



PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal full-back Andre Santos is ecstatic after scoring the second goal against Olympiakos during their Champions League encounter at the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday.

Chamberlain charms Arsenal City suspend Tevez

Too easy for Barca; Milan, Marseille sail; Chelsea throw it away

REUTERS, Manchester

Holdings Barcelona barely broke a sweat in a ruthless 5-0 hammering of BATE Borisov while former champions AC Milan made harder work of finding the net before overcoming new boys Viktoria Plzen 2-0 in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Lionel Messi drew level with Ladislau Kubala as Barca's second highest scorer of all time thanks to a double in a dominant performance on a rainy night in Minsk as the Spaniards went joint top of Group H along with Milan.

Seven-times champions Milan needed second-half goals to break the deadlock against Czech side Plzen at the San Siro with Zlatan Ibrahimovic converting a 53rd-minute penalty and setting up Antonio Cassano for the second 13 minutes later.

On a good night for former European champions, Olympique Marseille distanced themselves from a poor domestic campaign to demolish Borussia Dortmund 3-0 as the German champions matched their lacklustre early Bundesliga form.

Brother and Ghana forward Andre Ayew scored twice for the hosts and France striker Loic Remy got the other as they maintained their perfect start in Group F, where they have a two-point lead over second-placed Arsenal.

Arsene Wenger's side enjoyed a better outcome to fellow English club Chelsea in nervy endings to their games, holding on to an early lead to beat Olympiakos Piraeus 2-1 while Andre Villas-Boas' men conceded a late penalty to draw 1-1 in Valencia.

While Wenger watched the game from the stands as he served the last match of his touchline ban, teenager Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain made a dream start to his European debut with an eighth-minute opener.

The injury-hit London side were two up after 20 minutes through Brazilian left back Andre Santos before the Greek visitors got back into the game with a David Fuster header on 27 minutes and from then on Arsenal merely hung on.

Many miles away in Belarus, Barcelona made no such

meal of their early lead as the champions seemed to barely let their hosts touch the ball.

BATE helped Barca on their way with Aleksandr Volodko's 19th-minute own goal and a header from Pedro followed three minutes later.

Argentine World Player of the Year Messi headed in just before the break and smashed a fourth high into the net to reach 194 club goals. Still aged only 24, Messi is now only 41 goals behind top scorer Cesar Rodriguez.

David Villa wrapped up the scoring against BATE, who despite effectively playing 10 at the back could not contain Barca's effortless class.

Back in Spain, Barca's La Liga rivals Valencia were anything but effortless against Chelsea, looking nervous despite their home advantage and they fell behind to a Frank Lampard first-time strike in the 56th minute.

The English side had plenty of chances to go further ahead but instead wiped out all their good work when substitute Salomon Kalou needlessly flapped an arm at a Valencia cross and the referee pointed to the spot with three minutes left.

Roberto Soldado struck the ball in low for the equaliser as Chelsea watched the three points evaporate on Juan Mata's return to his old stomping ground.

"I think it was more deserved for us to win this game," Chelsea boss Villas-Boas told Sky Sports. "To be so near to win the game and to be in such a good position leaves us a little bit with a feeling we don't like."

"It's useless and pointless to go on about it right now. These are referees decisions, it's nothing new for Chelsea."

Chelsea lead Group E with four points, one ahead of Bayer Leverkusen who beat visitors Racing Genk 2-0 with Chelsea old boy Michael Ballack making sure of the points with a stoppage-time goal after Lars Bender's first-half strike.

In the night's other games, Zenit St Petersburg beat 10-man Porto 3-1 in Group G with Roman Shirokov netting a double in Russia, while in the same group Shakhtar Donetsk drew 1-1 at home with surprise group leaders APOEL Nicosia.

RESULTS

Valencia (ESP) 1 (Soldado 86-pen)
Chelsea (ENG) 1 (Lampard 56)
Bayer Leverkusen (GER) 2 (Bender 29, Ballack 90+1) Genk (BEL) 0
Arsenal (ENG) 2 (Oxlade-Chamberlain 8, Andre Santos 20)
Olympiakos (GRE) 1 (Fuster 26)
Marseille (FRA) 3 (A. Ayew 20, 69-pen, L. Remy 62) Borussia Dortmund (GER) 0
Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 1 (Jadson 64)
APOEL Nicosia (CYP) 1 (Trickovski 61)
Zenit Saint Petersburg (RUS) 3 (Shirokov 20, 63, Danny 72) Porto (POR) 1 (Rodriguez 10)
BATE Borisov (BLR) 0 Barcelona (ESP) 5 (Volodko 19-og, Pedro 21, Messi 37, 55, Villa 90)
AC Milan (ITA) 2 (Ibrahimovic 53-pen.

Football

AFP, Manchester

Manchester City suspended Argentinian star Carlos Tevez on Wednesday as they began an investigation into whether he refused to come on as a substitute in the Champions League tie with Bayern Munich.

He denied that he had refused to come on when told to do so by manager Roberto Mancini, who had said after the match - which they lost 2-0 - he was "finished" at the club.

However, the club have decided that it is best he stays away completely while they carry out their investigation.

"Manchester City can confirm that striker Carlos Tevez has been suspended until further notice for a maximum period of two weeks," read the statement.

"The player's suspension is pending a full review into his alleged conduct during Tuesday evening's 2-0 defeat to Bayern Munich.

"The player will not be considered for selection or take part in training whilst the review is under way."

Tevez had denied Mancini's claims in a statement earlier on Wednesday.

"In Munich on Tuesday I had warmed up and was ready to play. This is not the right time to get into specific details as to why this did not happen. But I wish to state that I never refused to play," Tevez said.

He blamed his failure to appear on "confusion" on the City bench and apologised to the club's fans for "any misunderstanding."

"I would like to apologise to all Manchester City fans, with whom I have always had a

strong relationship, for any misunderstanding that occurred in Munich," Tevez said.

"They understand that when I am on the pitch I have always given my best for the club ... there was some confusion on the bench and I believe my position may have been misunderstood."

Mancini has indicated Tevez -- reportedly one of the highest earners in English football with weekly wages of more than £200,000 -- will never play for the club again in the aftermath of Tuesday's defeat.

"If I have my way he will be out. He's finished with me," Mancini said.

"He refused to come on the pitch. What I said to Carlos is between me, him and the team but I am really disappointed because it is Carlos.

"Can you imagine a Bayern Munich, Milan or Man United player doing this?" he said. "He refused to warm up and again refused to go on the pitch.

Mancini later added he would be speaking with Manchester City chairman Khaldoon al-Mubarak in the next few days to decide what to do with Tevez.

"In the next days, we will speak with Khaldoon," said Mancini. "It is normal. He is the chairman. He decides everything."

Ex-players and media commentators backed Mancini on Wednesday, with former Liverpool star Graeme Souness describing Tevez as a "disgrace to football."

"He (Tevez) is one bad apple," Souness told Sky Sports. "He's a disgrace to football. He epitomises what most people think is wrong with modern football."

Wenger not counting up the years

AP, London

Arsene Wenger's 15th anniversary as Arsenal manager falls only one day before another north London derby at Tottenham.

The Frenchman, however, is not one for marking milestones, and he isn't in a celebratory mood after leading his team to only two wins in six Premier League matches this season.

Wenger says "there is plenty not to be happy about. I never look back and I am not an anniversary fan."

Wenger has won the Premier League title three times, but with Arsenal failing to win a major trophy since the 2005 FA Cup, the pressure on him has been mounting.

Manchester rivals United and City are leading the way this season, separated only by goal difference at the top.

Nike causing discomfort

INTERNET, Undated

Lionel Messi and his Barcelona teammates have made an unusual complaint to team uniform manufacturers Nike and demanded the sportswear giant change the fabric used to make the official club shirt.

Despite the distraction, Messi and his colleagues were untroubled Wednesday, cruising to a magnificent 5-0 victory at BATE Borisov in the Champions League.

However, the players believe their performances in recent weeks have been affected by the Nike shirt, which they claim holds too much sweat and greatly increases in weight over the course of a game.

Nike admitted it had been contacted by Barcelona and was confident of finding an appropriate solution within a few weeks. The shirts are made from a fabric called Dri-FIT, which also gave tennis star Rafael Nadal difficulties during this year's Australian Open.

Messi, David Villa and Xavi were among the stars to make their discomfort known to club officials, who passed the news on to Nike. The players insisted the shirts caused particular concern when conditions were hot and humid, or raining.

Derby ends in fiasco

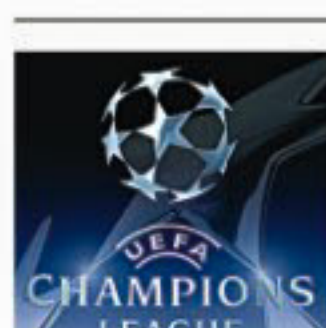
INTERNET, Undated

A nice little move around the last defender and a goal from Velez's Rijad Demic in a Bosnian Cup match against city rivals Zrinjski led to Demic celebrating a little to close to the hostile home Zrinjski fans. And as a result, a wave of those Zrinjski fans hopped the fence and chased the entire Velez team off the pitch. After that, the match was abandoned.

It's always nice when football can cross borders and bring people together. And it's always not so nice when it gives some of those people an excuse to chase others away under threat of a savage beating just for putting a ball in a net. They probably won't be making a heart-warming family film out of this one.

Records not his goal

REUTERS, Madrid



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Lionel Messi has dismissed talk of chasing records after the Argentine struck twice in Wednesday's 5-0 Champions League win at BATE Borisov to equal Ladislau Kubala as Barcelona's second highest scorer of all time on 194 goals. As the Spanish and European champions prepare to take on struggling Sporting Gijon in La Liga on Sunday (1800 GMT), Messi said he was not focused on eclipsing top scorer Cesar Rodriguez, who scored 235 for the Catalan club, but merely wanted to perform for the team.

"Cesar is not my goal," the 24-year-old World Player of the Year, who has netted his goals in only 280 appearances, was quoted as saying on Barca's website (www.fcbarcelona.cat).

"It is to do things well in each match," the Argentine added. "I know that I am making history and hopefully I can do more."

Messi already has eight goals in five La Liga games this season, including two hat-tricks, as Barca bid for a club record-equalling fourth

consecutive domestic title.

After a couple of away draws they are second on 11 points, one behind surprise leaders Real Betis, who host Levante, also on 11, earlier on Sunday (1400).

Messi made his debut for Barca's first team in October 2004 and became the club's youngest league scorer when he netted against Albacete in May 2005 at the age of 17 years, 10 months and seven days.

A string of breathtaking performances has landed him the world's best player award the past two seasons and he has topped in the Champions League, Europe's elite club competition, the past three campaigns, when Barca twice won the title and reached the semi-finals.

"What Messi is doing is extraordinary, accumulating these numbers and playing for the team," Spain midfielder Xavi, one of Barca's club captains, said after the BATE game. "Having the best footballer in the world is priceless."

Striker David Villa, Xavi's Spain and Barca team mate, added: "Messi is incredible. He will keep exceeding himself. We are just happy to help him out in all this."



PHOTO: AFP

Marseille forward Andre Ayew is about to score against Borussia Dortmund during their Champions League clash at the Velodrome Stadium on Wednesday.