

# Real scare for Barca

Football

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Barcelona knocked out its archrival, Real Madrid, in the quarterfinals of the Copa del Rey on Wednesday, securing a tense 2-2 draw and delivering another blow to the ambitions of Madrid's boisterous coach, Jose Mourinho.

Although Real Madrid staged an impressive comeback, rallying for two goals in the second half, the result was not enough to reverse a 2-1 defeat last week in Madrid in the first leg of the series.

Wednesday's result extends what has been a miserable run for Mourinho against Barcelona. He has never won in Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium and has defeated Barca only once in 10 matches--in last year's Copa final--since taking charge of Madrid in the summer of 2010.

Yet, unlike in their most recent confrontations, when Madrid was humiliated by Barcelona, Madrid displayed plenty of skill and fight, even after Barcelona appeared to take control of the match in the closing minutes of the first half.

The tight result could ease the pressure on Mourinho after a week of reports in the news media about a possible rift between Mourinho and the players, and mounting speculation that he could leave Madrid soon.

The match also exposed the frailty of Barcelona's defence, with Madrid again coming close to taking an early lead, having pounced on goalkeeping blunders in the teams' last two confrontations.

On Wednesday, it was the turn of Barcelona defender Dani Alves, a Brazilian, to provide Madrid with a golden opportunity within the first minute. His sloppy back pass



Barcelona fullback Dani Alves celebrates his goal against Real Madrid during their King's Cup quarterfinal second leg at Nou Camp on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

was intercepted by Gonzalo Higuain, who miscued his shot--one of a handful of early chances wasted by Madrid.

After half an hour, Madrid was also unlucky when Mesut Ozil hit a curling, long-distance shot that beat Jose Manuel Pinto, Barcelona's second-string goalkeeper, but that crashed against the crossbar.

As the first half was coming to a close, however, Barcelona's world player of the year, Lionel Messi, sliced open Madrid's defense. He sent a beautiful pass that left Pedro free to shoot low past Iker Casillas, Madrid's goalkeeper and captain, in the 43rd minute. Only two minutes later, Casillas was again left grimacing, this time after a stunning shot Alves blasted into the top corner of the goal.

But Barcelona failed this time to capitalize on its 2-0 advantage. Instead, it was Madrid that staged a stirring come-

back in a scrappy second half, which ended with Sergio Ramos, the Madrid defender, being sent off after picking up a second yellow card for a head clash with Sergio Busquets.

Madrid is leading La Liga, 5 points ahead of Barcelona, and has cruised in the Champions League. But Mourinho has yet to find a recipe to thwart Barcelona, despite having won last season's Copa del Rey and having twice previously gotten the better of Barca in the Champions League--at the helm of Chelsea seven seasons ago and with Inter Milan in 2010, against a Barcelona team that already included most of the current players.

After the match, the often outspoken Mourinho steered clear of further controversy and measured his words.

"The players had a good match," he said. "It's not for me to say whether the outcome of the encounter is fair or not."

## Motta moving to PSG

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan defensive midfielder Thiago Motta has "given the green light" for a move to Paris Saint-Germain, according to his agent, Dario Canovi.

"Tonight's match could be Thiago's last in the Inter shirt, as the player has given the green light to PSG for the transfer," Canovi told CRC radio ahead of Inter's Italian Cup encounter with Napoli on Wednesday.

"We've not yet discussed financial details with the French club because the two clubs are yet to reach an agreement."

According to AFP sources, an agreement could be reached shortly, with Motta set to be awarded a three-and-a-half-year contract worth around 4.5 million euros (\$5.8m) a year.

Inter stand to receive an initial transfer fee of 10m euros, rising a further 3m euros with bonuses.

Motta, 29, is a Brazil-born Italy international with eight caps and one goal.

# Always effervescent

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

My first question has Dwight Yorke in stitches.

Beside him, the Manchester United representative sent to monitor the interview is also laughing. "You are kidding," says Yorke after catching his breath. "Did Andy really say that?"

I nod and show him my notes where Andy Cole's statement from the offending interview is printed verbatim. The former England striker had likened his partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago star as "...meeting a special woman and falling in love. Everything felt right."

I ask him if he agrees.

Yorke proceeds to laugh some more. "Can you believe it?" he asks turning to his rep whose laughs have now descended into a wide ear-to-ear grin. The rep shrugs his shoulder and Yorke finally turns back to me.

"Alright, alright! I agree, but on one condition Andy has to be the woman in that relationship."

At that the entire entourage bursts out laughing.

It's a good start to the interview. Yorke has been known the world over as the Smiling Assassin mostly due to the smile he always wears whether he is on or off the field. It is also that smile that has endeared him to a generation of youths and most Manchester United supporters. That and the small fact that he has also won a treble, the unique combination of the league title, the cup and the Champions League.

In these days of Catalan dominance, that might seem a mundane statistic but the world was a different place in 1999; David Beckham, for one, was a social pariah, abused in every ground in England and an 11 year old Lionel Messi had just been diagnosed with growth hormone deficiency.

Yorke had just made the move from Aston Villa to Manchester United, but it had come about in slightly acrimonious circumstances, to say the least. The Villa manager at that time, John Gregory, was so upset at the sale of his prized asset that he said he would have 'shot Dwight Yorke if he could.'

Hardly the right preparation when you come in to play for one of the most popular clubs in the world, but for Yorke reputations never held much currency.

"I was lucky that I was a bit of a free-spirit and not very aware of the history of Manchester United when I came in to join them. For me, it was always about going out to play in a football game, no matter who the club. I told myself, I have done this a hundred times, no problem."

This is perhaps as good an explanation as any as to why Yorke embedded himself so well into his surroundings in his debut season and then went on to achieve so much more. The other was of course the great players he had around him.

"... [David] Beckham, [Paul] Scholes, [Roy] Keane, [Ryan] Giggs this was just a phenomenal group to play with and then we had players like [Teddy] Sheringham and Ole-Gunnar [Solskjaer]... amazing really."

But for Yorke there was always Cole. Like Laurel and Hardy, like yin and yang,

"I think part of the reason we played together so well is because of how well we got along," recalls Yorke. "I came in and originally I was supposed to be replacing him but he still went out of his way to make me feel welcome and show me around. He invited me into his home and helped to embed me into the club. And we did not even play together for the first five or so games," says Yorke.

But when they did it was magic. A telepathic understanding saw both capitalize incessantly on the chances served up by their wonderfully talented midfield where Giggs and Beckham patrolled the wings, Scholes provided the creativity and Keane strode like a titan.

The striking duo had a number of memorable games, but the pinnacle of Yorke-Cole was undoubtedly a 3-3 draw



PHOTO: STAR

Manchester United legend Dwight Yorke (R) speaks during an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on Wednesday, also seen with him is Airtel CEO Chris Tobit.

at the Camp Nou against Barcelona in a game of such heightened quality that it should be required viewing for every football fan.

"That day..." says Yorke pausing for emphasis, "...that day was brilliant and me and Andy were pulling things out that even the both of us did not properly understand." Neither it seemed did the rest of the league or even the giants in Europe who bowed down to the twin master-class served up by the dynamic duo.

In this age of 4231's, two striker formations are almost dead but Yorke feels that clubs should still try and replicate the success they have had, as long as it works.

"Too much is made out of formations, I feel. I think it is about using the players at your disposal to the best of your ability. If that means two strikers, then so be it," says Yorke who still harbours managerial ambitions.

For the coup de grace of that incredible season, United again went back to the Camp Nou to play in what would become one of the most famous European finals of all time; if not the most famous.

Looking dead and buried against Bayern Munich, the Red Devils snatched victory from the jaws of defeat with two late goals from Sheringham and Solskjaer. Highway robbery?

Yorke shakes his head. "Not a bit. That season we always had the belief that we could win games no matter what. Everyone was playing at a high level. For example, we knew that if we did not keep our performance up, there

were top notch replacements waiting to take our place."

And how many times has he been back to see that final?

"Not once," says Yorke. "I still see clips from time to time, but that is about it. I haven't gone back to watch that match ever."

But with a treble win in your first season, it really is hard to live up to anything again. Tennis player John McEnroe once said that being on top was the loneliest feeling in the world. Yorke nods his head.

"But that's sport, the fickle nature of it. One day you are a hero and the next you aren't. I only scored a couple of goals less in my second season than in my first and suddenly I wasn't good enough anymore," he recalls.

You can see that there are no hard feelings with Yorke even though his

## Del Piero eyes rare start

REUTERS, Undated

Juventus stalwart Alessandro Del Piero could be in line for a rare league start when the leaders host third-placed Udinese on Saturday following his superb strike in the Italian Cup in midweek.

Del Piero netted his first goal at Juve's new stadium in Tuesday's 3-0 quarterfinal win over AS Roma and with Mirko Vucinic and Fabio Quagliarella not fully fit, the 37-year-old hopes ex-team mate-turned-coach Antonio Conte again gives him the nod.

"If you had asked me to imagine my first goal in our new stadium, I would have dreamt it like that," Juve's record scorer Del Piero said on his own website (www.alessandropiero.com).

"I've scored my first goal. Let's say it is a good start..." Juve are hoping to wrap up the re-signing of Sevilla defender Martin Caceres but the Uruguayan may not move in time for Saturday.

Udinese trail Juve by three points after an astonishing first half of the campaign despite selling Alexis Sanchez and Gokhan Inler, two of their best three players, in the close season.

# Bellamy KO Man City

Football

REUTERS, Liverpool

Craig Bellamy scored the decisive goal against his former club as Liverpool reached the League Cup final on Wednesday by beating Manchester City 3-2 on aggregate, prompting manager Kenny Dalglish to go all teary-eyed.

A thrilling semifinal second leg finished 2-2 at Anfield but the advantage carved out in Manchester a fortnight ago booked Liverpool a date at Wembley next month where they will face Cardiff City, another of Bellamy's old clubs.

City started without striker Mario Balotelli after deciding not to appeal his four-match ban for stamping on Tottenham Hotspur's Scott Parker at the weekend.

Against the run of play, City drew level on aggregate with Nigel de Jong's 31st-minute cracker but nine minutes later Liverpool had their noses in front again when captain Steven Gerrard converted a penalty as he had done in the first leg.

City keeper Joe Hart had kept his side in the game with a succession of excellent saves before Edin Dzeko put the Premier League leaders 2-1 ahead on the night with a 67th minute tap-in.

Seven-times winners Liverpool were not done yet, though, and Bellamy secured their place in the final with a confident finish 16 minutes from time that Hart could do nothing about.

Cardiff had booked their place by beating fellow Championship (second division) Crystal Palace 3-1 on penalties on Tuesday after a 1-1 aggregate result.

Victory gives Liverpool the chance of their first silverware since the 2006 FA Cup and provides them with a first trip to Wembley since 1996 as various finals were held at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium while the London stadium was being renovated.

With their one-goal lead from the first leg in Manchester a fortnight ago, Liverpool looked the hungrier team from the outset and Hart was kept busy as he saved well from Jose Enrique, Charlie Adam and Bellamy early on.

City's defence again sorely missed suspended Vincent Kompany with understudy Stefan Savic looking out of his depth before his halftime substitution.

However, with much of the action at the other end of the pitch, the visitors' opener came out of the blue.

David Silva played a short pass to De Jong who curled the ball into the top corner from 25 metres out despite slipping over while he was striking it.

# Cavani brace sinks Inter

Football

REUTERS, Undated

Edinson Cavani's double sent holders Inter Milan tumbling out of the Italian Cup as Napoli won 2-0 on Wednesday to set up a semifinal with Siena.

The Uruguayan striker converted from the spot early in the second half after being fouled by Thiago Motta, linked by his agent with an imminent move to Paris St Germain.

Cavani scored his second on the counter attack in injury time.

Hosts Napoli dominated the first half with Christian Maggio and Walter Gargano going close while an otherwise lethargic Inter had a good shout for a penalty turned down shortly after Cavani's spotkick when Maggio challenged Diego Milito.

Napoli will play Siena over two legs in February and March after the Tuscan side overcame Chievo 1-0 away thanks to Mattia Destro's 54th-minute strike.

Siena were also reduced to 10 men on the hour when Paolo Grossi was dismissed in a game that was briefly threatened earlier in the day by a minor earthquake in northern Italy.

Serie A leaders Juventus beat AS Roma 3-0 in Tuesday's quarterfinal and will next meet the winners of Thursday's encounter between AC Milan and Lazio.

## SPORTS POLL

### WEEKLY QUESTION

Can BPL take Bangladesh cricket forward?

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## What to WATCH

### STAR Sports

Australian Open Men's Singles Semifinal Live from 3:00pm

### ESPN

Sportscenter India Sports News Live at 8:30pm

### STAR Cricket

Australia v India Fourth Test, Day 5 Live from 6:00am (Saturday)

### TEN Cricket

England v Pakistan Second Test, Day 3

## DAY'S EVENT

### Premier Div Cricket League

Mohammedan v Old DOHS

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur

Gazi Tank v Brothers Union

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## SPOT ADMISSION

Ms Kate Whiston, Senior International Officer & Prof. Anand Pandyan, Rehabilitation Technology for Health, will be conducting admissions interviews for courses with a September 2012 start

Venue: British Council Date: 28/1/12, 1pm-5pm

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