

Reds leave it late

AFP, Liverpool



UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Luis Suarez's late goal sent Liverpool into the Europa League group stage as the Reds drew 1-1 with Hearts at Anfield on Thursday to clinch a 2-1 aggregate success.

Brendan Rodgers' team had a 1-0 advantage from last week's first leg at Tynecastle and despite dominating for long periods at Anfield, they out just scraped past the Scottish Premier League outfit.

David Templeton looked set to make Liverpool pay for their wastefulness when his weak shot was allowed into the net by Pepe Reina with five minutes left.

But three minutes later Suarez burst away down the left and managed to find the net from close-range to secure Liverpool's place in the group stages of Europe's second tier competition.

It was an unnecessarily nervous end to the evening for a Liverpool side that had plenty of chances to see off the Edinburgh club.

Rodgers, who has allowed Andy Carroll to join West Ham on a season-long loan, can also be forgiven for having half an eye on the 24 hours ahead.

The Liverpool manager could see Charlie Adam and Jay Spearing leave and is keen to add new faces ahead of Friday's 2200GMT deadline.

Hearts began brightly and Callum Paterson hit a half volley that landed just wide and had another effort blocked by a team-mate.

Suarez immediately carried a threat and after swapping passes with Martin Kelly, he had a low effort pushed away by Hearts goalkeeper Jamie Macdonald.

Stewart Downing has endured plenty of criticism during his time at Anfield but he showed great skill to beat Paterson with ease and send over a cross that was flicked on by

youngster Adam Morgan and headed towards goal by Suarez, only for Marius Zaliukas to clear off the line.

John Sutton went down in the area under Jamie Carragher's challenge with the visitors appealing for a penalty, before Liverpool's Joe Allen broke forward and had a long-range effort held by Macdonald.

The Hearts goalkeeper also did well to rush out to block after Steven Gerrard had burst through two challenges into the area.

Sutton also glanced a header wide from a whipped cross from Templeton and Morgan wasted a decent opening after he was played through by Gerrard after a quick break.

After the break, Gerrard picked out Martin Skrtel at the near post but the Slovakian defender's effort was turned wide by Andy Webster.

And Jonjo Shelvey thumped another effort from 25 yards just past the top corner as the hosts continued to press.

Suarez then passed up two opportunities to kill the tie. The Uruguayan was sent through by Jordan Henderson and had his close-range effort blocked on to the post by Ryan McGowan.

A minute later he spun 10 yards from goal and curled a shot past the far post.

Raheem Sterling, who had replaced Morgan just after the hour, made an immediate impression and just missed after an beating several defenders and Gerrard also hit a bending shot narrowly wide midway through the second half.

Hearts went close again through Mehdi Taouil and Daniel Grainger also had a free-kick deflected wide by the wall.

The Scottish side pulled the tie level in the 85th minute when Reina allowed a routine shot from Templeton to squirm through his body and into the net.

But, with extra-time looming, Suarez broke clear down the left and managed to squeeze a shot inside the near post in the 88th minute.



Liverpool striker Luis Suarez (R) celebrates his goal with teammate Steven Gerrard during their Europa League play-off second leg match against Hearts at Anfield on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Villa back for Spain

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain's all-time leading scorer David Villa was recalled to the squad by Vicente del Bosque on Friday for their opening 2014 World Cup qualifying matches.

Villa, who has scored 51 goals in 82 games for Spain, broke his left leg while playing with Barcelona at the Club World Cup last December and missed eight months of action including the national team's Euro 2012 triumph.

The world and European champions play a friendly against Saudi Arabia in Pontevedra, north-west Spain, on September 7 and four days later travel to Tbilisi, Georgia to play their opening group game on the road to Brazil.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers:

Iker Casillas (Real Madrid), Pepe Reina (Liverpool), Victor Valdes (Barcelona).

Defenders:

Alvaro Arbeloa (Real Madrid), Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid), Raul Albiol (Real Madrid), Gerard Pique (Barcelona), Ignacio Monreal (Malaga), Juanfran (Atletico Madrid), Jordi Alba (Barcelona).

Midfielders:

Xabi Alonso (Real Madrid), Sergio Busquets (Barcelona), Santi Cazorla (Arsenal), Cesc Fabregas (Barcelona), Andres Iniesta (Barcelona), Benat Etxebarria (Real Betis), Xavi (Barcelona).

Forwards:

David Silva (Manchester City), Jesus Navas (Sevilla), Pedro (Barcelona), Fernando Torres (Chelsea), Roberto Soldado (Valencia), David Villa

Bastian left out

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany have left midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger out of their squad for the World Cup qualifiers against Faroe Islands and Austria next month.

Coach Joachim Loew said the Bayern Munich player was still not match fit after a series of nagging injuries.

"I have spoken with Bastian and we have come to the understanding that he still needs some time, to get back into training and match rhythm. Our plan for Bastian Schweinsteiger is laid around the two matches in October against Italy and Sweden."

SQUAD

Goalkeepers:

Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich), Ron-Robert Zieler (Hanover 96), Marc-Andre ter Stegen (Borussia Moenchengladbach)

Defenders:

Holger Badstuber (Bayern Munich), Jerome Boateng (Bayern Munich), Benedikt Hoewedes (Schalke 04), Mats Hummels (Borussia Dortmund), Philipp Lahm (Bayern Munich), Per Mertesacker (Arsenal), Marcel Schmelzer (Borussia Dortmund)

Midfielders:

Lars Bender (Bayer Leverkusen), Julian Draxler (Schalke 04), Mario Goetze (Borussia Dortmund), Ilkay Gundogan (Borussia Dortmund), Sami Khedira (Real Madrid), Toni Kroos (Bayern Munich), Thomas Mueller (Bayern Munich), Mesut Ozil (Real Madrid)

Forwards:

Miroslav Klose (Lazio), Lukas Podolski (Arsenal), Marco Reus (Borussia Dortmund)

City look for spark

AFP, London



BARCLAYS PREMIER LEAGUE

Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini hopes the prospect of reliving the greatest day in the club's history will spark his tired stars into life, while title rivals Manchester United turn to Robin van Persie for inspiration in the absence of Wayne Rooney.

When QPR last visited Eastlands three months ago, the west London club were just minutes away from ruining City's attempt to become English champions for the first time in 44 years.

City needed a win against Mark Hughes' relegation-threatened side to guarantee the title, but they trailed 2-1 heading into stoppage-time.

That set the stage for an incredible finale which saw Edin Dzeko equalise before Sergio Agüero's winner with virtually the last kick of the season ensured Mancini's team finished top, above United on goal difference.

Although City have made an unbeaten start to their title defence, Mancini has been underwhelmed by his side's performances in a 3-2 win over Southampton and a 2-2 draw at Liverpool.

The Italian believes fatigue after Euro 2012 is to blame and he rested Spanish midfielder David Silva for last weekend's trip to Liverpool.

"We don't have all the players in good form," Mancini said. "The international players started pre-season on July 25. They are not in good form. This is one of the reasons."

"David started his pre-season late and for one week went to Puerto Rico with Spain. He needs training and maybe to play, but not for 90 minutes."

While City strive to rediscover their rhythm, United have

also made a spluttering start, losing at Everton before an error-strewn 3-2 win over Fulham that was marred by an injury to Wayne Rooney which will sideline the England striker for up to four weeks.

With Rooney, who this week denied rumours he could quit United after reports of a row with manager Sir Alex Ferguson, recovering from a nasty thigh gash that required stitches in hospital and Bulgarian striker Dimitar Berbatov set to join Fulham, van Persie will be expected to step into the breach.

The early signs are good. Van Persie marked his first United start with his maiden goal for the club against Fulham and the Dutch striker, a £24 million signing from Arsenal, already looks comfortable in his new surroundings.

Ferguson's defensive options could also be boosted by the return from injury of centre-back Jonny Evans, which would allow Michael Carrick to return to midfield after he was deployed at the heart of United's defence for the last two matches.

Arsenal travel to Liverpool on Sunday still looking for their first win and first goal of the season after 0-0 draws with Sunderland and Stoke.

Van Persie's exit has clearly shaken Arsenal's belief, and Gunners boss Arsene Wenger, who has seen a host of top players leave in the last year, still faces a battle to persuade England winger Theo Walcott to extend a contract which expires at the end of this season.

"Theo has one year to go and that is simple. We have to find an agreement with him on whether to extend the contract for a longer period or not," Wenger said.

England striker Andy Carroll should make his West Ham debut against Fulham after completing a season-long loan move from Liverpool.

Real seek upturn

AFP, Madrid



LFP

Having claimed the season's first piece of silverware with victory over Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup, Real Madrid return to domestic action needing to close a five-point deficit on the Catalans in La Liga.

Madrid coach Jose Mourinho uncharacteristically tore into his players after their 2-1 derby defeat by Getafe last weekend, describing their performance as "unacceptable".

He got the reaction he was looking for in the Super Cup though, with a sparkling first-half display on Wednesday at the Bernabeu paving the way for a 2-1 victory over 10-man Barca that gave Madrid the trophy on away goals.

It was the only silverware that Mourinho lacked in Spain after winning the King's Cup in his first year and then the league title last season, which ended Barca's hegemony under Pep Guardiola, who had finished first in the previous three campaigns.

"The trophy will give us confidence. We should enjoy the moment but also realise that we must now move forward and know that we cannot afford to make any more

mistakes," said Cristiano Ronaldo, ahead of Sunday's game at home to Granada.

The defeat was a blow for new Barca coach Tito Vilanova as he seeks to emulate the successes of his predecessor.

Barca take on Valencia looking to maintain their 100 per cent record, which is also shared by Real Valladolid and Rayo Vallecano.

Valladolid are yet to concede a goal in an impressive return to the top flight and they face an Athletic Bilbao side in disarray after the departure of Javi Martinez to Bayern Munich, and with Fernando Llorente expected to follow him out of the door.

Their policy of only fielding Basques means their ability to hold onto their players is crucial but their fine displays last season have put them in the shop window.

Rayo now play Sevilla, who were happy to come away with a point from the Andalusian derby with Granada after playing the whole second half with 10 men following the dismissal of goalkeeper Diego Lopez.

Atletico Madrid will look to continue their strong start to the season, which included a hat-trick by striker Radamel Falcao in a 4-0 victory over Athletic Bilbao, when they play Real Betis.

FIXTURES

Saturday

Celta Vigo v Osasuna (1400GMT), Real Zaragoza v Malaga (1600GMT), Deportivo La Coruna v Getafe (1800GMT), Real Mallorca v Real Sociedad (2000GMT)

Sunday

Rayo Vallecano v Sevilla (1000GMT), Athletic Bilbao v Valladolid (1400GMT), Levante v Espanyol (1600GMT), Real Madrid v Granada (1750GMT), Barcelona v Valencia (1930GMT)

Monday

Dutch drop VDV



Football

REUTERS, Zeist

The experienced duo of Rafael van der Vaart and Nigel de Jong were dropped from the Netherlands squad on Friday for the World Cup qualifying matches against Turkey and Hungary.

Ibrahim Afellay and Gregory van der Wiel were also missing when a 23-strong squad was announced by coach Louis Van Gaal.

"Those four are all changing clubs at the moment and above that they haven't played regularly and are not fit enough", Van Gaal told a news conference.

"For them, it is better that they make a fresh start at their new club but the door to my squad stays open because they are good, experienced players."

Van der Vaart was poised to join De Jong in leaving the Premier League on Friday. He had reportedly travelled to Hamburg SV for a medical, while AC Milan confirmed they had signed De Jong from

Manchester City.

Afellay joined Schalke 04 on a one-year loan from Barcelona and Van der Wiel was also expected to move before the transfer window closed at 2200 GMT on Friday.

Van Gaal said the absence of Van der Vaart and De Jong had nothing to do with their performances in the 4-2 defeat by Belgium, his first friendly match since taking charge of the Netherlands for a second time.

Van der Vaart struggled to make any impression while De Jong's second half blunder initiated Belgium's come back.

Van Gaal added the changes would not tempt him to play Robin van Persie as a playmaker.

"In the profile I made I consider Robin (van Persie) as a central striker and not as playmaker," Van Gaal said.

Since becoming coach after Euro 2012, where the Dutch lost all three group games, Van Gaal has now introduced nine new players, seven of whom played recently for the country at the under-23 level.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Schalke's latest recruit Netherlands midfielder Ibrahim Afellay (R) holds his new shirt with team coach Huub Stevens during a news conference in Gelsenkirchen yesterday.



STAR Cricket

India v New Zealand

Second Test, Day 2

Live from 10:00am

TEN Sports

US Open

Men's & Women's 3rd Rd

Live from 9:00pm

ESPN

English Premiership

West Ham v Fulham

Live from 6:00pm

Tottenham v Norwich City

Live from 8:00pm

Man City v QPR

Live from 10:30pm

STAR Sports

English Premiership

West Bromwich v Everton

Live from 8:00pm

Serie A