



Chelsea midfielder Raul Meireles celebrates after scoring a late goal against Benfica at Stamford Bridge to secure qualification into the semifinals of the Champions League on Wednesday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Nervey Chelsea set up Barca clash

REUTERS, London

Chelsea nervously beat 10-man Benfica 2-1 in their Champions League quarter-final second leg at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday to seal a 3-1 aggregate victory and set up a semi-final with holders Barcelona later this month.

Chelsea doubled their aggregate advantage when Frank Lampard scored a 21st-minute penalty and their grip on the game tightened five minutes before halftime when Benfica skipper Maxi Pereira was sent off for a second yellow card after a lunge.

Javi Garcia headed in from close range on 85 minutes to prompt an awkward finale for the Londoners before Raul Meireles struck in stoppage time.

"We knew... we were going to face a difficult game tonight and so it

proved," Chelsea interim manager Roberto Di Matteo told ITV.

"The second goal was missing to kill the game off."

Asked about next opponents Barca, who Chelsea host in the last-four first leg on April 18, the Italian said: "They probably are one of the best teams if not the best team in the world."

Chelsea have now reached the semi-final for the sixth time in the last nine seasons.

However, they have made only one final and have never won the competition.

Benfica began with all guns blazing and although they came close to scoring at regular intervals, Chelsea defended superbly.

Defender John Terry, who later went off injured, was forced to clear a shot from Oscar Cardozo off the line while goalkeeper Petr Cech made a superb diving save from Pablo Aimar at the

start of the second half.

Chelsea's breakthrough came when makeshift defender Garcia clattered into Ashley Cole to concede a clear penalty and Lampard scored from the spot, although Artur got a hand to the ball.

Benfica, who won the second and last of their two European Cups 50 years ago, came into the match having scored in all of their away games in the competition and seemed intent on keeping that record intact.

They finally scored after spells of pressure through Garcia's flicked header when Cech could have done better. The visitors then went close to a sensational winner which would have put them through.

However, Chelsea broke upfield and Portuguese Meireles blasted home to end his compatriots' hopes and send Stamford Bridge into delirium.

Broken bones don't stop Terry

REUTERS, London

Chelsea captain John Terry revealed he played with two cracked ribs and could hardly breathe during his team's Champions League 2-1 triumph over Benfica on Wednesday.

The 31-year-old England centre-back came off after an hour and afterwards told reporters he had suffered the injury more than a week earlier in the quarter-final first leg in Lisbon.

"I couldn't breathe and my chest was closing up. I was having a difficult time out there, especially in the first half. Hopefully, I'll be okay," he said.

"I don't know how long I'll be out. I will have a scan in the morning and we will see where we go from there. It's just horrible.

"When you get one in the ribs, you can't do anything about it. You can't treat it. You just have to let it heal, but I can get through games definitely.

"I thought it was okay, but, later in the second half, it just seemed to be getting worse and I was struggling to breathe to be honest.

"It was difficult. I have never felt anything like that before."

Terry managed to complete the first leg and also played the full 90 minutes in Chelsea's 4-2 Premier League win at Aston Villa last Saturday.

Season over for Pato

AFP, Rome

AC Milan's Brazilian striker Pato will be out of action for the rest of the season, club doctor Jean-Pierre Meersman revealed on Thursday.

The 22-year-old has suffered 14 injuries in the past two years, principally thigh muscle problems, but also to his ankles and groin, restricting him to just 11 league games this season, in which he has scored once.

"Ten days, or 20 or 30 (out) does little to change where we are now," Meersman told Gazzetta dello sport. "And when he has recovered we'll be back to square one again. Pato was declared clinically recovered 13 times but he's obviously not cured."

Shooting star Shinji

Football

REUTERS, Munich

Bundesliga champions Borussia Dortmund are confident sought after midfielder Shinji Kagawa will accept a new deal, club CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke said on Thursday.

The 23-year-old Japan international has attracted the interest of several top clubs during another memorable season in which he has scored 12 goals and set up another seven to help Dortmund to the top of the Bundesliga.

Snapped up for just 350,000 euros from Japan's second division in 2010, Kagawa is now valued at around 15 million and Dortmund are eager to extend his contract which runs out next season.

Premier league Chelsea and Manchester United are reportedly among the clubs interested in the skilled player.

"We have had talks with Shinji. From our side we have made him an offer and now Shinji has time to think about it and decide," Watzke told Reuters in an interview.

"Then we could have a talk after 14 days or so. That is if it is necessary. We have not given Shinji any ultimatum."

"He could say yes now but if he wants to talk about it then we can talk. Then a decision can be taken in the coming weeks. But I am confident that Shinji will stay with us," said Watzke.

Watzke is credited with steering Dortmund away from financial collapse some seven years ago and guiding the club and 1997 Champions League winners into the most exciting sports brand in Germany in the past two seasons.

But even Watzke is surprised by his team's stunning season where they have gone 22

straight league games without a loss and are top with a three-point lead over Bayern Munich and six games left to play.

"Yes, absolutely," he said when asked whether the team's second consecutive dominant season was unexpected.

"The team showed the same consistency as last year only this season we had a rival. Bayern were not that strong last season. But this season both teams are playing on a very consistent level and are likely to end up with more than 70 points each," he said.

"That is very unusual and especially since at the start of the season we expected Bayern to run away with the title," said Watzke, who extended his own contract to 2014.

Dortmund, who have all but secured qualification for the Champions League group stage next season, will also face Bayern in the German Cup final in May.

"After 28 games we can say we are completely satisfied with the current season. It looks very good, we look set to go in the Champions League group stage," said Watzke.

"If someone had told us last year that we would be in the top three or four and that we would be in the German Cup final as well we would have thrown a party before the season."

"But if you are within touching distance of two titles then you want to win at least one," he said.

Watzke said planning for next season had yet to start given possible changes to the squad that could also include the departure of Paraguay international Lucas Barrios, who lost his starting spot to Dortmund top scorer Robert Lewandowski.

"We have not dealt with next season for one second yet. We will start doing that once we know with which players we will go into the next season," he said.

Di Maria back for late run-in

REUTERS, Madrid



Angel Di Maria's late goal for Real Madrid against APOEL Nicosia will have been the icing on the cake for coach Jose Mourinho, as it appeared to signal the return to fitness of one of his most potent forwards.

Di Maria is still one of the side's highest providers of assists despite having sidelined with a string of niggling muscle injuries since the turn of the year and he has only started 12 league games and three in the Champions League.

"I suffered a lot after having a relapse on my injury and it has been very tough," Di Maria told reporters after coming on as a substitute to play a lively 35 minutes.

"I thought it was the end of the season for me but I am back in time for the most important games."

Kaka and Jose Callejon also netted on Wednesday, as did ever-present leading scorer Cristiano Ronaldo, who bagged a brace, and Mourinho was able to rest regulars such as striker Karim Benzema and midfielders Xabi Alonso and Mesut Ozil.

His fearsome trio of Ronaldo, Higuain and Benzema have scored a total of 101 goals between them in all competitions this year.

"The competition in the squad is very good," said Kaka, one of the world's most expensive players who is not guaranteed a place in the starting XI.

"Obviously there are players who are decisive but our strength has been the group."

Toure denies Balotelli bust-up

AFP, Manchester

Manchester City midfielder Yaya Toure on Thursday dismissed reports of dressing-room bust-ups with team-mate Mario Balotelli.

Reports alleged the pair clashed at half-time in City's 3-3 draw at home to Sunderland last weekend as well as during the defeat at Swansea.

But Toure said he views Balotelli as a "brother" and "loves" him.

"They said I fought with Mario at Swansea and against Sunderland," he said in an interview with the Daily Mail. "That shocked me. My lawyers called me about this and it was the first I knew about it."

"It's just not true. It didn't happen. I am a footballer, not a boxer. People don't know my relationship with Mario. He's not my friend, he's my brother and I love him. To say we had a fight is very sad. It upset me and I feel sorry for Mario. He suffers most from these things."

Madrid sail into semis

REUTERS, Madrid



Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Real Madrid enjoyed one of their most comfortable passages into the Champions League semi-finals on Wednesday, progressing 8-2 on aggregate.

with a 5-2 victory over APOEL Nicosia on Wednesday, progressing 8-2 on aggregate.

Ronaldo and Kaka, two of the world's most expensive players, scored before the break, the second from the Brazilian a wonderful curling effort from outside the area.

Gustavo Manduca had the noisy travelling support in full song after he broke away to pull one back for APOEL in the 67th minute, but Ronaldo with a freekick and Jose Callejon quickly

restored order at the Bernabeu. Esteban Solari netted a penalty for the competition debutants but Angel Di Maria immediately lobbed a fifth for Real who eased into a semi-final meeting with Bayern Munich.

"Our objective has been achieved, we won, and we are in the semis against Bayern," Ronaldo told Spanish television.

"Bayern will be very difficult. They are the type of team who can win the Champions League so it will be extremely tough."

APOEL's colourful and raucous fans were the most exciting part of the opening half hour as Real laid siege to their goal without making much headway.

Ronaldo had come close twice before he breached their defence in the 26th minute, tapping in from

Marcelo's low cross.

Kaka curled in a second from outside the area in the 37th minute and as halftime approached he curled another effort against the post.

Complacency crept into Real's game and APOEL took full advantage, a well-worked passing move setting Manduca through to score wide of Iker Casillas.

Constantinos Charalambides forced Casillas into a fingertip save, but Ronaldo ended the wobble with a swerving freekick from wide of the area that arched into the top corner in the 75th.

Substitute Jose Callejon fired in a low shot five minutes later, but APOEL's fans had more to cheer when Hamit Altintop brought down Aldo Adorno and Solari scored from the spot.

Di Maria rounded off the scoring in the 84th minute.



Real Madrid stars Kaka (L) and Cristiano Ronaldo (R) celebrate after the former scored a stunning goal in their Champions League quarterfinal against APOEL at the Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Which Tiger will perform better in the IPL?

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TEN Cricket

Sri Lanka v England
Second Test, Day Four
Live from 10:30am

SET Max

Indian Premier League
Mumbai v Pune
Live from 4:30pm
Rajasthan v Kings XI Punjab
Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

English Premiership
Swansea City v Newcastle
Live from 9:30pm



Bangladesh Premier League
Mohammedan v Rahmatganj
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

আপনি জানেন কি?

সর্বোচ্চ মুনাফা

নিরাপদ বিনিয়োগ

মাসিক/ত্রৈমাসিক ভিত্তিতে

মুনাফা উত্তোলনের সুযোগ।

সুতরাং আর বিলম্ব নয়,

আজই জাতীয় সঞ্চয়পত্রে বিনিয়োগ করুন।

জাতীয় সঞ্চয়পত্রের স্কীমসমূহ হচ্ছেঃ-

- ০১। পরিবার সঞ্চয়পত্র (৫-বছর মেয়াদী); মুনাফার হারঃ ১৩.৪৫%। ১৮ বছর বা তদূর্ধ্ব বয়সের যে কোন বাংলাদেশী মহিলা একক নামে এ সঞ্চয়পত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।
- ০২। পেনশনার সঞ্চয়পত্র (৫-বছর মেয়াদী); মুনাফার হারঃ ১৩.১৯%। অবসরপ্রাপ্ত সরকারি, আধা-সরকারি, স্বায়ত্তশাসিত, আধা-স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানের সামরিক ও বেসামরিক কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ একক নামে এ সঞ্চয়পত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।
- ০৩। ৫-বছর মেয়াদী বাংলাদেশ সঞ্চয়পত্র; মুনাফার হারঃ ১৩.১৯%। সকল শ্রেণী ও পেশার বাংলাদেশী নাগরিক একক অথবা যুগ্ম নামে এবং স্বীকৃত ভবিষ্য তহবিল ও কর অবকাশপ্রাপ্ত প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহ এ সঞ্চয়পত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।
- ০৪। ৩-মাস অন্তর মুনাফাভিত্তিক সঞ্চয়পত্র (৩-বছর মেয়াদী); মুনাফার হারঃ ১২.৫৯%। যে কোন বাংলাদেশী নাগরিক একক অথবা যুগ্ম নামে এ সঞ্চয়পত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।
- ০৫। ডাকঘর সঞ্চয় ব্যাংক মেয়াদী হিসাব (৩-বছর মেয়াদী); মুনাফার হারঃ ১৩.২৪%। যে কোন বাংলাদেশী নাগরিক একক অথবা যুগ্ম নামে এ সঞ্চয়পত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।

আপনাদের সেবায়



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