



YOU BEAUTY! Chelsea's players (from L-R) Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and Celestine Babayaro race to catch Eidur Gudjohnsen after the Dane had scored the second goal against Liverpool at Stamford Bridge on May 11.

Premiership Up with Chelsea, down with Hammers

Football

AFP, London

West Ham fell through the English Premiership trapdoor on Saturday after relegation rivals Bolton pulled off an escape with a 2-1 home win over Middlesbrough.

On an emotion-laden final day of the league season, West Ham drew 2-2 at Birmingham and that sealed their fate as Bolton saw off Boro with a vicious strike from Per Frandsen and a Beckhamesque freekick from Jay Jay Okocha in the opening 20 minutes at the Reebok Stadium.

Former Bolton favourite Michael Ricketts pulled one back for Boro on the hour - but the visitors then had Franck Queudrue sent off for a lunge at Ivan Campo and Sam Allardyce's side just held out.

"We got a little jittery in the second half," admitted Allardyce. "But we saw the game out really well. It's been a magnificent day for Bolton Wanderers," he told Sky sports television.

History had been against the Hammers from the outset with every side rooted to the bottom at Christmas always going down - but veteran striker Les Ferdinand's close-range header on 66 minutes gave them hope.

However Geoff Horsfield equalised for Birmingham with 10 minutes remaining.

That was the prelude for West Ham's stand-in boss Trevor Brooking to send on Italian Paolo di Canio for a cameo appearance but he was unable to repeat his exploits of last week's winner against Chelsea as Stern John slid in to put Birmingham ahead.

Di Canio promptly nodded them level but it was not enough.

While West Ham were left to ponder the gaping financial hole of around 30 million dollars which relegation brings, Chelsea celebrated bagging the final qualifying spot for the Champions League with a 2-1 win over rivals Liverpool.

Chelsea, who had only to avoid defeat, found themselves behind in the 11th minute as Sami Hyypia headed home from a Danny Murphy freekick.

But within three minutes French international defender Marcel Desailly stole in to head in a Jesper Gronkjaer cross.

The Dane then curled home a sweet left-footer to give the Blues the lead on 27 minutes.

Liverpool's Milan Baros had an effort ruled out before England midfielder Steven Gerrard was sent off in the closing stages for a second booking after a foul on Graeme Le Saux.

Emotions were running high but for very different reasons at Maine Road where Manchester City waved goodbye to their famous ground after 80 years with a



MR. PREMIERSHIP! The Premiership's top scorer Manchester United's Dutch forward Ruud Van Nistelrooy celebrates with the league trophy after defeating Everton at Goodison Park on May 11.

TABLE							
English Premiership table after Sunday's matches, the final day of the 2002-03 season (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Man United	38	25	8	5	74	34	83
Arsenal	38	23	9	6	85	42	78
Newcastle	38	21	6	11	63	48	69
Chelsea	38	19	10	9	68	38	67
Liverpool	38	18	10	10	61	41	64
Blackburn	38	16	12	10	52	43	60
Everton	38	17	8	13	48	49	59
Southampton	38	13	13	12	43	46	52
Man City	38	15	6	17	47	54	51
Tottenham	38	14	8	16	51	62	50
Middlesbrough	38	13	10	15	48	44	49
Charlton	38	14	7	17	45	56	49
Birmingham	38	13	9	16	41	49	48
Fulham	38	13	9	16	41	50	48
Leeds	38	14	5	19	58	57	47
Aston Villa	38	12	9	17	42	47	45
Bolton	38	10	14	14	41	51	44
West Ham	38	10	12	16	42	59	42
West Brom	38	6	8	24	29	65	26
Sunderland	38	4	7	27	21	65	19

Champions: Manchester United
Relegated: Sunderland, West Brom and West Ham
Qualified for Champions League: Manchester United, Arsenal, Newcastle

Primera Liga

Sociedad go second

Football

AFP, Madrid

Eight days ago Real Mallorca romped to a 5-1 victory at Real Madrid but on Sunday they were on the receiving end as Real Sociedad eased to a 3-1 win over at the Balearic island side.

The comfortable win means Sociedad moved up to second with 66 points, the same tally as league leaders Deportivo La Coruna, who won 2-0 at Malaga on Saturday.

"We've recovered the form we didn't have in our recent away games. We are definitely back in the hunt for the title," enthused Sociedad coach Raynald Denoueix.

Real Madrid were deposed from the top of the table on Saturday when they could only draw 0-0 at struggling Recreativo Huelva. The European champions now lie third with 65 points.

Sociedad got off their marks after 10 minutes when Spain's World Cup winger Javier De Pedro scored from the penalty spot after Mallorca defender Poli Fernandez had tripped Darko Kovacevic.

De Pedro then provided the service from out by the left touchline with crosses that allowed Valery Karpin to tap in with his left foot after 25 minutes and then for Kovacevic to head the Basques third goal, and his 18th of the season, nine minutes after the break.

Mallorca kept alive their hopes of a comeback when Samuel Eto'o scored his seventh goal in five games just after the hour, but Sociedad then reinforced their defence for the remainder of the match.

Catalan giants Barcelona stayed in contention for a spot in the

UEFA Cup next season, and moved up to seventh, despite their lacklustre performance in a 0-0 with Sevilla.

Racing Santander salvaged a point in a 2-2 draw at Celta Vigo with a goal from Diego Alonso nine minutes into injury time.

Alonso headed home to equalise with the last touch of a bizarre game.

"We gave the game away," said Celta coach Miguel Angel Lotina.

"Even though playing that amount of extra time is unusual, I can't blame the referee. In fact there have been plenty of times when we have been playing away from home, losing and I wished we had the correct amount of time added on," added Lotina.

Celta had taken the lead with Juanfran Garcia getting his first goal of the season after 35 minutes, but the advantage shifted to the visitors after Celta goalkeeper Pablo Cavallero was sent off early in the second half for fouling Rodolfo Bodipo and Racing's Javi Guerrero equalised with the resulting penalty.

Both sides were then reduced to 10 men when Racing defender David Coromina saw red after 69 minutes.

Celta got back in front when Edu scored from the spot six minutes for time, only for Diego Alonso get his last-gasp goal.

Despite dropping two vital points, Celta remain in fourth and in contention for their first appearance in the Champions League after Valencia lost 2-1 at home in their local derby with Villarreal.

Jorge Lopez opened the scoring for the visitors with a penalty after 36 minutes and then Francisco Farinos put Villarreal further ahead five minutes later when his weak

shot was fumbled by Valencia goalkeeper Santiago Canizares.

Farinos, who spent four seasons at Valencia, then went over to the home fans to plead for their forgiveness at scoring in such a feeble fashion.

Juan Sanchez got one back for the reigning Spanish champions 10 minutes from time but it was not enough to prevent Villarreal getting their first ever league victory in Valencia's Mestalla stadium.

Bottom club Rayo Vallecano have now gone eight games without a win, but at least managed a 1-1 draw against Real Betis.

Bolo Perez headed Rayo in front from a Michel Sanchez cross after five minutes before Fernando Fernandez nodded home an equaliser for Betis two minutes before the break.

A header also went into the Spanish football history books on Saturday.

Deportivo's first goal, that helped prople the 1999/2000 champions to the top of the league for the first time this season, came from their 40-year old former Spanish international defender Donato, who became the oldest man to score in the 72 years of the Spanish first division.

TOP SIX							
Spanish football league table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Deportivo	33	20	6	7	59	36	66
Sociedad	33	19	9	5	62	41	66
Real	33	18	11	4	71	38	65
Celta	33	15	9	9	38	26	54
Valencia	33	15	8	10	48	28	53
Bilbao	33	12	9	12	52	52	45

Blanc days end

AFP, Manchester

The glittering career of Laurent Blanc came to an end on Sunday as the former France international defender played his last game for Manchester United.

The 37-year-old played the second half of their 2-1 victory over Everton at Goodison Park as the already-crowned Premiership champions finished their league season with a flourish.

Blanc has won the World Cup, the European championships, a French league title, has played for nine clubs and finally ended his footballing days with a Premiership title.

The name Blanc has also caused mirth as the name spells out the first letters of the teams United lost to in the league this season - Bolton, Liverpool, Arsenal, Newcastle and Chelsea.

Blanc, who arrived in the summer of 2001 as a replacement for Dutchman Jaap Stam, has been past his best this season yet his experience in the back line was valuable despite a distinct lack of pace.

Blanc told the Sunday Times "Criticism from the press has been part of the job. When a club like Manchester United signs a 35-year-old player, you could ask yourself where's the sense in that."

"That's why I will be forever grateful to Alex Ferguson for having brought me here. Because to play for Manchester United is a unique experience."

Blanc, nicknamed "the President" because of his leadership skills, said he discovered English culture, which he sometimes found more rich than French culture, and adored his life in a town where it did not rain more than in Paris.

At the end of the week, Blanc and his family will pack their bags and return to France for good. The man who scored 143 goals in 20 years is likely to look up his old friend Eric Cantona for a few games of beach soccer perhaps.

Rest is also likely to be high on his list of priorities. "Twenty years in football is too long," Blanc added.

Rooney gets the nod Seaman out of favour

Football

AFP, London

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson included teenage Everton striker Wayne Rooney in his 25-man squad for the forthcoming friendlies against South Africa and Serbia and Montenegro as well as the Euro 2004 qualifier against Slovakia but dropped veteran goalkeeper David Seaman.

Arsenal keeper Seaman, 39, has been England's unchallenged first choice for the best part of a decade. However, during the course of the season his club boss, Arsene Wenger, speculated that the former Leeds shot-stopper might move into a purely coaching role at Highbury.

Explaining his decision, Eriksson said: "I spoke to David Seaman yesterday (Sunday) and, in view of the excellent way in which David James performed in his two competitive games and the fact that we are still unsure of David Seaman's plans for next year, it is better that David James remains in place for this one competitive game."

"We shall re-assess David Seaman's situation after the summer," the Swede also told the Football Association (FA) website Monday.



WAYNE ROONEY

still a part of his plans.

Moyes and Eriksson have been on the brink of a club v country row over Rooney's international participation.

Rooney was due to have a scan

Monday but Eriksson may yet insist on a separate report on his fitness from FA medical staff.

The biggest surprise in Eriksson's 25-man squad was the international recall of goalkeeper Ian Walker who this season played First Division football for newly-promoted Leicester City.

Arsenal centre-back Sol Campbell was not included because of injury.

It had been thought that former Tottenham defender Campbell would be unavailable for the two friendlies because of his domestic suspension.

However, earlier Monday the FA, at Eriksson's request, revoked the rule which had seen players serving a domestic suspension barred from representing England in friendly matches.

FA Cup finalists Ashley Cole, Wayne Bridge and James Beattie will all miss the South Africa trip but join up with the squad thereafter.

David Beckham will travel to South Africa only.

Owen Hargreaves will miss South Africa and the subsequent training camp at La Manga, Spain, but will join up for the other two games as he plays in the German Cup Final on May 30.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: David James (West Ham), Paul Robinson (Leeds), Ian Walker (Leicester)

Defenders: Danny Mills (Leeds), Rio Ferdinand (Manchester United), John Terry (Chelsea), Ashley Cole (Arsenal), Phil Neville (Manchester United), Matthew Upson (Birmingham), Gareth Southgate (Middlesbrough), Wayne Bridge (Southampton)

Midfielders: David Beckham (Manchester United, capt), Steven Gerrard (Liverpool), Paul Scholes (Manchester United), Kieron Dyer (Newcastle), Trevor Sinclair (West Ham), Owen Hargreaves (Bayern Munich/GER), Jermaine Jenas (Newcastle), Frank Lampard (Chelsea), Danny Murphy (Liverpool)

Forwards: Emile Heskey (Liverpool), Michael Owen (Liverpool), Darius Vassell (Aston Villa), Wayne Rooney (Everton), James Beattie (Southampton)

FRIENDLY FIXTURES

May 22: v South Africa, Durban (away)
June 3: v Serbia and Montenegro, Leicester (home)

EURO 2004 QUALIFIER

June 11: v Slovakia, Middlesbrough (home)

Ligue 1

Anderson gem does it

Football

AFP, Paris

A stunning solo effort by Sonny Anderson spurred Lyon to a 1-0 win over Paris Saint Germain on Sunday to extend their lead at the top of the French first division to three points.

Monaco had taken temporary control of the summit with a 3-1 verdict over Montpellier 24 hours earlier, but Anderson's 25th minute goal helped displace Didier Deschamps' men.

The razor sharp Brazilian striker picked up the ball at the halfway line and caught the PSG defence offguard to fly at 20 metres, his shot rocketing past Jerome Lorenzo into the right hand side of the net.

PSG, who remain in ninth place, then went close when Frederic Dehu fired a low left handed drive past the Lyon wall, the ball being nudged wide by the quick-reflexed Coupet.

Anderson's deep influence on the game came to an end when he was replaced by Peguy Luyindula in the second half, the captain's armband passing to Philippe Violeau. The Lyon faithful gave him a rousing reception as he headed for the bench.

Juninho Pernambucano had hopes of doubling Lyon's advantage off a free kick deep into the second half, his 30m effort flirting with the goalmouth.

But Lyon held firm despite a late

PSG onslaught and now approach the final two matches very much in the driving seat to become the first back to back champions since Marseille in 1992.

Paul Le Guen, the Lyon coach, said: "PSG are always dangerous

away from home. Our objective was to win and we've succeeded in doing that."

Lyon have an attractive enough run in, with an away trip to Montpellier and a home tie against Guingamp.

While Monaco kept themselves in the hunt taking maximum points against Montpellier on Saturday southern neighbours Marseille may miss the boat regarding getting a spot in the lucrative Champions League after a disastrous evening in Sochaux.

Marseille went down 3-0 to stay third - finishing a stormy match with nine men. Frank Leboeuf and Daniel Van Buyten both earning the referee's wrath.

Sochaux's domination of Marseille still left them fifth but they closed the gap on Marseille to two points.

Bordeaux are ahead of Sochaux on goal difference with 60 points after a 2-0 win over Le Havre.

Auxerre are sixth but may go no higher after dropping home points in a goalless home draw with Lille and Nice are set to miss a UEFA Cup spot after losing 2-0 at Ajaccio, who could just survive as a result.

Guingamp made it six wins in seven matches after thrashing Breton neighbours Nantes 4-0 away. Troyes are meanwhile relegated having lost 1-0 at Lens.

TOP SIX

French league table after 15 rounds (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Lyon	36	19	10	7	61	36	67
Monaco	36	18	10	8	59	30	64
Marseille	36	18	8	10	37	33	62
Bordeaux	36	17	9	10	54	35	60
Sochaux	36	16	12	8	42	28	60
Auxerre	36	16	10	10	34	28	58



Lyon Brazilian star striker Sony Anderson (L) scoring against Paris Saint Germain at Gerland stadium in Lyon on May 11.