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UEFA Cup: Dica gives Steaua Bucharest win

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LONDON (AP) - Steaua Bucharest striker Nicolae Dica was the lone scorer in the UEFA Cup semifinals Thursday, helping his team beat Middlesbrough 1-0 in the first leg while Schalke drew 0-0 with Sevilla.

Middlesbrough goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer made two second-half saves to keep the English club's chances alive before the second leg at Riverside Stadium on April 27.

"It's only a 1-0 deficit, we know we can score goals at home," Middlesbrough captain Ugo Ehiogu said. "We're a goal down, we need a clean sheet and we know we can create chances. We've just got to be able to finish them."

Dica scored in the 28th minute when he took the ball at the top of the box with his back to goal, turned quickly, and slotted it into the top corner.

Steaua defender George Ogararu almost conceded an own-goal in the 41st minute when his header hit the crossbar. From the corner, Middlesbrough midfielder James Morrison's 10-meter shot was saved by Steaua 'keeper Carlos Fernandes.



Nicolae Dica

Schwarzer, an Australia international, palmed Dorin Goian's eight-yard shot over the bar in the 55th, and then blocked Dica's attempt eight minutes later.

"I have a bitter taste after this victory," said Steaua coach Cosmin Olaroiu, adding that Steaua should have converted more of its scoring chances at home in Bucharest, Romania.

At Gelsenkirchen, Germany, Schalke defender Mladen Krstajic was sent off for violent conduct in the 80th minute.

Three minutes later, Sevilla 'keeper Andres Palop leapt high to tip Marcelo Bordon's powerful header over the bar in the best goal-scoring attempt in the match.


"It's not all lost," Schalke coach Mirko Slomka said. "We are always good for an away goal."

Sevilla forward Jesus Naves came close with a long-distance shot in the 23rd minute, then missed again over the bar in the 66th in front of 53,000 fans at AufSchalke stadium.

Schalke, the 1997 champion, plays the return leg on April 27 with Sevilla yet to lose at home in the competition this season.

"The longer the game went on the more pressure we developed, but it never quite worked," Schalke midfielder Fabian Ernst said. "We are struggling as a team right now."

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