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## Ronaldinho's terrible debut

AFP, Mexico City

Brazilian legend Ronaldinho had a nightmarish debut with his new Mexican club Queretaro on Wednesday, missing a penalty in a 1-0 home loss to Tigres.

Fans packed the stadium for the game in central Mexico less than two weeks after the 34-year-old former world player of the year signed with the White Roosters.

But the Tigres, based in northern Nuevo Leon state, spoiled the party in the ninth minute, courtesy of a goal by US forward Herculez Gomez.

At the 61st minute, the former Barcelona and Paris St-Germain player had a chance to make his mark but his penalty shot sailed over the bar.

The 2002 World Cup winner decided to play in Mexico after ending his contract with Brazilian club Atletico Mineiro in July.



Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng (L) is ecstatic after scoring the winning goal against Manchester City during their Champions League encounter in Munich on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Costa not fully fit'

REUTERS, London



Striker Diego Costa, who has scored seven goals for Chelsea in his first four Premier League games, cannot play more than once a week because of a hamstring problem, Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has said.

Mourinho, looking down in the dumps after Chelsea could only draw 1-1 with Schalke 04 in their opening Champions League Group G match on Wednesday, started with returning veteran striker Didier Drogba in attack with Costa on the bench against the Germans. The Brazil-born Spain international, who cost Chelsea 32 million pounds (\$52 million) when he joined from Atletico Madrid in the summer, replaced Drogba in the 74th minute, but could not keep up his remarkable scoring record which includes four goals in pre-season and seven in the League including his hat-trick against Swansea City on Saturday.

Mourinho said Costa's injury is not connected to one he suffered towards the end of last season and which restricted him to just the first nine minutes when he played for Atletico against Real Madrid in last season's Champions League final.

He did recover from that to play for Spain in the World Cup and Mourinho added: "When he came to us he was completely fine. He got the problem with the national team."

Costa picked up the injury in Spain's 1-0 defeat to France on September 4 and Mourinho said he could not play more than one match a week for the time being.

"If he has one week to let the muscle recover he can start. He played on Saturday and was not in condition to start the game today."

Costa scored the last time he played in a Champions League match at Stamford Bridge - when he banged home a penalty in Atletico's 3-1 win over Chelsea in last season's semifinal - but failed to hit the target during the later stages of the game against Schalke as Chelsea sought the winner.

"It was not to protect Costa for the game against Manchester City on Sunday, it was because he was not in condition to start the game," Mourinho said.

"Playing on Saturday, three days is not enough for him to recover. He will play against City but he cannot play against Bolton (in the League Cup) next week, that's for sure."

Drogba, back at Chelsea after two years away playing in China and Turkey, was playing in his first Champions League match for the club since scoring the decisive penalty in the 2012 final shootout against Bayern Munich.

He had two good chances to score but fired narrowly wide and then blazed a chance over the bar in the second half.

Chelsea dominated much of the match and took the lead when Cesc Fabregas scored his first goal for the club in the 11th minute but Chelsea failed to capitalise on their superiority and allowed Schalke to escape with a point after Klaas-Jan Huntelaar equalised in the 62nd minute.

# Germans draw first blood

AFP, Paris



Jerome Boateng's late goal and a second-half equaliser from Klaas-Jan Huntelaar on Wednesday completed a good week for German clubs against their counterparts from England in the opening round of Champions League group games.

Boateng's first ever goal in the competition was a memorable one as it sealed a 1-0 win for Bayern Munich against his former club Manchester City in Group E, the defender unleashing a fierce drive to at last beat Joe Hart as the teams met in the group stage for the third time in four seasons.

Meanwhile, Huntelaar's strike allowed Schalke 04 to earn a deserved 1-1 draw with Chelsea at Stamford Bridge in Group G after Cesc Fabregas had been slightly fortunate to see his first goal for his club stand.

Bayern and Schalke's strong showings

against English opposition followed on from Borussia Dortmund's dominant performance on Tuesday in beating Arsenal 2-0.

Elsewhere Bayern coach Pep Guardiola's former club Barcelona eked out a 1-0 home win over resilient Cypriot side APOEL Nicosia with Gerard Pique getting the only goal in a match probably better remembered for legendary midfielder Xavi Hernandez equalling compatriot Raul's Champions League all-time appearance record of 142.

The side likely to be their main rivals to top Group F, Paris Saint-Germain, dropped points with a 1-1 draw away at Ajax.

PSG wasted a host of chances when they were 1-0 up -- Edinson Cavani's 28th goal in his 50th appearance for the French champions giving them the lead -- and paid the price when Danish international Lasse Schoene levelled with a delightful free-kick.

Two other games ended in draws --

Athletic Bilbao's first game at this stage in 16 years saw them hold Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk 0-0 in Group H.

Former Manchester United winger Nani got on the scoresheet for Sporting Lisbon but Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho will have not seen anything to fear too much from his group rivals as Slovenian champions Maribor fought back to grab a 1-1 draw.

Both AS Roma and Porto bucked the trend of low scoring games by thrashing CSKA Moscow and Belarus outfit BATE Borisov 5-1 and 6-0 respectively, with the Portuguese side's Algerian winger Yacine Brahimi producing the scoring performance of the evening with a hat-trick.

The 24-year-old's second was the pick of them as he collected the ball on the halfway line and ran through to slot the ball home.

For Boateng the goal provoked unbridled celebrations in Munich as he wheeled away and ran to the dugout where an ecstatic Guardiola embraced him -- a contrast to

## RESULTS

**Bayern Munich (GER) 1** (Boateng 90) Manchester City (ENG) 0  
**AS Roma (ITA) 5** (Iturbe 6, Gervinho 10, 31, Maicon 20, Ignashevich 50-og) CSKA Moscow (RUS) 1 (Musa 82)  
**Barcelona (ESP) 1** (Pique 28) APOEL (CYP) 0  
 Ajax (NED) 1 (Schoene 74) Paris Saint-Germain (FRA) 1 (Cavani 14)  
 Chelsea (ENG) 1 (Fabregas 11) Schalke 04 (GER) 1 (Huntelaar 62)  
 Maribor (SLO) 1 (Zahovic 90+2) Sporting Lisbon (POR) 1 (Nani 80)  
**FC Porto (POR) 6** (Brahimi 5, 32, 57, J. Martinez 37, Adrian 61, Aboubakar 76) BATE Borisov (BLR) 0

when the German World Cup-winning defender was sent off in a group match between the two sides last season.

"We had so many chances to score, but we wasted all of them until the last minute," said Boateng.

"The ball came absolutely perfectly to me and I thought to myself, this one I will hit into the roof of the net, and that's what I did. It was pure joy for me, but it was hard work. We wanted to win this match and we did it."

## CSKA fans hospitalised

AFP, Rome

At least two Russian CSKA Moscow fans were rushed to hospital, one with suspected stab wounds, on Wednesday following clashes between supporters of the Russian club and fans of Serie A side AS Roma, according to reports.

Roma won the game 5-1 to top Group E of the Champions League, but the celebrations -- on what was the club's return to the competition after a three-year absence -- were marred by ugly scenes of violence before and during the match.

According to a web report on Italian sports daily Gazzetta dello Sport, one unnamed Russian was stabbed in the stomach and the arm and was transported to the city's Gemelli hospital.

Initial reports said the man's life was not in danger.

Another fan of the Russian Premier League side was taken to hospital with head wounds after being hit with what was thought to be a bottle.

Violence also erupted in the later stages of the game as Roma romped to a 5-0 lead.

Television pictures showed fans of both sides taunting and throwing missiles at each other, prompting the intervention of stewards.

When the Roma fans were cordoned behind a line of stewards, fans of CSKA began attacking stadium stewards, many of whom had to defend themselves from punches being thrown and what appeared to be iron bars before they moved back as police with guns and batons arrived.

## Dunga picks youngsters

AFP, Rio de Janeiro



Brazil coach Dunga named fresh defensive blood Wednesday in the shape of CSKA Moscow defender Mario Fernandes and Inter Milan defender Dodo in naming his squad for an Asian tour comprising games against Argentina and Japan in Beijing and Singapore.

The October 11 encounter with Argentina is the latest in the South American neighbours' Superclassico of the Americas series, while the friendly with Japan three days later in Singapore will enable Dunga to work on solidifying the foundations of the post-World Cup era which began when he replaced Luiz Felipe Scolari in July.

"We are just starting off. There is no point in changing everything around. We have to build a base and target continuity. We must offer the youngsters tranquillity and tap into their enthusiasm," said Dunga, who skippered the Selecao to the 1994 World Cup but was sacked as coach after a 2010 quarterfinal loss to the Netherlands.

"It'll be something different for the Chinese to see a Superclassico with Brazil and Argentina. It'll be good for them and an important game for us."

Recent Superclassicos were played over home and away legs. With the Chinese match an official FIFA friendly date the Brazilians and their World Cup finalist rivals can call on European-based stars such as Neymar.

Seven of the Brazil squad are home based.

Mario Fernandes, 23, started off at Gremio and is now making a name for himself in Russia with CSKA following a 2012 move. He gets his chance after veteran Maicon was dropped from the squad for indiscipline on a US tour earlier this month.

Fernandes turned down an earlier Superclasico call up under Scolari predecessor Mano Menezes in 2011 citing personal problems.

Dunga said: "That was a while back. He was young but we all get a second chance."

In two friendlies at the helm since his return Dunga has overseen solitary goal victories in the United States over Colombia and Ecuador.

## SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Jefferson (Botafoogo), Rafael (Napoli/ITA)  
**Defenders:** David Luiz, Marquinhos (both Paris Saint Germain/FRA), Gil (Corinthians), Miranda (Atletico Madrid/ESP), Filipe Luis (Chelsea/ENG), Danilo (FC Porto/POR), Mario Fernandes (CSKA Moscow/RUS), Dodo (Inter Milan/ITA)  
**Midfielders:** Luiz Gustavo (Wolfsburg/GER), Elias (Corinthians), Fernandinho (Manchester City/ENG), Ramires (Chelsea/ENG), Everton Ribeiro (Cruzeiro), William (Chelsea/ENG), Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool/ENG), Oscar (Chelsea).  
**Strikers:** Neymar (Barcelona), Diego Tardelli (Atletico Mineiro), Ricardo Goulart (Cruzeiro),

## Colombia move into third

AFP, Paris

World Cup winners Germany and beaten finalists Argentina were joined at the top of the FIFA rankings published Thursday by Colombia.

The South Americans leapfrog the Netherlands into third place thanks to the Dutch defeat by the Czech Republic in their Euro 2016 qualifier.

Brazil move up to sixth behind Belgium, ahead of Uruguay, Spain, France and Switzerland in the top 10.

Top 10 FIFA standings on September 18:  
 1. Germany, 2. Argentina, 3. Colombia (+1), 4. Netherlands (-1), 5. Belgium, 6. Brazil (+1), 7. Uruguay (-1) 8. Spain (-1), 9. France (+1), 10. Switzerland (-1)

**2016 CL final at San Siro**

AFP, Nyon

Milan will host the 2016 Champions League final, European football's governing body UEFA decided Thursday at a meeting of its executive committee in Nyon, Switzerland.

The final of the Europa League next season will be held in the Swiss city of Basel and that of the Super Cup in Trondheim in Norway.

This will be the fourth time the San Siro host the Champions League final after 1965, 1970 and 2001. The game is scheduled for May 28, 2016. Milan will follow Berlin, which will host European club football's most prestigious tournament final next year.

## Xavi happy with role

AFP, Barcelona



Barcelona midfielder Xavi Hernandez insisted he hasn't been frustrated by his lack of opportunities under new boss Luis Enrique after starting for the first time this season in a much-changed side in a 1-0 victory over APOEL Nicosia on Wednesday.

Gerard Pique's first-half header was enough to hand the Catalans an unconvincing winning start to their Champions League campaign against the Cypriot champions.

Xavi started alongside youngsters Sergi Samper and Sergi Roberto in

midfield as Enrique made nine changes in all from the side that started Saturday's 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao.

"I am happy. When my turn to play comes I will try to be useful," said the 34-year-old, who moved level with Real Madrid legend Raul for the all-time record of Champions League appearances with 142.

Despite the presence of Lionel Messi and Neymar in attack, Barca struggled to create clear-cut chances against the mass ranks of the APOEL defence and Xavi admitted the lack of fluidity in the final third.

"We struggled. We tried to move the ball quickly and we didn't manage to do it," he added.

"It is true we dominated. We tried

through the middle and wide, but they defended very well.

"In the end it was a tiring game, but we have won and we have to treat it like it is. It is always good to start the group stage with three points."

The narrow victory was enough to take Barca to the top of Group F as French champions Paris Saint-Germain were held 1-1 in Amsterdam by Ajax.

Next up for Barca in Europe is a trip to Paris on September 30 and Enrique admitted that a run of six games in 18 days had been part of his reasoning for making so many changes.

"I have to manage the squad. I am convinced that if it works we will be successful and we need the help of all the players."

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