

NAPOLI BEAT BENFICA, BOTH TEAMS GO THROUGH

LISBON: Jose Callejon and Dries Mertens sent Napoli into the last 16 of the Champions League with a 2-1 win at Benfica yesterday while the Portuguese champions scraped through after rivals Besiktas were thumped by Dynamo Kiev. Callejon broke clear and dinked the ball over Benfica goalkeeper Ederson in the 60th minute and substitute Mertens sealed a convincing win for the Serie A side in the Group B match with a superb individual effort.

Raul Jimenez pulled back a late goal for a disappointing Benfica who were rescued by previously winless Dynamo Kiev as the Ukrainians thrashed Besiktas 6-0 in the other group game. Napoli topped the group with 11 points followed by Benfica on eight and Besiktas one behind on seven. Dynamo, already eliminated, finished with five points. Benfica, unbeaten at home in all competitions since they lost to Porto last February, started the game needing a

win while Napoli needed a draw to qualify without depending on the Besiktas result. However, a Besiktas defeat meant both sides would go through whatever happened in Lisbon and the match lost its edge as the Turkish champions went 3-0 down after little more than half an hour. Napoli were the more dangerous side and Manolo Gabbiadini had a goal disallowed for offside while Ederson made good saves to deny Callejon and then Gabbiadini.

Jimenez had Benfica's best first-half effort when he forced his way past two Napoli defenders but his shot was saved by Pepe Reina, one of the few moments in which the hosts threatened. Gabbiadini had a shot deflected wide by Luisao at the start of the second half then Lorenzo Insigne sent Callejon clear but the former Real Madrid forward put his shot high and wide. The Spaniard made amends on the hour, however, when a Mertens flick

again put him in the clear and this time he made no mistake. Benfica lost their composure and Mertens struck in the 79th minute, collecting the ball on the edge of the area before jinking his way past two defenders and firing a low shot in off the post. Benfica fans began leaving the Stadium of Light and many missed their team's consolation goal when Raul Albiol gifted the ball to Jimenez who easily beat Reina. —AP

BESIKTAS OUT OF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE IN 6-0 LOSS TO DYNAMO

KIEV: They had been the Champions League's kings of the late surprise earlier in the season, but Besiktas had no answer to a 6-0 onslaught from Dynamo Kiev as it was eliminated from the competition yesterday. The game was all but over by halftime in Ukraine, with Besiktas four goals down, and the Turkish champions finished with nine men following two red cards. Besiktas showed no sign of the never-say-die spirit that had characterized the team's Champions League campaign, with a late win over Napoli and a 3-3 draw from being 3-0 down against Benfica last time out. Instead, it slumped to a heavy defeat in a mostly empty stadium against a Dynamo team that was already sure to finish last in Group B, but that recorded its biggest Champions League win. Its previous mark was 4-0, after victories in 1997 and 2000. Besiktas needed a win to go through thanks to group winner Napoli's 2-1 victory at Benfica. Dynamo's star winger Andriy Yarmolenko started the night's torment for Besiktas with smart footwork on the byline and a cross to the far post for Artyom

Besedin to score the ninth-minute opener. Besiktas looked lively for the next 20 minutes until defender Andreas Beck was dismissed for a collision with Derlis Gonzalez, who was through on goal for Dynamo. Yarmolenko scored the resulting penalty and Vitaliy Buyalskiy soon made it 3-0 with a lobbed effort after a Besiktas defensive mix-up. A deflected shot from Gonzalez provided Dynamo's fourth in first-half stoppage time, and Serhiy Sydorchuk added the fifth in the 60th with a shot on the rebound, shortly after Besiktas striker Vincent Aboubakar was red-carded for a second offense. Junior Moraes made it 6-0 before Dynamo twice hit the woodwork. The win could prove a morale-booster for Dynamo, with the team's struggles in Europe being mirrored by troubles at home, with the Ukrainian champion 10 points off league leader Shakhtar Donetsk. Eliminated from the Champions League, Besiktas will take its place in the Europa League after finishing third in its group. —AP



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Nolito, right, and Celtic's goalkeeper Craig Gordon challenge for the ball during the Champions League group C soccer match between Manchester City and Celtic at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, England, yesterday. — AP

ARSENAL ROUTS BASEL 4-1 TO WIN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP

BASEL: Arsenal easily beat Basel 4-1 to finish top of its Champions League group yesterday, powered by a hat trick from little-used forward Lucas Perez. Getting a rare start, the Spanish forward gave Arsenal a three-goal lead by the 47th minute as the visitors coasted to victory. Mesut Ozil's delightful assist let Alex Iwobi score in the 53rd before Basel substitute Seydou Doumbia struck a consolation goal in the 78th. Arsenal unexpectedly finished atop Group A, rising above Paris Saint-Germain which drew 2-2 at home to winless Ludogorets Razgrad. As a group winner, Arsenal is seeded in Monday's draw for the Round of 16, hoping to avoid a seventh straight exit at that stage. Arsenal will avoid the likes of Barcelona and Atletico Madrid but the pot of unseeded teams is stronger than usual. One possible opponent is Bayern Munich which ousted Arsenal in the first knockout round in 2013 and '14. Another option is either Real Madrid or Borussia Dortmund, which play Wednesday in Spain with leadership of Group F at stake. Arsenal completed its 17th straight successful group stage with a deserved win on a cold night in Switzerland. Lucas Perez has made little impact in north London since a deadline-beating move from Deportivo La Coruna in August. Still, the 28-year-old forward scored his first Champions League goal in the eighth minute and scored in almost identical fashion eight minutes later. Each time, left back Kieran Gibbs was found deep in the Basel area. First a cross, then a shot, flashed across the goalmouth for Lucas Perez to tap in with his left foot at the far post.

The hat trick goal was more impressive, as Lucas Perez advanced into the path of the ball 15 meters (yards) out to shoot right-footed across the dive of goalkeeper Tomas Vaclik. Ozil's visionary assist was the key to Arsenal's fourth. A fast, direct break saw the Germany playmaker surge into the Basel penalty area and deceive defenders who expected him to shoot by clipping a reverse pass for Iwobi to score easily from close range. — AP

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Tottenham Hotspur v Moscow	22:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Leverkusen v Monaco	22:45
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Legia Warszawa v Sporting	22:45
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
Real Madrid v Dortmund	22:45
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Club Brugge v Copenhagen	22:45
beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
Porto v Leicester	22:45
beIN SPORTS 9 HD	
Juventus v Dinamo Zagreb	22:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Lyonnais v Sevilla	22:45
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	

IHEANACHO UP TO SPEED AS MAN CITY, CELTIC DRAW

MANCHESTER: Manchester City striker Kelechi Iheanacho made a successful start to his spell as Sergio Aguero's stand-in by earning his team a 1-1 Champions League draw with Celtic yesterday. Aguero's four-game ban for getting sent off in Saturday's 3-1 loss to Chelsea means Iheanacho can look forward to a run of games in manager Pep Guardiola's first XI. The 20-year-old Nigeria striker took his chance with an eighth-minute goal that cancelled out Celtic's opener, ironically scored by 19-year-old City loanee Patrick Roberts. City had already secured a place in the last 16 and were guaranteed to finish below Group C winners Barcelona, while fourth-place Celtic already knew they had missed out on a Europa League berth. Roberts' goal means City have recorded just one clean sheet in their last 16 matches, but after the trauma of the loss to Chelsea, in which Fernandinho also saw red, this was a welcome return to normality. With nothing riding on the game, Guardiola gave some playing time to young defenders

Pablo Maffeo and Tosin Adarabioyo, but it was another City youngster who was the first to show. Roberts, loaned to Celtic by City in February, embarrassed his parent club's defence, slipping past Gael Clichy from the right and sticking a left-foot shot past goalkeeper Willy Caballero. Celtic had conceded the lead three times in September's 3-3 draw at Celtic Park and history was to repeat itself here as City levelled within four minutes. Nolito slid a pass down the inside-left channel for Iheanacho and he showed composure to guide a firm shot past Craig Gordon. **CITY PENALTY APPEAL** The sense that Guardiola was treating the game as an experiment was emphasised by his casual dress-skinny jeans and sneakers-as well as by City's novel 3-5-2 shape. The system featured Pablo Zabaleta in midfield and he almost created a second goal with a sweeping pass that Iheanacho put wide. Gordon was also required to palm away an improvised back-heel from Iheanacho, with

Nolito's follow-up blocked. But City looked patchy at the back and Moussa Dembele, scorer of a brace at Celtic Park, twice got in behind in the early stages. Freed in turn by a sloppy Fernando back-pass and a neat James Forrest through ball, he was thwarted both times by Caballero, blazing wastefully wide of an open goal on the second occasion. Despite losing Forrest to injury, Celtic made a bright start to the second half, with his replacement, Gary Mackay-Steven, curling a shot into Caballero's gloves. Guardiola introduced Jesus Navas for Maffeo and the winger teed up Nolito to turn the ball up at the back post, only for an offside flag to curtail the Spain international's celebrations. Celtic threatened twice as the game approached its latter stages, with Leigh Griffiths shooting wide and Caballero thwarting Mackay-Steven. Leroy Sane curled a free-kick narrowly wide at the other end and might have won his side a late penalty with a cross that struck Jozo Simunovic's hand, but Slovenian referee Slavko Vincic shook his head. —AFP

NY CITY FORWARD VILLA NAMED LEAGUE MVP

NEW YORK: New York City forward David Villa was named Major League Soccer's most valuable player yesterday after leading the club to its first playoff appearance in just its second year in the league. The former-Barcelona striker, who also finished runner-up for the MLS Golden Boot with 23 goals, beat off competition from Bradley Wright-Phillips and Sacha Kljestan of crosstown rivals New York Red Bulls. Toronto FC's Sebastian Giovinco, the 2015 MVP, finished fourth in the running for the award, which is voted on by players, club management and media. Former Spain striker Villa was a key part of New York City's incredible turnaround as the team claimed a postseason spot after finishing 17th in 2015. The first player signed by NYCFC, Villa finished the regular season in tremendous form, scoring six goals in his last four appearances, with the team winning three of those contests en route to clinching a playoff spot. NYCFC finished the season second in the Eastern Conference with a total of 54 points and a 15-10-9 record. — Reuters



NEW YORK: David Villa of New York City FC poses for a photo with the 2016 Landon Donovan MLS MVP trophy and his children (L-R) Luca Villa Gonzalez, Olaya Villa Gonzalez, and Zaida Villa Gonzalez and his wife, Patricia Gonzalez, at Spring Studios yesterday in New York City. — AFP



BASEL: Basel's Marc Janko, center, in close action with Arsenal during their Champions League Group stage Group A soccer match between Switzerland's FC Basel 1893 and England's Arsenal FC in the St. Jakob-Park stadium in Basel, Switzerland, yesterday. — AP

ROSTOV ADVANCES TO EUROPA LEAGUE

EINDHOVEN: FC Rostov earned a place in the Europa League by holding PSV Eindhoven to a 0-0 draw in Group D of the Champions League yesterday. With both teams already out of contention for a spot in the knockout stage of the Champions League, Rostov only needed the draw to get into Europe's second-tier competition and rarely threatened PSV. Neither side had an attempt on target until Sardar Azmoun shook off Daniel Schwaab in the 67th minute and fired a shot straight at Jeroen Zoet in the PSV goal.

PSV only threatened late after coach Phillip Cocu brought on three attacking substitutes. Steven Bergwijn finally got PSV's first shot on goal in the 75th, and Bart Ramselaar came close to stealing the three points in the 86th but his shot was cleared off the goal line by Vladimir Granat. The Dutch champion finished its Champions League campaign with just two points. "We fought today and it wasn't enough," said PSV captain Luuk de Jong. — AP