

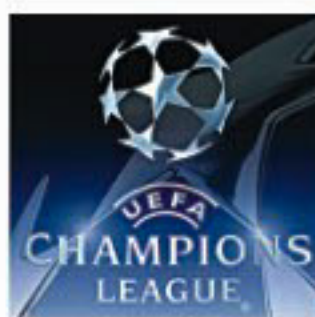


Schalke defender Benedikt Hoewedes (R) celebrates his goal with teammate Raul during their Champions League quarterfinal in Gelsenkirchen on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Schalke KO Inter

AFP, Gelsenkirchen



Schalke 04 will face English giants Manchester United in the semifinals of the Champions League after beating holders Inter Milan 2-1 on Wednesday to knock-out the holders 7-3 on aggregate.

Having won the quarterfinal first-leg 5-2 at Inter's San Siro stadium last week, the second-leg back in Germany was always going to be a formality.

Spain legend Raul opened the scoring on the stroke of half-time to extend his record Champions League tally to 71 goals while Inter midfielder Thiago Motta levelled minutes after the restart.

Defender Benedikt Hoewedes put the matter beyond doubt with a late winner, rubber-stamping Schalke's first-ever appearance in the semi-finals of Europe's premier club event.

"It was a magnificent victory," said Schalke chairman Clemens Toennies, who sacked coach Felix Magath last month and replaced him with ex-Hoffenheim handler Ralf Rangnick.

Germany defender Christoph Metzelder, playing with a mask to protect a healing broken nose, said the Bundesliga side are growing in confidence.

"We have seen in the two games just how much team this potential has, we really wanted to win this game out right," said Metzelder.

Schalke are now set to win just short of 55 million euros (79.5m US dollars) for

reaching the last four.

Inter came to Gelsenkirchen facing a near-impossible task of needing to score four goals to go through to the semifinals to face Premier League giants United.

Schalke will host United at their Veltins Arena stadium on April 26 in the first-leg of the semifinal, with the return leg at Old Trafford on May 4.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson was in Gelsenkirchen amongst the crowd of 54,000 to watch the Royal Blues' quarter-final.

The hosts took the lead just before the half-time break when Spanish midfielder Jose Manuel Jurado split the Inter defence with a perfectly-timed pass into the path of compatriot Raul.

The Spain veteran needed no second invitation to round Inter goalkeeper Julio Cesar and slot his shot into an empty net.

It was the Spaniard's 71st Champions League goal, his fifth goal of this European campaign and the 33-year-old's 18th since joining Schalke from Real at the start of the season.

It put Schalke up 6-2 on aggregate and effectively killed off any flicker of hope the Italians had.

The guests levelled the scores when Motta was left unmarked from a corner and headed home on 49 minutes.

Schalke looked to have regained the lead on the hour mark only for Howedes' header to be ruled off-side, but the defender scored the winner when he ran onto a long pass from Raul to drill his shot past Julio Cesar.

Cole accepts charge

AFP, London

West Ham striker Carlton Cole on Thursday accepted a charge of improper conduct over comments he posted on Twitter about Ghana fans attending last month's friendly with England.

Cole landed in hot water after commenting on the large contingent of Ghana fans who thronged Wembley for the 1-1 draw.

"Immigration has surrounded the Wembley premises! I knew it was a trap! Hahahaha. The only way to get out safely is to wear an England jersey and paint your face w/ the St. George's flag!" Cole posted on the micro-blogging site.

Cole later removed the comments from his Twitter feed but was hit by FA disciplinary charges. Cole has now accepted the charge and is expected to receive a fine or a warning.

Cole's case is expected to be resolved by April 21.



SET Max
Indian Premier League
Chennai Super Kings v Royal Challengers Bangalore
Live from 4:30pm
Deccan Chargers v Kings XI Punjab
Live from 8:30pm

ESPN
English Premiership
West Bromwich v Chelsea
Live from 8:00pm
Blackpool v Wigan
Live from 11:00pm

STAR Sports
English Premiership
Birmingham City v Sunderland
Live from 8:00pm

TEN Action+
La Liga
Real Madrid v Barcelona
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)



National Cricket League
(Four-Day Match, Day-1)
Dhaka v Barisal at Bogra
Rajshahi v Sylhet at Rajshahi

Independence Cup
Muktijoddha v Arambagh
Time: 6:00pm
Venue: Kamalapur Stadium
Sheikh Russel v Mohammedan
Time: 6:30pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Bangladesh A v South Africa A
(2nd 4-day Match, Day-4)
Venue: Pietermaritzburg

An Iberian lock-out

AFP, Paris



FC Porto led an Iberian lock-out of the Europa League semifinals on Thursday, Jose Mourinho's former charges brushing aside Spartak Moscow.

Under Mourinho, Porto captured the 2003 UEFA Cup and the Champions League the following year, and they edged closer to claiming Europe's second tier club competition again with a 5-2 drubbing of Spartak Moscow for a 10-3 aggregate win.

Porto, now in the care of Andre Villas-Boas, strolled into the last four with first half goals from Brazilian forward Hulk and Cristian Rodriguez.

Colombian midfielder Fredy Guarin added to the Portuguese side's tally shortly after the break before Spartak's Artem Dzyuba reduced the deficit on 52 minutes.

First leg hat-trick hero Falcao produced Porto's fourth on the night, a close range header, for the Colombian's 11th in the competition two minutes later.

Spartak's Ari scored with 20 minutes remaining but Porto were not in the mood to capitulate, substitute Ruben Micael rounding off the lopsided tie with Porto's fifth one minute from time.

Villarreal put one foot in the semifinals last week with a 5-1 first leg win at home, and cruised into the last four with a 3-1 second

leg success in Enschede, 8-2 on aggregate.

Twente gave themselves a glimmer of hope with Emir Bajrami's 32nd minute tap in but their Spanish visitors levelled on the hour when Giuseppe Rossi scored from the spot after Twente's Dwight Tiadealli was sent off for felling Wakaso Mubarak.

Marco Ruben added a second penalty on 84 minutes with Cani underlining the visitor's supremacy with a superb left-footed volley on the whistle.

The second semifinal, an all-Portuguese affair, pits Sporting Braga against Benfica.

Braga, who knocked out Liverpool in the last round, went through on the away goals rule after a goalless stalemate at home in the second leg to follow last week's 1-1 draw in Ukraine.

The northern Portuguese outfit had made life difficult for themselves with the 29th minute sending off of Brazil forward Paolo Case for a late challenge on Dynamo striker Andriy Yarmolenko.

Kiev were also down a man three minutes from time when Popov picked up a second yellow card.

While Braga weeded made to sweat to the end their last four rivals Benfica secured their ticket after a 2-2 draw at PSV Eindhoven for a 6-3 aggregate win.

The Lisbon side were living dangerously when PSV raced to a 2-0 lead on the night to make it 3-4 on aggregate in the first half an hour but the visitors ensured their European adventure continued with goals from Luisao and Oscar Cardazo from the spot.

Real cruise into semis

AFP, London



Real Madrid secured a Champions League semifinal showdown with Barcelona as Cristiano Ronaldo punished Heurelho Gomes's blunder to clinch a 1-0 win over Tottenham in the quarterfinal second leg on Wednesday.

Jose Mourinho's side already had one foot in the last four after romping to a 4-0 victory in the first leg and the 5-0 aggregate success sets up an epic instalment of their 'El Clasico' feud with bitter rivals Barca.

Tottenham had two decent penalty claims turned down at White Hart Lane, but their hopes were extinguished when Brazilian goalkeeper Gomes allowed Ronaldo's shot to squirm into the net early in the second half.

Mourinho can now look forward to another semifinal meeting with Barca, who were eliminated by the Portuguese coach when he was in charge at Inter Milan last season.

Real and Barca will fight for three trophies over the

next month as they are also scrapping for the La Liga title and clash in the Spanish Cup final.

Harry Redknapp did a good job of making Tottenham's mission impossible seem slightly less implausible at his upbeat pre-match press conference but, for all his faith in a miraculous escape, he knew no team had ever come back from four goals down in the second leg of a Champions League tie.

Redknapp's side needed an early breakthrough to make Madrid nervous.

Gareth Bale led the way as he fired over a shot that Iker Casillas could only parry. From the rebound Luka Modric appeared to be fouled by Xabi Alonso, but Spurs' penalty appeals were rejected by referee Nicola Rizzoli.

Another incisive burst from Bale left two Madrid defenders trailing in his wake before the Welsh winger was finally crowded out. Mourinho responded by turning to his bench with a look of admiration as much as relief etched across his face.

The Real boss was glued to the edge of his technical area and he had another

scare in the 26th minute as Spurs created their first clear chance.

Rafael van der Vaart's turn and quick pass sent Aaron Lennon away down the right and his cross looked perfect for Roman Pavlyuchenko, only for the Russian to shoot wildly over the bar.

After being hamstrung by Peter Crouch's reckless red card in the first leg, Spurs were showing they could hold their own against Real with 11 men.

But for all their attacking energy, Redknapp's team couldn't make the breakthrough and Sergio Ramos almost punished them with a goal-bound header that Gomes just clawed away.

Despite having five stars one booking away from a European suspension, Mourinho had sent out a full-strength team.

He knows how desperately Real crave a tenth success in the Champions League and was determined to make sure there was no shock collapse.

The move slightly backfired when Ricardo Carvalho was booked for a foul on Tom Huddlestone, ruling the defender out of the semifinal first leg. But Mourinho's

men remained firmly in control of their main aim of reaching the last four.

Rizzoli turned down another penalty claim for Raul Albiol's trip on Pavlyuchenko, while Bale's 'goal' was rightly ruled out as Luka Modric was standing offside when he headed back to his team-mate.

Tottenham's hopes were fading by the minute and a horrendous mistake by Gomes put the tie completely beyond their reach five minutes into the second half.

Ronaldo was 25 yards out when he let fly and the Portugal forward's effort seemed to be heading straight to Gomes, only for the keeper to fumble the ball out of his grasp and into the net.

SPORTS POLL WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you agree with ICC's decision to restrict the next two World Cups?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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Real Madrid playmaker Kaka (C) wriggles past the challenge of Tottenham Hotspur defender Michael Dawson (L) during their Champions League quarterfinal at White Hart Lane on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP