

Evergrande complete sensational victory

Reysol register 1st win in this year's competition

HONG KONG, March 6, (AFP): Fabio Cannavaro's Guangzhou Evergrande roared back from 2-0 down Tuesday with four second-half goals from Ricardo Goulart completing a sensational AFC Champions League victory 5-3 over Jeju United.

On a night when it rained goals, Cannavaro's former club Tianjin Quanjian were thumped 6-3 at 2016 winners Jeonbuk Motors, whose giant striker Kim Shin-wook bagged his first Champions League hat-trick.

Evergrande, the club who have declared they want to field an all-Chinese side by 2020, had to thank their two prolific Brazilian forwards for the victory over their Korean visitors.

The Chinese champions found themselves 2-0 down after 29 minutes at the Tianhe Stadium to goals from Jin Seong-uk and Magno Cruz.

But Goulart's goal spree thrilled the raucous home crowd after fellow Brazilian Alan's opener deep into first-half stoppage time had given Guangzhou a lifeline.

The 2006 World Cup-winning captain Cannavaro had endured a stuttering start at the southern Chinese city club since taking over from Luiz Felipe Scolari, who led Evergrande to a seventh successive Chinese Super League (CSL) title last year.

Evergrande drew both their previous Group G matches and lost their CSL opener 5-4 to derby rivals Guangzhou R&F on Friday.

But they now lead Group G by a point from Thailand's Buriram United, who enjoyed a 2-0 home win over Japan's Cerezo Osaka courtesy of goals from Andres Tunez and Edgar Silva.

Last season Italian Cannavaro led Tianjin Quanjian to Champions League qualification and his former charges took a shock lead in the 10th minute in Jeonju when a partially cleared corner was volleyed home sweetly by right-back Zhang Cheng.

The towering Kim saw one header disallowed before the 6ft 6in (1.98m)



Cannavaro



Guangzhou Evergrande's Nemanja Gudelj (left), fights for the ball with Jeju United's Lee Changmin during the AFC Champions League group stage football match between China's Guangzhou Evergrande and South Korea's Jeju United in Guangzhou in China's southern Guangdong province on March 6. (AFP)

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target man rose in 24th minute to head the equaliser. Three minutes before half-time Jeonbuk were ahead courtesy of Han Kyo-won.

Brazilian Ricardo Lopes swept home before Kim bagged two more to complete his hat-trick in the 64th minute and captain Choi Bo-kyung then found the net to make it 6-1.

A late Zhao Xuri header and an Alexandre Pato penalty were only consolations for the visitors as Jeonbuk made it three wins from three matches to go five points clear at the top of Group E.

Kashiwa Reysol registered a first win in this year's competition and join Tianjin on four points after labouring past Hong Kong's Kitchee 1-0 in Japan thanks to Junya Ito's 66th-minute winner.

Kitchee remain rock bottom of Group E without a goal or a point so far in their debut AFC Champions League campaign but will have another chance when they host Kashiwa at Hong Kong Stadium next week.

Red Devils retake second

Matic gem caps epic Man Utd fightback

LONDON, March 6, (AFP): Nemanja Matic capped Manchester United's stirring fightback from two goals down as the Serbia midfielder's stunning strike snatched a dramatic 3-2 win at Crystal Palace.

Jose Mourinho's side trailed to Andros Townsend's early opener and Patrick van Aanholt's second half effort at Selhurst Park.

But Chris Smalling got one back for United and Romelu Lukaku equalised with 14 minutes remaining.

That set the stage for Matic to score for the first time since his move from Chelsea last year with a blistering blast from the edge of the area in stoppage-time.

It was an escape act that seemed unlikely when United fell 2-0 behind after being out-fought and out-played by a Palace team fighting gamely to avoid relegation.

But Mourinho will take heart from the way his players shrugged off their limp opening to move back above Liverpool into second place in the Premier League and within 16 points of runaway leaders Manchester City.

Third bottom Palace deserved better, but they remain one point from safety after a heartbreaking loss.

While injury-hit Palace had struggled badly in recent weeks, they have often proved a thorn in the side of bigger clubs at Selhurst Park.

They were given early encouragement by Mourinho's men, who were playing as though it was nothing more than a Sunday morning kick-about in the park.

United paid the price for their lethargic start in the 11th minute.

Christian Benteke was allowed to jink into the United penalty area unchecked by Smalling and when his pass picked out Townsend 18 yards from goal, the Palace winger unleashed a shot that took a wicked deflection off Lindelof as it looped past David De Gea.

Fit again Mori 'eyes' Everton starting spot

BRITAIN, March 6, (RTRS): Everton defender Ramiro Funes Mori is ready to stake his claim for a first-team spot ahead of Saturday's Premier League tie against Brighton and Hove Albion after featuring for the Under-23 team on his return from a long-term knee injury.

The Argentina international, on what was his 27th birthday on Monday, delivered an assured performance in a 2-0 win over Swansea City.

It was the first time Funes Mori played in a competitive fixture since facing Hull City in March last year, shortly after which he underwent knee surgery.

"I've been training good these past weeks," he told the club website. (www.evertonfc.com)

United were nearly undone by more sloppy play when Matic conceded possession in midfield, but Palace striker Alexander Sorloth shot straight at De Gea.

With Matic and Paul Pogba rattled by Palace's relentless pressing, United were unable to match their opponents' intensity.

The out of form Pogba, dropped several times by Mourinho recently, was a major cause of the visitors' woes as the France midfielder wasted possession

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and was caught out of position time and again.

He was playing so badly that United legend Gary Neville, working for Sky Sports, was moved to say: "It's like everything he does is like a YouTube or Instagram video. 'It's like it's not serious, it's like a joke to him in terms of the way he goes about things.'"

Mourinho kept faith with Pogba, instead sending on Marcus Rashford for Scott McTominay at half-time.

But just three minutes after the interval, United were caught cold again.

When Palace won a free-kick, Jeffrey Schlupp alertly took it quickly, sending van Aanholt scampering clear on goal.

United appealed in vain for offside but the flag stayed down and van Aanholt held his nerve to slot past De Gea for his first goal since May 2017.

Mourinho was raging on the touchline, but Smalling gave United a lifeline in the 55th minute.

The England defender had missed a good chance moments earlier, but he made amends with a clinical header

from Antonio Valencia's cross.

That completely changed the momentum and even Pogba sparked into life as his curler was pushed away by Palace keeper Wayne Hennessey.

Matic almost equalised with a thunderous strike that Benteke cleared off the line and United's pressure was rewarded in the 76th minute.

Alexis Sanchez's shot deflected off James Tomkins and ran to Lukaku, who worked himself into position to fire low past Hennessey.

United were relieved, but it took a brilliant one-handed save from De Gea, diving to his right to keep out Benteke's header, to ensure their comeback wasn't in vain.

The drama wasn't over and in stoppage-time Matic stole the points for United, seizing the loose ball on the edge of the Palace area and cracking his strike into top corner to spark wild celebrations from the visitors.

Standings

Man City	29	25	3	1	83	20	78
Man Utd	29	19	5	5	56	22	62
Liverpool	29	17	9	3	67	32	60
Spurs	29	17	7	5	55	24	58
Chelsea	29	16	5	8	50	26	53
Arsenal	29	13	6	10	52	41	45
Burnley	29	10	10	9	24	26	40
Leicester	29	9	10	10	41	42	37
Watford	29	10	6	13	39	47	36
Brighton	29	8	10	11	28	38	34
Everton	29	9	7	13	33	49	34
Bournemouth	29	8	9	12	34	44	33
Swansea	29	6	15	25	42	30	28
West Ham	29	7	9	13	36	54	30
Huddersfield	29	6	15	25	50	30	28
Newcastle	29	7	8	14	27	40	29
Southampton	29	5	13	11	29	41	28
Palace	29	6	9	14	27	46	27
Stoke	29	6	9	14	28	54	27
WBA	29	3	11	15	22	43	20

Note: Standings read as played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against and points.



Manchester United's Chilean striker Alexis Sanchez (left), vies with Crystal Palace's English defender James Tomkins during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Manchester United at Selhurst Park in south London on March 5. (AFP)

'Door remains ajar for all players'

Cahill gets nod in Van Marwijk's 1st Aussie squad

SYDNEY, March 6, (AFP): New Socceroos coach Bert van Marwijk named his first squad since taking the job Tuesday, with 38-year-old Tim Cahill included after the Dutchman and his scouts monitored 100 players.

Van Marwijk was appointed in late January following the sudden departure of Ange Postecoglou and with the World Cup fast approaching, he has spent the ensuing time keeping tabs on Australians playing at home and in Europe and Asia.

With friendlies against Norway in Oslo and Colombia in London this month, he named a 29-strong preliminary squad which will be slimmed down next week.

Cahill, Australia's most prolific international scorer with 50 goals, left the domestic A-League in January to join Championship side Millwall to get more game time and keep alive his dream of playing in a fourth World Cup in Russia.

He has barely appeared for the London side but van Marwijk included him anyway, along with Aston Villa's Mile Jedinak, Hull City's Jackson Irvine, Brighton goalkeeper Mathew Ryan and Celtic's Tom Rogic.

And Feyenoord 'keeper Brad Jones, the former Liverpool and Middlesbrough custodian, was brought back from the international wilderness at the age of 35. "Since my appointment with the Socceroos, my staff, scouts and I have monitored over 100 Australian players in the A-League, as well as in leagues across Europe and Asia," said van Marwijk.

"We are pleased with the initial 29 players we have

picked for our upcoming games against Norway and Colombia and will finalise the squad next week.

"Our upcoming matches against Norway and Colombia will provide a great chance for the players selected to press their claims for Russia.

"However the door remains ajar for all players not picked for the March window."

Australia face Norway on March 23 and Colombia on March 27.

Squad — Aziz Behich (Bursaspor/TUR), Joshua Brillante (Sydney FC/AUS), Tim Cahill (Millwall/ENG), Milos Degenek (Yokohama Marinos/JPN),

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Alex Gersbach (Racing Club de Lens/FRA), Jackson Irvine (Hull City/ENG), Mile Jedinak (Aston Villa/ENG), Brad Jones (Feyenoord/NED), Tomi Juric (FC Luzern/SWI), Matthew Jurman (Suwon Bluewings/KOR), Robbie Kruse (VfL Bochum/GER), Mitchell Langerak (Nagoya Grampus/JPN), Mathew Leckie (Hertha BSC/GER), Massimo Luongo (Queens Park Rangers/ENG), Jamie Maclaren (Hibernian/SCO), James Meredith (Millwall/ENG), Mark Milligan (Al Ahli/KSA), Aaron Mooy (Huddersfield Town/ENG), Andrew Nabbout (Urawa Red Diamonds/JPN), Dimitri Petratos (Newcastle Jets/AUS), Josh Risdon (Western Sydney Wanderers/AUS), Tom Rogic (Celtic/SCO), Nikita Rukavitsyia (Maccabi Haifa/ISR), Mathew Ryan (Brighton/ENG), Trent Sainsbury (Grasshopper Club Zurich/SWI), Aleksandar Susnjic (FK Mlada Boleslav/CZE), James Troisi (Melbourne Victory/AUS), Daniel Vukovic (Genk/BEL), Bailey Wright (Bristol City/ENG).



Cahill

Italy to close window early

MILAN, March 6, (RTRS): Italy will close the summer transfer window on Aug 18 this year, one day before the start of the Serie A season, and schedule matches on Dec 26, the league's extraordinary commissioner Giovanni Malago said.

The decision to shut the window early follows the example of the English Premier League which decided in September to end the transfer window before the season gets

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underway.

Until now, the window has closed at the beginning of September in most European countries, after the start of the season, leading to widespread complaints that transfer speculation overshadows the football itself.

Coaches also say they cannot prepare properly for the new campaign as they often lose key players after a few matches.

Malago, who is president of the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI), also told reporters that Serie A would stage two rounds of matches between Christmas and the New Year, again following the English Premier League model.

However, there would then be a three-week winter break.

"Next season, matches will be played on Dec 22, 26 and 29 and the championship will restart on Jan 20," he said, adding that the winter transfer window would also end before the championship resumes.

Italy has traditionally had a break over Christmas and the New Year but changed this season when a round of league matches were played on Dec 30 with Coppa Italia games on Dec 26 and 27.

Next season will be the first time there has been such an intense programme in the Italian top flight as Serie A competes with the English Premier League for global attention.