



Barcelona striker David Villa (R) is slide-tackled by Sporting Gijon defender Alberto Botia during their Primera Liga encounter at Nou Camp on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

A night of upsets

Football

AFP, London

Liverpool were sent crashing out of the League Cup by lowly Northampton on Wednesday as Chelsea and Manchester City tumbled out on a night of upsets.

The shock of the third round came at Anfield, where a virtual reserve Liverpool team were beaten 4-2 in a penalty shoot-out by Northampton, languishing near the bottom of the fourth tier of English football.

Serbian striker Milan Jovanovic looked to have set Premier League Liverpool on their way after nine minutes, rifling in a low left foot shot. But Roy Hodgson's side were stunned when Billy McKay hooked in an equaliser for the League Two outfit, forcing the match into extra time.

Eight minutes later, the unthinkable occurred as Michael Jacobs put Northampton ahead. It looked like being enough until David Ngog struck on 116 minutes to send the game into a shoot-out with the score at 2-2.

The fairytale looked over when Steve Guinan skied the first spot-kick of the shoot-out for the Cobblers.

But subsequent misses by Ngog and youngster Nathan Eccleston left Northampton striker Abdul Osman with a shot for glory and the forward made no mistake, beating Liverpool keeper Brad Jones to trigger joyous scenes.

The defeat was the latest disappointment for Liverpool, who have struggled to make any kind of impression in the league where they are lying in 16th place, already 10 points behind leaders Chelsea.

Chelsea were beaten 4-3 by Newcastle at Stamford Bridge, where not even the returning John Terry could stifle the Magpies, who recovered from an early Patrick van Aanholt goal to prevail in a seven-goal thriller.

Newcastle looked to be cruising to victory after taking a 3-1 lead early in the second half with goals from Nile Ranger, Ryan Taylor and Shola Ameobi.

Chelsea's problems deepened when Yossi Benayoun limped off with an injury after the Blues had already made their three substitutions, forcing the home side to play the

remainder of the match with 10 men.

However Chelsea fought back to level with two goals from Nicolas Anelka, the equaliser coming from the penalty spot with only three minutes left.

An epic encounter was settled on 90 minutes though when Ameobi nodded in a header to settle a pulsating encounter.

In another upset, West Bromwich Albion ratcheted up the pressure on Manchester City boss Roberto Mancini after the Baggies downed their free-

spending opponents 2-1 at the Hawthorns. Gianni Zuiverloon and Simon Cox got the goals for West Brom after Jo had given City an early lead.

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St Etienne in last 16

AFP, Paris

St Etienne, who went top of the French first division for the first time in 29 years last weekend, continued their impressive form on Wednesday with a 2-0 win over Nice in the League Cup round of 32.

With a crucial league derby against Lyon approaching, St Etienne rested Loic Perrin, Carlos Bocanegra and Sylvain Monsoreau while top scorer Dimitri Payet was injured.

Christophe Landrin opened the scoring in the 15th minute with a sweet volley from an acute angle after being set-up by Argentine winger Gonzalo Bergessio.

Bergessio added the second in the 39th minute, converting a cross from Bakary Sako.

Toulouse, currently second in the first division, were knocked out 2-1 by second division Boulogne after extra-time.

Chilian Gonzola Lorca put Boulogne ahead after half an hour.

Moussa Sissoko levelled in the 77th minute but Fatih scored a 115th-minute penalty to decide the tie against Toulouse who ended with 10 men.

Moore faces drinking charge

AFP, Dubai

A Dubai prosecutor said Wednesday that former Aussie national football captain Craig Moore, reportedly involved in a drunken altercation over a taxi fare, will only be charged on a misdemeanour drinking offence.

After Moore was questioned over "alcohol consumption, aggression and insult of a functionary and refusing to pay a taxi fare," Sami Salem al-Shami said it was decided to turn the case over to a court dealing with misdemeanours.

Moore will only be tried for "alcohol consumption under conditions not authorised by law," Shami said in a statement, explaining that the "private parties" -- the cabbie and a policeman -- had decided not to pursue it.

He did not elaborate but on Sunday The National newspaper cited Dubai police as saying Moore was arrested after a row with a cab driver that escalated into a confrontation with police.

Moore drunkenly argued with the cab driver over a 50 dirham (13.60 dollar) fare and police were called to intervene, the newspaper said.

"He then shoved one of the officers," it added.

Shami did not say when Moore would be tried.

The offence is punishable by up to three months in prison, a 5,000 dirham (1,360 dollar) fine, or both, The National said.

Inter hammer Bari

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan returned to the summit of Serie A on Wednesday after two goals each for strikers Diego Milito and Samuel Eto'o helped the champions to an easy 4-0 win at home to Bari.

Little Cesena, top on goal difference above Inter at the beginning of the evening, conceded for the first time since being promoted, going down 2-0 at Catania.

It was also a night for Italy's most coveted goalscorers to come to the fore as Milito, Fiorentina's Alberto Gilardino and Antonio Di Natale all hit the net for the first time in this campaign.

After four games, Inter are on 10 points, one clear of Brescia and Chievo, who scored impressive wins at home to Roma, 2-1, and away at inconsistent Napoli, 3-1, respectively.

AC Milan and Lazio dropped points after a 1-1 draw in Rome where Zlatan Ibrahimovic opened the scoring only for Sergio Floccari to equalise for Lazio.

While Inter have won all of the last five titles, it is the first time former Valencia and Liverpool coach Rafael Benitez has enjoyed top spot in Italy.

"We played beautiful football because we have quality players - it's nothing to do with the system we play," said Benitez, respond-

Villa lifts Barca

AFP, Madrid

Spain World Cup star David Villa scored a 49th minute winner as Barcelona beat Sporting Gijon 1-0 on Wednesday to record their first league win of the season at the Camp Nou.

Villa, 28, began his career at hometown club Gijon in 1999 and, in the absence of the injured Lionel Messi, struck a timely first goal at home for Barcelona following his 40-million-euro summer move from Valencia.

It was Barcelona's first home goal of the league campaign and allowed the champions to climb to third on nine points, one point behind leaders and arch-rivals Real Madrid who beat Espanyol 3-0 on Saturday.

The win gave the Camp Nou public something to cheer, after watching their side lose 2-0 to promoted Hercules in their last home league match. Since then, Barcelona have won three games on the spin.

Valencia saw their 100 per cent start come to an end in a 1-1 home draw with Atletico Madrid.

Portuguese winger Simao shot Atletico ahead and Valencia needed an 83rd minute equaliser from Aritz Aduriz to salvage a point as they joined Real Madrid on 10 points with Madrid top on goal difference.

Atletico had been indebted to 19-year-old goalkeeper David de Gea for producing several smart saves to keep his side in front until the closing stages with Aduriz powering in a header to equalise seven minutes from time.

Atletico, beaten 2-1 by Barcelona at the weekend, go fourth with the point, three points behind Valencia and Real and two points behind Barcelona.

With Messi out with an ankle injury until the

end of September, Barca youngster Bojan Krkic, 20, was given a chance to shine up front alongside Villa and Iniesta.

Nine minutes in Iniesta had a great chance for Barcelona but was foiled by smart work from goalkeeper Ivan Cuellar.

A minute later Mate Bilic fired just wide of the Barcelona posts to give the home side a scare.

Barcelona were struggling to get through a well-organised bottleneck but almost got the breakthrough on 26 minutes when Bojan ran a full 60 metres as Gijon were caught on the counter attack.

However, some last-ditch defending stopped the Barcelona from getting his shot off and scoring what would have been a wonder goal.

Villa then dragged a left-footed shot wide and at half-time the scores were level.

Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola brought on Pedro Rodriguez and Gerard Pique for Seydou Keita and Carles Puyol in the second half and the hosts scored four minutes after the break.

Dani Alves fed a great pass to Villa who made no mistake with the finish for his second league goal of the campaign.

The goal relaxed Barcelona who played their slick possession football as Sporting chased shadows, however a game-killing second goal remained elusive, with Pique and Villa going closest in the final 10 minutes.

Nerves were jangling when the visitors had a dangerous free-kick on the edge of the area in the final minute but Barcelona stood firm to take the points.

Elsewhere promoted Levante's 1-0 at Almeria handed them their first points of the season and moved them above their opponents, who are still searching for their first victory and sit second from bottom.

Real Zaragoza are also winless and prop up the table after a scoreless draw with Hercules on Wednesday.



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RESULTS

Almeria 0 Levante 1 (Sergio 39)
Real Zaragoza 0 Hercules 0
Barcelona 1 (Villa 49) Sporting Gijon 0
Valencia 1 (Aduriz 83) Atletico Madrid 1 (Simao 19)

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