

Basel stun Bayern

REUTERS, Basel



Basel produced another Champions League shock as they ventured into uncharted territory in the competition on Wednesday, clinching a dramatic 1-0 victory over Bayern Munich to pile the misery on Germany's biggest club.

The humble Swiss team, who qualified for the last 16 at the expense of Manchester United after a momentous victory against the English side, had St Jakob-Park rocking again as substitute Valentin Stocker scored an 86th-minute winner.

Basel, who often play in front of only a few thousand fans in the Swiss league, hit the woodwork twice, then survived long periods of Bayern pressure before snatching victory.

Bayern had two let-offs in quick succession, firstly when Aleksandar Dragovic's header was pushed away by Neuer, hit the inside of the post and bounced out.

The woodwork saved Bayern three minutes later when Alexander Frei, Switzerland's record international goalscorer, crashed a shot against the crossbar from 12 metres after a Park Joo Ho's slide rule pass found him free in the middle.

Bayern took control of the midfield after that, enjoying lots of possession although their attacks lacked imagination.

Robben set up one chance for David Alaba and the Austrian's shot from the edge of the area was parried by Sommer.

Mario Gomez nearly caught out Sommer with an overhead kick and the goalkeeper also did well to palm away Philipp Lahm's drive before he produced his best save, blocking Gomez after the Bundesliga's leading scorer was given a clear run on goal.

Bayern looked more likely winners but were stunned four minutes from time.

Jacques Zoua, another Basel substitute, made a powerful run across the edge of the area and slipped the ball to the unmarked Stocker, who fired between Manuel Neuer's legs to send the St Jakob-Park crowd wild.



FC Basel midfielder Valentin Stocker (R) celebrates his goal with teammates during their Champions League second round clash against Bayern Munich in Basel on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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Chittagong v Dhaka
Live from 2:00pm
Rajshahi v Sylhet
Live from 6:30pm
STAR Cricket
Australia v Sri Lanka
Tri-Series Match
Live from 9:20am

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

DAY'S EVENT

Premier League
Team BJMC v Farashganj
Time: 3:00pm
Venue: Tangail Stadium
BPL T20
Chittagong v Dhaka
Time: 2:00pm
Rajshahi v Sylhet
Time: 6:30pm
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur

City KO holders

AFP, Manchester



The presence of former manager Andre Villas-Boas at Eastlands failed to inspire holders Porto as Manchester City eased into the last 16 of the Europa League with a 4-0 second leg win on Wednesday.

Goals from Sergio Aguero, Edin Dzeko, David Silva and David Pizarro -- the last three in the space of nine minutes late in the second leg tie -- ensured a comfortable evening for City who won 6-1 on aggregate.

The goal rush came against a Porto side who played the final 14 minutes with 10 men after the sending off of defender Rolando for a second yellow card.

Even so it took Premier League leaders City just 19 seconds to extend their advantage when Aguero claimed the quickest goal in the Europa League this season.

Argentinian defender Nicolas Otamendi lost the ball in a costly position, around the halfway line, and Nigel de Jong found Yaya Toure whose pass sent Aguero racing clear of the Porto backline.

He took his chance brilliantly with a clinical finish into the bottom left-hand corner.

Porto responded gamely as Joao Moutinho volleyed wide, Silvestre Varela headed at Joe Hart and defender Maicon ended a marauding right-wing run with a wayward centre across goal.

But for all Porto's possession, City looked far more dangerous and Silva's well-weighted through ball after 16 minutes sent through Yaya Toure whose progress was well-blocked on the edge of the area by goalkeeper Helton.

Roberto Mancini's team, were content to withstand the modest pressure from Porto and play on the counter-attack, with Aguero involved in a pacy break before the interval which ended with a pass to Yaya Toure.

Despite terrible initial control, the City midfielder eventually managed to re-connect with Aguero only for the goalscorer to flash a poor shot wide.

Hulk saw a fierce free-kick deflected behind and Rolando volleyed over from six yards at the resulting corner as every passing minute left Porto facing a bigger obstacle.

After the restart, Lucho Gonzalez poked wide from 18 yards, Hulk's low cross-shot was spilled by the diving Hart who was relieved to see the ball travel to safety and James Rodriguez had the ball in the net after 57 minutes only for his 'goal' to be ruled out for offside.

City weathered that brief storm, however, and their second goal, in the 76th minute, put the outcome of the tie beyond all doubt.

Aguero was the creator, holding the ball intelligently outside the Porto area and waiting for the overlapping run of substitute Dzeko who took the ball in his stride and finished expertly from 10 yards.

Porto's hopes of an unlikely recovery were hampered by the dismissal of Rolando who collected a second yellow card prior to the re-start for dissent.

Silva added to what had become a rout six minutes from time when he turned the ball into an open goal after substitute Pizarro burst into the area and crossed selflessly from the right.

Pizarro himself completed it, in the 86th minute, starting a move outside the area and collecting a poor touch-on from Dzeko before slotting past the helpless Helton.

Tevez dispute over

Football

AFP, Manchester

Roberto Mancini, the Manchester City manager, has drawn a line under his long-running dispute with Carlos Tevez and insisted the Argentina striker is now available for selection.

But Mancini, talking after his team reached the last 16 of the Europa League with an emphatic 4-0 victory over holders Porto, warned Tevez he faces a major obstacle in attempting to regain a regular place in his side.

This week, Tevez apologised for his behaviour during his refusal to play for the team over a dispute with Mancini which dates back to September, when he disobeyed his manager's instruction to warm-up during a Champions League defeat away to Bayern Munich. The Italian boss will meet his player before training on Thursday and expects him to be available for selection in the middle of next month.

"He has apologised," said Mancini. "I don't have any problem. Tomorrow, I will meet him before training, after that, he can start to work with us."

"I think he maybe needs two or three weeks to find form; after this he will be okay. He can play, like the other players," he added with City two points clear of Manchester United at the top of the Premier League.

"Carlo (Carlos) knows the team very well but the team, in the last six or seven months, has played very well. They are top of the Premier League."

"We know Carlo well, he's a top striker so it would be good to have him back, I think he can help us and do a good job in the next two months."

"I think it is important if we have Carlo, Mario (Balotelli), Edin (Dzeko) and Sergio (Aguero) so it would be good for the team."

With Tevez still absent from the City line-up, his compatriot Aguero was the pick of the hosts' stars at Eastlands here on Wednesday, scoring the opening goal in just 19 seconds then laying on a second for Dzeko before David Silva and David Pizarro completed the rout and a 6-1 aggregate win for City.

Mancini had spoken at the start of the season about wanting to have four front-line strikers at his disposal for the campaign and now, with Tevez's return, he appears to be in that position.

"Carlo cannot play in the Europa League," said Mancini. "But having four strikers for the Premier League would be good."

Mancini refused to get into an argument with Argentina great Diego Maradona, Aguero's father-in-law, who had said City were too defensive.

"Diego was a fantastic player, one of the best in the world," said Mancini before refusing to elaborate.

However, Maradona's son-in-law certainly looks like one of Europe's leading footballers on current form and Mancini added: "Sergio is another top striker but he is young and still needs to improve."

"He's a top striker, he's scored a lot of goals and helped us in this game and during the season. Now, over the last two months, it's important to have all the players, all the strikers, available."

City's comfortable victory over last season's Europa League winners has left them as one of the favourites to claim the trophy in 2012 and, with Mancini's team still occupying first place in the Premier League, a league and cup double is possible.

Eusebio leaves hospital

AFP, Lisbon

Legendary Portuguese striker Eusebio left a Lisbon hospital on Wednesday two days after being admitted for high blood pressure, according to a source from the city's Hospital da Luz.

Eusebio "left in a discreet manner without making a statement to the press", a representative from the hospital said, adding that the former Benfica star will undergo "cardiological tests" next week.

The 70-year-old also spent Christmas in hospital after contracting pneumonia and then returned just a few days later after complaining of severe neck pain.

Nicknamed the "Black Panther", Eusebio helped guide Benfica to a European Cup title in 1962 before leading his country to a third-place finish at the World Cup four years later, finishing as the tournament's top scorer with nine goals.

He also won the Ballon d'Or in 1965 and was twice the recipient of the European Golden Shoe, an award given to the leading goalscorer across Europe.



PHOTO: AFP

Marseille forward Andre Ayew (C) scores the all-important goal against Inter Milan during their Champions League second round encounter at the Velodrome Stadium on Wednesday.

Ayew at the death

AFP, Marseille



A dramatic 93rd-minute header from Andre Ayew gave Marseille a 1-0 victory over luckless Inter Milan in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie here on Wednesday.

Bidding to reach the last eight for the first time since they won the trophy in 1993, the hosts dominated possession but looked set for a night of frustration until Ayew's decisive intervention in the game's dying stages.

Having been eliminated by Manchester United at the same stage of last season's competition, Didier Deschamps' side will now travel to San Siro on March 13 with high hopes of reaching the quarterfinals.

Inter, meanwhile, have now gone seven matches without victory and coach Claudio Ranieri will only face more questions about his future after this latest setback.

Ranieri had persisted with the out-of-form Wesley Sneijder and handed Argentine forward Mauro Zarate a first start since November, while Brandao took the place of OM's injured top scorer Loic Remy.

After a watchful start, Inter began to carry a threat on the counter-attack and Steve Mandanda had to tip over a shot from Diego Forlan on 10 minutes after the Uruguayan met Esteban Cambiasso's cross

with his right instep.

The Marseille goalkeeper also had to get down to block a low effort from Zarate, while Cambiasso saw a shot deflected into Mandanda's grasp shortly before the interval after another forward foray from midfield.

Cesar Azpilicueta sent a half-volley dipping onto the roof of Julio Cesar's net in the 19th minute, but OM's best chance of the half fell to Souleymane Diawara, who was unable to convert Mathieu Valbuena's inswinging free-kick.

Marseille bossed the opening of the second period and although they failed to create any clear chances, Ranieri was sufficiently perturbed to replace Zarate with the more conservative Joel Obi.

To the displeasure of the Velodrome crowd, the game became punctuated by niggly fouls and misplaced passes, and Deschamps responded by introducing young Ghana striker Jordan Ayew in place of Brandao.

The elder Ayew sibling appeared to have taken it upon himself to break the deadlock, and after testing Julio Cesar with a header from another Amalfitano cross, he drew a corner with a rising drive from the edge of the box.

When Valbuena's resulting set-piece fell at the near post, Andre Ayew got across his man to head home, ending Julio Cesar's resistance and nudging Ranieri another step closer to the trapdoor.