

Brave Arsenal fightback falls short against AC Milan

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AC Milan withstood a brave comeback from Arsenal to advance to the quarterfinals of the Champions League Tuesday despite a 3-0 defeat in the second leg at the Emirates.

The Italian champions had led 4-0 from the first leg last month and few bar the most optimistic of Arsenal fans gave Arsene Wenger's men any hope of retrieving the deficit.

But first-half goals from Laurent Koscielny, Tomas Rosicky and captain Robin van Persie gave the English Premier League side the perfect platform to complete a remarkable recovery.

Koscielny headed home from a corner, Rosicky took advantage of a defensive mistake after a Theo Walcott run and van Persie slotted home a penalty after the excellent Alex-Oxlade Chamberlain was fouled.

Milan were all at sea, but regrouped strongly after the break and blunted the Arsenal onslaught.

Van Persie uncharacteristically fluffed the best chance for the home side to make it 4-4 on aggregate, but after fine work by Gervinho his effort was saved by Christian Abbiati.

"I felt he wanted to chip the keeper because he was down but Abbiati got up very quickly but he reacted well and unfortunately we couldn't score, Wenger told Sky Sports.

"I hoped in the final 10 or 15 minutes to create some more goal chances, but it didn't happen."

At the other end, Zlatan Ibrahimovic came to life and twice came close to scoring the Milan goal which would have completely killed off the tie.

But at the finish it was the Milan players who were celebrating, while Arsenal will be boosted in their challenge for a Champions League spot in the EPL and remain in the FA Cup.

In Tuesday's other last 16 tie, Benfica overturned a 3-2 deficit from their first leg against Zenit St Petersburg to win 2-0 in Lisbon and go through 4-3 on aggregate.

Maxi Pereira's goal in first-half injury-time set them on their way with Nelson Oliveira secured the outright win in the second minute of added time.