 Pipe-bowl residue

26 Friars' tribute

29 Samson subject

30 Dinner for Dobbin

31 "Grapes of Wrath" type

32 Legume holder

33 Stupely

DOWN

1 Picnic troop

2 Joint-inflammation

3 Shrek, e.g.

4 Fish-eating seabird

5 Doyen

6 Id

7 Chirping grass-hopper

8 Search

9 Last (Abbr.)

10 Literary collection

11 Cowboy's sweetie

16 Got up

20 A billion years

23 Type of Oriental cuisine

24 Hang out in the hammock

25 Black — Susans

26 Kerouac's place

27 Gumbo ingredient

28 Intentions

29 Bart, to Homer

32 Shunners of the colloquial, maybe

33 Wood nymph

35 Jewel

36 Rug

38 Houdini or Truman

39 Muffler

42 Expansive

43 Arthur of tennis

44 Biblical pronoun

45 Matter-horn, for one

46 Half of XIV

47 Nosh

49 Privy

SERA MEWL ROD

ERAS AREA TRA

TOP SECRET GEL

ASTUTIE TAOHE

MA CHEST

RILE POT SNAP

PIE END OGE

MITZ LEE BWAP

DEBRA STAINS

EVA BOTTOMSUP

MIN LIND ELBA

TLK ELAN NEST

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

12 13 14

15 16 17

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

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CRYPTOQUIP

KUQD ARSHA AXLJB P FRQL

JUHDEL UBOUBYBWPX, OQROPQ

SHEUJ LBX UQ CQARS QL

B KHP PX - DHPX CHPPX .

Yesterday's Cryptquip: DOCUMENTARY FILM CONCERNING TREES AND SHRUBBERY WITH GRAND FOLIAGE: "IT'S A WONDERFUL LEAF"

Today's Cryptquip Clue: O equals P