

Football – Champions League

Birkirkara set up second round match against Zilina

Birkirkara 4
Santa Coloma 3
(Birkirkara pass 7-3 agg)

Birkirkara: E. Lovison, N. Vukanac, B. Nisevic, S. Bajada (A. Tabone), A. DeCesare, T. Cilia (A. Buhagiar), P. Fenech, J. Zerafa (K. Pulo), R. Muscat, T. Paris, M. Galea.
Santa Coloma: R. Fernandez, FX Gil, JM Ayala, O. Sonejee (G. Sanchez), D. Garcia (ZE Bodjo), NL Urbani, M. Jimenez, A. Sanchez, MS Urbani, FS Martin, D. Ribolleda (JM Garcia).
Referee: Bobby Madden (Scotland)
Asst refs: F. Andrews, S. Pullar, 4th official: A. Law.
Scorers: M. Galea 2, T. Cilia 2, NL Urbani, M. Jimenez, MJ Urbani
Yellow cards: JM Garcia, A. DeCesare, N. Vukanac, NL Urbani.

HENRY BRINCAT

Birkirkara advanced to the second qualifying round of the competition yesterday after defeating Andorra's Santa Coloma 4-3 in front of around 1,000 fans, for a 7-3 aggregate win.

The Stripes qualified on a 7-3 aggregate after having been awarded an away 3-0 win by UEFA as last week's first leg match had to be cancelled due to the pitch at Andorra La Vella being in a bad state.

Paul Zammit's boys now face Slovakia's

Zilina in the next round with the first leg being played next Tuesday.

Birkirkara showed superior qualities all around and were well worth their victory. However, they relaxed their hold in the second half, and the visitors threatened to get and equaliser near the end as the Birkirkara defence appeared to be in trouble.

The Stripes were very impressive in midfield with Bajada, Fenech and Muscat firmly in command and with Galea and Cilia providing a lot of anxious moments for the Andorran defence, especially in the first half.

Birkirkara took the lead on nine minutes through Galea after a Bajada cross. But Santa Coloma hit back to equalise through NL Urbani after a defensive lapse by Nisevic.

It became 2-1 on 30 minutes as Galea lobbed over the onrushing goalie after a splendid pass from Bajada. And four minutes later, it was Paris who set Cilia on the right for the latter to make it 3-1.

After Santa Coloma had a goal disallowed on 35 minutes for a foul on the goalie, Jimenez scored from a free-kick with the ball being deflected by a defender.



But immediately after, Birkirkara restored their two-goal lead as Trevor Cilia found the net again after a Paul Fenech shot was only partially parried by the goalie.

In the second half, Birkirkara continued to dictate matters but on most occasions, they preferred to play the possession game instead of pushing forward as they did in the first half.

Santa Coloma never appeared dangerous before MJ Urbani scored a third goal for his side five minutes from the end.

Earlier Cilia had missed a golden opportunity to achieve his hat-trick when the goalie missed the ball on the edge of the area, but the Malta striker, failed miserably with an open goal at his mercy, sending the ball wide.

Tour de France

Hushovd wins 3rd stage over cobblestones

Thor Hushovd of Norway won a bumpy third stage of the Tour de France over cobblestones on yesterday, while Lance Armstrong was held up by a flat tire and lost time to other title contenders.

Switzerland's Fabian Cancellara, who finished in a five-man group behind Hushovd, regained the yellow jersey that he had ceded just a day earlier to France's Sylvain Chavanel.

Hushovd finished ahead of Britain's Geraint Thomas and Cadel Evans of Australia in a sprint finish among the leading group of riders.

Chavanel wore the yellow jersey for yesterday's 213-kilometer ride as the race headed from Wanze, Belgium to Arenberg Porte du Hainaut in France.

But the Frenchman had to cope with two flat tires, along with a mechanical problem, and lost time on Cancellara.

Frank Schleck of Luxembourg, who won the Tour of Switzerland last month, crashed on the fourth of seven sectors of cobbles. His Saxo Bank team said he was out of the race and taken to a hospital.

In the overall standings, Cancellara leads second-place Thomas by 23 seconds and two-time Tour runner-up Evans by 39