

Gunners feast on Bavarians

AFP, London

Olivier Giroud kept Arsenal's Champions League campaign alive as the France striker punished a costly blunder from Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer to inspire a crucial 2-0 win on Tuesday.

Giroud came off the bench to open the scoring after Neuer made a hash of dealing with a free-kick with 13 minutes left at the Emirates Stadium and Mesut Ozil added the killer second with virtually the last kick.

Despite being on the back foot for long periods, Arsene Wenger's side gratefully accepted Neuer's gift after consecutive Group F defeats had left them on the verge of elimination.

The Gunners still have little margin for error with a trip to Munich next up, but their determined display has given them much-needed hope of making the knockout stages for a 16th successive year.

It was an especially ironic twist after a howler from Arsenal goalkeeper David Ospina had played a major role in their loss against Olympiakos in their previous European fixture.

Wenger had made the surprisingly candid revelation that his players underestimated Dinamo Zagreb and Olympiakos in the two defeats that had put them in such a perilous position, but there was never any chance they would repeat that mistake against the Bundesliga leaders.

Alexis Sanchez led Arsenal's first incisive raid as the Chilean surged forward before picking out Ozil for a low shot that Neuer turned away.

Bayern's victory at Werder Bremen on Saturday made them

the first team ever to win their opening nine league games.

And the sublime attacking play behind that record-breaking run was on display when Thomas Muller slipped a perfectly weighted pass through to Thiago Alcantara, whose drive was parried away by Petr Cech.

Bayern boss Pep Guardiola had claimed he expected Arsenal to fight like animals, but Wenger's men were caged by the Germans' metronomic passing game for long periods and Sanchez was fortunate to get away with a handball as he blocked a shot.

With the Germans weaving intricate patterns around midfield, Arsenal's concentration wavered when Jerome Boateng was given time and space for a long pass to

Douglas Costa.

Costa's quick feint took him past Hector Bellerin with ease and Bayern winger's powerful shot from a tight angle forced Cech to make a good save at his near post.

Bayern's intelligent movement again reduced Arsenal to helpless bystanders when Arturo Vidal finished another flowing move by testing Cech with a dipping strike.

Aware that chances would be at a premium against such elite opposition, Arsenal countered by attacking with pace on the break, but when their chances came Theo Walcott scuffed wide from a good position and Sanchez blazed high into the stands.

Walcott had no reason to reproach himself late in the first half when his seemingly goal-

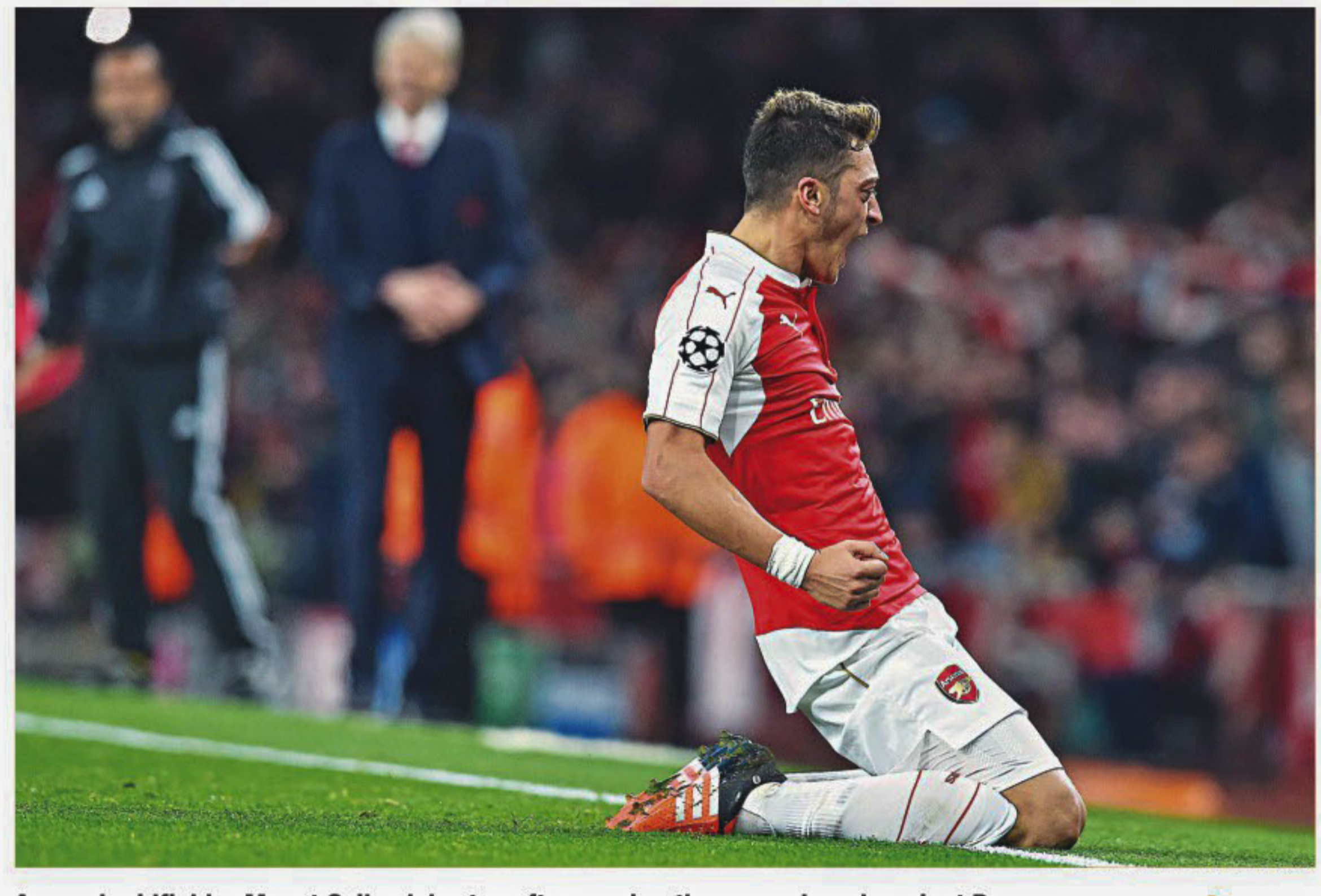
bound close-range header from Nacho Monreal's cross was brilliantly clawed away by Neuer.

It was an outrageously good save and Arsenal's frustration only grew as Aaron Ramsey dragged the rebound across goal.

Costa was a constant menace and the Brazilian lashed just over from long-range soon after the interval.

Robert Lewandowski had scored 15 goals in his last seven appearances for club and country and Bayern's Polish forward nearly added to that tally with a stinging drive that Cech pushed over.

Bayern kept pressing and Lewandowski's shot was repelled by a Laurent Koscielny block, while Muller's angled strike flashed just wide.



Arsenal midfielder Mesut Ozil celebrates after scoring the second goal against Bayern Munich during their Champions League clash in London on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

Bayer snatch thrilling draw

AFP, Leverkusen

Bayer Leverkusen snatched a dramatic late point in a 4-4 draw against Roma in a thrilling Champions League group stage encounter on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Chelsea had to settle for a 0-0 draw away to Dynamo Kiev but reigning European champions Barcelona won in Belarus.

Barcelona strengthened their position atop Group E with a 2-0 victory away to BATE, secured by two fine second-half goals from substitute Ivan Rakitic, both set up Neymar.

The other match in the group was without doubt the game of the evening, with Leverkusen taking a two-goal lead and then falling 4-2 down before fighting back to snatch a precious point against Roma.

Javier Hernandez opened the scoring from the penalty spot for the Bundesliga side and increased their lead in the 19th minute, but Daniele De Rossi replied with a double for Roma before the break.

A tremendous Miralem Pjanic free-kick put the visitors in front and Iago Falque appeared to have secured a first win of the campaign for the Italians in the 73rd minute.

But Kevin Kampl reduced the deficit and substitute Admir Mehmedi rounded off a breathtaking game by making it 4-4 four minutes from time to keep Leverkusen in second place and leave Roma bottom of the group.

Zenit St Petersburg closed in on a quarterfinal place with a third straight win in Group H as Artem Dzyuba, Hulk and Danny netted in a 3-1 victory over Lyon, for whom Alexandre Lacazette had equalised.

Valencia are three points back in second place after beating Gent 2-1 in Spain thanks to a Sofiane Feghouli shot that went in off Lasse Nielsen and a Stefan Mitrovic own goal either side of a Thomas Foket strike for the Belgians.

RESULTS		
BATE	0 - 2	Barcelona (Rakitic 48, 64)
Bayer Leverkusen (Hernandez 4-pen, 19, Kampl 84, Mehmedi 86)	4 - 4	Roma (De Rossi 29, 38, Pjanic 54, Falque 73)
Dinamo Zagreb	0 - 1	Olympiakos (Iliye 79)
Porto (Aboubakar 37, Brahimi 41)	2 - 0	Maccabi Tel Aviv
Dynamo Kiev	0 - 0	Chelsea
Zenit (Dzyuba 3, Hulk 56, Danny 83)	3 - 1	Lyon (Lacazette 49)
Valencia	2 - 1	Gent

Arsenal all around

STAR SPORT DESK

When a North London club beat a team from Bavaria on Tuesday night, nobody expected it to make waves in Bangladesh. However, after Arsenal's win over Bayern Munich in their Champions League group stage match, it seemed as if all the Gunners' fans had come out in unison, with spots of red and white peeking out of every room in Brac University yesterday.

As students walked to classes or attend their exams, the dominating discussion was about how well Arsenal played against one of the best teams in the world.

And from their conversations, you could easily overhear the names of Ozil, Bellerin and Wenger.

The discussion didn't even cease when one of them was sitting for his exam. With his friend -- a Chelsea fan -- beside him, his taunts stood out in the silence.

He was waxing lyrical about the character shown by his team, who had their backs against the wall, but still beat the German giants. It seemed he could go on forever, but a stern warning from the teacher finally shut him up.

However, the scenario outside the classroom was the same. There was no respite as every corridor was filled with stories of Arsenal's win. Even some girls joined in with their analysis of how well their 'favourite team' played.

It seems that after some quiet moments, the Arsenal fans have finally found their voice.

Corporate football from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The 2nd Mir Corporate Football Fiesta gets underway tomorrow at the International Turkish Hope School premises in Uttara. Organised by Leo Entertainment, the tournament will be participated by 16 teams, who will be divided into four groups, said a press release yesterday.

The tournament will have three categories: cup, plate and bowl. Each category will have a champion and a runners-up team at the end of the tournament.

Hockey crisis ending on Friday?

SPORTS REPORTER

A number of senior players of the national team, including Rassel Mahmud Jimmy, Pushkor Khisha Mimo and Hasan Jubayer Niloy, met with Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon at his office yesterday as the long-standing hockey crisis is seemingly drawing to an end. The BCB president, who is also a director of Abahani Limited, had also alongside him Mohammedan's director-in-charge, Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, and hockey federation's vice-president Abdur Rashid Shikkar, as well as a number of officials of a other Dhaka clubs.

The BCB president, who is mediating to bring the players into national team's camp, hoped that a positive outcome will be achieved by tomorrow's (Friday) meeting of the executive committee of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), and the players will soon join the camp.

"I have been instructed by the Prime Minister to resolve the crisis, and hopefully everyone will see a positive outcome by Friday," said Papon.

Jimmy, one of the many national players boycotting the camp in demand of announcement of transfer window for the premier league, said if a transfer window is announced during the meeting, they might join the camp as early as Friday night.

Meanwhile, seven national players of Bangladesh Navy joined the camp in BKSP under coach Mahabub Harun yesterday. 20 other players -- 16 of BKSP and four of Bangladesh Biman -- had earlier joined the camp.

They don't make 'em like Munna anymore

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

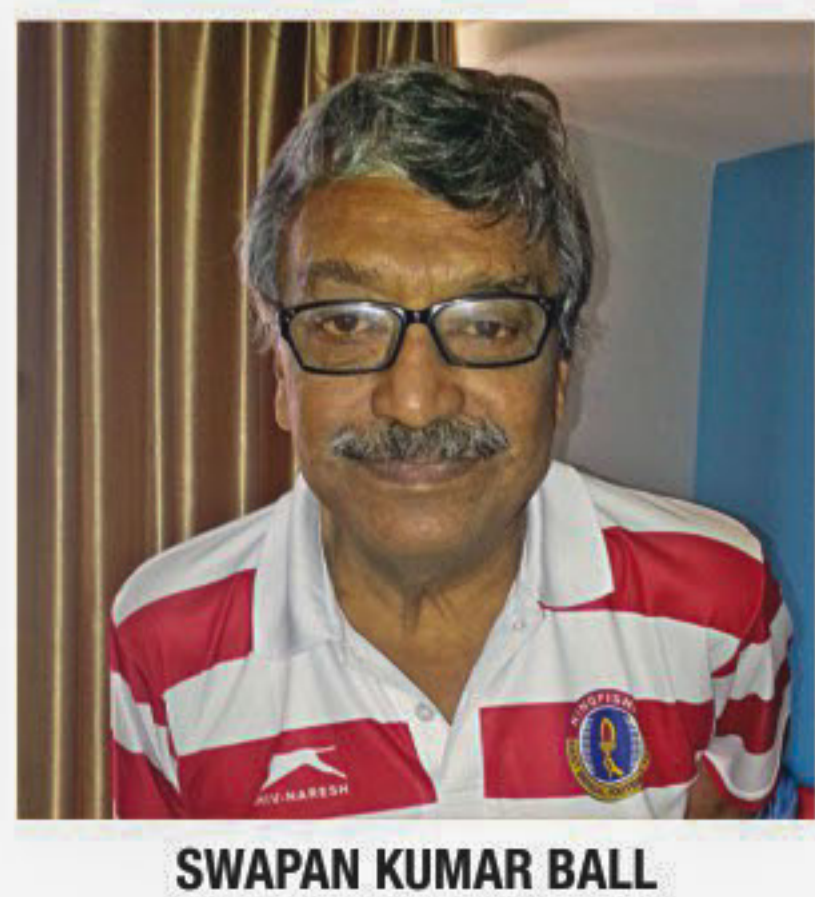
There was once a time when famous Bangladeshi footballers like the late Monem Munna, Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, Rizvi Karim Rumi, Kaiser Hamid, Rummon Bin Wali Sabbir and Golam Mohammad Gaus enthralled spectators in Kolkata with their everlasting performances in the Calcutta Football League. However, East Bengal team manager Swapan Kumar Ball believes that this trend has stopped in recent times because players of that quality simply do not exist in Bangladesh.

Swapan, who has been with East Bengal since 1984, is the right person to recollect the memories of those famous Bangladeshi players and also to explain why Bangladeshi players are not being picked by the Kolkata clubs anymore.

"Players like Munna, Aslam and others were game changers and they changed the complexion of the game but now there are no such players in Bangladesh anymore, perhaps not even in India either. So the clubs always try to rope in those foreign players who will have greater impact on the game," the 67-year-old told The

Daily Star at the Peninsula Hotel yesterday morning.

Among all Bangladeshi players who played in India in the early 90s, former Bangladesh captain Munna is still vivid in the memory of Kolkata spectators, especially the supporters of East Bengal, who are still eager to know



SWAPAN KUMAR BALL

delivered brilliant performances in all three seasons as a central midfielder along with Manaranjan and Tarun De. He was a complete team player and looked like he had been playing for East Bengal for long time.

Swapan believes the quality of footballers either side of the border has decreased due to a lack of motivation.

"I think there is a lack of motivation in the current footballers. I don't see the motivation that Munna or Manaranjan had in the present footballers," said Swapan.

Swapan, who is also a veteran organiser, did not forget to credit the Abahani officials.

"We have a historic relation with Abahani. Our former secretary Paltu Das had rapport with Abahani founder Sheikh Kamal and organiser Harunur Rashid and we are still maintaining those connections today. You can say Abahani and East Bengal are sister concerns," Swapan said, adding that the people of the former East Bengal (Bangladesh) were behind the formation of East Bengal Club, thus they always felt proud to take part in football tournaments in Bangladesh.

Swapan said that he feels emotional when he travels to Bangladesh, as his ancestors once lived in Bikrampur.

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