

Pakistan clinch series

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan snatched a historic first-ever series victory over South Africa when they beat the hosts by one run in the run-curtailed second one-day international at St George's Park.

Going into the match leading the 3-match series 1-0, Pakistan scored 262 in their allotted 50 overs before restricting the hosts to 261 for six.

Ahmed Shehzad hit his third one-day international century (102) while Saqib Maqsood and Umar Akmal scored 42 each to give the Pakistanis a fighting total.

Fast bowler Dale Steyn took a career-best six for 39, including two wickets in the last over of the innings, but the other South African bowlers struggled to contain their opponents.

Chasing the stiff total, South Africa looked on course with Hashim Amla (98) giving them a good start and skipper AB De Villiers with 45-ball-74, but somehow they managed to lose their way in the end as the required run-rate climbed. Junaid Khan was the most successful bowler with three wickets.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 262 all out in 45 overs (Shehzad 102, Maqsood 42, Akmal 42, Bhatti 21, Steyn 6-39)

SOUTH AFRICA: 261 for 6 in 45 overs (Amla 98, De Villiers 74; Junaid 3-42, Afridi 2-38)

Result: Pakistan won the match by 1 run.

Man-of-the-match: Ahmed Shehzad

Chelsea thru' despite loss

AFP, Paris



Chelsea became the latest team to qualify for the Champions League knockout stages though it was not in the fashion manager Jose Mourinho would have wanted as the 2012 champions lost 1-0 to Basel on Tuesday.

However, with Schalke only drawing 0-0 away at bottom side Steaua Bucharest the permutations work out in Chelsea's favour as they lead Basel by a point with Schalke another point back and the latter two play each other in the final group game.

They were the only side to progress from Tuesday's action with the result of the night coming in Amsterdam where a young Ajax side rolled back the years for the former European greats to hand Barcelona coach Gerardo Martino his first defeat in 21 games with a stunning 2-1 win.

Milan's 3-0 win in Glasgow over Celtic eliminated the Scottish champions from the knockout stage picture -- they won't even get a chance at the Europa League either -- and sets up what is sure to be a nervy encounter with Ajax in a fortnight for the second spot in the Last 16.

Barcelona need to beat Celtic to ensure they finish top of the group.

Chelsea's English rivals Arsenal did what they needed to do to give themselves a chance of qualifying by beating pointless French outfit Marseille 2-0 with Jack Wilshere grabbing a double.

The England star's first came after only 27 seconds, the fastest in this season's competition and also the fastest ever by an Englishman -- Wayne Rooney the previous holder with one in 65 seconds.

However, they will have to wait till the final round of matches after last season's finalists Borussia Dortmund produced an excellent 3-1 home win over Napoli to keep alive their hopes of reaching the Last 16 -- defeat would have seen them go out.

RESULTS

FC Basel (SUI) 1 (Salah 87) Chelsea (ENG) 0

Steaua Bucharest (ROM) 0 Schalke 04 (GER) 0

Arsenal (ENG) 2 (Wilshere 1, 65) Marseille (FRA) 0

Borussia Dortmund (GER) 3 (Reus 10-pen, Blaszczykowski 60, Aubameyang 78)

Napoli (ITA) 1 (Insigne 71)

Zenit St Petersburg (RUS) 1 (Alderweireld 74-go) Atletico Madrid (ESP) 1 (Lopez 53)

FC Porto (POR) 1 (J. Martinez 48) Austria Vienna (AUS) 1 (Kienast 11)

Ajax (NED) 2 (Serero 19, Hoesen 41) Barcelona (ESP) 1 (Xavi 49-pen)



Ajax forward Danny Hoesen (L) celebrates his goal against Barcelona during their Champions League encounter at the Amsterdam Arena on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

AFP, Amsterdam



Barcelona coach Gerardo Martino admitted his side may have taken their eye off the ball having already qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League as they lost for the first time this season 2-1 away to Ajax on Tuesday.

The Catalans were blown away by the hosts in the first-half as goals from Thulani Serero and Danny Hoesen gave them a 2-0 lead.

Barcelona were handed a lifeline at the beginning of the second period as Joel Veltman was sent-off for bringing down Neymar inside the area and Xavi halved the deficit from the

resulting penalty.

However, even against 10 men, Barca failed to find an equaliser as they slipped to their first defeat in 21 games since Martino took charge in the summer.

"It is always possible to lose and we need to analyse more how the team played in the first 45 minutes than the defeat. That is when Ajax made the difference and won the game," Martino told Canal Plus.

"We lacked intensity, it is clear that they were quicker, more precise, superior in the one against ones, they were better in all aspects.

"When a team plays well like Ajax did and you lack this intensity, the opponent is always going to win."

Barca still top Group H and need

just a point against already eliminated Celtic in the final game at the Camp Nou to ensure the finish as group winners.

But Martino was frustrated not to have secured top spot having played for over 40 minutes against a man less.

"Probably there is a situation where we thought we were qualified and subconsciously relaxed a little.

"We managed to qualify within four games and we would have liked to have secured first place today. With what I saw in the second-half I thought we were going to do it, but you can't let 45 minutes go by as we did."

Barca were without four first-team regulars, including World Player of the Year Lionel Messi, due to injury.

Weightlifters win silver

SPORTS REPORTER

Weightlifters Jahura Akter Resma and Mabia Akter Simanta won silver medals in their respective categories of the 2013 Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship and World Cup Masters Championship in Malaysia, said a press release from the Bangladesh Weightlifting Federation yesterday.

Resma won silver in 44kg category of youth group on Monday while Simanta won silver in 58kg category of the junior group the following day.

Landing scare for United

REUTERS, London

Manchester United's plane had to abort its landing seconds from touchdown as the squad flew to Germany for Wednesday's Champions League match with Bayer Leverkusen, British media reported.

The chartered 185-seater Monarch Airlines Airbus 321 jet circled before landing safely at the second attempt, 10 minutes late at Cologne's Konrad Adenauer Airport on Tuesday.

"The aircraft, carrying the squad and back room staff, was 400 metres from the Cologne runway when the pilot was alerted to another plane on the ground and had to quickly abandon the descent and rise sharply," the Manchester Evening News reported on its website.



Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho walks off the pitch at the end of their Champions League match against Basel at St Jakob Park on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Giggs expects New Year revival

AFP, London

Ryan Giggs expects Manchester United to hit top form in the New Year.

The Premier League champions may be on a 10-match unbeaten run since their shock home loss to West Bromwich Albion in September but that includes draws with Southampton and Cardiff where points have been squandered in the closing stages.

"We've got off to a disappointing start," Giggs told talkSPORT radio on Tuesday.

"But we've been in so many title chases, and from our experience we know we've just got to hang in there while we are not playing at our brilliant best, and hopefully the form will come at the turn of the year," added Giggs, whose side are currently seven points adrift of the Gunners.

Jose not amused

INTERNET



Mohamed Salah's 87th minute goal -- his third in Basel's last three matches against Chelsea -- gave the Swiss club a 1-0 win against Chelsea in their penultimate Champions League group-stage match.

It was Basel's second win over Chelsea this season, but it wasn't enough from keeping Jose Mourinho's side from remaining atop the Group E table and sealing a place in the knockout stages.

Immediately after Salah's late goal, Mourinho summed up Chelsea's performance by laying his head against his hands and pretending to be asleep.

It was a wholly uninspired performance from Chelsea after beating West Ham 3-0 at the weekend and Mourinho knew it.

After the match, he blamed himself for the defeat and said the players were tired.

Mourinho claimed he could see from the first minute his side were not right, and when asked what he did not like about the display he replied: "Everything.

"I didn't like it from the first minute, we started with a defensive mistake immediately, the first time we were in the game we made a defensive mistake -- I think we only had a little bit of stability and control in second-half but I felt the team was tired. [...]

"I think the team paid today the price for their international 15 days," he continued.

"The match against West Ham was crucial and everyone played a great intense game but I think today we paid a price, they were tired.

"There was no reaction, wrong decisions -- so I am not so sad with them as I understand, the team was not fresh and maybe I should make more changes in the team."

Defoe agrees MLS deal

INTERNET

Jermain Defoe has agreed a £90,000-a-week deal to join MLS side Toronto in January.

The Tottenham striker, who will sign a four-year contract, has been restricted to featuring in the Europa League this season, playing second fiddle to Roberto Soldado in the Premier League.

And the 31-year-old will link up with former teammate Ryan Nelsen who is in charge of the Canadian side after they made a successful bid of £6million.

The north London club actively tried to offload him, and strike partner Emmanuel Adebayor, over the summer - but neither wanted to leave.

And the England striker feared a similar scenario in January, with manager Andre Villas-Boas keen on adding another forward to his squad.

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