

Torres in, Bojan out

AFP, Madrid

Liverpool striker Fernando Torres was on Friday named in the Spanish squad for World Cup qualifiers against Estonia on October 11 and Belgium four days later.

Torres' return to Vicente del Bosque's squad sees Barcelona youngster Bojan Krkic relegated to the under-21 squad.

Spain top Group 5 with maximum points after beating Bosnia-Herzegovina 1-0 and Armenia 4-0, games Torres missed with a torn hamstring.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Iker Casillas (Real Madrid), Jose Reina (Liverpool/ENG)
Defenders: Raul Albiol (Valencia), Alvaro Arbeloa (Liverpool/ENG), Joan Capdevila (Villarreal), Juanito (Real Betis), Carlos Marchena (Valencia), Fernando Navarro (Sevilla), Carles Puyol (Barcelona), Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)

Midfielders: Xabi Alonso (Liverpool/ENG), Diego Capel (Sevilla), Santiago Cazorla (Villarreal), Marcos Senna (Villarreal), Cesc Fabregas (Arsenal/ENG), Xavi Hernandez (Barcelona), Andres Iniesta (Barcelona), Andoni Iraola (Athletic Bilbao)
Strikers: Fernando Torres (Liverpool/ENG), David Villa (Valencia), Daniel Guiza (Fenerbahce/TUR)



Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov (2nd from L) scores his second goal against Aalborg from a spectacular volley during their Champions League encounter in Aalborg on Tuesday. New signing Berbatov scored his first goals for United in the match.

PHOTO: AFP

Rafa dismisses City upstarts

AFP, Manchester

Rafael Benitez has warned Manchester City that their new billing as the world's richest football club will not guarantee success for manager Mark Hughes at Eastlands.

Liverpool manager Benitez takes his team to City on Sunday for a Premier League encounter against the club tipped by many to break-up the established 'Big Four' of Manchester United, Chelsea, Arsenal and Liverpool on the back of last month's 210-million-pound takeover by the Abu Dhabi United Group (ADUG).

Hughes is expected to spend big again in the January transfer window in an effort to inject more quality into

his squad, but Benitez insists that money alone will not smooth City's path to glory -- especially when up against clubs with the history and tradition of Liverpool, United and Arsenal.

Benitez said: "In January we will see what will happen, but it's not easy to improve a squad. Chelsea were spending money for years before they could win the title, so it's not easy."

"You also have to take into consideration the level of the other teams. If you are talking about money, then Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal have been spending big money on players for a long time."

"Money can help to sign the best players. You need balance in the squad, though, and that is the key if you want to win trophies."

Robinho has made an instant

impact since arriving in England from Real Madrid, scoring a memorable free-kick on his City debut against Chelsea, and Benitez admits that Hughes has signed a top quality player in the Brazilian.

He said: "We know he's a really good player and will always be a threat. He played well for Real Madrid last season and that is the reason why City have decided to sign him."

"He's a top class player and he has quality, so he can play well in England."

Initial claims by those linked to ADUG, suggesting that City would challenge for the Champions League this season, have since been toned down by Hughes.

And the former Blackburn manager admits that the reality for City is that they must still grow as a club and

as a team before emerging as top four contenders.

He said: "The top four is a big ask for us because they are good sides who reside there at the moment."

"There were statements made when the takeover first happened, but it's assured and calm and more realistic now."

"We are only five games further down the line (since the 3-1 defeat by Chelsea) so it will be big ask for us again to get a result against Liverpool because they are at the top of their form at the moment."

"It would help us if we won, but maybe expectations will start to run away with themselves again, so we have to temper everything."

"We're a young team and don't have the consistency of performance yet that we'll need to get to be viewed as a top four team."

Vieira, Ribery recalled

AFP, Paris

Coach Raymond Domenech has recalled both Patrick Vieira and Franck Ribery to the French squad for the World Cup qualifier against Romania in Bucharest on October 11.

Both players missed France's opening two qualifiers - a 1-3 loss to Austria in Vienna and a 2-1 win over Serbia in Paris - which resulted in growing calls for Domenech to be axed.

Former skipper Vieira was in the French squad that contested the Euro 2008 finals in Austria and Switzerland during the summer but a thigh strain kept him on the sidelines. He returned to action with Inter Milan on September 13.

Ribery sustained an ankle injury in the 0-2 Euro loss to Italy and only just made his comeback with Bayern Munich last week.

Also called back up was striker Florent Sinama-Pongolle, who has been in scoring form for new club Atletico Madrid in Spain.

Out injured were midfielders Sydney Govou and Samir Nasri and Vieira's return meant there was no place in the squad for former Arsenal player Mathieu Flamini.

French squad take on Romania in Bucharest in a World Cup qualifier on October 11 and Tunisia in a friendly three days later.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Steve Mandanda (Marseille), Hugo Lloris (Lyon)
Defenders: Eric Abidal (Barcelona/ESP), Bacary Sagna (Arsenal/ENG), William Gallas (Arsenal/ENG), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), Philippe Mexes (AS Rome/ITA), Gael Clichy (Arsenal/ENG), Sebastien Squillaci (FC Sevilla/ESP), Rod Fanni (Rennes)
Midfielders: Patrick Vieira (Inter Milan/ITA), Lassana Diarra (Portsmouth/ENG), Jeremy Toulalan (Lyon), Florent Malouda (Chelsea/ENG), Alou Diarra (Bordeaux), Yoann Gourcuff (Bordeaux), Franck Ribery (Bayern Munich/GER), Hatem Ben Arfa (Marseille)
Forwards: Thierry Henry (Barcelona/ESP), Nicolas Anelka (Chelsea/ENG), Karim Benzema (Lyon), Florent Sinama-Pongolle (Atletico Madrid/ESP)

Poland rejects FIFA ultimatum

AFP, Warsaw

Poland's Sports Ministry demanded on Friday that FIFA drop its Monday deadline for the reinstatement of the suspended national football federation (PZPN) in a row which could see Poland serve a two-match World Cup ban.

The talks between the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and the Polish Football Union will not be resumed until FIFA retracts its ultimatum, a senior Polish sports ministry official Adam Giersz said Friday, quoted by the Polish PAP news agency.

Giersz spoke after the latest in a string of inconclusive crisis talks Friday between sports ministry officials and the deposed PZPN board.

The world football governing body FIFA on Wednesday gave Poland until Monday midday to reinstate PZPN officials ousted by a Polish Olympic committee arbitration court or face Poland being banned from 2010 World Cup qualifiers scheduled for October 11 and 15.

FIFA told AFP Friday night it had not changed its position and the Monday noon deadline remained in effect.

Van der Sar to the rescue

AFP, The Hague

Manchester United goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar has temporarily come out of international retirement to help the Netherlands in World Cup qualifiers against Iceland and Norway.

Coach Bert van Marwijk named the 37-year-old Van der Sar in his 22-man squad after Maarten Stekelenburg sustained a shoulder injury, with Henk Timmer also uncertain with a groin injury.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Edwin van der Sar (Manchester United/ENG), Henk Timmer (Feyenoord), Michel Vorm (FC Utrecht)
Defenders: Dirk Marcellis (PSV), John Heitinga (Atletico Madrid/ESP), Joris Mathijsen (Hamburg/GER), Andre Ojor (Blackburn/ENG), Giovanni van Bronckhorst (Feyenoord), Tim de Cler (Feyenoord)
Midfielders: Ibrahim Afellay (PSV), Orlando Engelaar (Schalke 04/GER), Wesley Sneijder (Real Madrid/ESP), Nigel de Jong (Hamburg/GER), Mark van Bommel (Bayern Munich/GER), Demy de Zeeuw (AZ Alkmaar), Rafael van der Vaart (Real Madrid/ESP)
Strikers: Robin van Persie (Arsenal/ENG), Arjen Robben (Real Madrid/ESP), Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Ajax), Dirk Kuijt (Liverpool/ENG), Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (Celtic/SCO), Ryan Babel (Liverpool/ENG)

Klinsmann has no regrets

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich coach Jurgen Klinsmann insists he has no regrets about becoming boss of the German giants despite the defending Bundesliga champions making their worst league start in 31 years.

Bayern have won only two of their six league games so far this season and their defence was brutally exposed as title rivals Werder Bremen destroyed them 5-2 at Munich's Allianz Arena last month.

"I take enormous pleasure doing this job," Klinsmann told the Suddeutsche Zeitung. "We have started an exciting phase of training which requires much investment from the players."

"The results are important, but the overall picture is even more important."

Mallorca go English

Football

INTERNET, undated

The purchase of Spanish Liga club Mallorca by British businessman Paul Davidson has raised eyebrows across Spain - and produced mixed feelings.

Late on Thursday night Davidson reached an agreement with Mallorca president Vicente Grande to buy 90 per cent of the club's shares, for 38 million euros (52.87 million dollars).

It seems that Davidson wants Grande to continue as club president, on a salary basis.

Grande has been club president since 2005, and has given Mallorca a certain stability, with wily coach Gregorio Manzano keeping the team well above the danger zone.

The islanders finished ninth last season and are currently in seventh place in the table.

Davidson - about whom little is known - appears determined to keep a low profile, and to treat Mallorca as an investment rather than an obsession or a plaything.

Mallorca thus become the first Liga club to be owned and con-

trolled by a foreigner, a fact which has caused some unease in Spain.

Concern was expressed on Radio Marca on Friday morning that Davidson might be just the first of a wave of foreign millionaires eager to buy up Liga clubs.

Rival radio station Cadena SER, for its part, asked the question whether it would be beneficial for La Liga to "go down the Premier League road" - ie many clubs being taken over by wealthy foreigners.

According to AS on Friday, former Newcastle United chairman Freddy Shepherd was also interested in buying Mallorca, but was only prepared to spend 10 million euros on the club.

The Abu Dhabi United Group, who recently completed the takeover of Manchester City, were also considering making a bid, according to media reports, as was Austrian businessman Dietrich Mateschitz.

Two other Liga clubs which might be ripe for take over are Betis and Deportivo Coruna, who dramatically eliminated Brann Bergen from the UEFA Cup on Thursday.

Veteran owner Manuel Ruiz de Lopera is keen to sell his Betis

shares, the same as Deportivo counterpart Augusto Lendoiro, the man who transformed the Coruna club from second division no-hopers to Champions League aristocrats.

The only previous example of a foreign millionaire buying into La Liga is that of Dimitri Piterman, the larger-than-life Ukrainian-American magnate.

Piterman controversially tried to take over Racing Santander in 2003, only to be ignominiously thrown out a year later. He then switched his attention to second division Alaves, but was driven out last year after massive fans' protests against him.

Piterman never managed to gain complete control over Santander and Alaves, to the relief of the fans.

Davidson will surely be more sophisticated and sensitive than Piterman, who infuriated players and coaches by forcing himself into the dressing-room - then insisted on sitting on the bench throughout the matches, shouting out banal instructions in broken Spanish.

Ballack, Frings back

Football

AFP, Stuttgart

Captain Michael Ballack and veteran midfielder Torsten Frings are back in Germany coach Joachim Loew's squad named Friday for the World Cup qualifiers against Russia and Wales.

Chelsea midfielder Ballack and Werder Bremen's Frings both missed Germany's opening qualifiers against Liechtenstein and Finland last month.

Frings broke his nose playing basketball while Ballack withdrew with a foot injury, but both are back as Germany look to consolidate their place at the top of Group Four having beaten Liechtenstein 6-0 and drawn 3-3 in Helsinki.

Germany play Russia in Dortmund on Saturday October 11 and Wales in Muenchengladbach on October 15.

Five players have been brought back by Loew including goalkeeper Rene Adler, defender Arne Friedrich as well as midfielders Ballack, Frings and Schalke 04's Jermaine Jones.

Bayern Leverkusen striker Christoph Metzelder who has struggled to make the Spanish

in six games.

"We expect big things of Patrick Helmes in the future," said Loew.

"He has proved what potential he has and has been impressive for his club in recent weeks."

"Likewise Jermaine is physically very strong at present and we have paid close attention to him."

As well as Leverkusen's Adler and Hannover's Robert Enke, Loew has named Werder Bremen goalkeeper Tim Wiese.

There is no place in the squad



MICHAEL BALLACK

for Real Madrid defender Christoph Metzelder who has struggled to make the Spanish giant's first-team this season.

MU make light work

Cluj frustrate Chelsea

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AGENCIES, undated

Dimitar Berbatov's first two goals for Manchester United helped secure a 3-0 win over Aalborg in Champions League Group E on Tuesday, while Juventus had to fight back for a 2-2 draw at BATE Borisov in Group H.

The Bulgarian striker pounced twice in the second half after Wayne Rooney had put the holders ahead in the 22nd minute to give United their first win of the campaign.

Villarreal are level at the top of the group with United on four points after a 1-0 win at home to Celtic with a second half goal from midfielder Marcos Senna. Celtic and Aalborg have a point apiece.

Juventus had to come from two goals down in Minsk with BATE holding on for their first-ever Champions League point. Vincenzo Iaquinta scored both Juve goals after the Belarus side went two up in 23 minutes through Sergei Kryvets and Igor Stasevich.

In the other Group H match, Real Madrid kept their 100 per cent record intact with a 2-1 win at UEFA Cup holders Zenit St Petersburg. Ruud van Nistelrooy netting the 31st-minute winner.

Real, who went ahead with a fourth-minute own goal by Tomas Hubocan before Portugal's Danny Alves equalised, lead the group on six points after two games. Juventus are second with four points, BATE have one and Zenit none.

Arsenal crushed Porto 4-0 in Group G with a double strike from Robin Van Persie and goals in each half from Emmanuel Adebayor, his second a penalty. The other group match between Fenerbahce and Dynamo Kiev ended scoreless.

"I expect us to win the group from here," Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger told reporters.

Arsenal have four points from

two games, one point more than Porto. Dynamo have two points and Fenerbahce one.

Bayern Munich top Group F despite being held 1-1 at home by Olympique Lyon. The French side took the lead when Bayern's Martin Demichelis headed into his own net in the 25th minute, but the German champions claimed a crucial point when Ze Roberto headed home after the break.

Bayern have four points with Lyon and Fiorentina, held 0-0 at home by Steaua Bucharest, two points behind. The Romanians have one point.

On Wednesday, a Sergio Aguero-inspired Atletico Madrid kept pace with Liverpool at the top of Champions League Group D thanks to a 2-1 win over Marseille in the Spanish capital tonight.

Aguero made it three goals in two games to put Atletico ahead, although Mamadou Niang brought the French club level before Raul Garcia struck the winner.

The Spaniards join Liverpool, 3-

1 victors over PSV Eindhoven, at the top of the pool on a perfect six points.

In Group A, Roma got their campaign up and running as they came from behind to beat Laurent Blanc's 10-man Bordeaux 3-1 in France.

Yoann Gourcuff put the hosts ahead but Carlos Henrique was then red-carded for elbowing at a free-kick.

A Mirko Vucinic header plus two goals from Julio Baptista, including a free-kick, after the break sealed a vital three points for the Italians after their opening home defeat to CFR Cluj.

The Romanians drew 0-0 with Chelsea, leaving the pair top of the pile on four points.

Barcelona, champions in 2006, needed a 94th-minute strike from Lionel Messi to beat unlucky Shakhtar Donetsk 2-1 in Group C.

Both teams had won their opening games but a fine finish by Ilinho put the Ukrainians in pole position before the Argentina star's late show - he equalised with three minutes remaining then struck deep into injury-time.

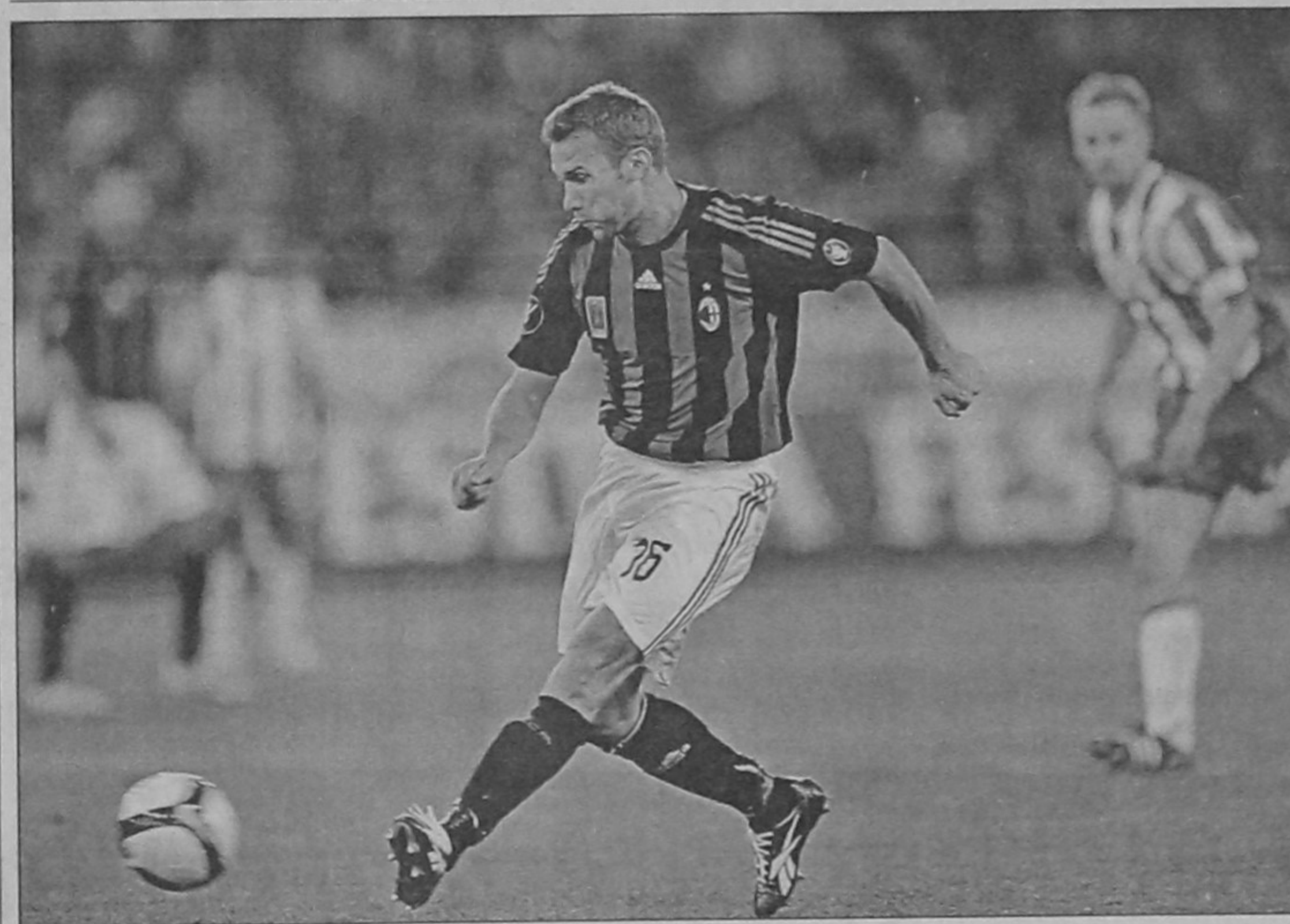
Goals from Leandro Romagnoli and Derlei handed Sporting Lisbon a 2-0 win over Basle in Portugal.

In Group B, Jose Mourinho's Inter Milan took the lead but were eventually pinned back by Werder Bremen, who claimed a 1-1 draw at the San Siro.

Maicon's sweetly chipped first-half finish put the Italians ahead before former Chelsea striker Claudio Pizarro tapped in for the equaliser.

Cypriots Anorthosis Famagusta claimed a famous 3-1 victory over Greek rivals Panathinaikos.

A Josu Sarriegi own goal and Sinisa Dobrasinovic effort gave the islanders a comfortable lead, and although Dimitris Salpingidis pulled one back from the spot, Hawar Mulla Mohammed clinched the win to continue his club's promising start.



Milan striker Andrei Shevchenko (C) scores the all-important goal against FC Zurich during their UEFA Cup first round tie in Zurich on Thursday. This was Shevchenko's first goal for Milan after his return to the club.

Everton fall by wayside

UEFA CUP

INTERNET, undated

Premier League side Everton were knocked out of the UEFA Cup on Thursday after going down to Standard Liege 2-1 to go out 4-3 on aggregate while a draw was enough to seal Aston Villa's place in the group stages.

Axel Witsel opened the scoring for the Belgian league leaders before Phil Jagielka levelled matters for Everton in the second half.

However, a penalty from Milan Jovanovic sealed the win for Liege to complete a miserable week for coach David Moyes, whose side lost to city rivals Liverpool at the weekend.

Villa entered their tie against Litex Lovech holding a comfortable 3-1 lead from the first leg and went further ahead on 27 minutes through Marlon Harewood. Wilfried Ndore equalized for Lovech from the penalty spot but Martin O'Neill easily held on to progress 4-2 on aggregate.

There was also success for struggling Premier League side Tottenham Hotspur who were held to a 1-1 draw at Wisla Krakow, but went through 3-2 on aggregate.

Tottenham went ahead through an own goal scored by Arkadiusz Glowacki on the hour. The home side then threw caution to the wind and were rewarded for their efforts seven minutes from time when Pavel Brozek levelled matters.

They then pushed forward even more in search of a second goal that would take them into extra time, but Spurs keeper Heurelho Gomes pulled off a number of classy saves to deny the home side.

It was also a good night for German clubs as VfB Stuttgart, VfL Wolfsburg, SV Hamburg and Schalke

04 also went through to join Hertha Berlin, who already qualified for the next round on Tuesday.

Stuttgart, who won the first leg against Cherno More Varna 2-1, looked on their way out at home as the Bulgarian side were leading 2-0 with seven minutes to go, but Thomas Hitzlsperger levelled the tie.

In injury time Mario Gomez found an equalizer for Stuttgart to send the team through 4-3 on aggregate.

SV Hamburg, who managed no better than a goalless draw against Unirea Urziceni at home, won 2-0 in Romania on the night to advance 2-0 on aggregate.

Schalke 04 had already done all the hard-work in Cyprus in the first leg winning 4-1 against APOEL Nicosia were held to a 1-1 draw at home but went through 5-2 on aggregate.

Wolfsburg were held to a 1-1 draw at Rapid Bucharest to advance 2-1 on aggregate.

Wolfsburg had the ideal start in Romania taking the lead in the 15th minute through Grafite, giving the home side a tough task of having to score three goals to go through.

Although Vasile Maftei equalized in the 70th minute, it was too late to allow the home side back into the game.

Borussia Dortmund pulled back a two-goal deficit against Italian side Udinese through two goals from Tamas Hajnal but ended up crashing out 4-3 on penalties.

Deportivo La Coruna needed penalties to overcome Norwegian side Brann Bergen while Sevilla eased into the group stages with a 2-0 victory to seal a 4-0 aggregate win.

Also through on the night were Sampdoria, who won 2-1 at Kaunas to advance 7-1 on aggregate, Lech Poznan, who needed extra time to dispose of Austria Vienna 5-4 on

aggregate after a 4-2 victory.

Benfica beat Napoli 2-0 to go through 4-3 on aggregate while Valencia celebrated a 2-1 win to progress 3-1 on aggregate against Maritimo Funchal.

Two extra-time goals from Peter Crouch ensured English FA Cup winners Portsmouth's place in the Group phase, the English striker's goal ensuring Harry Redknapp's side progress 4-2 on aggregate after drawing 2-2 on the night.

Cahill ban disappoints Moyes

AFP, Liverpool

Everton manager David Moyes said on Friday he was disappointed by the Football Association's decision to uphold Australian international Tim Cahill's three-match suspension.

Cahill was sent-off for a tackle on Liverpool midfielder Xabi Alonso in the 2-0 Merseyside derby defeat last weekend, a decision which Everton appealed.

"Losing Tim is a big setback because I think it was wrong," said Moyes.

"It wasn't a tackle that warranted a red card. There's no doubt about that."

Everton, struggling in the Premier League and who were knocked out of the UEFA Cup at the first round stage on Thursday, will be without Cahill for their next three league matches against Newcastle, Arsenal and Manchester United.