

Sports

PSG stunned in League Cup quarters by struggling Guingamp

Monaco goalkeeper scores winning penalty in marathon shootout

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain saw their 43-match winning run in domestic cup competitions come to an end as Thomas Tuchel's men suffered a shock 2-1 home defeat by Ligue 1 bottom club Guingamp in the French League Cup quarter-finals on Wednesday. The visitors were awarded three penalties at the Parc des Princes in a dramatic second half, as PSG failed in their bid for a sixth straight League Cup title. It was only a second defeat in all competitions this season for the capital club, after a 3-2 loss to Liverpool at Anfield in the Champions League last September.

Guingamp, who have won just two league games all season, join Monaco, Strasbourg and Bordeaux in the semi-finals. "We came here to win and we know it's very difficult here," said Marcus Thuram, the son of 1998 World Cup winner Lilian Thuram, who scored the winner.

"We know that in the Cup anything can happen... We knew how to hinder PSG." Neymar broke the deadlock in the 63rd minute after Thuram missed the spot, but Guingamp rallied, with Thuram's successful injury-time penalty snatching victory with a shootout looming.

"We played with too much confidence, we were not hungry enough to finish the match," admitted PSG coach Thomas Tuchel. "It's very hard to lose with three penalties. I was angry with the second one, I can see the VAR 100 times, it's not a penalty." Tuchel named a strong starting XI including Kylian Mbappe, Neymar and Angel Di Maria, but a drab first half in the capital failed to produce a single shot on target from either side. The reigning French champions had extended their cup winning streak at the weekend against fifth-tier Pontivy, but Guingamp were awarded a

penalty on the hour mark when Ludovic Blas was tripped by PSG full-back Thomas Meunier.

Forward Thuram blazed his effort from 12 yards well over the top of the crossbar, and it appeared as though the opportunity of an upset had passed Guingamp by when Neymar headed home a Meunier cross less than two minutes later. But the away side managed to stay in the game and were handed another penalty nine minutes from time when Marcus Coco was bundled over by Juan Bernat, and Congolese international Yeni Ngbakoto made no mistake after a lengthy VAR delay. With the game set for penalties after 90 minutes, Guingamp landed a decisive blow on the counter-attack, as Thilo Kehrer fouled Thuram, and this time the 21-year-old squeezed the ball under the diving Alphonse Areola in the PSG net.

Earlier on Wednesday, Monaco goalkeeper Loic Badiashile scored the winning penalty in a marathon shootout against Rennes. Monaco, runners-up in the past two seasons, salvaged a 1-1 draw after normal time thanks to Rony Lopes' second-half equaliser, before Badiashile's heroics as he also saved three spot-kicks.

Thierry Henry's young team are floundering in Ligue 1, sitting second-bottom and five points from safety, but managed to keep their coach's hopes of a first trophy alive at the Stade Louis II. "That's exactly how we want to play," said the former Arsenal and France striker. "Sometimes we heard the crowd were unhappy, but we got the ball back on the ground and we played. "Finally we reacted after conceding a goal. Before we didn't know how to do it. This time, we did."

Monaco were the better side for the majority of an uneventful first half, with Moussa Sylla twice



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Italian midfielder Marco Verratti (L) falls next to Guingamp's French defender Christophe Kerbrat (R) during the French League Cup quarter-final football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Guingamp (EAG) on Wednesday, at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. — AFP

going close, but went into the break a goal down after Benjamin Bourigeaud swept Rennes ahead on the half-hour mark after a clever pass from Hatem Ben Arfa. Henry was grateful to have Lopes back in the starting line-up for the first time since September 2 after a thigh injury, and the Portuguese forward

tapped in Julien Serrano's low cross to level in the 54th minute. Kamil Glik and new signing Naldo both missed chances to win the tie for Monaco on penalties, but 20-year-old Badiashile slotted home the 22nd spot-kick to send them through after Rennes keeper Tomas Koubek had blazed over. — AFP

Sven's 'street dogs' put Philippines on Asian Cup map

ABU DHABI: They may not be able to bend it quite like David Beckham, but Sven-Goran Eriksson's Philippines have made an instant impact in their first appearance at the Asian Cup. Ranked a lowly 116th in the world, the Azkals (street dogs) bared their teeth against South Korea in Abu Dhabi this week, giving the favourites a real fright before eventually losing 1-0 — a far cry from the hammering many had predicted.

"It's a different challenge," Eriksson told AFP in an interview yesterday. "The Philippines is unfortunately not a football country-basketball is more popular. But if this generation of players can do well at the Asian Cup, they can change that." Eriksson took charge of the Philippines last November on a short-term contract until the end of the Asian Cup. And the Swede is relishing the slower pace after a glittering coaching career that included spells at Lazio, Manchester City and, most famously, five years in the England hot seat from 2001 to 2006.

"Here it's much more quiet," smiled the 70-year-old. "If you travel around the world with David Beckham it's total chaos everywhere you go.

"I was amazed how he could focus on the football," added Eriksson, who was hounded by media and had his private life splashed across the tabloids during his time as England boss.

"None of my players have even played at an Asian Cup, but they're professional, they fight-like England or Lazio or whoever it is." A team mostly cherry-picked from overseas, the players who started against South Korea all had at least one non-Filipino parent, sparking renewed debate in the country over ethnicity after Filipino-Australian model Catriona Gray was crowned Miss Universe last month.

"I'm very proud of them," insisted Eriksson, who steered the Philippines to the knockout stages of the southeast Asian championships in his first assignment. "They stood up to a very good Korean team. I'm very curious to see if we can do it again tomorrow." Bustling forward Javier Patino could prove a thorn in China's side today in a match which sees Eriksson lock horns with his old foe Marcello Lippi. But there will be more on the line than three points.

"I think I've met Lippi in Italy and China 20 times maybe," said Eriksson, who spent four years in Chinese club football from 2013 to 2017. "When I was at Sampdoria and Lazio, he had Inter (Milan), Juventus and Napoli-Italian Cup finals, so many games-and we are friends still.

"I will take my usual best with him," added the Swede. "Whoever loses has to buy dinner and a very good red wine." Eriksson turned down jobs with Cameroon and Iraq to coach the Philippines but whatever the result against China and fellow Asian Cup first-timers Kyrgyzstan next week, he has no regrets.

"I like the people, I like the players," he said. "We are more like a team today than we were a month ago." Asked about his future, Eriksson suggested whimsically he could end his career where it began as a player-at amateur side Torsby.

"I'll always have my local team in Sweden-it's a village team," he said. "But I don't have any plans-and at my age in football, it's better not to have plans." —AFP

Real return United pay compensation to Mourinho

LONDON: Jose Mourinho is available for a dramatic return to Real Madrid after Manchester United paid him a reported £15 million (\$19 million) in compensation following his sacking last month, according to British media yesterday.

The Daily Mail reports that a source close to Mourinho-whose contract was due to run till the end of the 2019/20 campaign with the option of an extra season-has revealed that compensation has been paid.

"There are no issues over Jose's contract with Manchester United. Everything has been sorted," the newspaper reports the source as saying. "Jose is able to take on another job right now, but is in no rush.

"He is very relaxed about it and would be happy to wait until the end of the season if he needs to." The Sun reports that United agreed to the payment after his disappointing two-and-a-half-year stint at Old Trafford following a meeting between Mourinho's agent Jorge Mendes and United executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward. The pay-out leaves the 55-year-old Portuguese free to be considered for Madrid if the club decide to dismiss under-pressure coach Santiago Solari. — AFP