

Dnipro stun Spurs

AFP, Paris



Juande Ramos earned a measure of revenge for his sacking by Tottenham Hotspur as Dnipro snatched a late 1-0 win over his former club in the Europa League last 32 first leg on Thursday.

Ramos was axed by Spurs in October 2008 after just 12 months in charge at White Hart Lane, but the 59-year-old is 90 minutes away from making his old employers pay after Yevhen Konoplyanka's penalty in the closing stages gave the Ukrainian club a slender advantage to defend in the second leg in north London on February 27.

The visitors were left to rue a terrible miss by Roberto Soldado early in the second half, the Spanish striker scuffing over with the goal at his mercy four yards out.

Dnipro stole the win in the 81st minute when Jan Vertonghen gave away a penalty as he fouled Matheus just inside the area and Konoplyanka, a transfer target for Liverpool, stepped up to slot in the spot-kick via a post.

A Paulinho effort hit a post in the final moments, but Spurs were unable to scramble in the rebound.

Swansea City performed well against Napoli but couldn't find a way past the Serie A giants at the Liberty Stadium.

Visiting goalkeeper Rafael Cabral made a crucial save from Wilfried Bony in the first half after the striker had latched on to a superb pass by Pablo Hernandez.

Rafael then came off injured at the interval, and his replacement Pepe Reina continued to thwart the Welsh club in the second half, keeping out headers from Ashley Williams and Chico Flores as well as a curling effort by Wayne Routledge.

Meanwhile, Serie A leaders Juventus appear to have one foot in the last 16 after beating Trabzonspor of Turkey 2-0 in Turin.

Pablo Daniel Osvaldo took advantage of a lucky ricochet to fire Juve early on, but it was Paul Pogba's header that allowed them to take a cant lead into the return leg next week. Juve could face compatriots Fiorentina in the next round, with La Viola winning 3-1 away to Esbjerg in Denmark.



Juventus striker Pablo Osvaldo scores the opening goal during their Europa League clash against Trabzonspor in Turin on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea bank on Eden

AFP, London



Jose Mourinho will need another inspired display from in-form Eden Hazard as Chelsea try to cement their position on top of the Premier League against Everton on Saturday.

Mourinho's side have reached the summit despite just 11 league goals this season from their three main strikers, Fernando Torres, Demba Ba and Samuel Eto'o, but fortunately for the Blues their Belgium midfielder Eden Hazard has been in sublime form.

Hazard has netted 12 times in 26 league appearances, while also setting up countless chances for his team-mates, and boss Mourinho recently lauded the 23-year-old as Europe's most talented young player.

Chelsea defender David Luiz has also been impressed by Hazard's rise since moving to the Bridge from French club Lille in 2012 and the Brazilian is confident his team-mate can one day surpass Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo as the best in the world.

"He can be one day the best player in the world," Luiz said.

"I'm so happy for him, because he's a great person, a great guy, with a lot of talent."

A slip-up by Chelsea against Champions League hopefuls Everton would give second-placed Arsenal the chance to reclaim top spot.

The Gunners are one point behind their London rivals and will be desperate to bounce back from their midweek Champions League defeat when they host Sunderland.

Arsene Wenger's side were left cursing their luck after losing 2-0 against Bayern Munich in a match where Mesut Ozil had a tame early penalty saved and goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny was then sent off.

However, there is no time for Arsenal's players to feel sorry for themselves and Germany defender Per Mertesacker has warned his team-mates they must "switch off" from the frustrating Bayern loss.

"We will concentrate on Saturday now,

because we are going through a period with a lot of games," Mertesacker said.

"We will switch off from the Champions League now, and then switch on again for the Premier League on Saturday.

"We need that because we have played a lot of games. Our team has great spirit and will come back from this. Now we must keep our chins up."

Like Arsenal, third-placed Manchester City also suffered Champions League heartache in a 2-0 home defeat against Barcelona that left Manuel Pellegrini's team faced with probable elimination.

City, currently three points adrift of Chelsea, must put that result behind them quickly when they host Stoke City this weekend.

Fourth-placed Liverpool, just four points behind Chelsea, can maintain their surprising title challenge with a win against Swansea City at Anfield on Sunday.

Reds boss Brendan Rodgers insists he would be happy with a top-four finish this season, but Liverpool are in superb form in the league and captain Steven Gerrard puts some of that down to teenage winger Raheem Sterling.

The 19-year-old scored a brace in the 5-1 demolition of Arsenal earlier this month and Gerrard feels Sterling is sure to have caught the eye of England manager Roy Hodgson, who will be mulling over the options for his squad ahead of the finals in Brazil.

"Raheem has been in great form over the last couple of months and I'm sure Roy is watching him very closely," Gerrard said.

FIXTURES

(1500GMT unless stated)

Saturday

Arsenal v Sunderland, Cardiff v Hull, Chelsea v Everton (1245GMT), Crystal Palace v Manchester United (1730GMT), Manchester City v Stoke, West Brom v Fulham, West Ham v Southampton

Sunday

Liverpool v Swansea (1330GMT), Newcastle v Aston

Rafa rolls into qtrs

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

World number one Rafael Nadal breezed into the quarterfinals of the \$1.3 million ATP Rio Open on Thursday but admitted afterwards that he was still feeling the effects of a back injury.

Nadal, in his first event since losing last month's Australian Open final, needed only 74 minutes to rout Spanish compatriot Albert Montanes 6-1, 6-2 and book a date against Portugal's 48th-ranked Joao Sousa, who eliminated 87th-rated Spaniard Albert

Suarez dreams of C. League

AFP, London

Liverpool striker Luis Suarez says that his appetite to play in the Champions League has been whetted by watching matches in the competition on television.

Although Liverpool did not qualify for this season's tournament, they are firmly on track to play in next season's competition.

"I watched the games on TV this week and when you hear that Champions League music, that's motivation in itself," Suarez said, as reported in Friday's edition of regional newspaper the Liverpool Echo.

"I want to be there with Liverpool. It's an unbelievable competition. It's where we want to be, playing against the top teams in Europe.

"Stevie (Gerrard) has told me about Champions League nights at Anfield. He said when you have played Champions League football at Anfield, you will never forget it. I want to try it for myself.

"When I arrived here I said it was my dream to play for Liverpool and play Champions League here. I know I can achieve my dreams here."

SA in driving seat

REUTERS, Port Elizabeth



JP Duminy, AB de Villiers, Wayne Parnell and Vernon Philander put South Africa on top as they reduced Australia to 112 for four on the second day of the second Test at St George's Park on Friday.

All-rounder Parnell, playing his first Test in four years, and paceman Philander grabbed two wickets apiece after South Africa had amassed 423 in their first innings thanks to centuries from Duminy and De Villiers.

It might have been even worse for the tourists as wicketkeeper De Villiers dropped David Warner on 43. The left-handed opener was still there on 65 at the close of play with Nathan Lyon 12 not out. Lyon also benefited from two lives, one of them when South Africa declined to review a catch proved to be feathered down the leg side.

Earlier, Duminy answered his critics with 123 while De Villiers struck 116.

Duminy, who averaged 11 in his previous seven Test innings, looked assured from the start and brought up his third hundred off 199 balls before becoming off-spinner Lyon's fifth victim.

De Villiers reached his 19th century off 201 balls. He was removed with the score on 349, offering a sharp caught and bowled chance to Lyon who was the pick of the bowlers with five for 130.

Philander claimed the first Australian wicket when he trapped Chris Rogers leg before for five. Parnell then accounted for Alex Doolan (eight) and Shaun Marsh (duck), both caught behind by De Villiers.

Captain Michael Clarke spooned an easy catch to Dean Elgar at cover as a ball from Philander appeared to hold up in the pitch.

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings (overnight 214-5)
Smith lbw b Harris 9
Elgar c Harris b Lyon 83
Amla lbw b Johnson 0
Du Plessis c Smith b Lyon 55
De Villiers c and b Lyon 116
De Kock c sub (Henriques) b Smith 7
Duminy lbw b Lyon 123
Philander c and b Clarke 6
Parnell c Haddin b Lyon 10
Steyn not out 4
Morkel run out 1
Extras: (b-4, lb-4, w-1) 9
Total: (All out in 150.5 overs) 423
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-11, 3-123, 4-181, 5-200, 6-349, 7-378, 8-413, 9-420

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Harris	27	6	63	1
Johnson	25	5	70	1
Siddle	34	9	96	0
Lyon	46	7	130	5
Warner	3	0	10	0
Smith	8	0	30	1
Clarke	7.5	2	16	1

AUSTRALIA: First innings
Rogers lbw b Philander 5
Warner not out 65
Doolan c de Villiers b Parnell 8
Marsh c de Villiers b Parnell 0
Clarke c Elgar b Philander 19
Lyon not out 12
Extras: (lb-3) 3
Total: (For 4 wks in 25 overs) 112
To bat: Smith, Haddin, Johnson, Siddle, Harris
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-41, 3-41, 4-81

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	6	1	33	0

Ozil says sorry

AFP, London



Arsenal star Mesut Ozil has apologised to the club's supporters after squandering a penalty in Wednesday's 2-0 loss at home to Bayern Munich in the Champions League.

The German playmaker had an opportunity to put Arsenal ahead in the last 16 first-leg match with an early penalty, but his tame spot-kick was saved by international team-mate Manuel Neuer.

After Arsenal goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny had been sent off, Bayern went on to prevail through second-half goals from Toni Kroos and Thomas Mueller, leaving the reigning champions in a commanding position ahead of the second leg on March 11.

"The next morning doesn't feel better either," Ozil wrote on his official Facebook page. "Sorry guys - it wasn't planned that way. Outnumbered it was really hard to win against this team."

Ozil, a club-record £42.5 million (\$70.7 million, 51.6 million euros) signing from Real Madrid last year, was roundly criticised in the British media following a lacklustre display in the game.

Arsenal shareholder Alisher Usmanov suggested that the 25-year-old's poor performance may have been down to fatigue.

Speaking to reporters as he left the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday, he said: "Ozil was not (playing) at his capacity, maybe because he is tired."

StanChart cricket clinic

SPORTS REPORTER

Standard Chartered Bank on Wednesday organized an exclusive Cricket Clinic for children, aged between seven and 13 years, at the Gulshan Youth Club Ground.

About 120 children joined the clinic including children of Standard Chartered clients and staff.

Star Bangladesh

allrounder Shakib Al Hasan joined the cricket clinic. He spent time with youngsters and provided valuable tips to participants. The day-long Clinic was conducted by coaches from Bangladesh Cricket Board - Emdadul Hoque Emdu, Golam Faruque Chowdhury Suru and Kamrul Hasan.

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