



PHOTO: REUTERS

Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi shakes off the attention of a host of Milan players during their Champions League quarterfinal at the Camp Nou on Tuesday.

## Rooney bullish about City clash

AFP, London

Wayne Rooney insists Manchester United are capable of clinching the Premier League title with a victory at Manchester City later this month.

"We're certainly good enough to beat them there," Rooney said. "We showed that when we beat them 3-2 in the FA Cup in January.

"They have a great home record in the league but we managed to get the result there in the Cup.

"That shows we can go there and win. We just have to be ourselves and play our normal football. We'll take full confidence into that game and hopefully we can get the three points.

"We'll approach it as we do any normal game. There are three points up for grabs and we'll be trying to get them. We won't be doing anything different."

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- TEN Cricket**  
Sri Lanka v England  
Second Test, Day Three  
Live from 10:30am
- SET Max**  
Indian Premier League  
KKR v Delhi  
Live from 8:30pm
- ESPN**  
Sportscenter India  
Sports News  
Live at 8:30pm
- TEN Sports**  
UEFA Europa League  
Hannover 96 v Atletico Madrid  
Live from 1:00am (Friday)
- TEN Action**  
UEFA Europa League  
Bilbao v Schalke 04  
Live from 1:00am (Friday)

DAY'S  
EVENT

**Bangladesh Premier League**  
Brothers Union v Soccer Club, Feni  
Time: 4:00pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

# Messi sparks for Barca

THE GUARDIAN



Barcelona became the first team to reach five consecutive Champions League semifinals, potentially setting up another meeting with Chelsea. A 52nd-minute goal from Andres Iniesta and the two earlier penalties that gave Leo Messi 14 Champions League goals for the season, equalling Jose Altafini's 50-year-old European Cup record, took them to a 3-1 victory over Milan. As a bonus Barcelona took up their now familiar slot without suspensions and without the returning Zlatan Ibrahimovic scoring against them. Instead the Swede departed raging against the referee.

The night ended with songs and even an ole or two. "We had 21 shots; we made lots of chances and on a different day the result might have been much bigger," Pep Guardiola said. But it had not always felt so comfortable. Ibrahimovic caused problems and, at least until Iniesta struck, nerves invaded Camp Nou. The debate about the second penalty will run, too.

According to Massimiliano Allegri, it had been awarded "too easily" while Ibrahimovic went further. "Now I understand why [Jose] Mourinho behaves the way he does at the Camp Nou," he told Swedish television. "If Mr Ibrahimovic says that it's thanks to the referees, fine," responded Guardiola. "I have seen them on the television and they are two penalties. Sometimes they

### RESULTS

**Bayern Munich (GER) 2** (Olic 13, 37)  
Marseille (FRA) 0  
Bayern Munich win 4-0 on aggregate  
**At Barcelona, Spain**  
**Barcelona (ESP) 3** (Messi 11-pen, 41-pen, Iniesta 53)  
AC Milan (ITA) 1 (Nocerino 32)  
Barcelona win 3-1 on aggregate

don't blow those but pulling someone's shirt in the area is a penalty. And it's five semifinals in a row now. You talk on the pitch."

Guardiola said he was proud of that record but he was reluctant to be drawn on Barcelona's potential opponents. "It is too early," he said. "Benfica are a very good side who caused Chelsea problems in the first leg, so let's wait

and see. Whoever it is, they will be very difficult opponents."

For almost an hour Milan, too, were. The 0-0 first-leg draw left the tie on an edge, a single goal meaning the greatest of swings. Barcelona had a dilemma: go for goals or go for control? Guardiola had insisted "our objective will be to create chances". The reason was simple: Milan, he said, would score. There was little point in protecting a slender and vulnerable lead.

Instead Barcelona had to pull Milan about and create space. Isaac Cuenca gave width on the left and Dani Alves on the right, effectively leaving a high three-man defence. Messi and Cesc Fàbregas were part centre-forwards, part central midfielders, often creating a line of four up front: Cuenca, Fàbregas, Messi, Alves. The plan was familiar: occupy space outside to create space inside. It was also risky. Milan spread three across the middle with Ibrahimovic, Kevin-Prince Boateng and Robinho ahead. When they progressed, there was space.

For Barcelona there were nerves, even after taking an 11th-minute lead. Messi blocked Ignazio Abate's pass and

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## Forgotten Olic sends Bayern through

REUTERS, Munich



with a 4-0 aggregate victory.

The Croat, a surprise addition in the line-up ahead of Bundesliga top scorer Mario Gomez, gave the hosts a flying start when he connected with a Franck Ribery pass in the 13th minute. He tapped in his second after a well-timed pass from David Alaba in the 37th.

Four-time European champions Bayern look set to meet nine-time winners Real Madrid in a mouth-watering semifinal later this month, with the Spanish club hosting APOEL Nicosia on Wednesday and holding a 3-0 advantage from the first leg in Cyprus.

Bayern, who booked their spot in the competition's last four for the second time in three seasons with their 13th

win in the last 14 Champions League home games, are desperate for a final appearance that will be hosted by Munich on May 19.

Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes opted to leave winger Arjen Robben and Gomez, who has scored 11 goals in the competition, on the bench, and start instead with Olic, set to leave at the end of the season, and Anatoly Tymoshchuk.

Marseille, who needed to score at least three goals, had two shots on target in the opening minutes but Bayern got the early goal they wanted, dashing any French hopes when former Marseille player Ribery cut back into the box for Olic to slot in.

The Germans gradually got more and more possession, threatening with a thundering Tymoshchuk drive in the 27th before Marseille keeper Steve Mandanda denied Olic from close range seconds later.

Olic, who has been sidelined by Gomez with the Germany international scoring 23 times in the league this season, got his second of the evening, timing his run to connect with Alaba's low cross.

## Gomez signs on till 2016

REUTERS, Munich

Bayern Munich's Mario Gomez has extended his contract by three years to 2016 the day after his club booked a place in the Champions League semifinals, the forward said on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old, who was Bundesliga top scorer last season and jointly leads this season's charts with 23 goals, has been in fine form, also netting 11 times in the Champions League.

"I have always said Bayern are a great club, I feel well here and I see the best sporting prospects," Gomez said in a statement.

Bayern, chasing a treble of domestic and European trophies, beat Olympique Marseille 2-0 in their Champions League quarterfinal second leg on Tuesday to win 4-0 on aggregate.

Gomez became the most expensive transfer in Bundesliga history when he joined Bayern in 2009 for what is still a record sum of 35 million euros (\$46.69 million).

## Spaniards dominant

AFP, Paris



Three Spanish clubs will seek on Thursday to reach the Europa League semifinals and build on the impression that whilst their country is in a financial crisis their football fortunes are in rude health.

Athletic Bilbao should progress at home to German side Schalke 04 having won 4-2 away last week while 2010 winners Atletico Madrid hold a 2-1 lead as they travel to German side Hanover while Valencia host AZ Alkmaar having lost 2-1 in the first leg.

Sporting Lisbon will be bidding to make it an all-Iberian quartet in the semis as they take a 2-1 lead to Ukraine side Metalist Kharkiv.

The size of the task facing last season's Champions League semifinalists Schalke is illustrated by the fact that Athletic Bilbao have only ever lost 3-0 once in European competition - to another Bundesliga side Werder Bremen in 2009.

Both sides failed to win at the weekend, Bilbao losing 2-0 to Barcelona while Schalke had to rely on an 80th minute penalty by Klaas-Jan Huntelaar to force a 1-1 draw with Hoffenheim.

The German side will be looking to the in-form Dutch star for an early goal on Thursday and maintain his rich vein of scoring form that has seen him net 23 in the Bundesliga this term.

However, Athletic will be encouraged they can also score several more goals with the visitors probably forced to play fourth choice goalkeeper Mathias Schober as number one Timo Hildebrand was injured in the first leg and the other two goalkeepers are on their way back from injury.

The hosts' leading striker Fernando Llorente has warned his teammates that they would be foolish to already be thinking of the semifinals where they will play either Sporting or Metalist.

"We can't get carried away and relax," he told UEFA.com.

"We know they have players who can be very dangerous in midfield and attack with Raul, Huntelaar and (Jefferson) Farfan) for example.

"We need to play a very serious match so as not to have any problems."

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