

## Zurich stun Milan

AFP, Milan



FC Zurich pulled off a famous and unlikely victory as Finland's Hannu Tihinen scored the only goal in a 1-0 victory over AC Milan in the Champions League at the San Siro on Wednesday.

And this latest set-back will surely have piled even more pressure on under-fire Milan coach Leonardo.

In four home matches this season Milan have scored only one goal, also winning only once, while they have fared little better on their travels.

But the significance of this home defeat to European football minnows can hardly be understated, particularly as Milan's next two Group C games will be against free-scoring Real Madrid.

Having also won only two of six league matches, already Milan's pretensions both at home and in Europe look decidedly fragile.

Leonardo began this game under pressure and the first half would have made uncomfortable viewing for the Brazilian.

On seven minutes Milan full-back Ignazio Abate mishit a cross from the right that almost caught out Zurich goalkeeper Johnny Leoni, who bizarrely reacted by kicking the ball off his line.

But on 10 minutes the visitors were in front with a goal from a former West Ham player that the Premier League club's current manager would have been proud of.

Milan Gajic swing over a corner and Tihinen arrived unmolested at the near post to flick the ball with his heel between his legs and past Marco Storari in the Milan goal — a near copy of a goal Hammers boss Gianfranco Zola scored for Chelsea against Norwich in 2002.

On the quarter hour Filippo Inzaghi should have levelled after a surging run and devilish cross from Marek Jankulovski but the veteran striker slid in and poked wide from two yards.

It was an open game and after Clarence Seedorf had volleyed over for the hosts, Johan Volanthen escaped on the counter-attack and pulled the ball back for Xavier Margairaz, who failed to keep either his shot or his head down.

Milan were enjoying some success with their full-backs and Abate beat Onyekachi Okonkwo down the right and crossed for Inzaghi, whose header drifted wide of the far post.

Seedorf sent a vicious long range shot just past the upright but then Storari had to scramble behind an even harder shot from Gajic.

Leonardo wasted no time in trying to fire up his side, bringing on former world player of the year Ronaldinho for Seedorf at the break.

Just before the hour mark Inzaghi almost levelled again as he met a dangerous Andrea Pirlo free-kick with his head but Leoni made a flying one-handed save.

Moments later Ronaldinho sent Pato in on goal with a sumptuous through ball but although his young compatriot lifted the ball over Leoni, it dropped wide of the post.

It was a thrill a minute and after Leoni blocked a close range Inzaghi shot with his foot, Storari kept out a drilled Margairaz effort with his boot.

Milan kept pushing and on 88 minutes captain Massimo Ambrosini shaved the outside of the post with a low strike from 20 yards.

With almost the last kick of the match Gianluca Zambrotta crashed a stunning shot against the Zurich upright but the Swiss deserved that bit of luck and the three points that boosts their qualification hopes after their 5-2 home defeat to Real.



Zurich captain Hannu Tihinen celebrates scoring the all-important goal against Milan during their Champions League encounter at San Siro on Wednesday.

### IN BRIEF

#### Fan gets three year ban

AFP, Manchester

A fan who was slapped by Craig Bellamy after running onto the pitch during Manchester United's derby win over Manchester City on September 20 was Wednesday banned from football grounds for three years.

Bellamy has escaped action by the police or the Football Association over his confrontation with Jake Clarke, a 21-year-old United fan who came on to the pitch after Michael Owen sealed a 4-3 victory for United, deep into injury time.

Clarke, who had previous convictions, for cannabis possession and common assault, told Trafford Magistrates' Court that he "deeply regrets" his behaviour. As well as the ground ban, Clarke was ordered to pay a fine of 305 pounds.

#### Kuwaiti side triumph in landmark tie

AFP, Arbil

A Kuwaiti football club triumphed 1-0 over an Iraqi side Wednesday in the first sports competition involving the two countries here since Saddam Hussein invaded his oil-rich neighbour in 1990.

Kuwait SC's victory over Arbil Club at the 21,000-seat Francois Hariri Stadium in Arbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, propels it to the semifinals of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) cup.

Wednesday's fixture followed a 1-1 draw in the first leg earlier this month.

The match was a sign both of warmer ties between the two neighbours, which have clashed diplomatically in recent months over war reparations stemming from the 1990 invasion, and of improving security in Iraq.

The last Kuwaiti team to play in Iraq was the country's under-21 football team in September 1989.

#### Jozy, Tim and Landon in US award shortlist

AFP, Los Angeles

Five-time winner Landon Donovan, teen star Jozy Altidore and top goalkeeper Tim Howard were named Wednesday as finalists for the US national football team's Player of the Year Award.

A media panel selected the candidates, with the winner to be announced on October 20, six days after the US squad plays Costa Rica in its final North American qualifying match for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Donovan, 27, captured the honour the past two years and from 2002 through 2004. The all-time US national team scoring leader has 41 goals in 118 matches for the Americans and plays for the Los Angeles Galaxy.

Howard, who has 46 caps, plays for Everton after a past stint with Manchester United.

Altidore, 19, is a first time finalist who has eight goals in 19 caps. He became the youngest US player to record a hat-trick last April in a 3-0 qualifier win over Trinidad and Tobago. Altidore plays for England's Hull City on loan from Spain's Villarreal.

## Leonardo fights back

SOCCERNET



AC Milan coach Leonardo came out fighting after being given a vote of confidence in the aftermath of their shock 1-0 home defeat by FC Zurich in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Although Milan won at Olympique Marseille in their Group C opener, they have managed only one goal at home this season and have taken just eight points from six Serie A matches.

"I reconfirm our faith in Leonardo," chief executive Adriano Galliani told Sky television. "At the moment everything is sorted. I think a draw would have been fair, we must move forward."

Former Milan forward Leonardo, known for his intelligence and fluency in five languages, was handed his first taste of management after Carlo Ancelotti's departure to Chelsea in May.

Galliani once joked they appointed the Brazilian because he was cheap as he was already on the payroll as sporting director.

## Chelsea edge APOEL

AFP, Nicosia



Chelsea came through a tricky Champions League tie in Cyprus on Wednesday against Cypriot underdogs APOEL Nicosia with a scrappy 1-0 victory to stay top of Group D.

After a hesitant start in the opening minutes Chelsea quickly found their stride with the intelligent running of Nicolas Anelka on the left and Frank Lampard probing through the middle of the park.

The home side seemed unfazed by the occasion - billed as the biggest game in the club's 83-year history - but APOEL had little answer to combat Chelsea's wing play.

And the Cypriots were undone by a weaving run from right-back Branislav Ivanovic, who broke into the box to set up Anelka to calmly curl the shot past keeper Dionisios Chiotis after 18 minutes.

The Frenchman was a constant menace, first on the left, then switching intermittently to the right as he seemed to find space easily behind the defence.

Before Anelka's strike, Salomon Kalou had a chance to score but put his shot wide of the target and Ashley Cole could have made it two-nil after only 20 minutes gone but his header wide from six yards.

Despite Chelsea pressure the goal was the only shot on target with Chiotis not really called on to repeat the heroics of his clean sheet in Madrid.

His opposite number down the other end also had a quiet first 45 minutes with Petr Cech only called in to service to punch away a Constantinos Charalambides free kick. And the Cyprus international should have done better when he skewed a volley horribly wide when he had a sight on goal.

## Robben hobbles off

AFP, Munich



Bayern Munich's 0-0 draw at home to Juventus in Wednesday's Champions League clash could have cost them the services of winger Arjen Robben for a while, according to coach Louis van Gaal.

Robben only arrived at Bayern from Real Madrid last month, but he hobbled off just before the break in the Group A match at Munich's Allianz Arena with an injury to his right knee leaving van Gaal far from optimistic.

"I think it is a serious injury - it doesn't look good," said van Gaal with more information expected to be released later Thursday.

Bayern dominated the first half, but failed to hit the back of the net to make their advantage pay off as Juventus returned to Turin with a point.

"In the first half, we played outstandingly well against a top team, but we did not get the win," said van Gaal.

"We were dominant and Juventus did not create many chances."

"I think we haven't played as well as that in the first half in any other games this season. We had many chances and did not get the goal."

Angry fans believe the joke is closer to the truth after the sale of Kaka to Real Madrid to save money and limited new signings in the close season.

However, Leonardo refused to make excuses, despite the Rossoneri having struggled for two years now since their seventh European Cup triumph in 2007.

"To concede a goal like that after 10 minutes complicates the game," he told a news conference. "There are not a lot of ways to change it, we've got to be more compact. I've taken this job and I'm doing what I believe. No one put a gun to my head to take the role. We move forward. If we lose, we lose."

Two games against Real Madrid follow but Leonardo did not want to speak about how much Milan are missing Kaka.

"Of course we're not a team in a moment of great confidence. We can't talk about individuals, it's collective," he said. "Now certainly it's not easy. We've got to be there, with our army, and do our best."

"Right now, our performances don't offer many positives. But football is strange, we went to Marseille and won 2-1. This team has the resources to try to get out of this situation."

## Palermo fires Argentina

INTERNET, undated

Martin Palermo scored twice to hand Argentina a confidence-boosting 2-0 victory over Ghana in a friendly international at the Olimpico de Cordoba stadium on Wednesday night.

Argentina, who turned out with a home-based side, completely dominated a lacklustre Ghana side with some incisive attacking football. The Africans were also without their regular first-team members.

Los Albicelestes created several goal-scoring opportunities early on in the game, but hesitated when it came down to finishing them off.

After much pressure, Argentina finally went ahead in the 28th minute when Fabian Monzon fed Boca Juniors team-mate Martin Palermo with a precise cross, and the veteran made no mistake with a clinical finish.

The goal seemed to spark Argentina to life, and they looked to increase their lead against a shaky Ghana outfit. Each time they attacked the Ghana goal the Argentines came close to scoring.

In the 39th minute Palermo doubled Argentina's advantage when he connected to a precise Federico Insua cross with an unreachable header.

After the break Diego Maradona's side continued to dominate, even if they made a number of changes, including taking off man-of-the-match Palermo in the 57th minute.

Palermo, who captained the side, received a standing ovation from the 22,000 fans at the stadium as he made his exit. His performance will surely improve his chances of partnering Lionel Messi in the Argentina attack against Peru and Uruguay next month.

Argentina claimed a comfortable victory that should motivate the side ahead of their final two World Cup qualifiers.

### FORMULA ONE

## Renault eye replacement

INTERNET, Suzuka

The Renault Formula One racing team said Thursday it would name a successor for Fernando Alonso, who is leaving for Ferrari, next week. The Spanish two-time world champion already signed a three-year contract with the Italian team and will replace Kimi Raikkonen as a driver in the 2010 season.

Renault wished Alonso "all the best," the French team said in a statement issued in Suzuka, ahead of Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix.

The team would now concentrate on ending the season with good results, the statement added.

BMW-Sauber driver Robert Kubica of Poland is believed to have already signed a deal to replace Alonso at Renault.

Meanwhile, Ferrari rejected Spanish media reports of an annual salary of 25 million euros (36.5 million dollars) for Alonso, saying there was no "gold rush" in Maranello, the team's home base in Italy.

"The numbers talked about have absolutely nothing to do with reality. It's easy to write numbers, forgetting that the world has changed recently," the team said on its website.

"At Ferrari a lot of calculating is done and attention is not only paid to the costs of the operational structure, but also as far as the drivers are concerned."

In Suzuka, the 28-year-old star driver was relaxed ahead of the 15th of 17 races this season, joking with fans at the obligatory autograph session.

"I'm very happy and very proud to become a Ferrari driver," Alonso was quoted as saying by the Ferrari.com website. "Driving a single-seater from the Prancing Horse is everybody's dream in this sport and today I have the opportunity to make this dream come true."

He had originally planned to move to Ferrari only in 2011, Alonso said, but in "the last days, the picture changed and we decided to anticipate my arrival in Maranello by one year."

Alonso will team up with Brazilian driver Felipe Massa and Italian Giancarlo Fisichella as reserve driver, while Raikkonen is set to return to his former team McLaren-Mercedes.

## C'Ron keeps scoring

AFP, Madrid



Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo made it nine goals in seven games by bagging a brace as Real Madrid's 'Galacticos' defeated 10-man Marseille 3-0 on Tuesday in their first Champions League match in front of their Santiago Bernabeu crowd.

It means Real have now won all seven of their matches this season, two in the Champions League and five in the league, and sit top of Group C with a maximum six points.

Real blitzed Marseille with three goals in six minutes; Ronaldo, who now has four Champions League goals in two games, scored two and won the penalty that led to the other.

The marquee summer signing opened the scoring on 58 minutes and then won a spot-kick three minutes later which saw Marseille centre-back Souleymane Diawara dismissed for a second yellow card.

Kaka converted the penalty kick and Ronaldo struck again in the 64th minute to show why Real paid a world record 94 million euros for his services.

Captain Raul, the all-time top-scorer in the Champions League, had to be content with a place on the substitutes' bench as new French star Karim Benzema started against his compatriots.

Ronaldo and Kaka joined Benzema in an attacking trident with Xabi Alonso and Fernando Gago employed in defensive midfield.

There were familiar faces to the Real fans in the Marseille line-up as Argentine defender Gabriel Heinze and veteran striker Fernando Morientes returned to their old stomping ground.

Heinze spent two seasons at the club before being let go by incoming coach

Manuel Pellegrini in the summer while Morientes won three Champions League titles with Real and was given a warm welcome from the home fans.

Off the pitch there was a beefed-up police presence, after Marseille's last visit to Madrid saw them clash with baton-wielding riot police at the Vicente Calderon during a group match with Atletico Madrid.

There was no repeat of those ugly scenes, though, and the match took centre stage although it was a low-key opening from Real, who only had a half-chance from Sergio Ramos to show from the first 20 minutes.

Marseille, fourth in their domestic league, had a chance of their own on the quarter-hour mark but Iker Casillas was on his toes and raced out to swipe the ball from visiting captain Mamadou Niang.

On 26 minutes the Senegalese star skipped past Pepe but had to shoot from an acute angle and Casillas was on hand again to save with his chest.

It was a warning that appeared to spur Real into action and Benzema went agonisingly close twice.

First of all the ex-Lyon striker saw a brilliant overhead kick go just over and was then thwarted in a one-on-one by goalkeeper Steve Mandanda.

In the second half Real got into their stride and took the lead through a route-one goal, with Pepe's long ball finding Ronaldo who carefully placed a low shot beneath the advancing Mandanda.

The former Manchester United man then drew a foul from Diawara which earned the defender a second yellow card and allowed Kaka to put Real 2-0 up with a confidently taken penalty.

Ronaldo continued his rich vein of form in front of goal with an easy tap-in to wrap up the game after slick inter-play between Benzema and Kaka.



Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo (L) scores the opening goal past Olympique Marseille goalkeeper Steve Mandanda during their Champions League clash at Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday.