

# Blues lose on penalties

**Football**

AFP, Blackburn

A double penalty save by Blackburn Rovers goalkeeper Paul Robinson sent his side into the semifinals of the League Cup 4-3 in a shootout after an enthralling encounter here with Chelsea.

A Benni McCarthy spotkick in the third minute of extra-time looked like being enough to help Rovers win 3-2 before Paulo Ferreira equalised for the Premier League leaders to make it 3-3 and send the match to spot-kicks.

Robinson then saved from Michael Ballack and French youngster Gael Kakuta to win the encounter and so set up a semi-final against Aston Villa.

Earlier goals by Nikola Kalinic and Brett Emerton for Blackburn and Didier Drogba and Salomon Kalou for Chelsea set up a thrilling match at Ewood Park.

Blackburn made five changes and Chelsea even more as they had seven different faces from the starting line-up that defeated Arsenal 3-0 in the Premier League at the weekend.

Kalinic gave the home side an unexpected shock lead after just nine minutes when Pascal Chimbonda threaded a superb delivery through to the Croatian who tapped past Henrique Hilario for a well taken opener.

Kalou then missed the target with a free header from six yards out shortly before Michael Ballack also wastefully shot wide from long-range as Chelsea attempted to get back into the match.

Joe Cole tried to inject some flair into Chelsea's attacking play but found the home side's defence eager to close him down while Jason Roberts and South Africa star McCarthy also suffered the same problem for Rovers.

As half-time approached Blackburn's defence was finally caught asleep allowing Ballack to rifle a Florent Malouda effort

goalwards but it finally swerved wide of the post to sum up their first half.

Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti made three changes at half-time in a bid to kick-start his side and the tactic worked immediately as Drogba brilliantly equalised after 48 minutes.

Frank Lampard called Drogba the "best striker in the world" earlier this week, and he proved his power and ability as he superbly rose above Blackburn's defence and powered home a header.

Chelsea then took the lead just four minutes later after Kalou made the most of acres off space following Ballack's fine long ball and he managed to roll past the onrushing Robinson with ease.

Blackburn were not finished there though as Emerton then fooled everybody with a cross-cum-shot that went in to equalise.

He delivered a deep ball into the box that missed everyone, particularly after Hilario was put off by Kalinic's jump in front of him, and the ball ended up in the net.

Chelsea were then further dismayed as Kalou was forced off with an injury soon after and, as the visitors had made all their substitutions, they were now forced to play with 10 men.

That did not stop Drogba from nearly finding a winner though and he would have done apart from a brilliant stop from Robinson.

Meanwhile Kalinic also went close at the other end.

Rovers thought they had it won when McCarthy swept home in the 91st minute from Emerton's pass but he was marginally offside.

Kalinic then went achingly close seconds later but a clincher in normal time would not arrive.

However, just three minutes into the first period of extra-time, substitute David Hoilett was brought down directly in front of referee Alan Wiley and McCarthy made no mistake from 12 yards.

There was more to come though as Ferreira's finish and the subsequent shootout were to prove.



Blackburn Rovers goalkeeper Paul Robinson (R) celebrates after saving Chelsea forward Gael Kakuta's (not in picture) penalty in the tie-breaker during their Carling Cup quarterfinal at Ewood Park on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

# All eyes on Cape Town

AFP, Cape Town



Supporters of hosts South Africa will be anxious onlookers Friday evening when the 2010 World Cup draw is made here before a 3,000-strong audience including President Jacob Zuma.

Former national team and Leeds United captain Lucas Radebe summed up the feelings of most countrymen on the eve of the 90-minute ceremony by admitting he hopes Bafana Bafana (The Boys) are placed in a weak group.

"We are hoping for a weak group although none of the 31 qualifiers are going to be pushovers," the man who led South Africa in their first World Cup appearance 11 years ago told a local radio station.

"It is going to be hard no matter which three teams Bafana get in the draw and, ultimately, they have to rely on themselves," the former defensive marshal added.

The fears of South Africans ahead of the draw at the International Conference Centre in this south-west city are well founded with their team the lowest placed at 86 of the 32-strong field in the November world rankings.

That grim statistic stems from a run of 11 matches since June that delivered just one win, and that came in the mining town of Kimberley by a solitary goal

against African lightweights Madagascar.

Yet because they are hosting the four-yearly international football showcase, South Africa were placed among the top seeds Wednesday with Argentina, Brazil, England, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Spain.

France, 1998 winners and 2006 runners-up, and Portugal, fourth three years ago, were the chief casualties as they joined an all-Europe pot completed by Denmark, Greece, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland.

South Africa coach Carlos Alberto Parreira, who guided his native Brazil to the 1994 World Cup title, insists he is losing no sleep over which countries the first African hosts of the tournament come up against.

"I don't want to choose any opponent as I want my team to be exposed to every team. The mission is clear and that is getting to the group stage," Parreira told AFP.

But he must face one side from the all-Europe pot and given a choice between France or Portugal and Denmark or Slovenia would surely plump for the Scandinavians or East Europeans as Bafana have good records against both.

South Africa collected their first point at the 1998 World Cup in France by drawing 1-1 with the Danes and beat the Slovenians 1-0 at the next edition in South Korea four years later to record a first and only triumph.

Bafana also forced a 1-1 friendly draw in Copenhagen, although Parreira and his

team will be aware that the Danes topped a 2010 qualifying group that included the star-sprinkled Portuguese.

And while most South Africans would prefer Slovenia, they probably did not see the outsiders impressively eliminate Guus Hiddink-coached Russia in a play-off.

The South Africans, who will feature in the June 11 opening game of 64 spread over 10 venues and 31 days, are also certain to face one of Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, who scraped past Costa Rica in another play-off.

All the South Americans have played a friendly in South Africa with Chile winning 2-0 in Polokwane, Uruguay forcing a 0-0 draw at Ellis Park in Johannesburg and Paraguay crashing 3-0 in Atteridgeville near Pretoria.

Although Paraguay would seem the preferred choice, they are notoriously poor friendly performers and facing a Uruguay outfit heavily reliant on Diego Forlan for goals might offer the best chance of three points.

The final Group A opponents of South Africa must come from a motley mix comprising Australia, Japan, North and South Korea, New Zealand, Honduras, Mexico and the United States.

New Zealand might be the best draw given that hosts South Africa defeated them 2-0 at the 2009 Confederations Cup while the Australians, Mexicans and Americans would be best avoided.

## IN BRIEF

### FIFA rules out ref aids

AFP, Cape Town

World governing body FIFA on Wednesday ruled out the introduction of both video technology and goal-line assistant referees at next summer's World Cup in South Africa.

FIFA chief Sepp Blatter said that the question of adding two officials to keep an eye on action in and around the critical penalty box area had been discussed at an extraordinary meeting of the FIFA executive committee, but it had been decided to stick with the existing system.

"We have decided that for World Cup 2010, there will be no change in refereeing. We will still have one referee and two assistants," Blatter said.

The meeting also ruled out the introduction of video technology to assist referees similar to the system used in rugby, cricket and tennis.

### Becks loses his grandfather

AFP, London

David Beckham's grandfather died Wednesday, his agent said, but the England midfielder is expected to stay in South Africa where he is helping sell England's bid for the 2018 World Cup.

"His grandfather passed away this morning, but we ask everyone to respect the family's privacy at this time," his spokesman Simon Oliveira told AFP.

Joseph West, 83, who died after battling a serious illness, was very close to Beckham and is credited with having had a formative influence on the star player's early career, reports said.

A friend of the player said that unless the funeral takes place in the next couple of days, Beckham is expected to continue his schedule in South Africa.

Beckham, one of the few players to score in three World Cups, will take part in Friday's draw for next year's competition.

### Tiger admits transgressions

AFP, New York

Golf superstar Tiger Woods Wednesday admitted "transgressions" saying he had let his family down, in a statement posted on his website that appeared to confirm rumours of an extramarital affair.

"I have let my family down and I regret those transgressions with all of my heart," Woods said, appealing for privacy after tabloid reports fuelled a media frenzy over his alleged links to women other than his wife, Elin.

"I have not been true to my values and the behaviour my family deserves. I am not without faults and I am far short of perfect. I am dealing with my behaviour and personal failings behind closed doors with my family. Those feelings should be shared by us alone."

## EUROPA LEAGUE

# Lazio, Celtic crash

**Football**

AFP, Paris

Everton, Benfica, Hamburg, Fenerbahce and Red Bull Salzburg confirmed their places in the knockout phase of the Europa League on Wednesday, but Lazio and Celtic crashed out of European competition.

Hamburg made sure of their spot in the last 32 with a 2-0 victory at home to Rapid Vienna, thereby rendering Celtic's 2-0 win against Hapoel Tel-Aviv at Celtic Park immaterial and also securing the progress of the Israeli side.

Benfica won 2-1 at Belarusian outfit BATE Borisov to seal top spot in Group I, with Everton making sure of second place by beating AEK Athens 1-0 in Greece via a well-taken goal by Diniyar Bilyaletdinov in the sixth minute.

Javier Saviola and Fabio Coentrao were both on target for Portuguese giants Benfica, who are assured of the top berth in the group with one game remaining due to a superior head-to-head record against Everton.

Red Bull Salzburg's 2-1 victory over Lazio was their fifth straight win in the competition.

It sent the Austrian champions through as Group G winners and Lazio cannot catch second-placed Villarreal after the Spanish side won 2-0 at Levski Sofia.

Somen Tchoyi's fine solo goal with 12 minutes remaining proved the difference between the sides after Lazio midfielder Pasquale Foggia had cancelled out Rabiu Afolabi's 52nd-minute opener.

Giuseppe Rossi and Marcos Senna were the scorers in Villarreal's victory in Sofia and the Spanish side are guaranteed to finish second in their group despite being only three points ahead of Lazio with a game to play due to a better aggregate record against Davide Ballardini's charges.

Georgios Samaras's flying 22nd-minute header and a stylish free-kick by Barry Robson earned Celtic their first win in the competition against Hapoel.

The 2003 runners-up needed Hamburg to lose to stand any chance of going through though, and the Bundesliga outfit secured a comfortable 2-0 victory over Rapid Vienna with second-half goals by Marcell Jansen and Marcus Berg.

Valencia took over the Group B summit by defeating previous pool leaders Lille 3-1 thanks to a brace from Joaquin and a second-half Juan Mata strike, with the other game in the group between Genoa and Slavia Prague ending in a 0-0 draw that eliminates the Czech side but keeps the Italians in the hunt.

In Group H, Fenerbahce made sure of qualification by beating second-placed FC Twente 1-0, while Moldova's FC Sheriff Tiraspol remain in contention after a 1-1 draw at home to Steaua Bucharest ended the Romanians' hopes.

Ajax were already assured of their progress from Group A, and won 2-1 at FC Timisoara, Luiz Suarez scoring once and missing two penalties, as goalkeeper Costel Pantilimon and defender Eder Bonfim were sent off for the home side.

Dinamo Zagreb won 1-0 at Anderlecht to keep their hopes alive.

## LEAGUE ONE PSG crush Boulogne

AFP, Boulogne

Paris Saint-Germain left it late before giving renewed life to their title push on Wednesday with a 5-2 victory at struggling northern outfit Boulogne.

Trailing 1-0 at half-time following a superb 36th minute goal from Boulogne's Guillaume Ducatel, the Parisians sparked into life on the hour mark with four goals in a 10-minute spree.

Midfielder Clement Chantome got the equaliser after 60 minutes with Peguy Luyindula stepping up to convert a penalty three minutes later.

A double in the space of three minutes from striker Mevlut Erding (67, 70) put the visitors well on the way for victory.

Boulogne got one back through a Johan Ramare (82) penalty but Jean-Eudes Maurice slotted home the fifth for PSG four minutes from time following a Younousse Sankhare pass.

After their 1-0 win over Auxerre last weekend, PSG will be hoping to continue their form when they take on table-toppers Bordeaux on Saturday.

Boulogne had been looking to end a spiral of 10 matches without victory, but hit by the absence of their emblematic captain Gregory Thil and midfielder Alexandre Cuvilier, suffered their fifth straight defeat.

PSG are six points behind leaders Bordeaux with Boulogne on nine points after 14 games leaving them second from bottom.

# City spike Gunners

**Football**

AFP, Manchester

Carlos Tevez, Shaun Wright-Phillips and Vladimir Weiss were all on target as Manchester City beat Arsenal 3-0 in the quarterfinals of the English League Cup at Eastlands here on Wednesday.

After a tense opening period, Tevez put City in front four minutes after the break before Wright-Phillips added a second midway through the second half.

Substitute Weiss then made sure of victory as City moved closer to winning a first major trophy since they won the League Cup in 1976.

Former Arsenal striker Emmanuel Adebayor was always going to receive plenty of abuse from his old club's fans after the furore of City's 4-2 league win at Eastlands in September.

Adebayor was banned for a challenge on Robin van Persie but escaped censure for celebrating in front of the visiting fans after scoring for his new club.

The Togo forward went close on Wednesday to giving City the lead when he rose to head Gareth Barry's corner and was only denied by a fine low save from Lukas Fabianski.

But, as always, Arsenal's youthful side, which featured nine changes from the team beaten 3-0 by Chelsea at the weekend, looked more than comfortable with the ball.

Jack Wilshere laid on a good opportunity for Aaron Ramsey only for the Welshman to be blocked by another former Arsenal player, Kolo Toure.

But City were continuing to create the better openings and after Wright-Phillips robbed Mikael Silvestre and crossed,

Craig Bellamy should have given the hosts the lead but failed to hit the target from 10 yards.

Wilshere was Arsenal's creative force once again as he worked an opening for Carlos Vela only for the Spanish youngster to prod over the bar under pressure from Joleon Lescott.

But Argentinian Carlos Tevez threatened once again for City with a powerful run past Silvestre and a thumping shot that was only palmed away by Fabianski, with the home team claiming it hit Silvestre's hand.

As both teams continued to attack, Emmanuel Eboe beat Wayne Bridge and his powerful shot was gathered at the second attempt by Shay Given.

But City took just four

minutes after the restart to go in front.

Tomas Rosicky was closed down and robbed by Bellamy, who fed Tevez.

The former Manchester United forward ran in-field and cut past Eboe and Alex Song before drilling a shot off the under-side of the bar and into the far corner for his fourth goal for City.

Arsenal were desperate for a quick response and Rosicky angled a header wide of goal from Fran Merida's corner before Ramsey lifted a shot over the bar after being played through by Vela.

Adebayor could have made the game safe after racing on to Bellamy's cross from the left but stabbed wide under pressure from Fabianski.

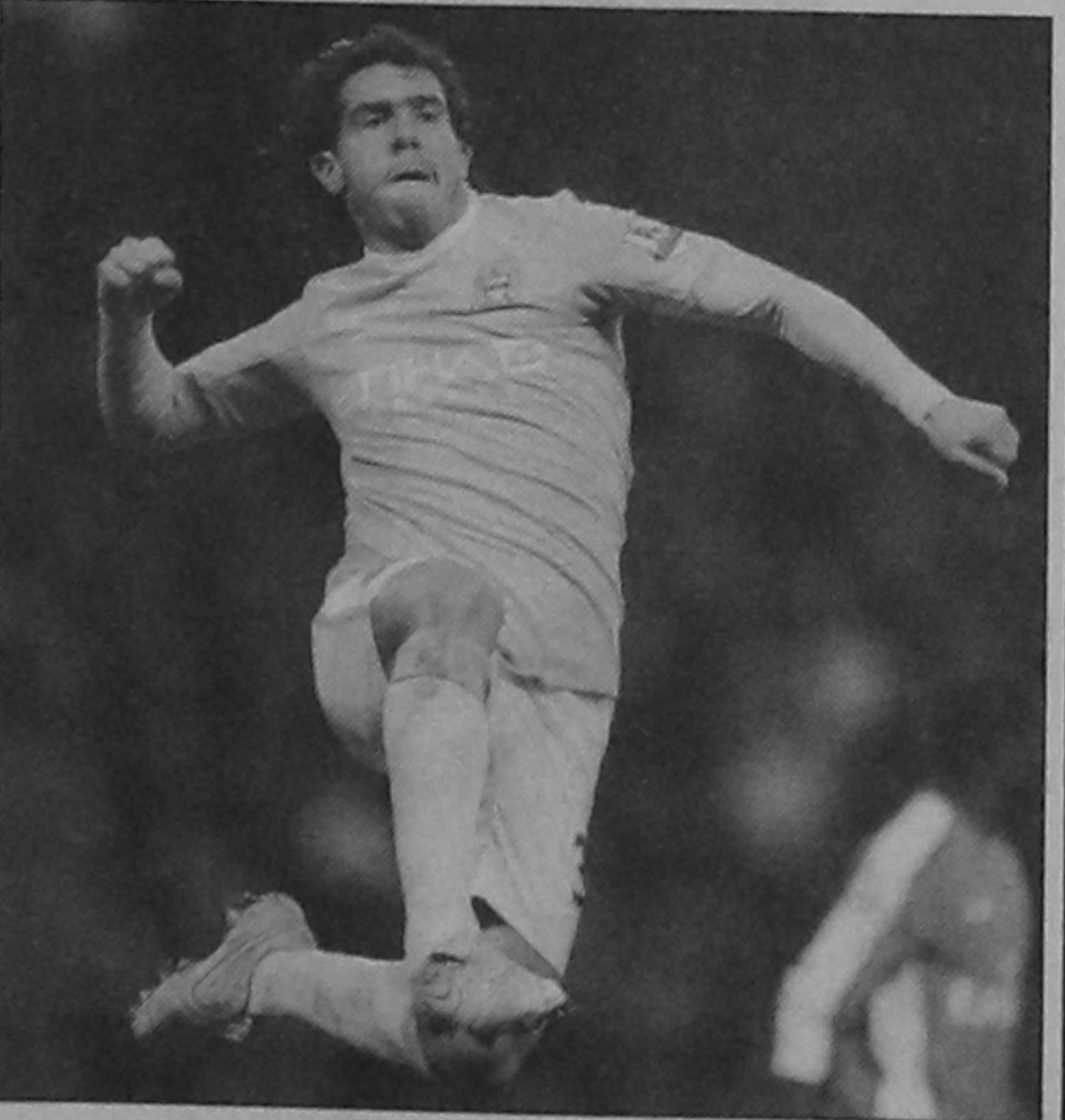


PHOTO: AFP

Manchester City striker Carlos Tevez is ecstatic after scoring against Arsenal during their Carling Cup quarterfinal at the City of Manchester Stadium on Wednesday.

# Barca see off Xerez

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona and their new Ballon D'Or victor Lionel Messi moved five points clear of Real Madrid at the top of the Spanish league with goals from Thierry Henry and Zlatan Ibrahimovic sealing a 2-0 win at Xerez on Wednesday.

Barca built on their 1-0 win over foes Real in Sunday's 'Clasico' and piled more pressure on their rivals in a rearranged league fixture to accommodate their participation in the FIFA World Club Cup in Abu Dhabi in mid-December.

France international Henry headed the opener 58 seconds into the second half before substitute Ibrahimovic scored his ninth goal of the season with a delightful chip in the final minute.

Messi, basking in lifting the Ballon D'Or 24 hours ago, came on as a substitute and hit the post before setting up Ibrahimovic's goal.

Champions Barca are also in league action this Saturday at Deportivo La Coruna while Real host Almeria.

The Xerez game had been brought forward due to Barca's participation in the FIFA World Club Cup in Abu Dhabi and coach Pep Guardiola rang the changes with Ballon D'Or winner Messi, who won the award on Tuesday at a canter, starting on the substitutes' bench.

Messi was joined by first teamers Andres Iniesta, Ibrahimovic, Gerard Pique and captain Carles Puyol while Sergi Busquets was suspended following his stupid dismissal against Real.

Nevertheless there was enough quality on show with Thierry Henry, Dani Alves and Xavi, voted third in the Ballon D'Or, to test a Xerez side that had been thrashed 5-1 by Getafe last time out to leave them rooted to the bottom of the table.

With key inventive players missing Barcelona struggled to create chances and it was not until the 25th minute that they looked like scoring with Frenchman Henry shooting over the bar from an acute angle.

Two set-pieces provided the best first half opportunities with Cote D'Ivoire midfielder Yaya Toure, who recently expressed his disappointment at not being in the first team, wasting a golden chance as the ball ricocheted off his chest to goalkeeper Renan Brito.

Barca had drawn their last three league matches but Guardiola didn't panic with the score 0-0 at the interval and 59 seconds into the second half the breakthrough came.

Brazilian left back Maxwell broke down the flank and stood a cross up for Henry to glance a header in off the underside of the crossbar.

It was Henry's first goal since his controversial handball helped France eliminate Ireland in the World Cup play-off and he celebrated wildly.

Xerez were frustrated at conceding so early and then had to deal with the sight of Messi warming up on the touchline.

Messi replaced Pedro Rodriguez on 55 minutes to give Barca more trickery going forward but Xerez recovered well from the goal setback and a fantastic counter attack almost provided the equaliser just after the hour mark but a

poor touch from striker Mario Bermejo saw the move break down.

Xerez had only scored four goals in the league but were looking threatening and Guardiola threw on Ibrahimovic - the hero against Real with his winning volley - for Bojan Krkic.

Messi showed why his regarded as the best player on the planet with a great run and back heel to wow the crowd and set up Alves but the Brazilian's cross was scrambled to safety.

Messi hit the post late on and Iniesta missed an unbelievable chance but they didn't prove costly for the champions as Ibrahimovic chipped in a late second.

## MU opt against Ljajic move

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United have decided not to take up the option to sign Partizan Belgrade midfielder Adem Ljajic, a club spokesman said Thursday.

The 18-year-old Serbian had been lined up for a potential move to Old Trafford next year.

However United feel they have a wealth of talent in midfield and that their initial interest in Ljajic will not be followed up.

A club spokesman told ManUtd.com: "We had an option to buy the player but, having closely monitored his development over past 12 months, and taken into the consideration the young players emerging through the ranks, we have chosen not to pursue the transfer."