

Primera Liga Giants suffer away

Football

AFP, London

Spanish giants Real Madrid and Barcelona both had an away day to forget on Sunday...

Real Madrid's draw means that they are now five points behind the side from Real Sociedad...

By contrast, the job of Barcelona coach Louis van Gaal is in jeopardy...

Ronaldo made another repayment on his 45 million euro summer transfer fee by putting Real Madrid into the lead after 57 minutes...

However, Real's lead only lasted 11 minutes as Asier Del Horno equalised for Athletic...

The European and world champions kept up the pressure for the remainder of the match but Aranzubia thwarted all their efforts...

"We lost two points here," admitted Ronaldo. "It's a long road to the end of the league and we are carrying on without getting defeated..."

Real Sociedad have 43 points from their 19 matches and were proclaimed the Spanish 'winter champions'...

The Basque team extended their unbeaten run with second half goals from Tayfun Korkut and Darko Kovacevic...

Barcelona are down in 12th place, a huge 20 points off the lead, after their latest disaster.

After an initial flourish from Barca, all the chances fell to the feet of the Galician hosts.

Jesuli Mora had the goal at his mercy but hit the post midway through the first half and then Gustavo Lopez had a weak penalty saved by Barca goalkeeper Roberto Bonano.

Jesuli made up for his earlier miss by finding the net two minutes after the break, darting forward unmarked with the Barca defence pushed too far forward to pick up a Peter Lucin cross.

Brazilian winger Sylvinho got Celta's second with a spectacular volley from an acute angle after 72 minutes, one of the best goals in the Spanish first division all season.

By contrast to the Barcelona



PHOTO: INTERNET

Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo skips the challenge of an Athletic Bilbao defender at Bilbao on January 26.

misery, the Celta victory brought joy to their own supporters whose team had lost their last three games and not even scored a goal since the start of the year.

Valencia stay third and have 35 points after a lacklustre 1-0 win on Sunday over Sevilla, who despite their lowly position can still boast of

the best defence in the First Division. Argentine international striker Pablo Aimar got the only goal of the game after 33 minutes when he trapped a Ruben Baraja cross with his chest and then blasted in the half-volley.

Valencia coach Rafa Benitez admitted the game was a pale shadow of the previous week's sensational 4-2 win at Barcelona.

"We had some clear chances but Malaga managed to kill everything in the midfield for a large part of the game," conceded Benitez.

Brazilian World Cup winner Denilson scored two spectacular goals in Real Betis' 2-1 win over Villareal, a win which sees the

missal of Argentine defender Nestor Sensini for unsporting behaviour. Milan fell behind eight minutes from the break when veteran defender Paolo Maldini handled the ball deliberately inside the 18-yard box.

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Asked if he thought there was any doubt about Udinese's penalty, Galliani replied: "It was the right decision, absolutely."

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CHRISTIAN VIERI

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Seville-based side move into fourth place on goal difference, although they had an uncomfortable final few minutes after Carlos Aranda headed a late consolation goal for the visitors.

Champions League contenders Deportivo La Coruna were humbled 3-1 at Espanyol on Sunday, where former Spanish national coach Javier Clemente continues to work his magic.

Relegation-threatened Espanyol have now won three of their five games since Clemente took over last month.

The Spanish First Division's leading scorer Roy Makaay took his tally to 13 for the season, giving Deportivo the lead after just two minutes but responded with three goals before 30 minutes had elapsed from Toni Soldevilla, Roger Garcia and Angel Morales.

Bottom club Recreativo came from behind to beat fellow strugglers Rayo Vallecano 2-1.

Rayo got in front quickly through Ramon De Quintana scoring less than two minutes into the game. Recreativo's Xisco Munoz then equalised early in the second half before Loren Monzon got the winner for Recreativo six minutes from time.

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Farewell to a legend

AFP, Turin

Turin bade an emotional farewell Sunday to its most famous son as Fiat patriarch Giovanni Agnelli's coffin was borne out of the city which became synonymous with the worldwide conglomerate he created.

An estimated 10,000 mourners who crowded around Turin Cathedral, many of them Fiat assembly line workers, applauded as his coffin, bedecked with white roses, was taken to his last resting place in the family crypt outside the city.

Turin's archbishop, Cardinal Severino Poletto told mourners during the solemn requiem mass, punctuated by choral music by Bach, that Agnelli had earned the merit of "the city, Italy and the world."

An honour guard of the Italian army saluted as Agnelli's coffin was taken from the cathedral after a service which bore all the trappings of a state funeral.

The Agnelli family who control the troubled industrial conglomerate left in a fleet of black cars for the private family burial after the 90-minute requiem mass which was carried live on Italian state television.

Among the chief mourners were President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, as well as the speakers of both houses of parliament and former president Oscar Luigi Scalfaro -- like Agnelli a senator for life.

Poletto said Turin, where thousands of families earned their living on Fiat's assembly lines since it was founded by Agnelli's grandfather in 1899, "is a city moved and shaken by this death."

The cardinal also read out a message from Pope John Paul II, who said Agnelli had "used his enterprise and generosity for good, and for the economic and social development of the country."

Agnelli wielded autocratic control over Fiat and remained an enormous influence until his death after a long battle with cancer on Friday, aged 81.

But he leaves behind a dynasty which may have to relinquish its loss-making auto wing, Fiat's core business, so beloved of Agnelli and despite political pressure to keep the car-maker in Italian hands.

At the close of the solemn ceremony, a soldier sounded the last post for Agnelli, who served in the Italian army and fought in Russia and Africa during World War II.

While thousands standing outside followed the ceremony on loudspeakers, and millions more across Italy watched on television, the few hundred inside the cathedral were a list of the great and the good from the worlds of politics, business and sport over which Agnelli wielded such influence in a glittering 60-year career.

They included politicians from all parties, diplomats as well as sports stars like Michel Platini, Agnelli's favourite player who captained his Juventus team in the 1980s.

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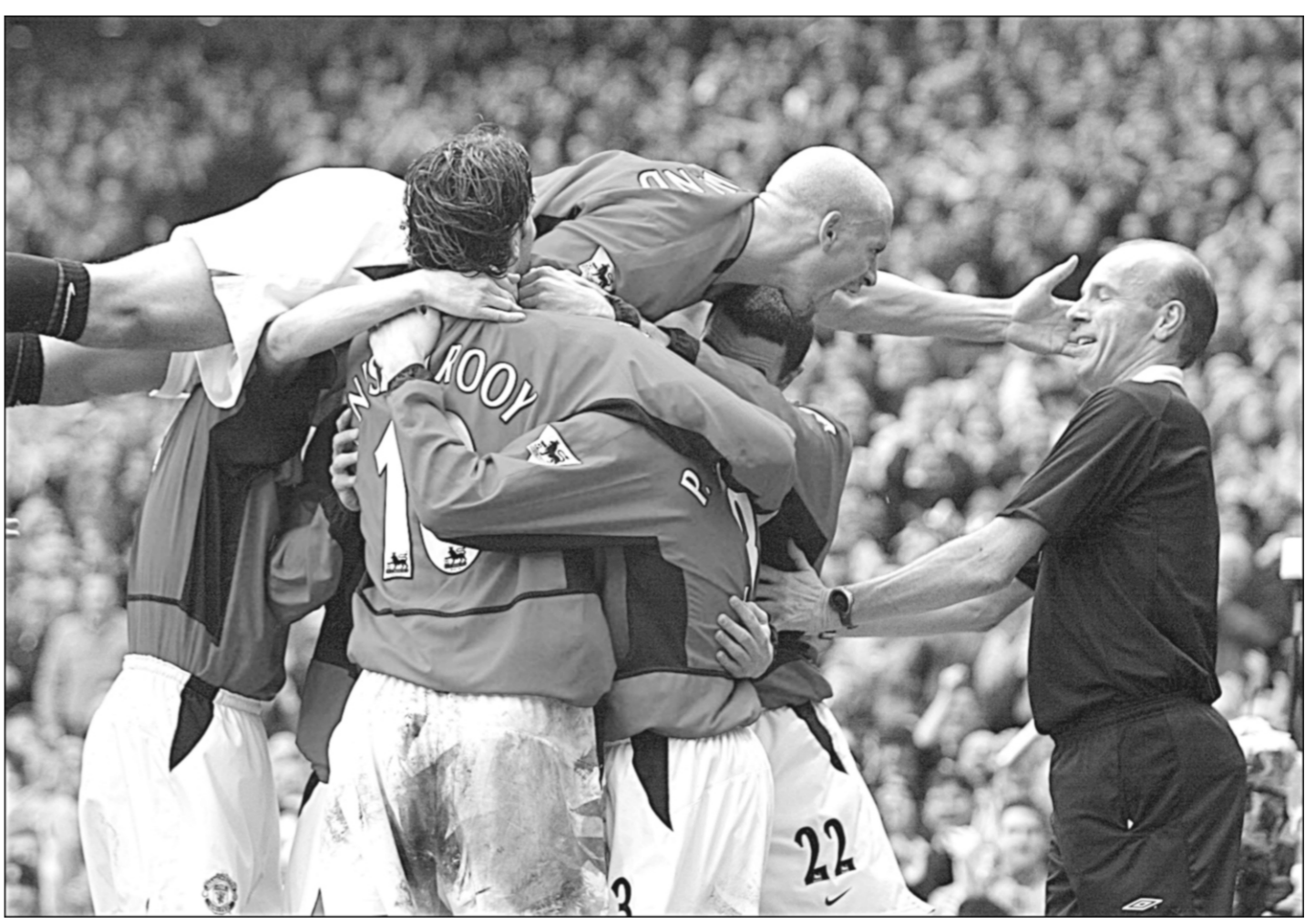


PHOTO: AFP

WHY DON'T YOU JOIN US? Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand (top) touches referee Steve Bennett while celebrating with teammates Phil Neville's goal against West Ham United at Old Trafford on January 26.

FA Cup Hammers Man-handled

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United hit West Ham for six to breeze into the fifth round of the FA Cup on Sunday.

But arch rivals Liverpool found life far less comfortable as they were forced to a replay after a full-blooded encounter with First Division Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park ended goalless.

Elsewhere, Premiership Chelsea were far too classy for little Shrewsbury with a convincing 4-0 win at Gay Meadow to destroy the home side's hopes of repeating their shock third round win over Everton.

As well as being frustrated by Trevor Francis's side, Liverpool also suffered the loss of first choice goalkeeper Chris Kirkland, who was stretched off mid-way through the first half.

The keeper, who had been hoping for a call-up to the England squad to face Australia in next month's friendly, was taken to hospital for checks on his knee after throwing himself at the feet of Palace striker Dele Adebola.

Kirkland's bravery prevented a goal but a serious injury to him would be a major blow to Liverpool as they attempt to get their season back on track.

Gerard Houllier's side entertain Arsenal in an important Premiership clash at Anfield on Wednesday but the Liverpool boss confirmed that there was concern that Kirkland may have damaged his cruciate ligament.

"There is nothing broken but we just need the scan tomorrow to check if the cruciate ligament has been damaged," said Houllier who then admitted the keeper could be out for the rest of the season.

"That would be the worst scenario but only a scan will tell us." United took full advantage of West Ham's current defensive woes with two goals apiece from Ryan Gigg and Ruud van Nistelrooy and one each for Phil Neville and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

The defeat leaves Hammers boss Glenn Roeder looking increasingly likely to be the second Premiership manager to be sacked this season. But he vowed he would fight on.

"My position is not helped by each defeat but I have never been a

person who would give in to anything and I am not thinking about walking away.

"For all the disappointments we have had this season this was the first time I could accuse a number of my players of not fighting all the way through to the end, but I could point the finger at a few today."

United manager Alex Ferguson thought the win augured well for United's attempt to close the gap on Arsenal in the Premiership.

"It was a good performance, we've gradually been getting better in the last few weeks, particularly the last week or so," the Scot declared.

"Some of the goals were very good and there's a lot of confidence in the team at the moment."

At Gay Meadow, Gianfranco Zola scored twice and set up a third in Chelsea's 4-0 win over Shrewsbury.

The Italian maestro was on target in the 40th and 75th minutes, crossed for substitute Carlton Cole to head in after 52 minutes with Jody Morris adding the fourth ten minutes from time.

"We didn't make any mistakes today and we had to play our best football because Shrewsbury beat

Everton and they deserved our respect," said Zola.

Fulham came through their all-Premiership clash with London rivals Charlton thanks to a hat-trick from French midfielder Steed Malbranque, two of the goals coming from the penalty spot.

To round off a miserable afternoon for the Addicks, they had their South Africa international defender Mark Fish sent off four minutes from the end for the foul which earned Fulham their second spot-kick.

The win means Fulham are unbeaten in 2003. Three wins and a draw represent a marked improvement on the run of one victory in nine matches with which Jean Tigana's side ended last year.

"Our form's better than before - but I'd prefer to be a better team in the league than in cups," Tigana said.

"The problem is only that we need confidence inside the box. So the best thing about this win was that we scored three goals."

First Division strugglers Stoke City went through with a comfortable 3-0 win over Third Division Bournemouth.

Serie A Vieri venom

Football

AFP, Rome

Title contenders Inter Milan drew level on points with city rivals AC Milan at the top of the table in Italy as Christian Vieri's hat-trick earned an easy 3-0 win at home to Empoli on Sunday.

Vieri's treble in 16 second-half minutes took the striker's league tally to 16 goals for the season and moved Inter up to second on 39 points behind Milan who lost 1-0 to 10-man Udinese in the late match at the Friuli stadium.

Milan, whose defeat was their third of the campaign, keep first place however because of their superior goal difference.

Inter coach Hector Cuper praised his players for finally breaching Empoli's defence after a frustrating first-half.

"The win was down to the heart more than the head," said the former Valencia boss.

"We didn't play particularly well in the first period, but we found something extra in the second-half to break Empoli down."

Vieri's first goal at the San Siro arrived in the 69th minute, tapping home from close range after Empoli goalkeeper Gianluca Bertl had spilled debutant Gabriel Batistuta's angled shot.

Inter went further ahead four minutes later when Empoli's defence failed to clear Emre Belozoglu's inswinging corner, allowing Vieri an easy headed chance a yard from goal.

Vieri completed the scoring five minutes from the end by converting Javier Zanetti's right-wing cross which Bertl failed to hold onto.

Udinese maintained their unbeaten home record by overcoming a star-studded Milan side despite the early second-half dis-

missal of Argentine defender Nestor Sensini for unsporting behaviour. Milan fell behind eight minutes from the break when veteran defender Paolo Maldini handled the ball deliberately inside the 18-yard box.

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Asked if he thought there was any doubt about Udinese's penalty, Galliani replied: "It was the right decision, absolutely."

Milan midfielder Clarence Seedorf echoed Galliani's sentiments.

"It was a terrible defeat but we but we have to hold our hands up and say we were poor," said the

Dutchman. Juventus marked the passing of honorary president Gianni Agnelli on Saturday by moving up to third in the table with a 2-0 home win over Piacenza.

After the match Juventus president Luciano Moggi paid tribute to

into an unguarded net. Lazio fell to fourth after suffering a shock 1-0 defeat at home to struggling Calabrians Reggina.

The visitors silenced the home crowd a minute after half-time when Lazio's giant Dutchman Jaap Stam lost possession to Emiliano Bonazzoli who beat Angelo Perruzzi with a firm left-foot drive.

Lazio coach Roberto Mancini made no excuses for his side's second defeat of the campaign which ended their 17-match unbeaten league run.

"We didn't play well and were punished by a good team who worked very hard for each other," he said.

"It's important that we learn the lessons of this defeat and put things right against Chievo next week."

Elsewhere veteran Roberto Baggio marked his return from injury with Brescia's equalising goal in a 1-1 draw at home to Parma.

In other matches Perugia beat Chievo 1-0 and Bologna were held to a 2-2 draw at home to Torino.

On Saturday night struggling Como clinched their first win of the Serie A season with a stunning 2-0 victory over 2001 champions AS Roma.

In Saturday's other league match Atalanta won 2-0 at Modena to improve their chances of avoiding the drop to Serie B.

in the table to Werder Bremen, who drew 2-2 at home to Arminia Bielefeld.

Bayern now have 42 points from 18 matches, with nearest challengers Bremen on 34 and Dortmund a further point back.

Ottmar Hitzfeld's men opened the scoring after 25 minutes when English international midfielder Owen Hargreaves finally found the net for the first time since joining Bayern in 1997.

Two late goals in the dying minutes of the game from German international striker Alexander

Zickler (85) and Brazilian Giovane Elber (89) sealed victory for the hosts leaving beleaguered Monchengladbach stuck fourth from the bottom.

Bayer Leverkusen's Bundesliga woes continued as last year's Champions League finalists were plunged further into crisis following a 3-0 thrashing at home by bottom-table Energie Cottbus.

The fate of Leverkusen's chain-smoking coach Klaus Toppmoller looks increasingly doubtful as last year's Bundesliga runners-up were humiliated on their return after the six-week winter break.

Despite the defeat, club manager Reiner Calmund said that there was no question of changing the

cpach. "There has been no discussion on the subject of the trainer," said Calmund.

Even the return of central defender Jens Nowotny after a year-long injury layoff couldn't help Leverkusen who are wallowing dangerously close to the drop in 14th position.

A monumental error by Leverkusen goalkeeper Jorg Butt allowed Marco Gebhardt to fire home the opener after 15 minutes, and the visitors were two up before the break after Marko Topic found the net after 32 minutes.

Leverkusen dominated after the break but could not stop Cottbus finding the third from the boot of

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Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich got their campaign for an 18th Bundesliga title off to a flying start after the winter break with a comfortable 3-0 home win against lowly Monchengladbach Sunday.

The Bavarian giants broke away from the leading group after reigning champions Borussia Dortmund blew their chance of gaining ground on the league leaders when they were pipped 2-1 by Hertha Berlin Saturday.

Dortmund also lost second place

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