

Pippo's rescue act

UEFA CUP

AFP, Paris

AC Milan's veteran Italian striker Filippo Inzaghi grabbed his 65th career European goal to dent Portsmouth's UEFA Cup ambitions in a 2-2 draw on Thursday as Manchester City and Tottenham eased to victory.

Portsmouth, in their first season of European football, were cruising at 2-0 in their Group E clash at Fratton Park after goals from Younes Kaboul and Kanu.

But substitute Ronaldinho pulled one back with a fabulous free-kick in the 84th minute before poacher Inzaghi struck in the second minute of injury time to put Milan, who now have seven points, into the knockout stages.

"We are struggling to put teams to bed but they have some excellent players and if you switch off, they punish you," admitted Portsmouth boss Tony Adams.

Manchester City made it two wins out of two in Group A with an assured 2-0 victory over Germany's Schalke 04 in Gelsenkirchen which followed their opening 3-2 victory against FC Twente.

Paris Saint Germain's 2-2 draw with Racing Santander in the same pool meant Mark Hughes's City are assured of a place in the next round.

City took the lead on the half-hour mark when Daniel Sturridge's cross was sidefooted home by Zimbabwean striker Benjani Mwaruwari to stun the majority of the 60,000-strong crowd.

In-form midfielder Stephen Ireland tucked

away the second in the 65th minute.

The result follows City's convincing 3-0 victory at home to Arsenal at the weekend, and Hughes feels his side are in fine fettle ahead of Sunday's derby meeting with Manchester United.

"It's been a great week," he said. "It started off very well, beating Arsenal, and we've carried on with a great performance here and that leads us very nicely into a certain game at the weekend."

Tottenham enjoyed a 1-0 win at Dutch side NEC Nijmegen with Jamie O'Hara's 14th-minute header proving the clincher after Fraizer Campbell had hit the bar.

Harry Redknapp's side now have six points from three Group D games, which should be enough to see through.

"The pitch wasn't particularly good," said Redknapp. "It was difficult to really pass the ball but we were strong and solid and I never felt in any danger. Six points is job done."

In Group H, CSKA Moscow beat Lech Poznan of Poland 2-1 to make sure of their place in the knockout stages.

Alan Dzagoev and Yuri Zhirkov's first-half goals secured CSKA's third successive win with Semir Stilic hitting a late consolation for the Poles.

In Group G, French side St Etienne also reached the last 32 after a 1-1 draw with Bruges, but the match was overshadowed by fighting between the two sets of fans in the Belgian city.

The top three teams in each of the eight groups go through to the knockout stage where they will be joined by the eight third-place finishers from the opening round of the Champions League.



Milan striker Filippo Inzaghi is ecstatic after scoring the equalising goal to make it 2-2 during their UEFA Group encounter against Portsmouth at Fratton Park on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

BLUES TAKE ON GUNNERS

A high-stake derby

AFP, London



Wayne Rooney has raised the stakes for this weekend's Manchester derby by casting scorn on newly-rich City's hopes of knocking Champions United off their pedestal any time soon.

Sunday's clash, which precedes an equally intriguing encounter between league leaders Chelsea and crisis-hit Arsenal, will be the first cross-Manchester skirmish since City were propelled into football's financial superleague as a result of a takeover by Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan.

The new owners have already financed the 32.5-million-pound acquisition of Robinho and more stars look set to follow the Brazilian in the wake of William Gallas being stripped of the

club captaincy over his public criticism of his teammates.

Gallas has been replaced by Cesc Fabregas and the 21-year-old, whose reign began with a 1-0 win over Dynamo Kiev in midweek, insists there is life left in the Gunners.

As Rooney pithily put it: "It'll be nice to show City who are the kings of Manchester."

"It doesn't irritate us that City are getting all this publicity," said Rooney, before really putting the bootin.

"If they were winning trophies it would irritate us, but while they're still lingering in mid-table we're not too bothered about it."

Having suffered five defeats already this season, Arsenal will travel to Stamford Bridge looking to convince the doubters that their title challenge can somehow be resurrected in the wake of William Gallas being stripped of the

goalkeeper, Brad Friedel, pass David James's record of 166 consecutive top-flight appearances, although the American is reluctant to make too much of the landmark.

In the pick of Saturday's other ties, Newcastle will be hoping Mark Viduka's return to the squad will provide the inspiration required to secure a derby win at the Australian's former club Middlesbrough, which would be enough to lift the beleaguered Magpies out of the relegation zone.

Joint leaders Liverpool are not in action until Monday and will be without Fernando Torres for West Ham's visit to Anfield after the Spanish striker suffered a hamstring strain in the midweek win over

Marseille.

FIXTURES

(1500 GMT unless stated)

Saturday

Aston Villa v Fulham, Middlesbrough v Newcastle, Stoke City v Hull City, Sunderland v Bolton, Wigan v West Brom

Sunday

Chelsea v Arsenal (1600 GMT), Manchester City v Manchester Utd (1330 GMT), Portsmouth v Blackburn, Tottenham v Everton

Monday

Liverpool v West Ham (2000 GMT)

Real Madrid, who are also in the next round of the Champions League, reduced the gap at the top of the table to three points with an impressive win over Recreativo Huelva last week and they now face Getafe with a long list of injuries headed by Ruud van Nistelrooy.

At least they were buoyed on Thursday by seeing Arjen Robben and Fabio Cannavaro return to training.

Villarreal had been the only remaining unbeaten team in the league until they fell apart against giant-killers Valladolid last weekend.

Now with qualification to the next round of the Champions League secured they can concentrate on the league with their next opponents Recreativo who are bottom of the table without a win in eleven weeks.

Since being crushed by Barcelona 6-0, Valladolid have bounced back with impressive wins over Real Madrid and Villarreal, and they will be hoping to continue their surge up the table against Mallorca who have not had a victory in the league for over a month.

Espanyol know that they cannot afford to lose at Montjuic against Sporting Gijon with the drop zone looming ever closer after three straight defeats.

Athletic Bilbao keeper Gorka Iraizoz has called for his teammates to be calm in the face of their relegation clash with Numancia claiming that it is not an 'all or nothing' contest.

UEFA CUP RESULTS

AFP, Paris

Collected UEFA Cup results on Thursday:

Group A

Schalke 04 (GER) 0 Manchester City (ENG) 2 (Benjani 32, Ireland 66)

Paris Saint Germain (FRA) 2 (Kezman 5, Luyindula 32) Racing Santander (ESP) 2 (Traore 40-og, Colis 55)

Group B

Galatasaray (TUR) 0 Metalist Kharkov (UKR) 1 (Edmar 81)

Olympiacos (GRE) 5 (Galletti 1, Patsatzoglou 17, Diogo 24, 53, Belluschi 44) Benfica (POR) 1 (Luiz 33)

Group C

Sampdoria (ITA) 1 (Samarco 39) VfB Stuttgart (GER) 1 (Manca 8)

Partizan Belgrade (SRB) 0 Standard Liege (BEL) 1 (De Camargo 36)

Group D

NEC Nijmegen (NED) 0 Tottenham (ENG) 1 (O'Hara 14)

Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) 0 Spartak Moscow (RUS) 1 (Saenko 75)

Group E

Portsmouth (ENG) 2 (Kaboul 62, Kanu 73) AC Milan (ITA) 2 (Ronaldinho 84, Inzaghi 90+2)

Sporting Braga (POR) 2 (Barzaghi 6-og, Meyong 49) Wolfsburg (GER) 3 (Dzeko 24, Misimovic 83-pen, 90+4)

Group F

MSK Zilina (SVK) 0 Slavia Prague (CZE) 0

Hamburg (GER) 0 Ajax (NED) 1 (Leonardo 77)

Group G

Bruges (BEL) 1 (Vargas 50) Saint Etienne (FRA) 1 (Alcaraz 44-og)

Rosenborg (NOR) 0 Valencia (ESP) 4 (Mata 21, Pablo 76, Baraja 88, Joaquin 90)

Group H

CSKA Moscow (RUS) 2 (Dzagoev 31, Zhirkov 45) Lech Poznan (POL) 1 (Stilic 66)

Deportivo La Coruna (ESP) 3 (Lopo 30, Hofland 50-og, Guardado 51) Feyenoord (NED) 0

Group I

CSKA Moscow (RUS) 2 (Dzagoev 31, Zhirkov 45) Lech Poznan (POL) 1 (Stilic 66)

Deportivo La Coruna (ESP) 3 (Lopo 30, Hofland 50-og, Guardado 51) Feyenoord (NED) 0

Group J

Atalanta v Lazio, Cagliari v Sampdoria, Genoa v Bologna, Inter Milan v Napoli, Palermo v AC Milan, AS Roma v Fiorentina, Siena v Torino, Udinese v Chievo

Group K

Atalanta v Lazio, Cagliari v Sampdoria, Genoa v Bologna, Inter Milan v Napoli, Palermo v AC Milan, AS Roma v Fiorentina, Siena v Torino, Udinese v Chievo

Group L

Atalanta v Lazio, Cagliari v Sampdoria, Genoa v Bologna, Inter Milan v Napoli, Palermo v AC Milan, AS Roma v Fiorentina, Siena v Torino, Udinese v Chievo

Group M

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Group N

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Group O

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Group P

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Group Q

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Group R

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Group S

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Group T

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Group U

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Group V

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Group W

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Group X

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Group Y

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Group Z

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Group AA

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Group BB

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Group CC

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