

Palace stun Man Utd

Football

AFP, Manchester

English champions Manchester United suffered a shock 2-1 defeat to Championship side Crystal Palace thanks to an extra-time goal from substitute Glenn Murray in their League Cup quarterfinal here on Wednesday.

Palace had not won, or even scored a goal, in five matches but took a surprise lead at Old Trafford with Darren Ambrose's fine long-range strike.

Federico Macheda pulled one back from the penalty spot with his first goal at Old Trafford in 18 months.

But after the game went to extra time, Murray headed in to send the south London side into the semi-finals.

After the 6-1 defeat to City in October, it was just United's second defeat at Old Trafford since their 2-1 loss to Chelsea in April 2010.

Even though Sir Alex Ferguson made a host of changes to his team, United were still expected to take a place alongside Manchester City, Liverpool and another Championship side Cardiff in the last four.

But despite their recent problems, Dougie Freedman's Palace started the game showing far more threat than the Premier League champions.

Wilfried Zaha looked a constant threat and the Palace winger fired just past the near post after a quick breakaway after just one minute.

The hosts finally went close when a sweeping move involving Antonio Valencia and Park Ji-Sung ended with Darron Gibson having a drive deflected wide. Dimitar Berbatov met the Gibson corner that followed but headed straight at goalkeeper Lewis Price.

United finally produced a decent opportunity just before the interval, when Valencia lifted a cross to the far post and Mame Biram Diouf's overhead kick flew over the bar.



Crystal Palace midfielder Darren Ambrose (C) is the toast of his teammates after scoring the opening goal against Manchester United during their League Cup encounter at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Do or die for British trio

AFP, Paris



Scottish giants Celtic and English sides Spurs and Birmingham City were left needing to win their final Europa League group matches if they are to have a chance of reaching the knockout stages after losing their penultimate group matches on Wednesday.

Spurs were surprisingly beaten 2-1 at home by PAOK Salonika - who qualified thanks to the win - after conceding two early goals and were unable to take advantage of playing all of the second-half against 10 men.

Celtic lost 1-0 at home to Spanish giants Atletico Madrid - who ensured they progressed - while Championship outfit Birmingham City went down by the same margin away at last season's surprise finalists Portuguese side Braga.

Celtic, though, will need to pull off a win away at Italian side Udinese - who are three points ahead of them after drawing 0-0 with bottom side Rennes.

Birmingham must beat already eliminated Maribor and hope there is a winner from the Braga and Club Brugge match as both are three points ahead of the English League Cup holders.

Spurs will feel hard done by as they had what they thought a perfectly good goal from Jermaine Defoe ruled out after initially being given but they were their own worst enemies as they failed to put away any of their chances in the second-half.

Croatian star Luka Modric's first-half penalty had got them back into the match after Kostas Stafylidis was sent off somewhat harshly for handling on the line.

The Greek side had stormed into a 2-0 lead through a Dimitris Salpingidis header and a Stefanos Athanasiadis tap-in after 13 minutes.

RESULTS
Rubin Kazan (RUS) 4 (Valdez 10, 51, Natcho 36, Martins 62) Shamrock Rovers (IRL) 1 (Oman 12)
Tottenham Hotspur (ENG) 1 (Modric 38-pen) PAOK Salonika (GRE) 2 (Salpingidis 6, Athanasiadis 13)
Standard Liege (BEL) 2 (Tchite 25, Cyriac 58) Hannover 96 (GER) 0
Vorskla Poltava (UKR) 1 (N'Doye 31-og) FC Copenhagen (DEN) 1 (N'Doye 37)
Legia Warsaw (POL) 0 PSV Eindhoven (NED) 3 (Zewlakow 32-og, Mertens 59-pen, Labyad 68)
Rapid Bucharest (ROM) 1 (Deac 43-pen) Hapoel Tel-Aviv (ISR) 3 (Ilgiebor 12, Tamuz 39-pen, Toama 45+1)
Celtic (SCO) 0 Atletico Madrid (ESP) 1 (Ardan 30)
Rennes (FRA) 0 Udinese (ITA) 0
Metalist Kharkov (UKR) 4 (Devic 16, Edmar 40, Guye 60, Sosa 90) Austria Vienna (AUT) 1 (Mader 19)
Malmö (SWE) 0 AZ Alkmaar (NED) 0
Braga (POR) 1 (Viana 51)
Birmingham City (ENG) 0
Maribor (SLO) 3 (Volas 11, 68, Donk 51-o.g.) Club Brugge (BEL) 4 (Dirar 74, 77, Akpala 82, Donk 90+1)

For Spurs to qualify they need to beat pointless Irish side Shamrock

Rovers and hope Russian outfit Rubin Kazan drop points against PAOK.

Celtic should have been 1-0 down after six minutes as Argentinian Eduardo Salvio was picked out unmarked in the box but his header lacked the accuracy reflected in his return of just one goal this season.

Celtic had their chances with veteran Greek striker Giorgios Samaras having the best one but his sidefooted volley from close range went straight at the 'keeper.

While Salvio missed another gilt-edged chance Atletico did eventually break the deadlock in the 30th minute through the impressive Turkish international Arda Turan.

The former Galatasaray star rifled home a 25 yard effort after an Atletico corner had been headed clear but Celtic skipper Beram Kayal will take some of the blame as he ill advisedly ducked to let the shot fly over him and see it go in off 'keeper Fraser Forster's hands.

FIFPro shortlist revealed

Football

AFP, Paris

Players from Barcelona and Real Madrid made up almost half of the 55-man shortlist revealed by FIFA on Thursday for the FIFA FIFPro World XI 2011, which will be announced on January 9.

Barcelona have 11 players in the list and Real 10.

World champions Spain are the most well represented country with 12 players, ahead of Brazil, which has eight.

Brazil star Neymar, of Santos, is the only player on the list who plays his club football outside Europe.

The 50,000 professional players registered with FIFPro-affiliated unions who will vote for the team must select an XI in a 4-3-3 formation.

Five players in the shortlist were named in the FIFPro World XI in 2009 and 2010: Iker Casillas and Cristiano Ronaldo of Real Madrid, and Xavi, Andres Iniesta and Lionel Messi of Barcelona.

SHORTLIST (selected)

Casillas, Neuer, Valdes, Abidal, Alves, Carvalho, Marcelo, Pepe, Pique, Iniesta, Ozil, Xavi, Messi, Ronaldo, Villa.

Marcelinho in hot water

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazilian footballer Marcelo dos Santos, better known as Marcelinho Paraíba or simply "Marcelinho," was arrested on Wednesday on suspicion of attempted rape, police said.

"I am innocent and I will only speak in front of a judge," Paraíba, was quoted as saying.

SPORTS POLL WEEKLY QUESTION

Who do you think is the right candidate for future ICC leadership?

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

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PHOTO: AFP

Tottenham Hotspur playmaker Luka Modric scores a penalty during their Europa League clash against PAOK Salonika at White Hart Lane on Wednesday.



Black Cats sack Bruce

AFP, London



Sunderland sacked manager Steve Bruce on Wednesday after chairman Ellis Short said results were "simply not good enough".

The north-east club's 2-1 home defeat by fellow strugglers Wigan on Saturday left Sunderland 16th in the English Premier League and just two points above the relegation zone.

Former Manchester United defender Bruce joined the Black Cats from Wigan before the 2009/10 season and struggled to win the affection of some Sunderland fans who resented his boyhood support of local rivals Newcastle United.

But, despite some of the taunts aimed at Bruce at the weekend by angry fans at the Stadium of Light, Dallas-based businessman Short said his was not a knee-jerk decision.

"This has been a difficult time for everyone at Sunderland and is not a situation that any of us envisaged or expected to be in," said Short in a statement released on Sunderland's official website.

"It is my job as chairman to act in the best interests of our football club at all times and I can assure everyone that this is not a decision I have taken lightly.

"Sadly, results this season have simply not been good enough and I feel the time is right to make a change.

"Steve has acted with honesty and integrity throughout, which is testament to the character and commitment he has shown during his time at Sunderland.

"I would like to personally place on record my thanks to him for his significant contribution to our football club over the past two and a half years and everyone here at Sunderland naturally wishes him the very best for the future."



ADMISSION -2011

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Age: Below 23 years on 31 December 2011.

Height: Minimum 1.60 m (5 feet 3 inches).

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Physically fit with perfect eye sight and colour vision.

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