

Beat: Sports

## UEFA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

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**Sport Pages** - West Ham and Basel will both take a 2-1 advantage into the second leg of their UEFA Europa League semi-final ties next Thursday, as they came from behind to beat AZ Alkmaar and Fiorentina, respectively. Basel has had the most dramatic run to this point in the competition.

The Swiss side came from two goals down to eliminate Slovan Bratislava on penalty shootouts in the round of 16. They also left it late against Nice in the quarterfinals. An equalizer just before the end of regular time and another in extra time were just enough to set up this tie against Fiorentina.

West Ham are the bookies' favorites to win the Conference League this season. The Hammers were Europa League semi-final losers last term and would hope to win their first major trophy since the FA Cup in 1979-80. Dutch outfit AZ Alkmaar are the only obstacle between them and their first European final in 47 years.

West Ham missed other chances to extend their lead in the first leg, and it might prove crucial as they travel to the Netherlands next Thursday. AZ Alkmaar have won all of their eight home games in Europe this season, and this makes for a more interesting encounter. Basel look to become the first team from Switzerland to reach a European final, and they might need more than the heroics of the last two rounds to keep off an in-form Fiorentina.

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