



WE SALUTE YOU: Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o (R) and teammate Thierry Henry celebrate the former's goal with the home fans during their Champions League round of 16 second-leg clash against Lyon at Nou Camp on Wednesday.

## Fergie not pleased

AFP, Manchester



Sir Alex Ferguson demonstrated why he has been Manchester United's special one for over two decades as he laid into his players in the aftermath of a 2-0 win over Inter Milan that sent them into the last eight of the Champions League.

The victory may have enabled Ferguson to settle at least one score with Inter boss Jose Mourinho, whose Porto side had eliminated United at the same stage on their way to lifting the trophy back in 2004.

But all the Scot wanted to talk about was his irritation at how close his side came to throwing the game away with what he described as their "suicidal" showboating after Nemanja Vidic had headed them into a fourth minute lead.

If Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Dejan Stankovic had taken the gilt-edged chances that came their way, the Italian champions would have been ahead by the time Cristiano Ronaldo nodded in United's second just after half-time.

And, perhaps with one eye on Saturday's Premier League

showdown with Liverpool, Ferguson left his players in no doubt about how furious he had been as he watched his side relinquish their early advantage.

"It was one of those long European nights where you don't know if you're watching a game of football or watching a game of suicide," the Scot said.

"After scoring the first goal, I thought we would go on and kill them. But after going ahead we started trying to put icing on the cake and we were lucky to be in front at half-time."

Flicking his hair dryer on to full blast, Ferguson added: "I thought we could score a few goals but then we started doing flicks and back heels, hitting balls into space where no one was."

"It was really reckless football and it allowed Inter Milan to get a grip of the game. From the middle of the first half to the end of the first half they were the better team."

Despite his frustration, Ferguson took heart from the fact that his side had survived to take their place in a quarterfinal draw in which he will be hoping to avoid any of the other three English clubs still in the competition as well as Barcelona.

"We changed the system at

half-time, closed the door on (Inter playmaker Esteban) Cambiasso and we were a bit better in the second half," he said.

"We played a team at its maximum, potential-wise with all the experience they have. And they played to their maximum."

"To get through that was a big plus for us, because we will be better in the next round. We can play better than that but I am happy to get through it."

Mourinho famously celebrated Porto's win here with an ecstatic sprint down the touchline.

Luck, as Mourinho ruefully observed, had definitely not been on the side of the Italians with both a header from Ibrahimovic and a flying volley from Adriano striking the woodwork at stages in the match when a goal for the visitors would have transformed the contest.

The League Cup and World Club Championship have already been secured and Mourinho believes United are perfectly equipped to retain their Champions League crown, a goal Ferguson regards as tougher than claiming a third consecutive Premier League crown or winning the FA Cup.

## Mourinho defends team

AFP, Manchester



Jose Mourinho is confident Inter Milan will bounce back from the disappointment of their Champions League exit and go on to claim a fourth consecutive Serie A title.

Given that Inter currently stand seven points clear of Juventus at the top of the Italian top flight, few would disagree with that view.

"We have not been good enough to win the Champions League but we are good enough to win the Scudetto and I'm sure we will go on and win it," he said.

Having initially denied that he had said he would be interested in succeeding Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson, the Portuguese promptly refuelled speculation on the subject by claiming, ahead of Wednesday's match, that he felt "at home" at Old Trafford.

Neither was Mourinho's performance at the post-match press conference following Inter's 2-0 defeat by

United particularly reassuring for the Milan club's fans.

Irked by an Italian reporter's suggestion that he had been brought to Inter to deliver victory in the Champions League, Mourinho snapped: "I understand the question, not the speech that preceded it."

An uneasy relationship with the Milanese press is only one of Mourinho's problems.

Winning a third consecutive title last season did not prevent Inter President Massimo Moratti from sacking Roberto Mancini to make way for Mourinho, who was billed as the man to take the club onto another level.

Asked if he expected to be summoned to explain himself, Mourinho said he would be seeking out Moratti to explain exactly why Inter had fallen short again on the biggest stage.

"Ultimately I'm accountable to him, not to you," Mourinho told his press critics.

"All I can say is that all my players did absolutely everything they possibly could do. They should not be criticised or questioned. We played a very good game, we really

played to our full potential.

Mourinho said he would be telling Moratti what needs to be done to make Inter a match for the likes of United.

"You can't just turn up and expect to win the Champions League just like that. One way is to spend a huge amount of money, which we know is not realistic in the current climate. The second way is to build a team over the course of time."

"Chelsea lost three semis before getting to last year's final. It is a process and getting to the top is a consequence of the hard work you put in."

Despite bemoaning his side's poor luck, Mourinho did not dispute that United had been better than his side over the two legs.

"They scored two goals over the course of the two games and we have to accept that, in football, the team that wins always deserves it."

"But I don't think we should be negative about my team's display. We played a great match against a great team. We just lacked that little bit of luck you need to win, that little thing that makes difference between winning and not winning."

## Jose allegedly punches fan

AFP, Manchester

British police are investigating an alleged assault by Inter Milan manager Jose Mourinho on a supporter after their Champions League defeat here at Old Trafford, a spokeswoman said Thursday.

The former Chelsea boss allegedly punched a supporter as he left the ground after Wednesday's 2-0 last 16 second leg loss to Champions League holders Manchester United, reports said.

"Shortly before midnight (0000GMT) last night a man reported that he had been punched in the face outside Old Trafford," said a spokeswoman for Greater Manchester Police when asked about the alleged incident involving Mourinho.

"We are investigating an allegation of common assault," she added.

An Arsenal supporter was attacked by a Roma fan here an hour before the teams met in the last 16 of the Champions League, the British embassy in Rome told AFP on Thursday.

Around 1800 GMT Wednesday the man, whose name and age have not been made public, "was in a minibus near the Olympic Stadium when it was attacked by Roma supporters", an embassy spokesman said.

The fans "smashed the window of the bus and one of them got on". In the ensuing fight, an Arsenal supporter was injured.

"We don't know the precise nature of the injury," the embassy added, following press reports that the Arsenal fan had been stabbed.

However, the spokesman stressed that the injured supporter had received treatment and was able to watch the second leg match which Arsenal won after a penalty shootout.

Arsenal officials had, in the build-up to the tie, warned their supporters to beware the risks of hooliganism being carried out by some Roma fans.

Champions League matches involving Roma during the past three years have been blighted by numerous acts of violence carried out by extreme sections of their support.

And this latest incident is now set to lead to renewed questions for European football governing body UEFA as to whether Rome remains the right place to stage the Champions League final on May 27.

## Arsenal fan injured in Rome

AFP, Rome

## Barca turn on style

AFP, Barcelona



Goals from Thierry Henry, Lionel Messi and Samuel Eto'o inspired Barcelona to an emphatic 5-2 victory over Lyon here on Wednesday night that booked their place in the Champions League quarterfinals.

The result gave the Spanish league leaders a 6-3 aggregate victory after the first leg ended 1-1 and takes Pep Guardiola's men a step closer to the trophy they last won in 2006.

Reigning French champions Lyon received a pre-match boost when their France international striker Karim Benzema was declared fit to play, but Barca bossed the opening exchanges, with Eto'o and Andres Iniesta both going close.

Ederson and Benzema then spurned presentable chances at the other end, and Henry punished the visitors' profligacy with two goals in as many minutes mid-way through the first half.

First he ran onto Rafael

Goals from Thierry Henry, Lionel Messi and Samuel

Marquez's lofted pass and calmly tucked the ball beneath Lyon goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, before picking up Xavi's prodded pass into the area and rifling home a low left-footed shot to put his side 2-0 up on the night.

On 40 minutes Argentine winger Messi struck a sublime third, darting in from the right flank and exchanging passes with Eto'o before stroking a measured finish into the bottom-left corner.

Moments later Lyon's capitulation was complete, as Eto'o moved onto Henry's square ball before smashing a shot past Lloris.

Lyon pulled one back almost immediately thanks to a precise header from midfielder Jean Makoun, and visiting captain Juninho breathed new life into the tie seconds after half-time when he slotted into the bottom-right corner after an intelligent dummy by Benzema.

Benzema wasted a great opportunity to reduce the deficit when he blazed over from the edge of the box with 10 minutes remaining, before Juninho compounded his side's misery by picking up a second yellow card in injury time.

Malian substitute Seydou

Keita set the seal on a memorable night for the Catalans, sprinting onto Xavi's pass and rounding Lloris before poking the ball into the empty net.

Messi said: "We weren't afraid, but it's true after those two goals (by Lyon) we were a little surprised, we had a complicated moment."

"But even so we weren't in a very dangerous situation, we were all united, we wanted the same thing."

Lyon defender Fabio Grosso shrugged: "There's not a lot to say, everyone can see we didn't play well in the first half."

"It was very hard against a super team, but we showed a different face in the second half to the first."

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas said: "We're disappointed that tonight we were outclassed by Barca. But it's also a sign that the top football in France is not at the same level as with its foreign rivals."

"We have to ask how to hold on to our best players and how to have the television revenue of a club like Barca which earns three or three and a half times more than the best side in France, Lyon."

## Porto scrape through

AFP, Porto

FC Porto scraped into the Champions League quarterfinals on away goals after a battling goalless draw against Atletico Madrid here on Wednesday.

This stalemate at the Estadio Do Dragao after the 2-2 first leg draw in Madrid left the tie all square on aggregate with Porto's priceless goals in the Spanish capital winning the day.

Porto, the 2004 European champions when in the care of Jose Mourinho, fielded an unchanged side that had performed so well in the first leg a fortnight ago.

Atletico coach Abel Resino in contrast made two changes with Luis Perea replacing Giourkas Seitaridis at right back and surprisingly top scorer Diego Forlan coming off for the pacy Florent Sinama-Pongolle.

In a tight affair though chances proved few and far between with one of the better ones coming Porto's way when deep into, the second half Cristian Rodriguez forced Atletico keeper Leo Franco into a quick reflex save.

Franco needed to have his wits about him shortly after to deny a shot from Raul Meireles.

And as Porto went all out to try and put the tie beyond doubt Franco had to be quick off his feet again to stop Lucho Gonzalez's shot as the final whistle beckoned.

Rival sets of fans clashed outside the stadium before kick-off leaving at least one person injured, Portuguese police who made two arrests, reported.

## Cash windfall for Bayern

AFP, Berlin

German giants Bayern Munich stand to make at least 40 million euros (51m US dollars) from their record-breaking 12-1 slaughtering of Sporting Lisbon in the Champions League Round of 16 tie.

Having hammered Sporting 5-0 in Lisbon a fortnight ago in the first leg, Bayern tore their guests apart 7-1 in the second leg at Munich's Allianz Arena on Tuesday night to record the biggest win in Champions League history at the knock-out stage.

For reaching the quarterfinals, Bayern have so far made 12.1 million euros (15.5m US dollars) including the 2.5 million euros (3.19m US dollars) for reaching the last eight.

As part of the 12.1m, Bayern will receive 4.4 million euros (5.6m US dollars) for qualifying for the Champions League by winning the Bundesliga title last year.

They also receive three million euros (3.8m) for their four wins and two draws in the group stages as well as 2.2 million euros (2.8m) for reaching the Round of 16.

In addition, Bayern receive 20 million euros (25.5m), half of the 40 million euros (51m) which is allocated to Germany.

And Bayern have made an estimated 10 million euros (12.7m US dollars) for hosting the four group stage games at their Allianz Arena ground.

## Gunners survive shootout drama

AFP, Rome



AS Roma's Ma x Tonetto skied his penalty miles over the bar to hand Arsenal a place in the Champions League quarterfinals following a tense match that went to the spot-kick lottery on Wednesday.

Arsenal won the shootout 7-6 thanks to Tonetto's sudden death miss after Eduardo and Mirko Vucinic had seen their earlier efforts saved by goalkeepers Doni and Manuel Almunia respectively.

It means all four English teams made it through to the last eight with Italy's three representatives all bowing out -- it is the first time in seven years no Italian team has made it through to the quarters.

The game ended 1-0 to the hosts after 90 minutes, matching the score the Gunners had won by in London two weeks ago.

Despite the four English teams in the next round, Wenger named Barcelona as his favourites to lift the title.

"England can be very proud to have four teams through for the second year now," he said.

"It was very close between Chelsea and Juventus. Between us and Roma it was very close and I heard that Inter (Milan) played well against (Manchester) United, so it looks like Italy are coming back."

"But I give you as favourite a non-English team hoping and English team wins it."

With a first leg deficit to overcome Roma needed all

the help they could get but while talisman Francesco Totti was passed fit, France centre-back Philippe Mexes was ruled out with the flu.

It meant that Malian Souleymane Diamoutene -- a transfer window signing from Lecce -- came into the side to make his Champions League debut.

Things looked desperate after just five minutes as Roma's other first choice centre-back Juan walked off the pitch with a hamstring problem.

However the Roma physios patched him up and sent him back on a couple of minutes later and with good reason as it was the Brazilian who slotted in the opener.

Roma opened up Arsenal's right side with some slick passing on nine minutes allowing Totti to cross into the box.

The ball passed between William Gallas and Emmanuel Eboue and was missed by Rodrigo Taddei but Juan, who had stayed up a long time following a corner, was free at the back post to control the ball and slide it under Almunia.

Despite the defeat, Roma coach Luciano Spalletti said he was proud of his patched-up team.

"After a night like this we should be proud, we're going out of the Champions League with our heads held high," he said.

"In the changing rooms I told the lads that they gave their all and they should feel proud."

Roma twice went close to a second on 23 minutes as Marco Motta broke into the box. Almunia saved his near post effort but Motta kept the

ball alive and it came out to Taddei whose shot Almunia tipped around the post.

However Juan couldn't continue much longer and Roma were forced into a defensive rejig with John Arne Riise moving into the centre and Julio Baptista coming on in midfield.

Arsenal were creating only half chances and Abou Diaby headed the best straight into Doni's arms from a Samir Nasri cross.

On the stroke of half-time Roma were screaming for a penalty as Motta went down in the box with Gael Clichy chasing him but the referee rightly ignored the appeals.

Roma's makeshift defence was looking vulnerable and on 58 minutes a terrible Riise mistake on the halfway line let Eboue run away down the right but the Ivory Coast international failed to pick out Nicklas Bendtner.

The game was on a knife edge and both sides seemed unwilling to commit too much in attack although Diaby did create some space before firing wide.

With 11 minutes left Roma opened Arsenal up at the back as the ball was switched quickly from Taddei to Totti to Baptista but the Brazilian, playing against his former club, slipped with the goal at his mercy and failed to trouble Almunia.

Arsenal had two good late chances but Robin van Persie's shot was deflected wide and Kolo Toure headed over from close range.

The extra 30 minutes failed to produce any clear cut chances and so the game headed to the spot-kick lottery. And Tonetto's woeful effort sealed Roma's fate.



Roma defender Max Tonetto (L) blasts his penalty over the crossbar to hand Arsenal victory during their Champions League round of 16 second-leg tie at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP