

City out of Europe

AFP, Paris

English champions Manchester City and rivals Arsenal both slumped to defeats in their final Champions League group matches on Tuesday leaving City without even the consolation of a Europa League spot and the Gunners failing to top their group and facing a tough Last 16 draw.

City bowed out with a passionless performance in a 1-0 defeat away to a largely second string Borussia Dortmund side, who topped the group, while City finished bottom with three points, the lowest amount recorded by an English side in the history of the group phase.

Ajax took the Europa League place despite losing 4-1 away at Real Madrid.

Arsenal let slip a 1-0 lead to lose 2-1 away at Olympiakos, who secured a deserved Europa League place while German outfit Schalke 04's 1-1 draw away at Montpellier ensured they edged out Arsenal for top spot.

That will only increase the pressure on the English side's previously untouchable manager Arsene Wenger with their domestic title hopes already all but over as they trail leaders Manchester United by 15 points.

While Wenger may be starting to feel the heat, the pressure eased a bit on Carlo Ancelotti, manager of big spending Paris Saint Germain and a



Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo scores the opening goal during their Champions League encounter against Ajax Amsterdam at Bernabeu on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Cerezo's jibe at Mourinho

REUTERS, Madrid

Atletico Madrid were again put firmly in their place by Real Madrid in the city derby last weekend but they have not lost their sense of humour as the fallout from the game continues to make headlines in Spain.

Atletico president Enrique Cerezo was asked about comments Jose Mourinho made after Real's 2-0 win at the Bernabeu, when the Portuguese coach brushed aside a question on whether there had been any tension between the dugouts during the game.

"Who is (German) 'Mone' Burgos?," Mourinho had replied when asked about a reported threat directed at him from Atletico coach Diego Simeone's assistant.

Cerezo was asked for his opinion on the incident by reporters on Wednesday.

"Who is Mourinho?," he replied with a deadpan face. "The president of Celta Vigo? (Celta's president is Carlos Mourinho).

"Ah, the Real Madrid coach. I assume between professionals they know each other."

Atletico have gone 22 La Liga matches without a win over their city rivals.

'Wrong time to sack Menezes'

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

The Brazilian Football Federation (CBF) were wrong to sack national coach Mario Menezes last month and replace him with Luiz Felipe Scolari, Brazilian soccer great Mario Zagallo said on Tuesday.

The 81-year-old, who won the World Cup twice as a player in 1958 and 1962 before becoming the first man to also win the title as a coach in 1970, said he was optimistic that 2002 World Cup winning coach Scolari could do a good job, but now was the wrong time to get rid of Menezes.

Menezes, 50, replaced Dunga after the 2010 World Cup finals and had come under pressure because of Brazil's failure to win last year's Copa America and their loss to Mexico in the London Olympics final before he was fired last month.

"I like Scolari as a friend and he will be working with Carlos Alberto Perreira and I have faith in them to do well," Zagallo told reporters at the Maracana Stadium. "But it

was not the right time for the CBF to sack Mario Menezes.

"Things were getting better, all the Brazilians felt the same way. But it is the CBF's responsibility and they took that decision but for me it was not the right time."

"Now, with 18 months to go the team is in the hands of two experienced coaches and although there is always uncertainty, I would think that Scolari thinks like me and is only thinking of winning the World Cup and would not be fearful of losing."

Zagallo was meeting members of the international media at the Maracana, which will be the venue for the 2014 World Cup final, also said he was delighted that Santos striker Neymar had decided to stay in Brazil and learn his trade.

"Neymar is a great player, but he is a boy, he is 19 years old, and he lacks people he can look up to," said Zagallo.

"He needs someone beside him, he still needs to learn."

Zagallo, still a revered figure in Brazilian soccer, said he was delighted to be speaking at the Maracana.

No festive cheer for QPR

AP, London

Queens Park Rangers, the Premier League's bottom club, announced on Wednesday that they have decided to cancel this year's Christmas party.

Despite signing a glut of new players in the close-season transfer window, the London club are currently seven points adrift of safety and without a win in 15 matches -- the worst ever start to a Premier League season.

According to reports in the British media, the decision to cancel the traditional end-of-year celebration was taken by the club's players.

Harry Redknapp will preside over his third match as manager when QPR visit Wigan on Saturday.

Hulk threatens to quit

REUTERS, St Petersburg

Zenit St Petersburg's record signing Hulk has threatened to quit the Russian club following a heated exchange with coach Luciano Spalletti during Tuesday's Champions League win at AC Milan.

The Brazil striker reacted angrily after the Italian coach substituted him late in the game at the San Siro, which Zenit won 1-0.

Spalletti was seen extending his hand, trying to greet Hulk as he was leaving the pitch but the Brazilian just walked by without looking at the coach before having a heated discussion with the Zenit staff near the sideline.

"If the situation with the coach does not resolve itself I may leave the club in the January transfer window," Hulk, 26, was quoted as saying by local media.

Spalletti hit back at the striker after initially playing down the incident.

"Hulk can say anything he wants, but if I decide to change him during the game it means I'm not happy with his play," Spalletti was quoted as saying by local media on Wednesday.

"Hulk is mistaken if he thinks he should play for 90 minutes all the time. He said he wants to leave? Then, it's his choice and I can do nothing about it," added the Italian.

Chelsea snap up Wallace

AP, London

Chelsea announced on Tuesday that they have agreed to sign teenage Brazilian full-back Wallace from Fluminense.

The 18-year-old will not officially join Chelsea until the January transfer window but he will then be immediately loaned back to the Brazilian club until the end of the season.

Chelsea did not reveal how much they had paid to sign the player, but reports in the British media said he was valued at around £5 million (\$8 million, 6.1 million euros).

The European champions reportedly acquired a 40 per cent stake in Wallace as part of the deal that took Brazil-born Portugal midfielder Deco from Chelsea to Fluminense two years ago.

Final word ref's

Football

AP, Tokyo

Referees can reject the use of goal-line technology or even overrule it in the Club World Cup, which starts this week in Japan, a senior FIFA official said Wednesday.

Two different GLT systems, Hawk-Eye and GoalRef, are to be used in the eight-game competition from Thursday, when continental kings of club football, including Chelsea and Brazil's Corinthians, will battle for world supremacy.

"The referee has the final word when it's about the goal-line technology system," FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke told a news conference in Tokyo.

In July, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) -- custodians of the game's laws -- decided to use goal-line technology at the Club World Cup, next year's Confederation Cup and the World Cup finals in Brazil in 2014.

Valcke said referees at these competitions will test the system 90 minutes before each game to see if it is working to their satisfaction.

"If he has any doubt and if this doubt cannot be corrected by the provider who is on the site, then he has the right to say, 'Sorry, guys. I don't think I can rely on the system,'" he said.

"Again, the referee is the most important person. He's the one who's making the final decision and he has to keep this right for the final decision," Valcke said.

Fans have called for years for the football world to embrace technology aimed at eliminating human error, citing its use in other sports including tennis and cricket.

"It's a big day because it's the first time that the technology will be used officially in game or games. Up to now, it was just experimental."



A FIFA official displays the new goal-line technology developed by GoalRef in Yokohama yesterday. The wrist watch displays "goal" and vibrates whenever the ball enters the goal.

Real cruise past Ajax

side that Wenger has been linked with, as the French outfit beat Porto 2-1 to leapfrog them and top their group.

There was to be some consolation for the hard-pressed fans of that group's bottom side Dinamo Zagreb as Ivan Krstanovic gained them their only point of the group phase with a penalty five minutes into time for a 1-1 draw with Dynamo Kiev added on in a game played in heavy snow in Zagreb.

In the other group the only outstanding issue was settled as Russian side Zenit St Petersburg withstood enormous pressure from already qualified seven-time champions AC Milan to win 1-0 away in Italy and take third place and a Europa League spot at the expense of Anderlecht.

Manchester City were undone by Julian Schieber, who crowned his first Champions League appearance of the season to score Dortmund's winner when he slotted home from a brilliant low cross by Polish star Jakub Blaszczykowski in the 57th minute.

Real Madrid eased to victory over Ajax with Brazilian star Kaka's superb effort making him the most prolific all-time Brazilian scorer in the Champions League with 28 edging ahead of fellow 2002 World Cup winner Rivaldo.

Real coach Jose Mourinho said that he wasn't disappointed with their overall group campaign.

"Well we emerged from the Group

RESULTS

Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) 1	Krstanovic 90+5-pen
Dynamo Kiev (UKR) 1	Yarmolenko 45+1
Paris Saint Germain (FRA) 2	Silva 29, Lavezzi 61
Porto (POR) 1	J. Martinez 33
Montpellier (FRA) 1	Herrera 59
AC Milan (ITA) 0	Schalke 04 (GER) 1
Borussia Dortmund (GER) 1	Howedes 56
Olympiakos (GRE) 2	Maniatis 64, Mitroglou 73
Arsenal (ENG) 1	Rosicky 38
Malaga (ESP) 2	Duda 45, Buonanotte 61
Anderlecht (BEL) 2	Jovanovic 50, Mbokani 89
AC Milan (ITA) 0	Zenit (RUS) 1
Borussia Dortmund (GER) 1	Rivaldo 57
Manchester City (ENG) 0	
Real Madrid (ESP) 4	Ronaldo 13, Callejon 28, 88,

tute Kostas Mitroglou ensured the hosts gained a second successive home win over their opponents, having beaten them 3-1 at the same stage last season.

Wenger took the defeat on the chin, something he is having to get used to of late.

"We had a good first half but dropped physically in the second. Many of the players are not used to that level."