

Primera Liga

# Valencia blank Atletico

Football

AFP, Madrid

Valencia went back on top of the Spanish first division, at least for 24 hours, for the first time in exactly a season after their 3-0 win at Atletico Madrid here on Saturday.

The last time Valencia were in pole position was also after the fourth game of their last campaign. Goals from Vicente Rodriguez and Mista Ferrer also helped to confirm Valencia's position as Atletico's bogey team as the 2001/02 champions have won on

their last four league visits to the Vicente Calderon.

As so often in the past, Pablo Aimar was the inspiration behind Valencia's success and made all three strikes.

After 65 minutes, the Argentine international played a clever 1-2 with Mista Ferrer before slotting the ball across the face of the area. Mista, lunging forward, was unable to connect with the ball but Spanish international midfielder Vicente Rodriguez had the presence of mind to provide support and was on hand to score his first league goal in more than a year.

Only eight minutes elapsed before Mista did get the ball in the

back of the net, the first of his two goals on the night.

Aimar, out on the right wing, slipped the ball between two Atletico defenders and Mista sent a strong side-foot shot home from the edge of the area.

Mista then added to his tally three minutes into injury time by picking up an Aimar cross and dribbling around a sprawling Atletico goalkeeper German Burgos before scoring.

The victory means that Valencia have 10 points from their four games and remain unbeaten although are probably going to be deposited as leaders on Sunday. Deportivo La Coruna, who

started the weekend in pole position, defend their 100 percent record at home to bottom club Albacete.

A victory for Real Madrid's travels to Malaga would also see the reigning champions go above Valencia, and the odds are on Madrid getting three points.

Madrid started the weekend in second place and have 10 goals to their name from their three league games while Malaga lie second from bottom and have yet to find the net this season.

Barcelona were earlier thwarted in their ambition of going to the top after being held to a 1-1 draw by Osasuna, although the Catalans also remain unbeaten.

Honours were even after the first half with both sides having chances to break the deadlock but slack marking gave the initiative to the visitors from Pamplona eight minutes after the break.

Cesar Cruichaga was given the space on the edge of the six yard box to have a free header at the Barca goal and the Osasuna defender didn't waste the opportunity to send home a Francisco Punal corner.

Barca got back on level terms after 70 minutes.

Ronaldinho unleashed a right foot blast from just inside the penalty area, after Osasuna goalkeeper Ricardo Sanzohad only been able to punch away an initial effort from Ricardo Quaresma, but the Brazilian's shot was going wide until it took a wicked deflection off the left leg of defender Jose Izquierdo.

**TOP SIX**

Spanish football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Valencia	4	3	1	0	6	1
Deportivo	3	3	0	0	5	10
Barcelona	4	2	2	0	5	8
Real Madrid	3	2	1	0	10	4
Osasuna	4	2	1	1	4	7
Real Sociedad	3	1	2	0	3	2



Barcelona's Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho (R) taking a fall under the challenge of Osasuna's Gorka Garcia (L) at the Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona on September 20.

# Premiership Liverpool on track

Football

AFP, London

Hernan Crespo's first goals for Chelsea fired the Blues to the top of the Premiership on Saturday for the first time since Roman Abramovich launched his Russian revolution at Stamford Bridge.

Argentina striker Crespo came off the bench to score twice in a 5-0 demolition of Wolves that lifted Chelsea above Arsenal on goal difference.

Arsenal can go back to the top if they avoid defeat in their summit meeting with Manchester United at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Liverpool's revival continued with a third straight win, this one at the expense of Leicester.

Emile Heskey responded to a warning from manager Gerard Houllier that his performances must improve with a goal against his own club after a Michael Owen penalty had put Liverpool ahead.

"That should be the start of things," Houllier said afterwards. "He is on the scoresheet now and that will give him plenty of confidence."

Marcus Bent gave the visitors hope but Liverpool held on for a 2-1 win.

On the evidence of Saturday's performance, Chelsea are set to mount a sustained challenge to the two clubs who have dominated English football for the last decade.

Crespo's dramatic introduction in

place of first-half scorer Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink wiped out memories of his three misses in their 1-0 Champions League win at Sparta Prague in midweek.

Chelsea coach Claudio Ranieri said: "This is a striker's life. Sometimes he has lots of chances and doesn't score, and today he had two chances and scored them both."

"This was a banana skin today and I am very pleased with my players' attitude. I am an ambitious man and it is important to keep building. When we are building and winning, everything is OK."

Frank Lampard, Hasselbaink and the inspirational Damien Duff had put Chelsea in control by the time Crespo came off the bench to score with his first touch.

The Argentinian added a superbly taken second in stoppage time to leave Wolves with just one goal and one point from their first six matches back in the top flight.

The odds on Glenn Hoddle being the first managerial casualty of the Premiership season were cut again as Tottenham slumped to a 3-1 home defeat at the hands of his old club Southampton.

James Beattie, whom Hoddle tried to sell when he was Southampton manager, scored twice before Kevin Phillips, a player Hoddle tried to sign for Spurs, made it 3-0 for the visitors.

Freddie Kanoute reduced the deficit but that was scant consolation for the beleaguered Hoddle, who could be out of a job by next weekend if his side lose a midweek

League Cup tie with Coventry.

Hoddle implicitly acknowledged his position was under threat but insisted: "I'm feeling the hurt more than the pressure. I know we are better than that."

A Paolo Wanchope header in injury time earned Manchester City a 2-2 draw at Fulham.

Nicolas Anelka's sixth goal of the season had put City ahead but the Frenchman's effort was cancelled out by his compatriot Steed Malbranque 17 minutes from the end.

Louis Saha looked to have clinched all three points for Fulham six minutes later before Wanchope got on the end of a Sun Jihai cross.

Premiership newcomers Portsmouth suffered their first defeat of the season with a 2-1 home loss to Blackburn.

Australia defender Lucas Neill, bouncing back from the row over the tackle that broke Jamie Carragher's leg last week, and Andy Cole put the visitors two ahead by the break.

Arie De Zeeuw replied for Portsmouth just before the hour mark but the home side could not break down a well organised Blackburn defence.

Blackburn boss Graeme Souness paid tribute to Neill's character in dealing with the furore over Carragher. "He showed he's a man with his attitude. You've got to give him a special mention. It has been a difficult week for him but he did very well."

A Robbie Savage penalty and a late strike from Mikael Forsell saw

Birmingham come away from Leeds with a controversial 2-0 victory.

Savage's first spot-kick was saved by Paul Robinson but the midfielder made no mistake after the referee ordered it to be retaken, provoking a furious reaction from Leeds boss Peter Reid.

A rare goal from Turkish international defender Alpay set Aston Villa on their way to a 2-1 win over Charlton. Jilloyd Samuel was Villa's other scorer with Kevin Lisbie replying with a late strike for Charlton.

Newcastle's problems in front of goal continued with a goalless draw at home to Bolton that leaves them mired in the relegation zone.

But manager Bobby Robson, who saw his side twice denied by the woodwork, insisted the Magpies luck would turn.

"Every single player we put out in the team gave absolutely 100 percent," he said. "I have no crib about that at all. We need a bit of luck and we didn't quite get it today."

**TOP SIX**

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

Chelsea	5	4	1	0	15	6
Arsenal	5	4	1	0	11	3
Man Utd	5	4	0	1	9	2
Southampton	6	3	3	0	8	3
Man City	6	3	2	1	14	11
Liverpool	6	3	2	1	9	4



North Korean players run towards their supporters after their victory over Nigeria in the FIFA Women's World Cup at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia on September 20.

# Norway's perfect start



AFP, Washington

Olympic champion Norway scored twice in the second half and rode a strong performance by goalkeeper Bente Nordby to a 2-0 victory over France in the opening match of the Women's World Cup on Saturday.

The win lifted the Norwegians to the top of Group B before a crowd of 24,247 in the first game of a doubleheader at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field.

"We were a bit nervous at the beginning," Norway coach Age Steen said. "But we took our chances very well and that sets us up nicely for the rest of the competition."

After a scoreless first half, Anita Rapp lifted Norway into the lead in the 47th minute, heading in Brit Sandaune's 25-yard free kick from 11 yards past goalkeeper Celine Marty.

"We were patient," Rapp said.

"We didn't have too strong of a start. We knew the goal would be coming. We had faith in that."

Dagny Mellgren, who scored the Golden Goal for Norway in the 2000 Olympic gold-medal match, doubled the score in the 66th minute, scoring from a severe angle from six yards.

Mellgren, who tied for the Women's United Soccer Association goal-scoring lead (14), beat Corinne Diacre. Marty ran out of the net and got a hand on the ball, but could not recover in time as Mellgren knocked the ball into the net.

The French, who made their World Cup debut, had a number of chances, but could not solve Nordby, who made several important stops. Nordby, an impact member of Norway's world championship side in 1995, denied Elodie Woodcock's 18-yard drive in the 38th minute and Marinette Pichon from 12 yards from point-blank range in the 63rd minute.

"In the World Cup of '95, she was the best goalkeeper in the world," Steen said. "Today, you can see why she is really great."

The field conditions hardly befitted a world championship tournament. Unusually American football lines were clearly seen at the stadium and on TV. The grass along the sidelines was worn down from where Philadelphia Eagles players and their opponents stand during National Football League games.

In the second game of the doubleheader, Jin Pyol-Hui scored two goals and set up a third as the North Koreans dominated Nigeria 3-0 in a Group A encounter.

The Koreans literally laid siege to the Nigerian goal in the opening half as Jin connected in the 13th minute.

Jin stole the ball from Kikelomo Ajayi and passed to Ri Un-Gyong, who ran in unmarked for a 2-0 lead in the 73rd minute. Ho Sun-Hui's steal set up Jin's second goal, which was scored off a rebound two minutes from time.

The lethal combination of Birgit Prinz and Maren Meinert was too much for Canada as the Germans rolled to a 4-1 Group C win over Canada in the first game of a doubleheader in Columbus, Ohio.

Prinz scored one goal and Meinert helped create two in the second half against the Canadians, who moved talented striker Charmaine Hooper back to stabilize the defense. It obviously did not work.

Young Canadian standout Christine Sinclair surprised Germany by scoring four minutes into the match past goalkeeper Silke Rottenberg. But the Germans equalized on Bettina Weigmann's penalty kick in the 39th minute past keeper Karina LeBlanc after Hooper was whistled for a handball inside the penalty area.

Meinert set up Germany's go-ahead goal in the 47th minute,

when Stefanie Gottschlich scored from eight yards and produced Prinz's score -- a header -- in the 75th minute for a 3-1 lead.

Kerstin Garefrekes added an injury time goal.

Homare Sawa scored twice in the first half and Mio Otani added a hat-trick during an nine-minute span late in the match to give Japan an easy 6-0 Group C victory over Argentina, who were reduced to 10 women in their World Cup debut.

Sawa connected in the 13th and 38th minutes before Argentina's Natalia Gatti was sent off in the 39th after a hard challenge on Tomoe Sakai, forcing the South Americans to play the rest of the match down a player.

Emi Yamamoto made it 3-0 in the 64th minute.

Otani started her amazing streak in the 72nd minute, adding goals in the 75th and 81st.

The Cup continues on Sunday with four games in a pair of doubleheaders in Washington and in the Los Angeles suburb of Carson, California.

The US begin their title defense, meeting Sweden in a Group A match in Washington, followed by a Group B confrontation between Brazil and South Korea.

In Group D action in California, Australia meets Russia and China plays Ghana.

# Unhappy Rivaldo?

Football

AP, Milan

Brazilian veteran star Rivaldo, unhappy with his season start on AC Milan's substitute bench, is reportedly willing to leave the European Champion team but vice president Adriano Galliani said Friday he wanted Rivaldo to stay.

"I wish that Rivaldo will stay with AC Milan," the club official said at a ceremony at the Milan city hall where team captain Paolo Maldini and his father Cesare, a former AC Milan player and Italy's coach, were awarded a golden coin with the city symbol as popular sportsmen and residents.

"Our philosophy is to keep only

players who are happy to stay with us. I hope that Rivaldo's happiness is to stay with AC Milan" Galliani said.

In recent interviews published in Brazil and Italy Rivaldo said he was disappointed with his first year with the Italian club, in which he was often left out of the starting eleven because of his questionable form and injury.

Rivaldo, a regular player with Brazil World Cup team, joined AC Milan in 2002, moving from Spain's Barcelona.

He started the current campaign the same way, although fit and willing to play.

Rivaldo's chances to be started by coach Carlo Ancelotti as playmaker were reduced further by the arrival this season of rising star

Kaka, who joined AC Milan's Brazilian group also including goalkeeper Dida, defender Cafu and midfielder Serginho.

Rivaldo

Dida, Kaka and Cafu were in the starting 11 in last Tuesday's Champions League match with Ajax that the Italian team won 1-0 at San Siro.

"If all players accept the turnover, AC Milan can win a lot again this year," Galliani said.

Last season AC Milan, which is owned by Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi, clinched the Champions League and the Italian Cup. It also won the European SuperCup last month and is looking forward to the Intercontinental Cup scheduled at Tokyo in December.

Meanwhile Ancelotti suggested that Rivaldo could make his season debut at Perugia in Sunday's Serie A third round.

# Pele's son's agency

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

Soccer great Pele is helping one of his sons launch a sports agency aimed at cleaning up the way transfer deals are conducted between clubs.

Acting in an advisory role, the three-time world champion will work with the Global Sports Group venture started Thursday by his son Edinho.

Edinho, whose real name is Edson Cholbi do Nascimento, is a former Santos goalkeeper. Former New York Cosmos goalkeeper Shep Messing, a teammate of Pele in 1977, is also joining the venture as a principal partner.

The group, with offices in Sao Paulo and New York, will provide international representation, wealth management and public relations for professional soccer players.

Edinho said unscrupulous club officials and player agents, particularly in Brazil, don't declare transfer fees and take money away from young players. The new company will try to apply pressure to reduce the practice, he said.



A shot from Bayer Leverkusen's Turkish international Yildray Basturk (not in the picture) going towards the Bayern Munich goal past a diving Bayern custodian Oliver at the Munich Olympic stadium on September 20.

# Bundesliga Stuttgart surprise leaders

Football

AFP, Berlin

VfB Stuttgart became the new leaders of the Bundesliga after notching a 1-0 win over Borussia Dortmund at the Gottlieb-Daimler Stadium Saturday.

Kevin Kuranyi scored the decisive goal to move Stuttgart, who have not conceded a single goal in the opening six Bundesliga matches, top of the table and pour more misery on Dortmund and their coach Matthias Sammer.

"I cannot say anything about my team because I did not see anything today," raged Sammer. "The way we played is disappointing. There is no explaining it."

Dortmund have now failed to win away from the Westfalen Stadium in 11 Bundesliga matches.

Felix Magath's Stuttgart bounced back from their 2-1 Champions

League defeat by Rangers Tuesday and head the Bundesliga standings after six games.

The Stuttgart coach was delighted to come through a gruelling week at home and abroad.

"Our victory was deserved," said Magath. "It was our third difficult match inside of a week."

"We should not dampen the expectation levels of the fans but we have to keep a cool head."

Bayer Leverkusen slipped down to second after a thrilling 3-3 draw against ten-man Bayern Munich at the Olympic Stadium where former Leverkusen star Ze Roberto was dismissed shortly before the hour mark after lashing out at compatriot Lucio.

Bayern chief Ottmar Hitzfeld was disappointed to lose two points and angry with the referee for Ze Roberto's red card.

"I am never happy when we do not win at home," declared Hitzfeld. "The referee made a mistake in sending off Ze Roberto."

Ten-man Bayern twice came from behind as Roy Makaay followed up his brace against Celtic in the Champions League with a fantastic volley while Paraguayan international Roque Santa Cruz notched his first goal of the season.

German Player of the Year Michael Ballack, who had earlier missed a penalty, then put Bayern in front during a frantic few minutes.

Ballack unleashed a shot that nearly ripped the net asunder on 69 minutes to make amends for the penalty miss but substitute Yildray Basturk grabbed a late equaliser just four minutes after coming on.

The Turkish World Cup star finished with aplomb to salvage a point and prevent a tenth successive defeat for Bayer at the Olympic Stadium.

Bayern goalkeeper Oliver Kahn had been experiencing problems with his vision of late and the capacity 63,000 crowd at the Olympic Stadium could hardly believe their eyes at the awful defending from

Bayern who have now conceded ten goals in their opening six matches - the same as strugglers Cologne and Borussia Monchengladbach.

Elsewhere Hertha Berlin are still searching for their first win of the season after a 2-2 draw at VfL Bochum.

Under-pressure coach Huub Stevens saw his side go ahead twice only to be pegged back by a stubborn Bochum team.

**TOP SIX**

German football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Stuttgart	6	4	2	0	6	0
Leverkusen	6	4	1	1	14	6
Bremen	6	4	1	1	12	5
Wolfsburg	6	4	0	2	14	12
Bayern	6	3	2	1	15	10
Hannover	6	3	2	1	14	11