

Premiership Chelsea, MU keep flying

Football

AFP, London

Romanian striker Adrian Mutu scored a superb debut goal in Chelsea's 2-1 win against Leicester City as the Blues joined Manchester United at the top of the Premiership table on Saturday.

The former Parma player, who joined Chelsea for 24 million euros (27 million dollars) last week, fired in a spectacular winner on the stroke of half-time, but the match was soured by three red cards.

Champion United, also maintained their perfect start to the season with a 2-1 win on Saturday.

Chelsea and United are the only two teams with six points from two matches, though Arsenal could join them if it wins at Middlesbrough Sunday.

United recovered from a goal down to beat Newcastle with another goal from Ruud van Nistelrooy and a Paul Scholes winner in a polished second-half display at St. James' Park.

Chelsea started brightly but was forced to battle for the points at Stamford Bridge as three players were sent off - Geremi of Chelsea and Leicester's Alan Rogers and Riccardo Scimeca.

By then the match had been decided by a superb debut goal from Mutu who lashed the ball home on the stroke of half-time after picking up a re-bound from his own free kick.

It was the first time Chelsea fans had seen their new-look side at home.

One interested spectator was Argentine striker Hernan Crespo, who is expected to join Chelsea from Inter Milan for 26 million dollars next week.

They only had to wait three minutes for the first goal when Leicester's Lilian Nalis powerfully headed a Juan Sebastian Veron corner past Ian Walker, his own goalkeeper.

A Jamie Scowcroft header put Leicester back in the match after 40 minutes, but then Mutu struck with his thunderous drive.

The match developed into a scrappy battle in the second half, with Geremi sent off for a two-footed tackle on Scimeca, Rogers red-carded for fouling Jesper Gronkjaer and Scimeca dismissed following a second yellow card.

While Mutu put his name on the premier league scoresheet for the first time, Van Nistelrooy cracked home his 50th league goal for Manchester United in his 68th league appearance.

Newcastle had struck first when Alan Shearer powerfully headed home Laurent Robert's free kick in the 26th minute.

That completed an unhappy few minutes for United which thought Andy O'Brien should have been sent off for hauling down Ryan Giggs.

That incident led to United's irate manager Alex Ferguson being ordered from the dugout for swearing at the officials.

But United gradually took control of the match, captain Roy Keane making both goals in nine minutes early in the second half.

After 51 minutes the midfielder played a perfect through pass to Van Nistelrooy who fired home for the 10th successive league match - equalling the record for the English top division established by Liverpool's John Aldridge in 1987.

Keane created his side's winner after 59 minutes, playing a deep angled ball through the defense which Scholes chested into an empty net.

United's 20th league match without defeat put it top of the table. "We got our noses in front, but they were just too strong, too experienced and too powerful for us in the second half," said Newcastle manager Bobby Robson.

It looked as though promoted Portsmouth would also secure its second successive win after taking the lead against Manchester City through Nigerian international Yakubu Ayegbeni.

He had the distinction of scoring the first goal in the new City of Manchester Stadium, but City avoided an unwanted first home defeat when David Sommeil equalized in the last minute.

But the nightmare continued for promoted Wolverhampton Wanderers when they were thumped 4-0 at Molineux by Charlton Athletic, a week after losing 5-1 at Blackburn Rovers.

Shaun Bartlett (twice), Jason Euell and Claus Jensen scored for the visitors before the break, but Charlton's day was spoilt when Scott Parker was sent off late in the game.

Blackburn had debutant Steven Reid sent off and drew 2-2 at Bolton Wanderers, who picked up their first point of the season.

So did Tottenham Hotspur, which came from behind to beat Leeds United 2-1 at White Hart Lane with an impressive second-half display.

Everton also won its first match with a 3-1 home victory over Fulham, while Southampton drew 0-0 with Birmingham City at St. Mary's.



THUNDERSTRUCK! Leicester City goalkeeper Ian Walker is desolate as the ball rebounds off the net after Chelsea's Adrian Mutu had scored with an unstoppable volley at Stamford Bridge on August 23.

PHOTO: AFP

Crespo in, Hasselbaink out

Football

BBC/SUN, London

Hernan Crespo got a feel for his future surroundings as he watched Chelsea's opening home game of the season against Leicester on Saturday.

Chelsea have agreed a fee of around £16.5m for the 28-year-old Argentine with his club, Inter Milan, and will wrap up a deal in the next week.

Crespo has been in London and watched from the stands on Saturday.

Chief executive Trevor Birch told the club's radio station Big Blue: "There have been negotiations and they are getting closer to closure. "I would have thought there will be some news early next week."

Inter were earlier cautious about whether an agreement would be reached for the player.

"We will have to wait a couple of days to see if it's either everything, or nothing," said Inter's sporting director Marco Branca, who led the club's negotiations alongside technical director Gabriele Orioli.

Chelsea are ready to off-load Hasselbaink, 31, who is a long-standing target for the Spanish giants.

be payable depending on Crespo's success at Stamford Bridge.

The South American has only been at the San Siro for one season following spells at Parma and Lazio, and scored nine goals in the Champions League as Inter reached the semi-finals.



HERNAN CRESPO

Crespo's imminent move to Chelsea will signal the end for Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink.

The Dutch hotshot is reportedly packing his bags for Barcelona.

Chelsea are ready to off-load Hasselbaink, 31, who is a long-standing target for the Spanish giants.

The Blues will get around £5m one-third of what they paid Atletico Madrid three years ago.

New Barcelona boss Frank Rijkaard wants to pair Hasselbaink with his Dutch international teammate Patrick Kluivert.

Barca have been linked with



JIMMY FLOYD HASSELBAINK

Sporting Lisbon's Brazilian ace Mario Jardel who joined Bolton this week plus Deportivo's Diego Tristan and Albert Luque from Real Mallorca.

But Rijkaard is running out of time with the transfer window closing a week tomorrow.

Siena rope in Flo

AFP, Rome

Newly-promoted Serie A club Siena have completed the signing of Tore Andre Flo from cash-strapped English second division side Sunderland.

The 30-year-old Norwegian international striker was released by the Black Cats, who have been forced to reduce their massive wage bill following relegation from the Premiership last season.

Siena, preparing for their first season in Italy's top flight, reached an agreement with Sunderland late Friday and the deal was formally completed after Flo passed a medical.

Flo, Siena's second major summer signing following the arrival of former Italy international Enrico Chiesa from Lazio, has signed a two-year deal with the Tuscan club.

Flo was not a resounding success at Sunderland following his arrival from Glasgow Rangers for 6.75 million pounds (10.7 million dollars) last August. He scored only four goals in 29 matches for the northeast club.

Before moving to Scotland, Flo spent four seasons with Chelsea, scoring 34 goals in 111 games for the Premiership club.

Magical Mutu

Football

THE SUN, London

Claudio Renieri led the praise for Adrian Mutu's debut supershow.

The £15.8million new boy stunned Stamford Bridge with his tricks and fired a spectacular winner to give Chelsea six out of six points.

Ranieri said: "Mutu was playing for the first time without a friendly.

"He was very good though. Of course, he wanted to show everything with his dribbling and shooting, and he was nervous, but it was a special goal with his left foot."

Mutu blasted himself into the hearts of Chelsea fans with a stunning winner.

He even had billionaire owner Roman Abramovich dancing in the directors' box when he cracked home a ferocious 20-yarder which maintained Chelsea's 100 per cent start to the season.

While Gianfranco Zola's place in Chelsea history is assured, Mutu proved with a brilliant debut display that the Italian's legacy is at least in safe hands.

Watched by intended strike partner Hernan Crespo, Mutu looked custom-built for Stamford Bridge.

At times, rather showy, perhaps even over-elaborate, he displayed his full range of trickery and left to a standing ovation.

Mutu lived up to his pre-match billing by Ranieri as a "snake", as well as his own promise to bring "fantasy" to the club.

That job used to be the preserve of Zola, whose name is still chanted

in reverence by the Chelsea fans.

However, while Mutu showed there can be life after the impish Italian.

It all provided a stirring afternoon's entertainment for Abramovich, who was given a fantastic reception as he was introduced to the fans before his first home game since his takeover.

Chelsea promptly got off to the perfect start when Nalis, a Frenchman signed this summer from Chievo, incredibly managed to head a corner past his own keeper, Ian Walker, under little pressure with just two minutes gone.

Whatever a Leicester side that cost almost nothing to throw together, may lack in technical quality compared to Chelsea's multi-million pound squad, they make up for in application and spirit.

When Muzzy Izzet's long-range free-kick hung in the air inside the Chelsea area five minutes before half-time, Scowcroft managed to outjump John Terry to power a header into the far corner.

Abramovich nevertheless merely shrugged his shoulders with a wry smile in the stand, and his confidence in his side duly paid off.

When Mutu's free-kick flew straight into the wall and rebounded to him, the Romanian let fly with a follow-up effort that rocketed into the far corner on the stroke of half-time.

Abramovich could finally smile with relief. He had bought Chelsea for fun, but might just find there are a few more nervous afternoons to endure like this one.

Bundesliga Bremen new leaders

Football

AFP, Berlin

Werder Bremen replaced Bayer Leverkusen, defeated 1-0 by VfL Bochum, at the top of the Bundesliga with a convincing 4-1 victory over Schalke 04 at the Westerstadien Saturday.

It was a miserable return to Bremen for Schalke 04 goalkeeper Frank Rost who played at the Westerstadien from 1993 to 2002.

Greek international Angelos Charisteads opened the scoring on 13 minutes before two-time German international Tim Borowski doubled the lead after 28 minutes.

Brazilian Ailton also notched his fourth goal in as many Bundesliga matches as Bremen cantered to victory.

"This was a very convincing performance," beamed Bremen

coach Thomas Schaaf. "Of course we are happy to be at the top of the table but we must not get carried away in the euphoria."

It is a real turn around in fortunes for Bremen who recently crashed out of the Intertoto Cup at the hands of Austrian side SV Pasching.

However their lead at the top of the table could be short-lived if Bayern Munich defeat struggling SV Hamburg by three goals or more at the AOL-Arena on Sunday.

VfL Bochum meanwhile ended the 100 percent record of Bayer Leverkusen with a 1-0 win over the 2002 Champions League finalists in front of 20,000 fans at the Ruhr Stadium.

Klaus Augenthaler had won all five of his games in charge of Bayer, including three this season, but Bochum, unbeaten at home since March 15 last season, continued their run of form over Bayer who they beat twice last season.

Bochum coach Peter Neururer



SV Werder Bremen's Brazilian striker Ailton (R) watches his attempt bound for goal past Schalke custodian Frank Rost at Bremen on August 23.

PHOTO: AFP

Ligue 1 Lille still ahead

Football

AFP, Paris

Lille stayed top in France on Saturday despite conceding their first goal of the season in a 1-1 draw at home to Metz.

The northern French side now have ten points, a one-point lead on Nantes who struggled to a 1-0 win over Le Mans, and Marseille, 2-0 winners to Sochaux.

Metz's Senegalese forward Pape Thiaw spoiled Lille's clean sheet after just three minutes, but the home side finally grabbed the equaliser two minutes after the break when Bulgarian Vladimir Manchev scored his third goal of the season, to make himself joint top scorer.

Lille, who only gained promotion back into the top flight three seasons ago, last captured the championship in 1954, and had got off to a flying start with three wins out of three this season.

Nice drop two places to fourth after being held 2-2 at home by Ajaccio with striker Liliam Laslandes both the hero and the villain of the night after scoring both Nice's goals and then being instrumental in an own goal which gave the Corsicans the equaliser.

Nantes, meanwhile, had to wait until the 79th minute before finding the crack in Le Mans' armour through Gabon's international striker Shiva Nzigou, putting them ahead of Marseille on goal difference.

Marseille bounced back from their defeat to Lens overpowering Sochaux 2-0 largely thanks to new Ivorian striker Didier Drogba who showed he is finding his feet at the Velodrome after 34 minutes, with a

penalty from Brahim Hemdani six minutes from time sealing victory.

Champions Lyon can continue their search for a replacement for Sonny Anderson after dropping one spot to fifth following a goalless draw at their Gerland stadium against second-from-bottom Toulouse.

Lyon dominated the tie but were unable to break through a well organised Toulouse defence.

Earlier Bordeaux made up for their poor start to the season so far with a dominating display which handed them a comfortable 2-0 win over visiting Auxerre.

Elie Baup's side, who have two defeats and a win from their first three games, kicked off in determined fashion, lobbing long balls up front which the boys from Burgundy initially had trouble keeping under control.

That strategy was meant to give the Bordeaux front men Jean-Claude Darcheville and new Brazilian signing Deivid plenty of ammunition - and it was the latter who, after trying an audacious lob over Auxerre keeper Fabien Cool, opened the scoring for the hosts in the 11th minute.

Guy Roux's Auxerre were given more food for thought just before the half hour mark when another new Bordeaux arrival, former Paris St Germain captain Mauricio Pochettino, got his head to a rebound from a free kick in the 28th minute.

Auxerre came alive in the final 10 minutes however midfielder Lionel Mathis saw his shot sail over the cross bar while France international Djibril Cisse hit the visitors' last chance wide.

Sunday's game pits PSG against last season's runners-up Monaco.



HOW DARE YOU! Manchester United Manager Sir Alex Ferguson (L) turns back to make a comment as fourth official Jeff Winter (R) points at the way off the field after Ferguson was sent off at St. James' Park in Newcastle on August.

PHOTO: AFP

Behave, Sir Alex!

Football

REUTERS, London

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has promised to improve his behaviour after a spat with officialdom led to his banishment from the touchline in the 2-1 premier league win over Newcastle on Saturday.

Ferguson appeared to swear at fourth official Jeff Winter after his side were denied a penalty in the first half.

A Football Association spokesman told reporters that they would await referee Uriah Rennie's report before deciding on any action.

Ferguson refused to apologise. "I was really angry about the failure to penalise or red card Andy O'Brien for the foul on Ryan Giggs and made my feelings known from the bench in the way that I have done many times in the past," he told the News of the World.

predicted a defeat for Leverkusen before the match and his words were soon confirmed in the shape of Thomas Zdebel's strike on 64 minutes, which clinched a first Bundesliga win for Bochum this season.

Borussia Dortmund had been aiming to go top of the 18-strong league but suffered a shock 1-0 defeat to Bundesliga newcomers Cologne.

A precise left footed free-kick from captain Dirk Lottner on 56 minutes saw Cologne record their first win of the season and inflict a first Bundesliga defeat on the 2002 league champions.

Dortmund coach Matthias Sammer must now lift his troops for Wednesday's Champions League qualifier with Club Brugge at the Westfalen Stadium.

Under-pressure Hertha Berlin coach Huub Stevens is still waiting for his team to score their first Bundesliga goal after a 0-0 with bottom side Eintracht Frankfurt at the Waldstadion.

Frankfurt were the only side not to win their home match on Saturday with the other six home teams collecting maximum points.

VfL Wolfsburg's record nine-million-euro signing Andres D'Alessandro saw red in the 1-0 defeat away to 1860 Munich after collecting a second booking for complaining to the referee.