

Premiership Stunning Liverpool

 Football

AFP, London

West Ham stayed firmly rooted in the English Premier League relegation zone following a 3-0 defeat by Liverpool here at Upton Park on Sunday.

Milan Baros and Steven Gerrard put Liverpool 2-0 up within nine minutes while Emile Heskey completed the scoring in the second half with his second goal in as many matches.

At Villa Park, in Sunday's other Premier League match, Aston Villa beat Blackburn 3-0 thanks to a Dion Dublin double and a Gareth Barry goal, leapfrogging their opponents into 11th place.

In London all of Liverpool's goals came from Norwegian international John Arne Riise corners, a clear sign of the Hammers' defensive frailty.

Liverpool stayed sixth in the table although they closed the gap on fifth-placed local rivals Everton, and Chelsea, occupying the last automatic Champions League qualifying position in fourth, to three points.

However Gerard Houllier's men still trail leaders Arsenal by 14 points.

West Ham, who saw relegation rivals Bolton and West Brom both win on Saturday, remained second bottom with only Sunderland beneath them.

Afterwards Liverpool manager Houllier said making it into the Champions League was now the club's priority.

"Our aim is to get into the top four. I don't think we can win the title," Houllier admitted.

And the Frenchman had some words of comfort for West Ham manager Glenn Roeder. "I feel sympathy for Glenn. He came up against a strong Liverpool side. But he's got good players.

"We caught them on set pieces and we worked a bit harder than they did.

"Our season starts from here,"

Houllier insisted. "The squad's woking hard for each other and allied to the individual brilliance from our players that can produce results."

Roeder thanked Houllier for his comforting words but said they could not hide his team's faults.

"When we went 2-0 down some of our players were fearful, but we have got to be bigger than that and some of them have to roll up their sleeves," Roeder insisted.

"We didn't compete well enough or get close enough to the Liverpool players.

TOP SCORERS

Leading scorers in the English Premiership after Sunday's matches:

- 17 - Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
- 16 - James Beattie (Southampton)
- 14 - Alan Shearer (Newcastle)
- 11 - Nicolas Anelka (Manchester City)
- 10 - Robbie Keane (Tottenham), Harry Kewell (Leeds), Gianfranco Zola (Chelsea), Ruud van Nistelrooy (Manchester United)
- 9 - Michael Owen (Liverpool), Tomasz Radzinski (Everton), Dion Dublin (Aston Villa)
- 8 - Jason Euell (Charlton), Paul Scholes (Manchester United), Sylvain Wiltord (Arsenal), Eidur Gudjohnsen (Chelsea)

"We gave away cheap goals because people have certain responsibilities from set plays and they did not carry them out today."

Hammers fans who imagined that Wednesday's 2-1 home win over Blackburn - the club's first league victory at Upton Park this season - was the start of a revival were soon brought back to harsh reality.

Riise's corner from the right in the seventh minute was met by Czech forward Baros who rose unchallenged and gave former Liverpool keeper David James no chance with what was his sixth goal of the season

Barely two minutes later Liverpool were in a similar position. This time James came to punch another Riise corner but failed to make good contact among a throng of bodies.

The ball fell to Liverpool and England midfielder Gerrard on the edge of the box and his powerful low shot from 20 yards sped into the far corner to make it 2-0.

In the second half the Hammers were sparked into life by the 55th minute arrival of French striker Frederic Kanoute, on as a substitute for Ferdinand, who twice went close.

But in the 67th minute, Heskey made it 3-0 after the ball had been headed goalwards by Liverpool captain Sami Hyypia following another Riise delivery.

West Ham thought the ball had gone out of play and all but stopped while England forward Heskey stole in at the near post to nod home before James could gather cleanly.

At the other end, Liverpool keeper Jerzy Dudek, in for the injured Chris Kirkland, was eventually forced into a save in the 73rd minute when, following Kanoute's cross, he blocked di Canio's shot from six yards out.

Liverpool started the match without England striker Michael Owen and fellow forward Bruno Chyrou, the pair being rested after the midweek draw with Arsenal.

Both came off the bench but by then Liverpool were cruising and hardly in need of fresh firepower against a West Ham side that left the field to a chorus of boos.

TOP SIX

English Premiership table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Arsenal	26	17	5	4	56	28	56
Man Utd	25	15	5	5	42	24	50
Newcastle	25	15	3	7	41	31	48
Chelsea	26	12	9	5	45	26	45
Everton	26	13	6	7	34	30	45
Liverpool	26	11	9	6	37	25	42



PHOTO: AFP

Milan Baros (R) is over the moon as he celebrates his opening goal against West Ham United with Liverpool mate John Arne Riise at Upton Park in London on February 2.

The ideal idol

 Football

AFP, London

Chelsea's Italian star Gianfranco Zola is setting the standards for English players both on and off the field.

The 36-year-old is currently playing playing some of the best football of his career at an age when most players are thinking of hanging up their boots.

And Chelsea team-mate Frank Lampard cannot resist comparing the Italian's career with former England star Paul Gascoigne, a year younger than Zola but who is now forced to earn his living playing for a Second Division Chinese side.

"Frankie Zola is a lesson to all of us. He sets the standard with his work ethic and lifestyle - I don't think I have ever seen him touch a single drop of beer," Lampard said.

"We all look up to him and he deserves every plaudit he receives. What he has achieved is a testament to looking after yourself."

Gascoigne, who admitted in 2001 he is a recovering alcoholic, had been without a club since being released by English First Division side Burnley at the end of last season.

Capped 57 times by England, Gascoigne had spells with English Premiership sides Newcastle, Tottenham, Everton and Middlesbrough, Scottish giants Glasgow Rangers and Rome side

Lazio during a 15-year career disrupted by injuries and drinking.

"I'm a massive Paul Gascoigne fan," said Lampard. But injuries and things that happened to him in his life outside of football got on top of him. Gianfranco is perfection but not everybody can live their lives like that," said Lampard.

The only thing missing from

Shrewsbury when he scored twice.

But Andrea forgot to carry on the idea.

"During the week before the Shrewsbury game, Andrea found out he was going to play striker for the first time in his school team. So we got together and said, 'look we have to find out the way that you celebrate'. I told him how he should do it and he told me how I should do mine.

"Believe it or not on the morning before our Shrewsbury match he played for the first time and scored two. He celebrated the way I told him and then he called me to say that I was not to forget mine. So when I scored the goals against Shrewsbury I did as we had agreed.

"But my son didn't give me any celebration for this week - he forgot to tell me."

It didn't matter. The Chelsea crowd celebrated in unison as the Italian levelled the scores.

Zola is intent on playing in London for one more season but is waiting for Chelsea to come back to him with a proposal about what happens after that.

"Right now my intention is to play one more year after this season. There is no pressure on me to go home," he said.

"The club has to make me a proposal and we will see. I am waiting for the club to come back to me. They have been saying they will for a while but they are considering the situation and I am waiting."



GIANFRANCO ZOLA

Zola's performance in Saturday's 1-1 draw with Tottenham was a new goal celebration.

The blame for Zola's minor fault lies with his son Andrea, who forgot to hand his father a new routine.

When Zola sent a trademark free-kick flying past Kasey Keller to earn a 1-1 draw, there was no new celebration to add to his repertoire. Zola and son first concocted the idea of different celebrations before last weekend's FA Cup tie at

Bundesliga

Leverkusen woes mount

 Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayer Leverkusen coach Klaus Toppmoller may well be taking furtive glances at the situations vacant columns after his side's poor run of form continued with a 2-0 loss to Borussia Dortmund on Sunday.

This latest defeat, coming on the back of an embarrassing 3-0 thrashing by lowly Energie Cottbus the previous weekend, leaves last season's Bundesliga and Champions League runners-up's struggling on 20 points in 14th place, six clear of bottom club Kaiserslautern.

Champions Borussia move up a place to second, seven points adrift of Bayern Munich who could only draw 0-0 against modest but in-form Arminia Bielefeld, a performance that left coach Ottmar Hitzfeld dissatisfied.

"Arminia were highly motivated and kept us under pressure. Our defence held strong but otherwise I can't be happy with the result," he said.

"We didn't create enough chances up front."

Bayern, missing several key men including suspended World Cup star Michael Ballack, had captain Oliver Kahn to thank for the one point - the talismanic keeper has now gone 713 minutes of play without conceding a goal and is on the brink of breaking his own clean-sheet record of 736 minutes achieved in the 1989/99 season.

Bayer Leverkusen were down to ten men after the sixth minute expulsion of Turkish international Yildiray Basturk for an assault on Brazilian Ewerthon.

They were already behind at that stage after Ewerthon's third minute goal with Czech international Jan Koller doubling the advantage just before the half hour.

Borussia inherit second place from Werder Bremen, who lost 1-0 away to Hamburg in Sunday's second match.

The season's surprise package VfB Stuttgart moved up a place into fourth, ten points adrift of Bayern, with a comprehensive 3-1 win over Hertha Berlin on Saturday.

Schalke 04 slipped down a spot to fifth after sharing the spoils 2-2 with bottom club Kaiserslautern.

Schalke's Nigerian striker Victor Agali struck in the fifth minute, but Tomasz Klos levelled after half an hour.

Agali got a second midway through the second half with Harry Koch claiming Kaiserslautern's equaliser on the full-time whistle.

In Saturday's other games Swedish striker Rade Prica got the only goal in Hansa Rostock's 1-0 away win over Nuremberg, and Hannover 96 had Nebojsa

TOP SCORERS

Leading scorers in the German Bundesliga after Sunday's matches:

- 14 - Ailton (Bremen)
- 12 - Thomas Christiansen (Bochum)
- 11 - Giovane Elber (Bayern Munich), Markus Schroth (1860 Munich)
- 10 - Sasa Ciric (Nuremberg), Kevin Kuranyi (VfB Stuttgart), Ewerthon (Dortmund)
- 9 - Benjamin Lauth (1860 Munich), Fredi Bobic (Hanover), Jan Koller (Dortmund)
- 8 - Bernardo Romeo (Hamburg)

Serie A

Milan giants neck to neck

 Football

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan piled more misery on Torino by beating the bottom club 2-0 at the Delle Alpi stadium on Sunday to draw level with Italian league leaders AC Milan on 42 points.

Inter however must settle for second place as Milan, who had opened up a three point gap earlier in the day after a 2-1 home win over Modena, have a better goal difference than their city rivals.

Meanwhile reigning champions Juventus and Lazio both lost ground in the race for the title after drawing their matches at Atalanta and Chievo respectively.

Inter's Turkish midfielder Emre Belozoglu said the first goal against Torino proved crucial.

"They were very strong in the first half but after we scored their heads seemed to drop and we took control

TOP SCORERS

Leading scorers in the Italian league after the weekend's matches:

- 17 - Christian Vieri (Inter Milan)
- 12 - Alessandro Del Piero (Juventus)
- 11 - Francesco Totti (AS Roma)
- 10 - Claudio Lopez (Lazio)
- 9 - Adrian Mutu (Parma), Filippo Inzaghi (AC Milan), Adriano (Parma)
- 8 - Julio Cruz (Bologna), Antonio Di Natale (Empoli), Andrea Pirlo (AC Milan), Roberto Baggio (Brescia)
- 6 - Tommaso Rocchi (Empoli), Bernardo Corradi (Lazio), Alvaro Recoba (Inter Milan), Igli Tare (Brescia), Federico Cossato (Chievo)

of the game," he said.

"They're desperate for points and we knew it would be tough, so we are very happy to come away with three points."

Torino held their own in a goalless first-half and almost took the lead in the 12th minute when Gianluca Comotto's rasping shot struck the underside of the bar.

But Inter absorbed the home pressure and silenced the home crowd three minutes after the break.

Hapless Torino goalkeeper Luca Bucci missed a clearance which fell kindly at the feet of Alvaro Recoba whose low cross was turned in at the back post by Christian Vieri for his 17th goal of the season.

Turkey international Okan Buruk doubled Inter's lead in the 57th minute with a goal almost identical to the first.

Once again Uruguayan Recoba was the provider and former Galatasaray midfielder Okan poked home from six yards.

Milan left it late before edging Modena at the San Siro.

A penalty from second-half substitute Andrea Pirlo broke the deadlock 13 minutes from time, before Filippo Inzaghi's stooping header doubled the home side's lead. Massimo Scopini scored a late consolation goal for Modena.

Asked if he was upset that his team had not scored sooner in the match, Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti replied: "If we leave it that late every week and still come away with three points I'll be happy.

"Modena made it very hard by not allowing us space, but all credit to the team for being patient.

"Players sometimes get frustrated when they can't find a way through but we took our time and used our heads in what was an

TOP SIX

Italian league table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Milan	19	13	3	3	36	13	42
Inter	19	13	3	3	39	20	42
Juventus	19	11	6	2	35	14	39
Lazio	19	10	7	2	34	18	37
Chievo	19	10	3	6	29	33	33
Parma	19	8	6	5	33	22	30

Raul teaser for Fergie!

AFP, London

Spanish international striker Raul threw down the gauntlet to Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson on Saturday when he said the only other club he would play for apart from Real Madrid would be the Premiership giants.

The 25-year-old has scored eight times this term for the European champions and admitted to being a huge fan of Ferguson.

"He's a great man and a real institution as a coach," Raul told the BBC.

"I would love to have him as my coach but I am a Real Madrid player.

"However if there was ever a point I would leave Real Madrid, the only team I would consider would be Manchester United," he added.

For the moment, though, Raul has dreams of playing at Old Trafford but for Real Madrid.

"I would love to play at Old Trafford in this season's Champions League final against Manchester United!" he said.

Primera Liga

Sociedad run ends

 Football

AFP, Madrid

League leaders Real Sociedad lost their unbeaten record on Sunday, suffering a shock 3-0 defeat to Athletic Bilbao with the main architect of their downfall one of their former stars - Joseba Etxeberria.

Real Sociedad went into this match against their lowly Basque rivals boasting 12 wins and seven draws from 19 games.

But records are there to be broken and Etxeberria showed that Athletic were not covered by the championship pacesetters when picking up a cross from the left to slam home from close range after 18 minutes.

Etxeberria added a second with quarter of an hour to go and then played a decisive part in the third, feeding Santiago Ezquerro who beat Sociedad's keeper to cap a fine night for the 13th-placed club.

Despite the unexpected and comprehensive reverse Sociedad are still flying high on top of the league on 43 points, four clear of Real Madrid.

The European champions, sent crashing out of the Spanish Cup by Real Mallorca in midweek, had to claw their way back from two goals down before eking out a 2-2 draw away to Espanyol.

Roger put the home side ahead after 40 minutes, the former Barcelona player's angled cross beating Real keeper Casillas, with Raul Tamudo doubling up five minutes later.

Stung into action, Real's Brazilian Roberto Carlos reduced the deficit with a 25 metres shot from the left on the hour, with the equaliser coming from a Luis Figo freekick 30 metres out.

The shared spoils left Real on 39

TOP SCORERS

Leading scorers in the Spanish league after the weekend's matches:

- 14 - Roy Makaay (Deportivo La Coruna)
- 11 - Darko Kovacevic (Real Sociedad)
- 10 - Nihat Kahveci (Real Sociedad), Patrick Kluivert (Barcelona), Walter Pandiani (Real Mallorca), Fernando Torres (Atletico Madrid)
- 9 - Ismael Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao), 8 - Raul Gonzalez (Real Madrid), Julio Alvarez (Rayo Vallecano), Kiki Musampa (Malaga), Ronaldo (Real Madrid)

Spanish First Division's top scorer with 14 goals.

In other games Celta Vigo lost 1-0 to Sevilla, Villarreal beat Osasuna by the same margin, Valladolid felled Racing Santander 2-1, Alaves drew 1-1 with Rayo Vallecano and Malaga thrashed Recreativo Huelva 4-0.

On Saturday Barcelona's crisis deepened with a 3-0 drubbing by Atletico Madrid.

League One Bordeaux too good

 Football

AFP, Paris

Marseille's march back towards the top of the French league hit a snag Sunday when Bordeaux beat the title contenders 3-1 to claim their fourth win in a row.

Alain Perrin's Marseille would have gone top had they managed a draw in the day's only league match, however they failed to capitalise on Lyon's failure to go top after their 0-0 draw against Nantes on Saturday.

However Marseille also came up against a Bordeaux side who are still in the hunt for silverware.

The hosts were handed a perfect chance to go ahead when they were awarded a penalty after Marseille keeper Vedran Runje pulled down Jean-Claude Darcheville in the

area.

Portugal striker Pauleta stepped up, but Runje saved superbly.

After the interval Bordeaux finally set out their stall when Feindouno headed home the opener after 10 minutes.

Another penalty was awarded in the 62nd minute when Ivory Coast defender Abdoulaye Meite handled in the area.

This time caught Runje was caught out, the Croatian 'keeper only touching Darcheville's rasping shot from the spot before it hit the back of the net.

Marseille pulled a goal back through talented Belgian midfielder Daniel Van Buyten two minutes from time - however Bordeaux hammered the point home on the whistle when Savio came up with their third goal after he had been provided by defender David Jemmal.

The shock result means

Marseille, who began the weekend on top of the league, slip back to third but are also on 42 points along with leaders Monaco and second-placed Nice.

It is a tight contest - Lyon sit fourth on 41 points, with Auxerre fifth on 40 and Bordeaux and Paris St Germain in sixth and seventh respectively on 39 points apiece.

TOP SIX

French league table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Monaco	25	11	9	5	38	21	42
Nice	25	11	9	5	29	18	42
Marseille	25	12	6	7	26	23	42
Lyon	25	11	8	6	43	30	41
Auxerre	24	11	7	6	24	19	40
Bordeaux	24	11	6	7	34	23	39