



PHOTO: AFP
Espanyol midfielder Luis Garcia (top) celebrates with teammates after striker Walter Pandiani (bottom) scored against Benfica in their UEFA Cup quarterfinal match at the Olympic Stadium in Barcelona on Thursday.

English fans cause more trouble

AFP, Seville



Lurid newspaper headlines in Britain on Friday, after the UEFA Cup match between Sevilla and Tottenham Hotspur, suggested that English football fans had disgraced themselves again.

However, the analysis of

Thursday's incidents in Spain which came 24 hours after 13 Manchester United fans were taken to hospital after fighting between rival fans and police at Roma's Olympic stadium in Italy, was rather different.

The words mayhem and

madness proliferated many of the British reports on Friday.

By contrast in Spain, what little

mention there was of incidents of

crowd violence during the 2-1 win by

the local side and UEFA Cup holders

over the visitors from London was

confined to a few paragraphs on the

inside pages.

The behaviour of the English

supporters was in general fine

except for a group of around 200

violent ones who, from the start of

the game, started fighting between

themselves and then afterwards

with the police," commented

Spanish sports daily As. Pictures of

the fighting, which started about 10

minutes into the game, and other

Spanish media accounts, suggest

that only between 20 to 30

Tottenham fans were actually

involved with the group throwing

seats and stones at the police.

Local police said that one of their

officers had been slightly hurt, with a

blow to the back and a slight head

wound.

Sevilla football club themselves

said that six Spurs fans had been

treated at the ground with three of

them taken to hospital for further

treatment.

Police also added that there had

been no arrests made before or

during the football match on

Thursday.

"The behaviour of the Tottenham

fans outside the stadium was good.

What happened inside the Sanchez

Pizjuan was sad, the police had to

defend themselves," said a Sevilla

vice-president Jose Castro.

With an estimated 4,400 Spurs

fans descending on Sevilla on one of

the city's main festival days, Holy

Thursday, and thanks to the hard-line

attitude of UEFA in refusing to

move the fixture, problems had been

envisioned.

However, the nightmare scenario

failed to emerge due to visible policing

and the common sense from the

vast majority of supporters from both

sides.

"A better atmosphere was almost

impossible to imagine before the

game.

Thousands of Spurs fans mingling

regularly with many Sevilla

fans, with the swapping of scarves

and other items," reflected one eye-witness account in the Spanish

sports daily Marca.

There was only one negative

note before the game, when some

Spurs fans dropped or smashed

some glasses in a road near the

stadium and batons were drawn by

the police.

"Statistically something clumsy is

going to happen between 4,000

people... a few blows, and then peace," added Marca, perhaps making a little too light of the incident.

Football's European governing

body UEFA have already promised

an investigation into the clashes

inside the stadium.

"Any incidents of crowd trouble in

the Sevilla against Tottenham match

will be investigated by UEFA," said

UEFA communications director

William Gaillard, who was at the

match.

Tottenham Hotspur released a

statement early on Thursday morning.

"The club will be working with

the appropriate authorities to ascertain

the events of this evening in

Seville."

"Our initial reports suggest there

was no fan-to-fan fighting at any

stage of the proceedings. As such

we are seeking explanations as to

why the police reacted in the way

they did with our fans."

Tottenham Hotspur supporters

have enjoyed an exemplary reputation

across Europe this season

which is why the events are unpreceded.

We will be co-operating

fully with UEFA, the British Embassy

and the Spanish authorities to

understand why this has happened.

"British Police, the club's security

officials, and club stewards - supported by British Embassy officials - will also be providing the Spanish

authorities and UEFA with full statements

from their first-hand experience

of what happened tonight," said the London side.

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