

The silent predator

REUTERS, Munich



Unsung and opportunist, Mario Gomez is never in the running when the World Player of the Year award comes around, yet the Bayern Munich striker proved again on Tuesday that he is one of football's deadliest.

Four days after scoring a hat-trick in a 7-1 Bundesliga win over Hoffenheim, Gomez notched his second four-goal haul of the season in Bayern's 7-0 Champions League demolition of FC Basel in their last 16 second leg match.

He has also scored three other hat-tricks, one of them in the Champions League against Napoli, and his tally in Europe's premier club competition this season is now only two short of Lionel Messi's haul of 12 for Barcelona.

He has scored 35 goals in all competitions this term, including 21 in the Bundesliga.

Unlike Messi or Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo, there is nothing remotely spectacular about most of Gomez' goals. Two of Tuesday's efforts were tapped into an open goal and the other two, although well-taken, came when he found himself unmarked.

But when Bayern's wingers Franck Ribery and Arjen Robben are in full cry, Gomez is deadly.

"The weekend match was very, very important for us," he said after Bayern's 7-1 aggregate win. "We carried on where we left off on Saturday. It was an outstanding match for us."

"But we have set ourselves ambitious targets and we haven't reached them yet."

Gomez had struggled to get into his stride in his first season after joining Bayern from VfB Stuttgart.

But he sprang to life last season, scoring 39 goals in all competitions, including six hat-tricks, and this season looks set to better that total.



Bayern Munich striker Mario Gomez (R) slots home the third goal during their Champions League second round match against FC Basel in Munich on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP



Seven-star Bayern

AFP, Munich



Germany striker Mario Gomez scored four goals as Bayern Munich marched into the Champions League quarterfinals by smashing FC Basel 7-0 in the second leg of their last 16 clash on Tuesday.

It was the biggest win in a Champions League knockout match as records tumbled in Munich and Bayern bettered their 7-1 home win over Sporting Lisbon from the 2009 competition, also in the round of 16.

Having come to Germany holding a 1-0 lead from the first leg three weeks ago, Basel's dreams of reaching the Champions League's last eight for the first time were rudely awakened as they lost the tie 7-1 on aggregate.

It was also Basel's worst ever away European defeat, breaking the 5-0 record set in 1963 at Celtic and equalled in 2008 at Shakhtar Donetsk in Ukraine.

Munich's Allianz Arena hosts the final here on May 19 and the Bavarians strolled into Friday's quarterfinal draw at UEFA headquarters in Nyon.

Bayern warmed up for the return leg by demolishing Hoffenheim 7-1 at home in the German league and having netted a hat-trick last Saturday, Gomez scored four more, while Dutch winger Arjen Robben again scored twice against Basel.

The Swiss side ended Manchester United's involvement in this season's campaign in the group stage, but spent the majority of the match defending their own half as Munich ensured they did not become

Basel's second major scalp.

Coach Jupp Heynckes stuck with the same team that hammered Hoffenheim and they were 3-0 up at the break.

Robben opened the scoring on 11 minutes when he played a pass into Thomas Mueller, whose shot clipped a Basel defender's boot and fell into Robben's path to blast home from 12 yards.

It was all Bayern as Basel won only their first corner with 34 minutes gone and any threat was comfortably dealt with by Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer.

Mueller made it 2-0 on 42 minutes when he converted a Robben cross and found enough space at the near post to beat Yann Sommer on the volley.

The third came less than two minutes later as defender Holger Badstuber squared the ball from a free-kick and with Gomez and Luiz Gustavo queuing up to score, it was Gomez who got his boot to it.

Gomez added his second on 50 minutes when he turned in a Franck Ribery cross and in an almost carbon copy of the fourth goal, Gomez completed his hat-trick when he latched onto a Ribery cross and headed home on 61 minutes.

The 5-0 scoreline equalled Basel's worst away defeat in the Champions League and the record fell when Gomez netted his third after the break on 67 minutes when he slotted home yet another cross from Ribery, who was untroubled down the left flank.

By this stage the Basel defence had been cut to ribbons and Robben added more salt to their wounded pride by rounding Sommer to slot home Bayern's seventh and his second of the night on 81 minutes.

Maradona mocks Pele

SOCCERNET

Diego Maradona has mocked Pele after the Brazil legend compared himself to Ludwig van Beethoven and Michelangelo.

Maradona and Pele have a long history of bickering over who is the greatest footballer of all time, and the Brazilian recently told FIFA.com: "I was born to play football, just like Beethoven was born to write music and Michelangelo was born to paint."

At a press conference, Al-Wasl coach Maradona responded: "If Pele thinks he's the Beethoven of football then I'm Ronnie Wood, Keith Richards and the Bono of football, because I have so much passion."

"Pele has said he's the Beethoven of football. I've never heard any Beethoven music in a match so, as I've told you before, anytime he takes the wrong pill he comes up with a crazy statement."

"Pele may have taken the morning pills at night time, so he should make sure he takes the right pills. In fact it would be better if he changed his doctor."

Marseille KO Inter

AFP, Milan



Brazilian substitute Brandao scored in injury time to send Marseille into the last eight of the Champions League for the first time since winning the competition in 1993 as they ousted Inter Milan.

Inter won the second round, second leg match 2-1 at the San Siro after a hectic finish in which Marseille goalkeeper Steve Mandanda was sent off giving away a penalty even later in injury time.

Giampaolo Pazzini, who was brought down by Mandanda, dispatched the spot-kick with the last kick of the match to give the Italians victory but they still went out on away goals.

Diego Milito had earlier given Inter the lead 15 minutes from time and the match looked to be heading into extra-time until the eventual three minutes of injury time.

Almost everything in this last 16 tie happened in injury-time with Andre Ayew giving the French victory in the first leg three weeks ago with a last-gasp goal at the Stade Velodrome.

Inter coach Claudio Ranieri may well be searching for a new job after this defeat with his team out of contention for silverware and facing an uphill battle in the league just to qualify for Europe next season.

They made a blistering start and only the brilliance of Mandanda kept the scores level.

Inter captain Javier Zanetti burst down the right, cutting into the box, twice dummying a cross before picking out Wesley Sneijder, via a slight deflection, seven yards out but Souleymane Diawara and Mandanda between them sprayed their

bodies in front of goal and kept the ball out.

Moments later and the hosts put together another lovely move with Dejan Stankovic releasing Sneijder down the right and his fizzed cross found Milito inside the six-yard box.

The Argentine forward made an instinctive thrust with his chest to push the ball goalwards, but Mandanda again made a stunning reaction save.

On the stroke of half-time Sneijder curled in a free-kick that Mandanda held easily before Maicon picked out Diego Forlan but he headed wide.

If Inter had gathered up a head of steam when they came out of the blocks, the wind seemed to have blown out of their sails by the second period.

They didn't create anything resembling a chance until halfway through when Stankovic fired a free-kick from 25 yards over the bar.

In fact it was Alou Diarra who came closest with a header from a Mathieu Valbuena free-kick that goalkeeper Julio Cesar did well to claw away from his left-hand post.

But 15 minutes from time master poacher Milito struck following a goalmouth scramble at a corner.

First Walter Samuel poked the ball goalwards, it fell to Pazzini but his prod was blocked by a sprawled Jeremy Morel before the ball broke to Milito to clip home with Mandanda helpless.

That spurred on the hosts and Maicon hit an inswinging free-kick that Mandanda had to tip over the bar.

But then in injury time Mandanda launched a free-kick long, Lucio missed his header and Brandao had just enough space to shoot home before Samuel could make a saving tackle.

Xavi fears Pep exit

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona midfielder Xavi admitted on Tuesday that the club's players fear coach Pep Guardiola will decide not to renew his contract with the European champions.

"We're not ready to have a 'no' from Guardiola. We're hoping he'll stay," said the Spanish international.

"Guardiola is a key element in the Barca system. I see him satisfied, enjoying himself."

Uncertainty continues to surround the future of Guardiola, who is out of contract in the summer and has not yet committed to a new deal after a glittering three and a half years in charge at Camp Nou.

Barca star Lionel Messi insisted on Monday that Guardiola was "more important" to the Catalan club than him, a day after taking his tally for the season to 50 goals.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Will AC Milan keep the Serie A title this season?

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

Follow The Daily Star Sport on

[twitter](https://twitter.com/dssport)
www.twitter.com/dssport

Gomez equals CL record

AFP, Munich

Germany striker Mario Gomez equalled the record for the fastest four-goal haul in Champions League history when he netted four times for Bayern Munich in their 7-0 rout of FC Basel.

Gomez needed just 23 minutes on Tuesday at Munich's Allianz Arena to score his four goals.

He equalled the record set by Croatia's Dado Prso in November 2003 who also needed only 23 minutes to score four times for AS Monaco against Deportivo La Coruna.

In the Champions League's 20-year history, Gomez is the first German to score four goals in a single game and after scoring his first on 44 minutes, he wrapped up his four-goal haul on 67 minutes.

Gomez joins some famous names who have also scored four goals in a game.

Dutch stars Marco van Basten, for AC Milan in 1992 against IFK Goeteborg, Ruud van Nistelrooy, for Manchester United in 2004 against Sparta Prague, and Lionel Messi, for Barcelona against Arsenal in 2010, are amongst those to score four in a game.



Liverpool star Steven Gerrard (L) celebrates his second goal during their Premier League clash against Everton at Anfield on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Gerrard fires hattrick

AFP, Liverpool



Steven Gerrard marked his return to Liverpool's starting line-up with a hat-trick as Kenny Dalglish's side returned to winning ways with a 3-0 win over Everton in the Merseyside derby on Tuesday.

Gerrard, who has been plagued by injury this season, became the first player since Ian Rush in 1982 to score a treble in the fixture as David Moyes's 10th anniversary celebrations in charge of Everton fell flat at Anfield.

Liverpool's first win in four league games lifted them to within two points of sixth-placed Newcastle while Everton's first defeat in 10 games continued their miserable record at Liverpool, where they have not won since 1999.

They might have secured the League Cup last month, but Liverpool's results since the beginning of 2012 have been anything but impressive.

Dalglish's side had lost five of their previous eight top-flight outings prior to this game. Everton made the short journey to Anfield on the back of a nine-match league and cup run, but Moyes risked criticism from his own fans after resting the likes of Tim Cahill, Phil Neville, Leon Osman, Nikica Jelavic, the goalscoring hero in the last game against Tottenham, Royston Drenth and John Heitinga ahead of Saturday's FA Cup quarter-final with Sunderland.

Liverpool started with Gerrard for the first time since suffering a hamstring problem, and the influential midfielder was at the heart of his side's high-tempo start as Dalglish's side looked determined to avoid an embarrassing fourth straight league defeat.

It needed a stunning seventh minute save by Tim Howard to deny Gerrard after Luis Suarez's defence-splitting pass.

Everton's United States keeper stood his ground to beat away Gerrard's fierce shot, with Jack Rodwell marking his return with a goal-saving block to keep out Jordan Henderson.

In an entertaining start, South African midfielder Steven Pienaar fired over the bar from a good position in front of the Kop after clever work by Leighton Baines.

Eleven red cards have been shown in the last 14 meetings between the neighbours from across Stanley Park.

But referee Phil Dowd did not even have to produce a yellow in the first half despite the frantic pace of the derby.

Andy Carroll and Suarez both spurned further chances before Gerrard's inperfect lob earned Liverpool a 34th-minute breakthrough after Martin Kelly was denied by Howard.

Kelly was unfortunate not to double the lead four minutes later following a surging run ended with the England under-21 international firing narrowly wide.

Any hopes Everton had of clawing their way back into the derby vanished early in the second half when Gerrard produced another deadly finish.

Suarez did all the hard work, the Uruguay striker cutting into the area and breezing past Sylvain Distin as if he did not exist.

Gerrard took the ball off the former Ajax player's toes and gave Howard no chance with a thumping finish in front of the Kop.

It was one-way traffic. Carroll was unfortunate with a low effort which fizzed just wide before full-back Kelly also went close.



BTV & NEO Cricket

Asia Cup Cricket
Pakistan v Sri Lanka
Live from 2:00pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports

UEFA Europa League
Eindhoven v Valencia
Live from 12:00am (Friday)

TEN Action

UEFA Europa League
Bilbao v Man United
Live from 12:00am (Friday)

NEO Cricket

Man City v Lisbon
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

NEO Cricket

New Zealand v South Africa
Second Test, Day 2
Live from 3:30m (Friday)



Asia Cup Cricket

Pakistan v Sri Lanka
Time: 2:00pm
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium