

Bayern stunned

REUTERS, London



Belarusian side BATE Borisov caused one of the biggest shocks ever seen in the Champions League when they stunned last season's beaten finalists Bayern Munich 3-1 on Tuesday.

The other likely title contenders all won with European champions Chelsea easily beating FC Nordsjaelland 4-0 away while Barcelona saw off Benfica 2-0 in Lisbon but lost Carles Puyol with a dislocated elbow before Sergio Busquets was sent off.

Like Barca and BATE, Manchester United maintained their perfect start with a come-from-behind 2-1 win over CFR Cluj in Romania where Robin van Persie scored both their goals.

The game between Juventus and Shakhtar Donetsk, both regarded as dark horses in this season's Champions League, finished 1-1 in Turin where the Italian side chalked up a European competition record of eight successive draws.

There were wins for Valencia, who beat Lille 2-0 to condemn the French side to a second successive defeat, while Celtic ended a run of 20 Champions League away matches without a win after a last-minute 3-2 triumph at Spartak Moscow.

Braga, in contrast, maintained their fine European record on the road, winning 2-0 at Galatasaray to remain unbeaten in seven matches away from home.

The biggest upset was in Minsk where BATE earned their first ever Champions League home victory as they beat a Bayern side who had won their last nine matches in all competitions.

Bayern dominated the first half, hitting the post through Toni Kroos, but they ran out of ideas as BATE chalked up an unexpected win

RESULTS

Nordsjaelland (DEN) 0 Chelsea (ENG) 4 (Mata 33, 82, David Luiz 79, Ramires 89)
Juventus (ITA) 1 (Bonucci 25)
Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 1 (Teixeira 23)
Valencia (ESP) 2 (Jonas 38, 74)
Lille (FRA) 0
BATE Borisov (BLR) 3 (Pavlov 23, Rodionov 78, Renan 90+4) Bayern Munich (GER) 1 (Ribery 90+1)
Benfica (POR) 0 Barcelona (ESP) 2 (Sanchez 6, Fabregas 56)
Spartak Moscow (RUS) 2 (Emenike 41, 48) Celtic (SCO) 3 (Hooper 12, 0, Kombarov 71-og, Samaras 90)
CFR Cluj (ROM) 1 (Kapetanos 14)
Manchester United (ENG) 2 (van Persie 29, 49)
Galatasaray (TUR) 0 Braga (POR) 2

against the four-time European champions. Goals from Aleksandr Pavlov, Vitali Rodionov and Renan Bressan gave the BATE a famous victory and all the Bavarians had to show for their efforts was a late Franck Ribery goal to pull the score back to 2-1 in the closing stages.

However, the Belarus champions still had time to score again through Bressan deep into stoppage time.

The victory took BATE to the top of Group F after they had recorded their first ever win in the competition by the same score against Lille two weeks ago. Valencia are level with Bayern on three points and Lille are bottom with none.

Unlike Bayern, holders Chelsea brushed aside the debutants of FC Nordsjaelland in Group E in Copenhagen with Juan Mata netting twice and David Luiz and Ramires also scoring - although three of their goals only came in the last 11 minutes.

Chelsea keeper Petr Cech made an important save after 73 minutes when he turned a shot from Joshua John on to a post to preserve their lead.

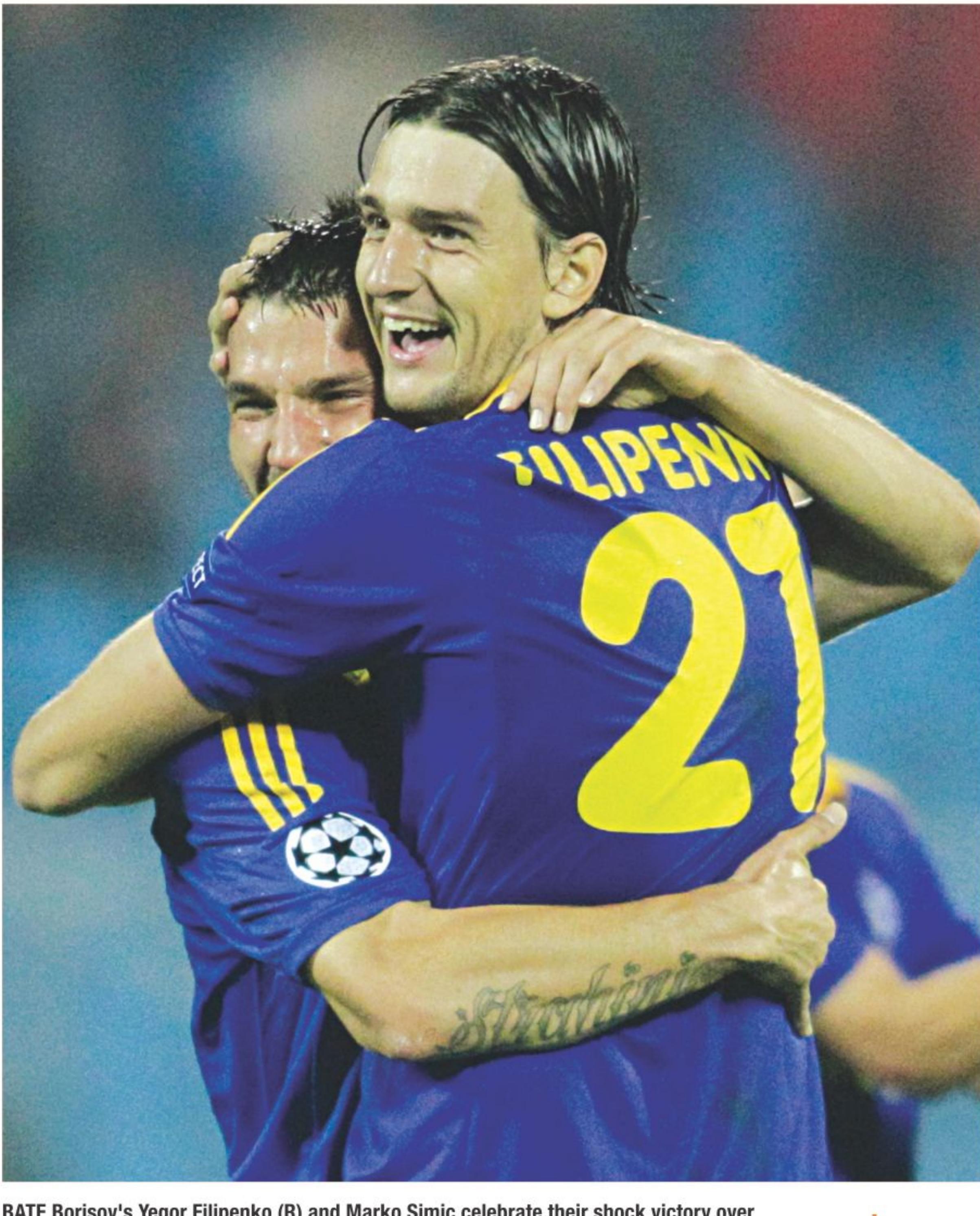
Minutes later Luiz scored from a free kick, prompting a defensive collapse from the Danish champions.

Chelsea's win, and Juventus's draw with Shakhtar in Turin, left them top with four points, the same as the Ukrainians. Juve have two and the Danes are bottom with no points and no goals.

Barcelona's rivalry with Benfica goes back to the 1961 European Cup final which the Portuguese side won 3-2.

Barca have not lost to Benfica in five European meetings since and won Tuesday's Group G game, though Puyol's injury has ruled him out of Sunday's 'Clasico' with Real Madrid.

Goals from Alexis Sanchez and Cesc Fabregas left the Catalans top with six points from their two games - two points ahead of Celtic who won a thriller in Moscow.



BATE Borisov's Yegor Filipenko (R) and Marko Simic celebrate their shock victory over Bayern Munich in their Champions League Group F match at the Dinamo Stadium in Minsk on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MU ride on Van Persie

REUTERS, Cluj



Robin van Persie has wasted little time in becoming an Old Trafford favourite after swapping Arsenal for Manchester United and he continued his hot scoring streak in a 2-1 Champions League win at CFR Cluj on Tuesday.

The prolific Dutch international striker made it seven goals since joining United before the start of the season as his double helped the visitors make it two wins from two in Group H.

United had to come from behind after Pantelis Kapetanos fired the Romanian league champions into a 14th minute lead but Van Persie equalised 15 minutes later when he met Wayne Rooney's free kick and the ball looped off his shoulder and over keeper Mario Felguera.

There was nothing fortunate about his second goal four minutes after the break, the striker showing a deft touch to sublimely flick Rooney's delivery past Felguera.

"The pass and the finish were equally good (for the second goal)," purred United manager Alex Ferguson who declared his intent from the start by fielding the attacking trio of Rooney, Van Persie and Javier Hernandez.

Rooney and Van Persie were starting a match together for the first time.

"We have good combinations over quite a few of our players. I think the strength of our squad is in attacking positions," Ferguson told reporters.

United, who failed to get out of their group last season, are now well-placed to advance this time.

"We started badly but we got a good result. It's not easy to come back especially when you're away," said Ferguson.

"They (Cluj) played with determination and it was a very tough match."

The Premier League side had kept clean sheets in seven of their last nine away games in the competition and although Ferguson had voiced defensive concerns after his side conceded three in losing to Tottenham Hotspur at Old Trafford on Saturday, the Scot was happy with Tuesday's improvement.

"I have got to be pleased with the possession and the concentration was really good tonight," he said.

"Apart from the goal I thought we defended very well. David (De Gea) made a good save towards the end. It's never easy and they have a good home record here."

Cluj, who beat Braga in their opening game, looked set to give United a difficult evening when they took the lead after a bright start.

A crossfield pass found Modou Sougou on the right and he easily brushed aside Patrice Evra and crossed for Greek international Kapetanos to net.

Martinez punished

AFP, London

Wigan manager Roberto Martinez has been fined 10,000 pounds (12,480 euros) over comments made following his team's 4-0 defeat against Manchester United last month at Old Trafford, the English FA announced on Wednesday.

An FA statement read: "The charge was in relation to a breach of FA Rule E3 concerning media comments which implied that the match referee and/or match officials in general are motivated by bias and/or brought the game into disrepute."

Martinez, who had requested a personal hearing, was also warned as to his future conduct."

The Spanish manager was furious after his side's defeat, during which England striker Danny Welbeck was awarded a controversial penalty following what seemed to be minimal contact from Ali Al-Habsi.

Imperious Barca

AFP, Lisbon

Barcelona continued their imperious form this season as they retained top spot in Champions League Group G with a 2-0 victory away to Benfica.

Alexis Sanchez struck after six minutes and Cesc Fabregas added a second following the break to leave Barca with a 100 per cent record from their opening two games while Celtic are on four points following their earlier win away to Spartak Moscow.

Sergio Busquets was sent off with two minutes to go after a clash with Maxi Pereira.

The home side began at a blistering pace with a well-worked move seeing Bruno Cesar cracking a left-foot shot from the edge of the area that was too central and keeper Victor Valdes parried.

But Benfica found themselves behind after Barcelona's first attack of the match as with Pereira pressing forward from right-back, Leo Messi found space on the left of the area and crossed for Sanchez to slide the ball home and end a barren spell which had seen him not hit the back of the net since last April.

Benfica quickly returned to the offensive and Puyol and Javier Mascherano were being run ragged while they received little protection from their midfield. Rodrigo Lima burst through and Valdes saved well

with his feet and then after 16 minutes Osvaldo Gaitan volleyed over from 15 yards.

As the first half progressed Barca began to find their composure and assert themselves on the midfield although the Portuguese continued to bite at their heels.

In a reverse of the first goal Sanchez on the left of the area found Messi, who forced a fine save from keeper Artur Moraes before Sanchez fired over.

Barcelona were using the strategy of harrying Barca's midfielders which was used with some success by Chelsea and Real Madrid last season.

But almost every time the visitors did break they went close to scoring. A Sanchez save was blocked by Artur and then on the point of half-time a Pedro Rodriguez cross was just too long for Messi.

Benfica brought the more attack-minded Carlos Martins into midfield but Barca started to dominate in the second half and got their second goal through an in-form Cesc. He latched onto a Messi pass and finished clinically on his left foot past Artur.

Benfica went close with headers from Jardel Vieira and Nemanja Matic but Barca were in control and the only stains on their evening were the injury for Puyol and Busquets' harsh expulsion late on when he seemed to make little contact with Pereira when they jumped for a ball.

Argentina on the move

AFP, Paris

World and European champions Spain remain top of the FIFA rankings released on Wednesday while Argentina moved up three places into fourth spot.

Germany were second while Portugal jumped one spot to third, as England fell two places to fifth.

Colombia, who have notched up convincing wins over Chile (3-1) and Uruguay (4-0) in World Cup qualifiers, shot up 13 places and now sit in ninth spot.

TOP TEN

1. Spain
2. Germany
3. Portugal (+1)
4. Argentina (+3)
5. England (-2)
6. Netherlands (+2)
7. Uruguay (-2)
8. Italy (-2)
9. Colombia (+13)
10. Greece (+1)

Travel ban for PSG fans

AFP, Paris

The French interior ministry has slapped a travel ban on Paris Saint-Germain fans for Sunday's top-of-the-table Ligue 1 clash with Marseille, with only an authorised group of some 150 supporters allowed.

It was initially announced that 400 PSG fans would make the trip to the Mediterranean coast, with some package deals offered for 340 euros (\$439, 272 pounds), pricing out the majority of travelling supporters and attracting just 20 requests.

"As a result of the insufficient requests for the official trip for the match, the club has taken the decision to propose a new package for 150 euros," read a PSG statement.

The high-octane clash, which has featured numerous violent incidents over recent years, was deemed so volatile last season that a complete ban was placed on travelling fans and the small group allowed to attend this season will be heavily protected.

Finance police raid Napoli

AFP, Milan

Serie A club Napoli came under scrutiny on Wednesday after the country's Finance Police raided the club in relation to suspicions of financial foul play, media reports said.

According to the domestic ANSA news agency, police, who took away a number of documents from the club, were acting on a mandate from the public prosecutor in Naples.

The raid was carried out by Italy's Guardia di Finanza, a wing of the armed forces which deals with financial crime and smuggling and comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

What to WATCH

BTW

ICC World T20

Sri Lanka v Pakistan

First Semifinal

Live from 7:30pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live at 11:30pm

TEN Sports

UEFA Europa League

Panathinaikos v Tottenham

Live from 1:00pm

Newcastle v Bordeaux

Live from 1:00am (Friday)

TEN Action

UEFA Europa League

Nefci PFK v Inter Milan

Live from 10:00pm

Liverpool v Udinese



Manchester United striker Robin van Persie (L) scores one of his two goals against CFR Cluj during their Champions League Group H match in Cluj-Napoca on Tuesday.

Albiceleste look for revenge



Football

AFP, Buenos Aires

Alejandro Sabella's Argentina will be out for revenge on Wednesday when they take on long-time rivals Brazil in their "Superclasico de las Americas" return in the northern city of Chaco.

Brazil won the opening encounter in Goiana on September 19 since when Sabella has tweaked a homegrown squad with the arrival of striker Ignacio Scocco from Newell's Old Boys.

Both countries will be playing young home-based stars with top names such as the hosts' Leo Messi in European action for their clubs.

The match will be played in the modest northern city of La Resistencia, home to second tier Zone B side Chaco for Ever.

The match allows Sabella and Brazil counterpart Mano Menezes will use the occasion to see what emerging talents are likely to blossom in time for the 2014 World Cup.

Adding a little spice to the occasion is the fact that four of the Argentinians play their club trade in Brazil - strikers Juan Manuel Martinez of Corinthians and Hernan Barcos of Palmeiras and midfielders Pablo Guinazu from Internazionale Porto Alegre and Cruzeiro's Walter Montillo.

Barcos is a potential call-up for upcoming World Cup qualifiers against reigning South American champions Uruguay and Chile.

Brazil are pre-qualified as holders, hence Menezes can delve into his youth ranks with less riding on the immediate outcome, whereas Argentina have to ensure they bag a berth in the regional qualifiers.