

Italian Cup A truly Milanese week

Football

AFP, Milan

European champions AC Milan won their second trophy in four days after lifting the Italian Cup here at the San Siro on Saturday.

Milan, who defeated Juventus on penalties to win the Champions League on Wednesday, drew a gripping second leg 2-2 with Serie A rivals AS Roma to secure a 6-3 aggregate score.

Two spectacular free-kicks from Francesco Totti gave Roma a two-goal lead before Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo and Filippo Inzaghi struck to level the scores. All the goals came in the second half.

Roma's misery was compounded in the final 20 minutes when Totti and fellow striker Antonio Cassano were sent off.

Totti saw red for a second bookable offence, while Cassano was sent for an early bath for dissent.

Milan's cup triumph was their fifth success and their first since 1977.

Milan midfielder Manuel Rui Costa said landing the double was the icing on the cake of a memorable season for Carlo Ancelotti's men.

"It's a great party, a season worth framing," said the Portuguese international. "We have worked hard to end the season this way and we deserve the applause."

Roma coach Fabio Capello said his side didn't get the rub of the green in a fractious match which saw five others booked.

"It was a great effort but a shame that we finished up with nine men," said Capello. "It's a real pity because I thought we were unlucky. Totti's send-off was harsh."

"I think we have proved that we can compete with anybody but our season has finished just how it started."

A carnival atmosphere greeted the Milan team as thousands of supporters turned up to hail their European heroes, but it was Roma who dominated the first-half.

Christian Abbiati, replacing Brazilian Dida in the Milan goal, produced a superb flying save to deny Totti in the ninth minute as the Roma captain's powerful right-foot shot headed for the top corner.

Sixty seconds later Roma found the back of the net only to have their effort controversially ruled out.

Antonio Cassano's quickly-taken free-kick put Totti clean through and the Italy international stabbed the ball past Abbiati with the outside of his right boot.

However referee Roberto



PHOTO: AFP

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GRANDPA AND PA? AC Milan captain Paolo Maldini and his son Christian (R) carry the Champions League trophy at the end of the second leg of the final match of the Italian Cup against AS Roma at Milan's Meazza stadium on May 31.

Rosetti insisted the ball was not still when the set-piece was taken and called play back. On this occasion Totti's piledriver was blocked by Milan's defensive wall.

Milan had to wait until the 28th minute before threatening Roma's goal with Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf blazng a close-range volley over the crossbar.

Roma regained the initiative in the final minutes of the first period with Abbiati brilliantly clawing away Totti's half-volley after Martin Laursen had failed to clear Vincent Candela's cross.

The visitors took a deserved lead on the night 11 minutes after the break.

Cassano was hauled down just outside the penalty box and Totti's sweetly-struck free-kick crept inside the far post off Abbiati's fingertips.

Totti produced a close replica in

the 64th minute, leaving Abbiati helpless from 25 yards to double Roma's advantage.

Roma joy lasted less than a minute as Milan settled their nerves through Rivaldo.

Sergino cut in from the left after flicking the ball through Jonathan Zebina's legs and crossed for his fellow Brazilian to head firmly into the roof of the net.

Roma's hopes were extinguished when Totti and Cassano departed and Milan added insult to injury by levelling the scores in stoppage time.

Rivaldo split Roma's defence with an angled ball for Inzaghi, who drilled a low shot wide of Ivan Pelizzoli.

Primera Liga Celta upset Real chase

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid could only draw 1-1 at home to Celta Vigo on Saturday night leaving Real Sociedad in the driving seat in the Spanish league title race this weekend.

Madrid conceded a point to Celta although the visitors to the Santiago-Bernabeu stadium were happy to sit back in defence and were even ahead at the break with their only chance of the first half.

Russian Aleksandr Mostovoi headed home 10 minutes before half-time to put Vicente Del Bosque's men up against it.

Raul, the darling of Real Madrid, also headed home midway through the second half to earn a point and put them level with leaders Sociedad on 72 points but they remain in second place because they come out worse in matches between the two sides.

Should Sociedad win at home to Valencia on Sunday, they would go three points clear with just two matches left to play.

In the opening spell, Real had two goals disallowed for offside, Raul deflected a Roberto Carlos

shot on to a post and Celta's Argentinian keeper Pablo Cavallero made saves from Fernando Hierro and Luis Figo.

When Mostovoi scored the first goal, it shocked the home supporters who whistled their players with Figo particularly a target of their displeasure.

In the second half, Celta made the most of the lack of inspiration from Figo, Zinedine Zidane and Ronaldo, and kept solid at the back.

Real finally found the net in a move started by former Celta player Claude Makelele and Michel Salgado, also formerly of Celta, passed the ball on to the head of Raul who beat Cavallero to at least give Real something from their poor night.

FIXTURES						
Spanish football league table after Saturday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):						
Sociedad	35	21	9	5	65	41 72
Real	36	20	12	4	79	41 72
Deportivo	35	20	6	9	60	41 66
Celta	36	16	10	10	42	32 58
Valencia	35	16	8	11	51	31 56
Bilbao	35	14	9	12	58	55 51



PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid striker Raul (L) under pressure from Celta Vigo's Jose Ignacio at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on May 31.



PHOTO: AFP

FITTING FINALE: Arthur Numan (top) is lifted by his Rangers' teammates (from L) Fernando Ricksen, Ronald de Boer, Shota Arveladze and Michael Mols after the former Dutch international had played his last match for the Glasgow giants at Hampden Park on May 31.

Scottish Cup Picture perfect Rangers

Football

AFP, Glasgow

Lorenzo Amoruso marked what is likely to have been his last game for Rangers with the winner as the Glasgow giants beat Dundee 1-0 to lift the Scottish Cup and complete the seventh domestic treble of their history.

The Italian centre-back, who is expected to leave Rangers for English Premiership side Blackburn Rovers this summer, got his head to a Neil McCann free-kick in the 66th minute to break the resistance of a spirited Dundee side.

The win extends a remarkable run for Rangers under manager Alex McLeish, who has now won every domestic title available to him since taking over from Dick Advocaat midway through last season.

At that stage, Celtic were too far ahead for Rangers to make an impression in the league.

But both Cups were brought back to Ibrox and this season had already seen McLeish's men reclaim the ascendancy in the Scottish game by beating Celtic in the League Cup final then pipping their old rivals at the post in the league race.

"It is a wonderful feeling," the Rangers boss told Sky Sports.

McLeish admitted it had been a relief to hear the final whistle as the effects of a long hard season took their toll.

"We were walking on empty at the end," he said. "We needed to score in the second half because extra time would have killed us."

"We had one of two players with injuries and cramp but we've dug

deep and I'm proud of the players." Amoruso, a survivor of the Rangers squad that lifted the club's last treble in 1998, was overcome with emotion after the final whistle.

"I already won the treble five years ago but this one is so special because it has been so difficult," he said.

The Italian said he would take a two-week holiday before making a decision about his future.

"I don't know if I will go or if I stay but if I do go it was the best way for me to say goodbye to the Rangers fans."

"My six years in Scotland have been fantastic. Now I just want to enjoy this moment with my teammates and the fantastic Rangers fans."

Dundee, who have the consolation of knowing their Cup run has earned them a place in next season's UEFA Cup, were by no means overawed by their all-conquering opponents.

They did enough in the first hour of the match to suggest they were capable of defying the odds and lifting the Scottish Cup for the first time since 1910.

But they were made to pay a heavy price after conceding a free-kick close to the touchline on the left of their own box.

Winger Neil McCann curled an inswinging cross in to the edge of the six-yard box. The charging Amoruso got there a split second ahead of Dundee goalkeeper Julian Speroni and the finest of touches was enough to carry the ball into the net.

Amoruso celebrated with a relish that suggested he could well be on his way south and was determined to enjoy his farewell to the Rangers fans.

But he nearly blotted his copy-

book a quarter of an hour from the end when he badly misjudged a long ball into the Rangers box, allowing it to fly over his head.

Behind him, Nacho Novo had got inside Kevin Muscat but the Dundee substitute failed to connect cleanly and the ball spun away to safety.

Despite that setback, Novo continued to pose a threat to the Rangers defence. With nine minutes left his neat layoff left Steven Milne with a free shot from barely ten yards out but his strike partner failed to get any power into his shot and Stefan Klos was able to gather comfortably.

Both sides hit the woodwork in the first half with Dundee signalling their determination not to be overawed by threatening as early as the fourth minute.

Skipper Barry Smith unleashed a fierce drive which looked to have beaten Klos but crashed off the German goalkeeper's left-hand post.

Rangers hit back in the 15th minute when Dutch striker Michael Mols rose above the Dundee defence to head Neil McCann's free-kick against the crossbar.

Dundee goalkeeper Julian Speroni had been beaten by the power of Mols' header but he recovered well to punch the rebound away from the advancing Craig Moore.

Ronald de Boer was having an unusually quiet match in midfield for Rangers but the Dutchman did produce one flash of his extensive array of skills in the 25th minute.

After turning Zurab Khizanishvili superbly, he waltzed past Lee Mair to the edge of the box but his low shot, which Speroni touched wide, was disappointing by his high standards.

French Cup Cisse sparks celebrations

Football

AFP, Paris

Two late goals from Djibril Cisse and Jean-Alain Bounsong spurred Auxerre to French Cup glory against 10-man Paris Saint Germain here Saturday.

At a sell-out Stade de France, veteran coach Guy Roux's side came from behind to win 2-1 against PSG for whom the Cup was their only salvation after a season laced with mediocrity.

While PSG coach Luis Fernandez quits his post in unhappy circumstances having finished just 11th in the French league, the result was another vindication of the talents of 64-year-old Roux.

"It was a superb victory for Auxerre which is a great football family," said the man who joined Auxerre way back in 1961 and who has now led them to three Cup wins.

He added: "We completely messed up the first half and the score at the break was completely fair."

"We dominated virtually the whole of the second half however and managed to turn the score around."

PSG it was though who were flying high after Hugo Leal's 20th minute half volley had put the French capital side in the driving seat.

The goal was set up by Ronaldinho who crossed from the left, Auxerre defender Bounsong's clearance falling at the 23-year-old Hugo Leal's waiting feet.

The goal was rough justice for Auxerre keeper Fabien Cool who a minute earlier had pushed a dangerous shot from Jerome Leroy over the cross bar.

Cisse, who is angling for a move to Anfield to link up with Michael Owen on the Liverpool attack, was in his usual dazzling form, his pinpoint passing and pace an ever present threat to the PSG defence.

Although a badly off-target, 20-metre freekick was not a proper advertisement of his talents around the half hour mark.

Hugo Leal found himself turning from hero to villain when he was sent off with 25 minutes left for a high tackle on Philippe Mexes, referee Bertrand Layec having to

calm down a posse of PSG players livid at his decision.

Zimbabwean striker Benjamin Mwaruware entered the picture as a substitute in place of Amdy Faye as Roux sought to strengthen his forward line so as to exploit his team's numerical advantage.

Then up popped Cisse with the equaliser 15 minutes from time, the 21-year-old French international volleying home a high ball from Johan Radet which had escaped the clutches of PSG defender Gabriel Heinze.

Ronaldinho attempted to restore PSG's lead with a Beckham-like freekick which was dealt with smoothly enough by Cool, who pushed the ball wide of the right post.

As extra time beckoned, Fernandez must have been praying for a touch of Brazilian magic from Ronaldinho but the magic was to come instead from Auxerre's Bounsong.

With two minutes of normal time left, Auxerre piled on the pressure in the PSG goalmouth. A header from Bounsong was punched away but when the ball fell to him a second time he duly converted.

A miserable night then for PSG who will be hoping for a change of fortune when new coach Vahid Halilhodzic takes over from Fernandez.

For Roux however it was the latest chapter in an extraordinary career.



PHOTO: AFP

CHAMPAGNE MAN! Auxerre striker Djibril Cisse pours champagne on himself after his two goals guided his side to French Cup, glory against Paris Saint Germain at the at Stade de France in Saint-Denis on May 31.

German Cup Bayern double done

Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich beat Kaiserslautern 3-1 to win the 2002/03 German Cup here on Saturday to complete the double and give two-goal Michael Ballack more joy and fulfill Oliver Kahn's prediction.

Munich's huge success came after a season of early Champions League elimination yet the Bavarian giants were able to use their extra energy to clean up domestically.

Goals by Ballack in the third and 10th minutes and then another by Peruvian Claudio Pizarro five minutes after the break, after good work from, you guessed it, Ballack, left Kaiserslautern with little to cheer at Berlin's Olympic stadium.

The trophies were a big bonus for Ballack who missed out horribly last season. He finished a three-time runner-up with Bayer Leverkusen in the German League, German Cup and European Champions League.

Then he was suspended and had to watch from the sidelines as Germany lost to Brazil in the World Cup final.

"It has been even sweeter to win trophies this season after losing so much last year," Ballack told Sat 1 television station after the match.

"It was great that we scored three goals but the main thing was to win," he added before a large glass of beer was poured over his head.

Keeper Oliver Kahn had also predicted Munich would clean up domestically after coming bottom of their first round group this season in the Champions League after several seasons of reaching the later stages, and being champions in 2001.

Bayern also won the German

League title with four matches to go to completely dominate the Bundesliga.

More than 70,000 supporters saw a superb start by Bayern who were ahead after just three minutes.

England's Owen Hargreaves knocked a freekick into the penalty area and Ballack got the better of his marker Vratislav Lokvenc to head home.

In the 10th minute, Ballack scored his second. Hargreaves was fouled by Bill Tchato in the box and Ballack stepped up to fire home the penalty into the top-left-hand corner.

Brazilian Lincoln had Kaiserslautern's best early chance minutes later when he fired over Bayern's bar.

A late tackle by Kaiserslautern's Markus Anfang on Ballack earned him a yellow card but Ballack had already done the goal-scoring damage and quickly shrugged off the challenge.

Though coach Erik Gerets' men came back into the game, Bayern's defence was holding firm and the match came to a stalemate situation before the end of the half with both teams cancelling each other out.

Five minutes after the break, the match was effectively all over. Ballack fed Pizarro who got the better of defender Herve Lembi and hit a beautifully timed lob over keeper Tim Wiese for Bayern's third.

When Bulgarian midfielder Marian Hristov was sent off in the 78th minute for a tackle from behind on Bayern's Brazilian Giovane Elber, Kaiserslautern's hopes looked to have faded.

Miroslav Klose however did head Kaiserslautern on to the scoresheet with 10 minutes to go after good work by defender Tchato but it was too little too late.



PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich's Michael Ballack scoring the second goal against Kaiserslautern at Berlin on May 31.