

Zenit St. Petersburg Lose 2-1 to Germany's Bayer Leverkusen in Champions League

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Zenit St. Petersburg's Rondon scores a goal against Bayer Leverkusen during their Champions League group C soccer match at the Petrovsky stadium in St. Petersburg.

ST. PETERSBURG — Son Heung-min showed his finishing prowess with two goals as Bayer Leverkusen took a large step towards qualifying for the Champions League knockout stages with a 2-1 victory over Zenit St. Petersburg.

Two superbly-taken strikes in five minutes by Son midway through the second half secured all three points for the Bundesliga side, before Jose Rondon grabbed a late consolation for the hosts.

Leverkusen have now won their last three games in European football's premier club competition, while Zenit have not won a Champions League group stage match at home in more than two years.

The Bundesliga side top Group C with nine points from four games, four ahead of second place Monaco, who visit Benfica (one point) later on Tuesday. Zenit are third on four points, with two rounds of matches still to play.

Despite enjoying a lot of possession, Zenit found it difficult to create chances in a match they needed to win to boost their chances of reaching the last-16, following their 2-0 reverse in Leverkusen two weeks ago.

Their best chance of the first 45 minutes fell to Brazilian Hulk. The powerhouse forward whipped in a left-footed free kick from wide on the right, which eluded everyone before coming back off the post with Bernd Leno stranded in the Bayer goal.

Danny's vision was proving to be a handful for the visitors as he twice provided Alexander Kerzhakov with excellent opportunities to score.

Yet the former Sevilla forward, who scored the only goal when Zenit last won a Champions League group game at the Petrovsky Stadium against Anderlecht in October 2012, was denied on both occasions by Leno.

Bayer, who had won their last two games in this season's competition after losing their opener to Monaco, were more than content to sit back and defend.

Karim Bellarabi had their best effort in the 31st minute, but Yury Lodygin easily saved his shot from 20 meters

The second half proved to be equally as frustrating for the hosts, who had plenty of possession, but no end product.

By the hour mark they had managed to muster just one shot on target. As tirelessly as Kerzhakov toiled in attack, a lack of pace twice hindered the 31-year-old, as he was unable to get clear of the last defender and give himself a clear goalscoring opportunity.

Roger Schmidt's side were doing an excellent job of reducing space for the dangerous Danny and an out-of-sorts Hulk. They took the lead on 68 minutes with an excellently worked free kick.

The ball was laid off to South Korea international Son 20 meters from goal and the 22-year-old hit a stunning right-footed curling effort, which beat the outstretched left hand of Lodygin.

The Korean made the game safe five minutes later showing excellent awareness and strength to put himself one on one with the Zenit goalkeeper.

He kept his composure to completely wrong foot Lodygin and make it 2-0. Rondon pulled one back a minute from full time, with a good finish after being put through by fellow substitute Alexander Ryazantsev.

Yet it was too little too late and the German side easily held on for a deserved victory.

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