

PREMIERSHIP NEWS, GOSSIP & RUMOURS

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UEFA postponed Wednesday's Champions League and Thursday's UEFA Cup ties – a total of 48 matches – as a mark of respect for the victims of Tuesday's terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC.

Manchester United flew back from Athens on Wednesday and will now play their Champions League match against Olympiakos on 10th October. Leeds United's flight to Madeira, where they were due to play Maritimo in the UEFA Cup on Thursday, was turned back in mid-air when UEFA's decision was relayed to them.

That tie, along with Ipswich Town v Torpedo Moscow, Aston Villa v Vorteks and Chelsea v Levski Sofia will be played next Thursday.

Peter Kenyon, chief executive of Manchester United, said: We are fully supportive of UEFA's decision. It is the right decision given the scale of the tragedy. Around 1,000 United supporters had travelled to Greece and Kenyon said: We will look at plans to help them financially for the rearranged game on 10th October.

David Shepshanks, the Ipswich chairman, said: No one would argue with the decision, although it is very disappointing on the eve of such an exciting night in the club's history. However, everything pales into insignificance [compared with the horrific events in America].

UEFA's chief executive, Gerhard Aigner, said: UEFA feel it is right that the football family should respect the loss and suffering being felt by those families who have lost loved ones, by postponing all UEFA games scheduled to be played this week. We will continue to monitor the overall security situation within Europe over the next few days and will make a further statement in due course concerning the rescheduling of these matches.

While everyone would support these sentiments, it is regrettable that the Champions League matches scheduled for Tuesday – the day of the atrocity – actually went ahead.

From a purely footballing point of view, both Liverpool and Arsenal would have been better off had those games been cancelled. Liverpool, back in the Champions League for the first time since the Heysel disaster of 1985, were disappointed to secure only a home draw against Boavista. Michael Owen maintain his incredible scoring run with Liverpool's goal, but by then the Reds were already one down. The result completes a trio of poor results for Gerard Houllier's team, following Premiership defeats by Bolton Wanderers and Aston Villa – the latter at Anfield when Steven Gerrard was sent off for a reckless challenge on Villa's Paul Boateng.

The Red card was again a feature of Arsenal's tie against Real Mallorca. Not one of the Gunners' five games this season has finished with all 22 players still on the pitch. Ugo Ehiogu and Ray Parlour saw red in the Middlesbrough v Arsenal game. Then the Leeds pair, Lee Bowyer and Danny Mills, were dismissed as Arsenal lost 1-2 at Highbury. Dennis Wise and Patrick Vieira were off as Arsenal beat Leicester 4-0, and Chelsea's Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink was next to go as Arsenal drew 1-1 at Stamford Bridge. The sorry sequence continued in Mallorca. After just ten minutes, a foul by Ashley Cole resulted in his dismissal and the awarding of a penalty from which Real scored.

It was the only goal of the game but Arsenal's 10 men came close to conceding more as their fourth consecutive Champions League campaign got off to a depressing start. The Gunners must now take maximum points at home to Germany's Schalke 04 on Wednesday.

In English domestic football, there were midweek upsets for some Premiership clubs in the Worthington (League) Cup. Sunderland lost 2-4 to First Division Sheffield Wednesday, while Everton crashed out to lower Division opposition for the third season in a row. The Toffees were held to a 1-1 draw by Crystal Palace, but lost the penalty shoot-out 5-4. West Ham United also lost on penalties – 6-5 to Reading after a goalless draw; but Fulham won their tie with Third Division Rochdale 6-5 on penalties following a 2-2 draw after extra-time.

In other ties, Bolton beat Walsall 4-3 in extra-time, Middlesbrough gained their first win of the season by beating Northampton Town 3-1, and Southampton got both their first win and first goals with a 3-0 victory at Brighton. Blackburn Rovers beat Oldham Athletic 2-0, Charlton Athletic overcame Port Vale 2-0 at home, Derby County beat Hull City 3-0, and Newcastle United thrashed Brentford 4-1 after extra-time. The Magpies Welsh striker Craig Bellamy hit a hat-trick in 12 extra-time minutes to add to the equaliser Shola Ameobi had secured in the 59th minute.

It was Newcastle's second 4-1 win in five days, after they'd beaten near-neighbours Middlesbrough by the same score last Saturday. That game marked the return after six months out with a knee injury of ex-England captain Alan Shearer. Typically, the striker scored twice on his come-back, once from the penalty spot.

On the transfer front, Liverpool's Sander Westerveld has confirmed he is seeking a new club after losing his place to Jerzy Dudek, while Blackburn have sold striker Nathan Blake to Wolverhampton Wanderers for £1.5 million.

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