

Barcelona goalkeeper Victor Valdes (R) watches a glancing header from Celtic forward Victor Wanyama (L) elude him during their Champions League encounter at Celtic Park on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ibrahimovic punished

AFP, Paris

Ligue 1 leaders Paris Saint Germain will be without star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic for their next two league games after the fiery Swedish international was handed a two-game ban on Wednesday.

The 31-year-old - who is the leading scorer in the league with 10 goals - was slapped with the ban by the Professional Football League's disciplinary commission for his red card last Saturday for a rash challenge on St Etienne goalkeeper Stephane Ruffier.

Hulk, Adriano dropped

AP, Sao Paulo

The Brazilian soccer federation says Zenit St. Petersburg striker Hulk and Barcelona defender Adriano will not play in Brazil's friendly against Colombia next week in East Rutherford, N.J.

The federation said Wednesday that Hulk and Adriano were dropped from the squad because of right thigh muscle injuries sustained while playing for their clubs.

The friendly at MetLife Stadium will be Brazil's final match of the year.

Celtic stun Barca

AFP, Paris



Manchester United became the third club to reach the Champions League knockout stages after coming from behind to beat Braga 3-1 and ensure they also top their group on Wednesday.

However, it was the side that beat them to being Britain's first ever winner of the European Cup, Celtic, that stole the glory as they recorded a deserved 2-1 home win over four-time champions Barcelona just a day after the hosts celebrated their 125th birthday.

Another British winner of European club football's premier competition - defending champions Chelsea - kept their hopes alive of avoiding the humiliation of becoming the first champions to go out at the group stage with a last gasp 3-2 home win over talented Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk.

However, while they top the group on goal difference from Shakhtar, their fate probably hangs on their trip to Italian champions Juventus in a fortnight as their hosts are just a point behind them having demolished Nordsjaelland 4-0 in Turin.

The biggest winners of the night were last season's beaten finalists Bayern Munich who humiliated hapless French side Lille 6-1 with Peruvian striker Claudio Pizarro scoring a hat-trick in the first-half.

Bayern are battling it out on the same points as Valencia, who also enjoyed an easy night at home beat-

ing early pacesetters BATE Borisov 4-2. The Belarus side trail the top two by just three points but appear to have gone off the boil.

United were second best for most of their match with Braga but having resumed after a second-half power cut they scored three times in the last 10 minutes to give the scoreline a rather unfair look about it but still a place in the last 16.

That above all was a relief to Alex Ferguson and his players after they

RESULTS

Juventus (ITA) 4 (Marchisio 6, Vidal 23, Giovinco 37, Quagliarella 75) Nordsjaelland (DEN) 0
Chelsea (ENG) 3 (Torres 6, Oscar 40, Moses 90+4) Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 2 (Willian 9, 47)
Valencia (ESP) 4 (Jonas 26, Soldado 29 pen, Feghouli 51, 86) BATE Borisov (BLR) 2 (Renan 53, Mozolevski 83)
Bayern Munich (GER) 6 (Schweinsteiger 5, Pizarro 18, 28, 33, Robben 23, Kroos 66) Lille (FRA) 1 (Kalou 58)
Benfica (POR) 2 (Cardozo 55, 69)
Spartak Moscow (RUS) 0
Celtic (SCO) 2 (Wanyama 21, Watt 83) Barcelona (ESP) 1 (Messi 90+1)
Cluj (ROM) 1 (Sougou 53) Galatasaray (TUR) Galatasaray 3 (B. Yilmaz 18, 61, 74)

missed out on the knockout stages last season.

"I think we were all disappointed (we didn't progress from the group stage last year)," said veteran Ryan Giggs.

"It was not good enough and we knew we had to do something about it and we have. Long may it continue."

Celtic had been unfortunate to lose 2-1 to Barcelona a fortnight ago having taken the lead but they did not make the same mistake on

Wednesday more than holding their own after an early goal by the outstanding Victor Wanyama.

They sealed the points through a superbly-taken late second from 18-year-old Tony Watt - Lionel Messi grabbed a stoppage time consolation goal - prompting wild celebrations.

"I said when I took the job that I wanted to bring the thunder back to the club and I have never heard anything like that at the end of the match," said manager Neil Lennon.

"This is simply unbelievable. The club has been in the doldrums. This is not the pinnacle, there is more to come from this team, but the progression is great. It gives us a great chance of qualifying."

His Barcelona counterpart Tito Vilanova was gracious in defeat.

"Congratulations to Celtic and their fans. The credit is theirs," Vilanova said.

"It was an amazing show. If we had scored first it would have been a more open match. We hit the post twice but their goalkeeper did very well."

Chelsea showed terrific grit to seal their victory in the fourth minute of stoppage time through Victor Moses, his first goal in the competition, but their opponents deserved a share of the spoils.

"We've got a crucial three points. It was crucial for us to win this tough home game," said Di Matteo.

"They are a very good side. Now it's probably going to go down to the last kick of the last game in this group."

'Destiny still in our hands'

AFP, Turin



Two-time Champions League winners Juventus set up a potential make-or-break clash at home to defending champions Chelsea in two weeks' time after a 4-0 rout of Nordsjaelland on Wednesday.

However, their legendary goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon is confident they can get the required results to make the last 16, which sees them at present lying in third spot a point adrift of both Chelsea and Shakhtar Donetsk.

Chelsea had stolen all three points with a stoppage time goal by Victor Moses for a 3-2 win over Shakhtar at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

"A draw (in the Chelsea/Shakhtar game) would have been nice, of course, but at the end of the day our destiny is still in our hands," said Buffon.

"The fact it all depends on us is a good sign. We're at home to Chelsea and then away to Donetsk."

"We're confident and you can't always rely on other results."

Antonio Conte's side went into the fourth match of the group phase desperate for a win having had to settle for three consecutive draws including a 1-1 tie in Denmark two weeks ago.

However the Old Lady of Turin's nerves were settled early on when Claudio Marchisio pounced to score the opener on seven minutes and Arturo Vidal and Sebastian Giovinco made it 3-0 before the interval.

Nordsjaelland's share of the points two weeks ago was likened to a victory by the Danish champions, but away from home they were sorely exposed and given few opportunities at launching meaningful offensives.

Juventus were ruthless in putting the Danes to the sword, extra motivation stemming from suffering their first defeat in 50 games on Sunday when Serie A rivals Inter Milan left Turin with a precious 3-1 win.

Marchisio, who along with midfield maestro Andrea Pirlo stood out for the hosts in a quasi-striker's role, admitted defeat to Inter had played a role.

"It was important for us to win and we did really well tonight," said Marchisio.

Levein calls in lawyers

AFP, Glasgow

Craig Levein said Wednesday he was taking legal advice after being sacked as Scotland manager.

The Scottish Football Association announced Monday that Levein was being "relieved of his duties" but stressed they would pay him his wages for the 20 months left on his contract.

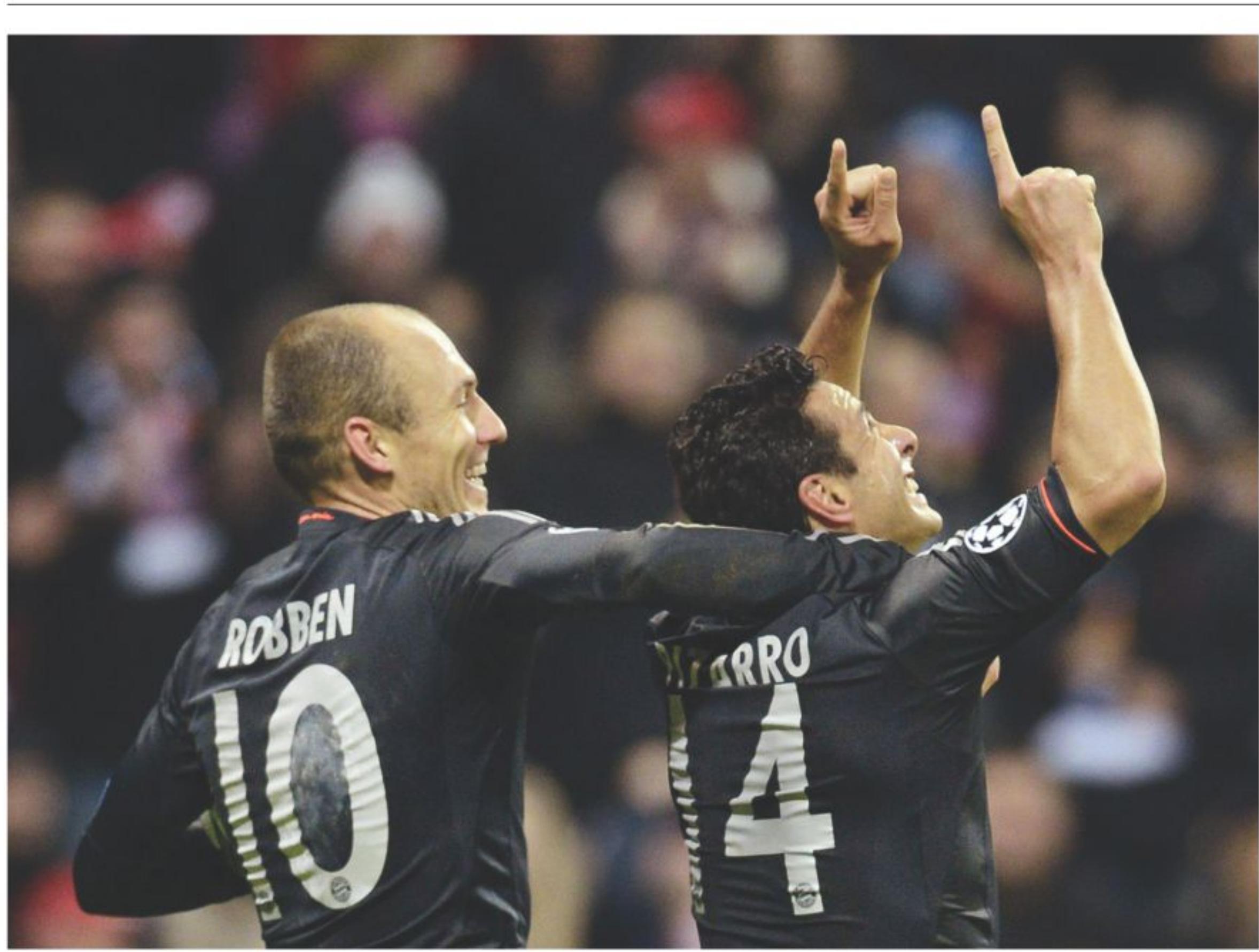
However, Levein was far from happy with the sequence of events that led to his departure and he said in a statement issued Wednesday: "I am extremely disappointed by the process of the last week.

"I note the position as stated by the Scottish Football Association but do not concur and I am currently taking legal advice as to my options.

"I will make no further comment at this time."

SFA chief executive Stewart Regan, speaking on Monday, said: "We have not terminated the manager's contract. He (Levein) will be paid his dues and his entitlement under his contract."

Former Celtic manager Gordon Strachan appears the favourite to succeed Levein on a permanent basis.



Bayern Munich striker Claudio Pizarro (R) celebrates his goal with teammate Arjen Robben during their Champions League clash against Lille in Munich on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bayern go goal crazy

REUTERS, Munich



Claudio Pizarro scored a 15-minute hat-trick as Bayern Munich pulverised Lille 6-1 in their Champions League Group F match on Wednesday, eliminating the French side and taking a big step towards the round of 16.

The 34-year-old, in the starting lineup only because top scorer Mario Mandzukic was ill, notched the Champions League's third fastest hat-trick as Bayern recorded the biggest halftime lead in the competition's history.

Bastian Schweinsteiger and Arjen Robben scored from free kicks and Toni Kroos fired in from 16 metres in the second half as Bayern rode roughshod over Lille, who briefly cut the lead with a Salomon Kalou goal.

Bayern's win put them on nine points in the group alongside Valencia who beat BATE Borisov 4-2. BATE are on six with bottom-placed Lille having lost all four group matches.

"I had said before the game that we need to win this, draw in Valencia and win

our last home game against BATE and that is the situation in the group," said Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes.

"Obviously we had great plays in the first half. We also had two free kick goals which is something we trained but the opponent was not in top form tonight."

Bayern, who have now won 16 of their last 17 home games, shot out of the blocks with Schweinsteiger curling a free kick over the wall for the lead after five minutes and Thomas Mueller squandering two golden chances.

With Dutchman Robben back in the team for a European match after a one-month injury layoff, and Franck Ribery in sparkling form, the hosts, who are also leading the Bundesliga by seven points with nine wins out of 10 matches, were unstoppable.

Pizarro doubled their lead with a stunning low drive after a one-two with Ribery at the edge of the box leaving the Lille defence in tatters.

They added another with a heavily deflected free kick from Robben before Pizarro flicked in his second goal from close range from captain Philipp Lahm's well-timed cutback.



ESPN

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Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

La Liga

Real Betis v Granada

Live from 2:30am (Saturday)

STAR Cricket

Australia v South Africa

First Test, Day 1



National Cricket League

(Four-day match, Day-1)

Rajshahi v Rangpur

Venue: Rangpur Cricket Garden

Khulna v Chittagong

Venue: Shaheed Chandu

Sylhet, Bogra

Sylhet v Dhaka

Venue: Sylhet Divisional Stadium

Barisal v Dhaka Metro