



PHOTO: AFP
Arsenal striker Marouane Chamakh (C) heads in the opening goal against Wolverhampton Wanderers during their Premier League encounter at the Molineux Stadium on Wednesday.

HK end long wait

AFP, Guangzhou



Defending champions Qatar edged past Gulf neighbours Kuwait 2-0 to make the last 16 at the Asian Games on Thursday as Hong Kong ended a 52-year wait to qualify for the knockout rounds.

Qatar, who looked to be in deep trouble when they trailed India 1-0 with 11 minutes left on Tuesday, ensured they finished top of Group D with a 31st minute strike from Hatim Abdelaziz and another by Ahmad Abdil deep in injury time.

Kuwait still went through as the second placed team, while India stunned Singapore 4-1 to keep their hopes alive of qualifying as one of the four best-placed teams finishing third.

The Indians put Singapore on the back foot with 13 minutes gone when Jewel Raja Shaikh got the opener.

The floodgates opened in the second half, with further goals from Jibon Singh Khangeman, Singh Balwant and Maithani Minish before the Young Lions got a late consolation.

It was a poor tournament for Singapore, who are out of the running and face an early plane home.

Joining them on the scrapheap are Bangladesh who were hammered 4-1 by Hong Kong, with Au Yeung Yiu Chung grabbing two

goals and Ju Ying Zhi and Chan Man Fai piling on the misery for the hopelessly outclassed Bangladeshis.

Mohammed Hoque briefly pulled his side level at 1-1 midway through the first half with his team's only goal of the tournament, but Bangladesh finished pointless in three matches having conceded 10 goals.

Hong Kong, who face Oman in the next stage, collected seven points from their three matches but finished runners-up to Group E winners UAE on goal difference after the Gulf side saw off Uzbekistan 3-0.

Theyab Al Musabi put the UAE in front after 10 minutes with Ahmed Al Jenaibi adding a brace courtesy of a strike in each half.

UAE will tackle Kuwait for a place in the quarter-finals.

In Group F, Bryan Robson's Thailand ensured they stayed in the tournament but it was a patchy performance in a drab 0-0 draw with minnows the Maldives.

It was equally bad from Pakistan, who enlisted the help of Robson's former England colleague Graham Roberts to help them here.

His influence failed to work as they crashed 2-0 to Oman, who qualify with Thailand as the Pakistanis head home.

Asian heavyweights Japan and South Korea, along with hosts China, wrap up their qualifying campaign on Saturday, a day after the Asian Games officially start.

Benitez rues bad luck

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan coach Rafael Benitez blamed bad luck after his Serie A champions slumped to a 1-1 draw against Lecce on Wednesday.

It was the second draw in a row against a newly-promoted side for the goal shy nerazzurri and before that they were well beaten by Tottenham in the Champions League.

Benitez's side slumped to fourth in the table ahead of Sunday's city derby against new leaders AC Milan.

What has been remarkable this season has been Inter's failures in front of goal with just 13 successful strikes in 11 league games.

They have also drawn five of those matches.

At this stage last season Jose Mourinho's Inter had eight more points, had scored more than double the number of goals (28) and were well clear at the top of Serie A.

But former Liverpool boss Benitez refuses to accept he is to blame for their drop in form.

"If we were lacking intensity it's everyone's responsibility, those on the pitch and those who work off it," he said as way of explanation for their limp performance against Lecce.

"I'm not making comparisons with last season, every season is a different race.

"We lacked luck and I hope we'll get that at other times. Last season we were scoring from certain chances (that we're missing now).

SPORTS POLL
WEEKLY QUESTION
Who do you think should be Bangladesh's captain in the World Cup?
Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote
Follow The Daily Star Sport on **twitter**
www.twitter.com/dssport

What to WATCH

TEN Sports
Asian Games Opening Ceremony
Live from 5:45pm
NEO Cricket
India v New Zealand
Second Test, Day 1
Live from 10:00am
TEN Cricket
Pakistan v South Africa
First Test, Day 1
Live from 12:00pm
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

DAY'S EVENT

Nat'l Cricket League
Dhaka v Barisal at SBNS
Rajshahi v Khulna at DCS

Dour Mancunian derby

AFP, London



Chelsea extended their lead at the top of the Premier League with a 1-0 victory over local rivals Fulham as the Manchester derby failed to live up to expectations.

A Michael Essien goal after half an hour saw Chelsea bounce back from Sunday's defeat to Liverpool to open a four-point lead after Manchester United were held 0-0 by Manchester City in a draw at Old Trafford.

Chelsea's delight at victory was tempered, however, by a red card for goalscorer Essien deep in injury time for a second bookable offence.

Meanwhile a disappointing Manchester derby saw City and United cancel each other out in a cagey encounter at Eastlands where goalscoring opportunities were thin on the ground.

Arsenal recovered from the shock of their home defeat to Newcastle on Sunday by easing past struggling Wolves 2-0 at Molineux.

The Gunners took the lead with one of the fastest goals of the season, Marouane Chamakh netting his seventh goal of the campaign in less than a minute to set the

minutes after half-time.

Second half substitute Jason Roberts then slotted the winner eight minutes from time as Rovers' former Newcastle boss Sam Allardyce made it a happy return to St James Park.

An 89th-minute goal from Aston Villa defender James Collins clinched all three points for Gerard Houllier's team in a 3-2 win over Blackpool in a helter skelter tussle at Villa Park.

Stewart Downing put Villa 1-0 up after 28 minutes, curling into the top corner after good work from Ashley Young. Blackpool struck back right on half-time when Marlon Harewood pounced on a Matt Phillips backheel to tuck away

But Scott Parker levelled for the Hammers five minutes later and early in the second half Frederic Piquionne scored from the spot to put the Londoners ahead. West Ham's hopes of a precious three points were dashed by Pablo Ibanez, however, who scored on 71 minutes to earn the visitors a draw, a result which left the Hammers rooted to the bottom of the table.

At Goodison, Everton needed a goal in the fourth minute of stoppage time from Jermaine Beckford to secure a 1-1 draw against Bolton, who had taken the lead after 79 minutes through Ivan Klasnic.

However the hero for the Gunners was maligned keeper Lukasz Fabianski, who pulled off a series of stunning saves to help preserve the visitors' lead. Liverpool's revival suffered a blip as they were held to a 1-1 draw at Wigan. The Reds looked to be on course for a fourth consecutive league victory after Fernando Torres slotted his fourth goal in as many games after seven minutes at the DW Stadium.

But Wigan came back into the match and netted a deserved equaliser early in the second half when Hugo Rodallega steered in a low shot from 10 yards.

After their superb away victory over Arsenal, Newcastle were brought crashing down to earth in a 2-1 home defeat by Blackburn.

Morten Gamst Pedersen fired Rovers ahead after only three minutes before Newcastle got back on level terms through in-form striker Andy Carroll, who enhanced his claims for a place in England manager Fabio Capello's next squad with a well-taken equaliser two

Milan soar to top

AFP, Rome



AC Milan went top of Serie A on Wednesday with a 3-1 victory over Palermo at the San Siro as previous leaders Lazio crashed 1-0 at newly-promoted Cesena.

Pato opened the scoring for Milan before Armin Bacinovic equalised for the Sicilians but a Zlatan Ibrahimovic penalty and late Robinho third gave the rossoneri the championship lead.

The crucial moment in the game was the 77th minute penalty award when Massimo Ambrosini went down a little easily in the box.

Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri admitted his team were lucky to get that decision.

"Seeing it again on TV it seems that Ambrosini let himself fall down a bit but I have to say that in real time I thought it was a penalty," he said before explaining that he thought there could have been up to two penalties for each team.

"The referee called them this way so this time things have gone well for us but on other occasions we were penalised a little bit."

There were a couple of early

half chances but Palermo's Mauricio Pinilla swiped at thin air with the goal at his mercy when well placed while up the other end Ibrahimovic dragged a shot wide.

Milan took the lead on 19 minutes in somewhat straightforward fashion as Pato rose to power home a header from Massimo Ambrosini's corner following some feeble marking from Bacinovic.

Palermo were marginally the more dangerous despite an under par performance from playmaker Javier Pastore but Pinilla's firm header on 29 minutes from Mattia Cassani's cross was straight at Christian Abbiati while the goalkeeper had little trouble dealing with Josip Ilicic's effort from distance on 44 minutes.

Abbiati was kept busy without being overly stretched and on 48 minutes he tipped Cesare Bovo's powerful curling free-kick over the bar.

The deserved equaliser came on 63 minutes. Bacinovic lined up from fully 25 yards out but his shot lacked venom.

Even so, Thiago Silva slipped and missed the ball while Abbiati seemed to have assumed his defence would deal with it and he was a static spectator as the ball crept into the corner of the net.

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Milan almost went back in front as Clarence Seedorf fired against the post and then headed the rebound just wide.

But then Ambrosini went down a little easily under a challenge from goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu and Ibrahimovic despatched the penalty with aplomb.

Milan were then able to hit Palermo on the break with Ibrahimovic teeing up substitute Robinho to kill the game seven minutes from time.

Lazio lost the lead after suffering a second successive loss after Sunday's 2-0 derby defeat to Roma.

Marco Parolo scored the only goal of the game five minutes from time as the biancoceleste fell to second. Champions Inter Milan dropped to fourth as they drew for the fifth time in their 11 games as Lecce came from behind to snatch a point.

Diego Milito scored just his third goal of the season on 76 minutes only for Uruguayan Ruben Oliver, back from a suspension, to cancel that out three minutes later.

Napoli, who finished the game carrying two injured players, moved up to third as Argentina forward Ezequiel Lavezzi snatched a winner deep into injury time as they won 1-0 at Cagliari.

"We did really not to get disorganised at the end. If we keep playing like this we can get some important results," enthused Lavezzi.

Juventus dropped to fifth with a 1-1 draw at Brescia, while Alessandro Diamanti pulled the scores level after Fabio Quagliarella's opener.

Despite a poor start to the season, sixth-placed Roma are just five points off top now following a third win in a row.

Brazilian Simplicio opened the scoring in their 3-1 win over Fiorentina at the Stadio Olimpico with Marco Borriello doubling it.

Alberto Gilardino pulled one back but Simone Perrotta made the points safe.

RESULTS
Aston Villa 3 (Downing 28, Delfouneso 60, Collins 89) Blackpool 2 (Harewood 45, Campbell 87)
Chelsea 1 (Essien 30) Fulham 0
Everton 1 (Beckford 90) Bolton 1 (Klasnic 79)
Manchester City 0 Manchester United 0
Newcastle 1 (Carroll 47) Blackburn 2 (Pedersen 3, Roberts 82)
West Ham 2 (Parker 43, Piquionne 50-pen) West Brom 2 (Odemwingie 38-pen, Ibanez 71)
Wigan 1 (Rodallega 52) Liverpool 1 (Torres 7)

Loew picks youngsters

Football

REUTERS, Berlin

Four of the Bundesliga's most talented young players got their first Germany call-up on Thursday with coach Joachim Loew eager to test them on the international stage.

Borussia Dortmund's Marcel Schmelzer, 22, and teenager Mario Goetze plus Mainz 05 pair Lewis Holtby and Andre Schuerle, both 20, were included in the squad for the Nov. 17 friendly away to Sweden after a sparkling start to the season.

Loew, who guided the youngest German World Cup squad in 76 years to third place in South Africa, also recalled Dortmund's Mats Hummels, 21 and Kevin Grosskreutz, 22, who have one cap each.

"The game in Sweden is a good opportunity to give a chance to players with great potential who have been in the spotlight lately and (who) fit our overall philosophy," said Loew.

Dortmund have a four-point lead at the top in the Bundesliga ahead of Mainz 05 after a scintillating start that has seen them score 27 goals

in 11 matches and concede only seven. Goetze has scored twice already and set up another four goals for his team mates. Schuerle, with four goals and two assists, and Holtby inspired second-placed Mainz to a seven-match winning streak to equal the Bundesliga record for the best start to a season.

Loew opted to give captain Philipp Lahm and fellow Bayern Munich players Holger Badstuber and Thomas Mueller a rest for the final international of the year.

He did, however, include Bayern midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger, who missed their two Euro 2012 qualifiers against Turkey and Kazakhstan in October through injury.

Germany top qualifying Group A with maximum points after with four wins out of four.

The Germany coach also agreed with Werder Bremen and Real Madrid not to call up goalkeeper Tim Wiese and midfielder Mesut Ozil.

SQUAD
Goalkeepers:
Rene Adler (Bayer Leverkusen), Manuel Neuer (Schalke 04)
Defenders:
Andreas Beck (Hoffenheim), Jerome Boateng (Manchester City), Mats Hummels (Borussia Dortmund), Per Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Sascha Riether (VfL Wolfsburg), Marcel Schmelzer (Borussia Dortmund), Heiko Westermann (Hamburg SV)
Midfielders:
Mario Goetze (Borussia Dortmund), Kevin Grosskreutz (Borussia Dortmund), Lewis Holtby (Mainz 05), Sami Khedira (Real Madrid), Toni Kroos (Bayern Munich), Marko Marin (Werder Bremen), Lukas Podolski (Cologne), Andre Schuerle (Mainz 05), Bastian Schweinsteiger (Bayern Munich), Christian Traesch (VfB Stuttgart)
Forwards:
Cacau (VfB Stuttgart), Mario Gomez

RESULTS
Marseille 2 (A. Ayew 42, Azpilicueta 60) Monaco 1 (Coutadeur 22-pen)
Valenciennes 1 (Dossevi 3) Paris SG 3 (Camara 9, Jallet 27, Luyindula 51)
Montpellier 2 (Kabze 28, 52) Lille 1

PSG wrapped up their place in the last four in the 51st minute with a nicely worked move that saw Sessegnon's delightfully weighted pass find Luyindula running on into the area and the experienced striker slid it past Penneteau into the far corner of the net.

Holders Marseille bounced back from their defeat by PSG with a 2-1 home win over Monaco coming from behind against the visitors, who had taken the lead through a Mathieu Contadeur penalty.

However, goals by Ghanaian World Cup star Andre Ayew and Spanish summer signing Cesar Azpilicueta saw Didier Deschamps side safely into the semifinals where they join Auxerre.

PSG extend run

Football

AFP, Paris

In-form Paris Saint Germain extended their unbeaten run to five matches in all competitions on Wednesday as they reached the League Cup semifinals with a 3-1 victory away at Valenciennes.

Goals by Zoumana Camara, Christophe Jallet and Pegguy Luyindula saw them come from behind after Mathieu Dossevi's opener for the hosts and avert defeat at the hands of their coach Antoine Kombouare's former club.

Valenciennes opened the scoring and brought PSG straight back down to earth, after their superb 2-1 league win over champions Marseille on Sunday, as Dossevi's volley deflected off the outstretched leg of Camara - who had originally lost the ball - and beat goalkeeper Gregory Coupet.

It was the worst possible start for 31-year-old Camara, who had earned himself a rare starting spot, but the central defender redeemed himself

in the ninth minute as he rose unopposed to head past Nicolas Penneteau in the home goal and level the match.

The visitors took the lead finally a minute later as Valeneiennes lost possession in the middle of the pitch and the ball was headed by Hoarau out to Jallet, who kept his composure and planted a fine cross shot from the right of the area past Penneteau.

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PHOTO: AFP
Milan striker Alexandre Pato celebrates his goal against Palermo during their Serie A clash in San Siro on Wednesday.

Wang says sorry

AFP, Guangzhou



Under-fire Chinese goalkeeper Wang Dalei, who sparked outrage after he called home fans "morons" and "a bunch of dogs", has apologised to the nation and been suspended.

The highly rated 21-year-old, linked with European champions Inter Milan and big-spending Manchester City, let loose on a micro-blogging site after being singled out for his failure to stop Japan's second goal on Monday.

The Japanese, China's bitter rivals, went on to win the match 3-0 in the Asian Games group stage in Guangzhou, to a barrage of criticism from fans and the

Chinese media.

One TV commentator compared Wang to a "volleyballer".

"I apologise sincerely to the media and supporters of the whole nation for my unpleasant words, which damaged the image of the football team, sports and China," a repentant Wang said.

"It's my fault. I hope you can forgive me and give me another chance," he added, calling his outburst "extreme".

"I'll never make the same mistake in the future."

Nevertheless Cai Jiadong, secretary general of the Chinese Asian Games delegation, said that Wang had been "suspended and ordered to meditate on his action", the state Xinhua news agency said.

"Wang admitted his action was unprofessional and irrational and hurt the feelings of Chinese soccer fans and

tarnished the image as a national soccer team player," Cai said.

He did not say how many games Wang, who branded reporters "haters of Chinese soccer", would be suspended for, but he did not feature in their nail-biting 2-1 victory over Kyrgyzstan on Wednesday.

Wang had written on the micro-blogging site: "I heard that there are 7,000 professional soccer reporters (in China) and I guess 4,000 of them must hate soccer."

"Is that really necessary? I'm not a 'Spiderman'. I punched the ball out, but you guys still laugh at me. I was beaten on the pitch and verbally abused off. Don't say you know how to play soccer. Because you know nothing about it."

The blogging site has been shutdown until the end of the Asian Games, which finish on November 27.