

Talking goals

Football

AFP, London

Alex Ferguson has denied that last week's explosive match against Arsenal handed Manchester United striker Ruud van Nistelrooy any extra motivation during his emphatic hat-trick against Leicester on Saturday.

United romped to a 4-1 away win over Leicester with van Nistelrooy turning back on the style to fire the Red Devils up to third place in the Premiership behind Chelsea and within a point of the pace-setting Gunners.

The Dutchman's contribution proved decisive however Ferguson said that it had been business as usual this week for his big striker despite last week's drama where he was jostled by

several Arsenal players and labelled a cheat by Arsene Wenger.

"I don't think it has been a difficult week for Ruud. As far as we are concerned, he has done nothing wrong," Ferguson told MUTV.

"I don't think the previous week's episode was any kind of motivation for Ruud. His motivation has always been that he is a world class footballer who loves scoring."

Ferguson was delighted with his team's performance and believes the return of Paul Scholes will take some of the pressure off van Nistelrooy to keep on scoring.

"I think today's (Saturday's) performance was probably one of the best of the season. The movement and passing was outstanding."

"We also defended well. We had watched Leicester on video and knew they would be a threat from set-pieces and crosses if we did not defend right and for 80 minutes we did that," added Ferguson who was also delighted that Roy Keane grabbed the other United goal.

"I am very pleased that Roy Keane got on the scoresheet. I was astonished when someone told me it was 41 games since he last scored."

"I knew there was something wrong with his game!

"It is important that other players score for us and Paul Scholes was back in the side and is always someone likely to get on the scoresheet. That hopefully will not place such a burden on Ruud to always score."



PHOTO: AFP

AWESOME! Manchester United ace Ruud van Nistelrooy celebrates a goal against Leicester City at Walkers Stadium in Leicester on September 27.

Serie A

Juve stave off Reggina

Football

AFP, Rome

Reigning champions Juventus went top of Serie A after battling their way to a hard-fought 2-0 victory at Reggina on Saturday while title rivals Inter Milan were held to a goalless draw at Udinese.

Marco Di Vaio gave Juve an early lead at Reggio Calabria before Pavel Nedved wrapped up the points shortly after half-time.

Reggina's misery was compounded by the late sending-off of defender Andrea Sottili, who departed five minutes from time after receiving his second yellow card.

One of only two southern teams in Italy's top flight, Reggina are still looking for their first win of the season.

Juventus have 10 points from four matches, two more than Inter and three more than AC Milan, Roma and Parma, who are all tied on seven points but have played a game less.

Reggina, who maintained their Serie A status by defeating Atalanta in a two-legged play-off at the end of last season, ruined a positive start by gifting Juventus the opening goal

in the 13th minute.

Emanuele Belardi spilled Nedved's feeble right-wing cross after colliding with Sottili and Di Vaio pounced on the loose ball to slot home from close range.

Di Vaio almost doubled his lead three minutes later when he was put clean through by Nedved, but his low angled shot struck the base of the post.

Juve's veteran defender Mark Iuliano was almost almost left red-faced in the 20th minute when he headed against his own crossbar when trying to clear Shunsuke Nakamura's floated free-kick.

Playing more like the away side, Reggina went agonisingly close to restoring parity with a swift counter-attack five minutes before half-time.

Daivide Di Michele carved his way into the penalty box and teed up the prowling Nakamura whose left-foot shot was tipped on to the upright by Gianluigi Buffon's fingertips.

Juventus, losing finalists in last season's Champions League final, stamped their authority on the match by increasing their lead five minutes after the break.

A lightning four-man move involving Stephen Appiah, Enzo Maresca and Di Vaio ended with Nedved through one-on-one with

Belardi and chipping the ball over the Reggina goalkeeper.

Julio Cesar Leon and Di Michele went close for Reggina before they were reduced to 10 men when Sottili saw red.

In Saturday's late match, Inter survived the 17th minute dismissal of Luciano to earn a 0-0 in an often bad-tempered match at Udinese.

The Brazilian winger was shown a straight red card for clattering into Czech midfielder Jarek Jankulovski with a tackle from behind.

Udinese's Danish defender Per Kroldrup also saw red five minutes before the end for a professional foul, while Chilean international David Pizarro missed a second-half penalty for the home side after Thomas Helveg brought down Dino Fava in the box.

TOP SIX

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

Juventus	4	3	1	0	11	4	10
Inter	4	2	2	0	3	0	8
Roma	3	2	1	0	9	3	7
Parma	3	2	1	0	8	4	7
Milan	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Lazio	3	2	0	1	8	5	6

Brazil to play at Leicester

AFP, Leicester

Brazil have taken a leaf out of Australia's book by organising a friendly international in England to ensure that all their European-based stars can play.

The World Cup holders are to take on Jamaica on October 12 at Leicester City's 32,000-capacity Walkers Stadium.

The prospect of seeing the likes of Ronaldo and Ronaldinho in action is likely to ensure the match is a sell-out, particularly as there are no Premiership fixtures that weekend.

Leicester chief executive Tim Davies said the club had beaten off competition from several other English clubs to host the fixture.

"We met a Brazilian delegation on Thursday afternoon and showed them around our new facilities," Davies said.

"I think they liked the idea that we were so keen to accommodate them and make this game happen at such short notice."

League Cup Leeds-MU face off

AFP, London

English Premiership giants Leeds and Manchester United will renew their bitter rivalry next month when they clash in the third round of the League Cup.

The two meet in a league fixture at Elland Road on October 18 before they clash again ten days later in the League Cup.

Notts County, the oldest professional club in the world and a founder-member of the English league will be looking for a much-needed financial windfall after they were drawn away to Chelsea.

Bundesliga

Makaay to the rescue

Football

AFP, Berlin

VfB Stuttgart maintained their lead in the Bundesliga with a 3-0 win over 1860 Munich at the Olympic Stadium Saturday, while reigning champions Bayern needed another Roy Makaay strike to net a 2-1 win over Hansa Rostock.

Stuttgart coach Felix Magath has been indebted to his defence this season and they came up with the goods at the other end of the pitch with defensive stalwarts Zvonimir Soldo and Fernando Meira on the scoresheet.

"Apart from the opening few minutes - when we lacked concentration - we were in control of the match," enthused Magath. "Scoring an early goal settled us down."

The Stuttgart rearguard has now not been breached in seven Bundesliga matches and goalkeeper Timo Hildebrand just needs to fend off the Cologne attack for 68 minutes next Saturday to break the record of Bayern Munich custodian Oliver Kahn which stands at 802 minutes.

Stuttgart face a real test of their progress on Wednesday when English champions Manchester United visit the Gottlieb-Daimler Stadium for a Champions League duel.

Bayern needed a late strike from 18.75-million-euro Dutch striker Makaay to steal all three points against Hansa Rostock at the Ostseestadion.

The Dutchman scored his fifth goal in four matches with four minutes remaining to get a makeshift

Bayern back to winning ways after a 3-2 defeat by VfL Wolfsburg and a 3-3 draw with Bayer Leverkusen.

"The numerous personnel changes were noticeable," said Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld. "We responded to the Rostock equaliser but the win was fortunate."

A leaky defence will still concern Hitzfeld ahead of Tuesday's Champions League match away to Anderlecht.

Seven goals conceded in the last three matches tells its own story and Bayern, who gave a Bundesliga debut to Argentine defender Martin Demichelis, continue to look unconvincing at the back as Thomas Linke's own goal illustrated.

Bayer Leverkusen ended VfL Wolfsburg's 100 percent record at the Volkswagen Arena with a 1-0 triumph to continue their impressive start to the new season, although coach Klaus Augenthaler conceded his team were fortunate.

German international Bernd Schneider scored the decisive goal to help Bayer to keep pace at the top of the table, although they slip to third after Werder Bremen's 4-1 thrashing of Cologne.

TOP SIX

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

Stuttgart	7	5	2	0	9	0	17
Bremen	7	5	1	1	16	6	16
Leverkusen	7	5	1	1	15	6	16
Bayern	7	4	2	1	17	11	14
Dortmund	7	4	1	2	12	6	13
Wolfsburg	7	4	0	3	14	13	12



Chelsea's Dutch striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (C) scoring against Aston Villa at Stamford on September 27.

PHOTO: AFP

Premiership

Blown away by Dutch dynamite

Football

AFP, London

Alex Ferguson paid tribute to the maturity of his Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy who ended a torrid week by scoring the fourth hat-trick of his Manchester United career as the champions demolished Leicester.

Van Nistelrooy's triple strike in the 4-1 win meant United remain just one point adrift of Arsenal, who beat Newcastle 3-2 on Friday.

Chelsea also moved back to within a point of the leaders on Saturday but their 100 million pounds (£160 million dollars) of talent was made to work hard for a 1-0 win over Aston Villa at Stamford Bridge.

Van Nistelrooy, branded a cheat by Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger after last weekend's ill-tempered goalless draw at Old Trafford, had received a mixture of plaudits and criticism this week after his role in the ugly scenes in that match.

His exaggerated response to

tackles was blamed for Patrick Vieira's sending-off which sparked the ill feeling, yet he refused to lash out when Arsenal players jostled him afterwards.

On Saturday, the only talking he was doing was with his boots.

Paul Scholes marked his return to the United side after a month sidelined by a hernia problem with a delightful chip to set up Roy Keane for United's opener after 15 minutes.

Van Nistelrooy hammered in a rebound from a Scholes shot to make it two a minute later and further strikes on the stroke of half time and seven minutes after the interval took the Dutch striker's Premiership tally for the season to seven in seven games.

Frank Sinclair scored a late consolation for the outclassed home side.

United boss Ferguson was delighted with his Dutch striker.

"His name will always be in the papers because he is a great player and he showed that today. There can't have been many strikers as good as him over the years. A hat-

trick today and he could have had six," said Ferguson.

"His motivation has always been that he is a world class footballer who loves scoring."

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink is proving he is not surplus to requirements at Chelsea following the arrival of Hernan Crespo and Adrian Mutu with his fifth league goal of the season.

Hasselbaink tapped in from two yards two minutes before the interval after Thomas Sorensen failed to hold a Frank Lampard shot.

Juan Pablo Angel spurned two good second half chances to equalise and Chelsea held on for a victory which manager Claudio Ranieri graciously conceded was less than deserved.

"I'm happy because I suffered a lot during the match," said Ranieri. "We're like a baby. We're crawling now. Sometimes we try to stand up but we're not ready yet. The pressure on the baby isn't good - but I'm his father and I'll take all the pressure."

"We started well and made a lot of chances without scoring and that

is not good because in England the opponent can always come back and score," Ranieri said.

"In the second half Aston Villa pushed a lot and deserved to draw the match. Angel had two good chances to score and they were unlucky."

At the other end of the table, a Kevin Davies equaliser five minutes from the end for Bolton denied Wolves their first Premiership victory and left Wolves boss Dave Jones seething.

A stunning 30-yard volley by Alex Rae had put Wolves on course for victory before sloppy marking allowed Davies the chance to equalise.

"One lapse in concentration has let them back into after we worked so hard to get the three points," Jones fumed.

Birmingham bounced back from their shock League Cup exit at the hands of second division Blackpool with a 2-0 win over Portsmouth.

Midfielder Stephen Clemence and Australian winger Stan Lazaridis scored the goals that lifted Steve Bruce's side, who are

unbeaten in six games in the league, to fourth in the table.

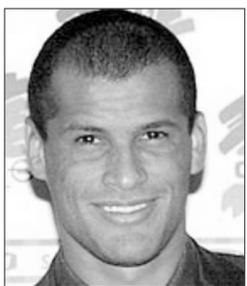
Southampton's unbeaten start to the season came to an end with a 1-0 defeat at home to Middlesbrough.

Malcolm Christie was Boro's match-winner with a 13th-minute strike and Southampton's frustration was underlined when Kevin Phillips was sent off in the closing minutes for kicking out at French defender Franck Queudrue.

TOP SIX

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

Arsenal	7	5	2	0	14	5	17
Chelsea	6	5	1	0	16	6	16
Man Utd	7	5	1	1	13	3	16
Birmingham	6	4	2	0	8	2	14



RIVALDO

Rivaldo drops Chelsea hints

AFP, London

Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo could become the latest big name addition to Chelsea's payroll after being released by AC Milan in midweek.

Rivaldo left the Italian giants at the end of last week after falling out of favour with Carlo Ancelotti and is now hoping to reignite his career at star-studded Stamford Bridge.

"At Chelsea it would be very easy for me to fit in quickly because there are already so many stars, some of whom I know directly," Rivaldo told the Sunday Herald.

"Perhaps that would make it the easiest choice for me because if I have good partners who know how I play then I could, literally, guarantee success."

"So Chelsea is interesting to me but I cannot say more specifically at the moment - I have to take in other factors."

"However, I think that England is the logical destination for me because I've had so many offers from there that it would be the easiest place to go and succeed."

Rivaldo revealed that Middlesbrough and Newcastle are two of the clubs chasing his signature but he has reservations about joining either of the north-east outfits.

He added: "I know that Middlesbrough have made contact, and that my team-mate Juninho is there - but I'd need to understand far more about the club and its situation before moving because of that."

"And at Newcastle of course I know there is also interest, but I know that Sir Bobby Robson could be having trouble so I'll wait on that."

Primera Liga

Real bubble burst

Football

AFP, Madrid

Valencia took advantage of a woeful performance from Real Madrid to claim a 2-0 win at home to the defending Spanish champions on Saturday and replace beaten Deportivo Coruna at the top of the table.

Depor's surprise 3-2 defeat at Osasuna handed Valencia the chance to lead the Primera Liga standings and they took it in style, sending Real to their first league defeat of the season.

Rafa Benitez's side went in front after four minutes through Mista and a Ricardo Oliveira strike in the second half clinched a surprisingly comfortable win.

The result proved enough to give Valencia the leadership with 13 points from five games after Deportivo lost their 100 percent record at Osasuna.

Depor blew their chance of a fifth successive victory by conceding three goals in a nightmare four-minute spell in the first half.

They dropped to second on 12 points with Real Madrid and Osasuna both on 10 in third and fourth respectively.

Barcelona, with eight points from four games, could move up to third with victory away to Atletico Madrid in one of six matches being played on Sunday.

Valencia, the 2002 champions, came at Real with all guns blazing and were rewarded with an early goal.

Argentine playmaker Pablo Aimar brought the ball forward from midfield and found Jorge Lopez wide on the right. He crossed low into the box and Mista, a former Real Madrid player, nipped in ahead of goalkeeper Iker Casillas to open the scoring.

"Valencia had a much more serious attitude from the start," conceded Real coach Carlos Queiroz.

"They were far more aggressive and the first few minutes decided the game. We have to congratulate Valencia because they played better

TOP SIX

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

Valencia	5	4	1	0	8	1	13
Deportivo	5	4	0	1	10	4	12
Real	5	3	1	1	13	7	10
Osasuna	5	3	1	1	7	4	10
Sociedad	5	2	2	1	6	3	8
Barcelona	4	2	2	0	5	3	8

than we did."

Aimar was at the heart of every Valencia move but he was forced off after 28 minutes with a leg muscle strain.

The home side duly reverted to a more defensive approach but Real failed to make any headway, with Zinedine Zidane, Ronaldo and David Beckham suffering a collective off-day.

Valencia were content to soak up pressure and hit Real on the break and

a run into the box.

A mistake from Deportivo goalkeeper Jose Molina handed Osasuna their second two minutes later.

Molina, stretching for a cross from the left, dropped the ball at the feet of Ibrahim Bakayoko, who tapped it across for Ivan Rosado to make the score 2-0.

Within a minute, Osasuna were three up, thanks to another



PHOTO: AFP

David Albelda (R) of Valencia checks Real Madrid's Luis Figo at the Mestalla Stadium in Valencia on September 27.

their second goal arrived after 71 minutes, when Casillas could only block an Oliveira header.

Ruben Baraja smacked the rebound back into the box and the ball broke again for Oliveira to blast the ball home.

Real hardly created a chance in what remained of the game and Valencia claimed victory with plenty to spare.

Deportivo were also guilty of a shoddy performance away to Osasuna.

Patxi Punal got the home side's first goal with a penalty on 21 minutes after Hector had needlessly brought down Moroccan midfielder Moha on

Deportivo mistake. Valdo, the former Real Madrid striker, smacked a shot against the bar and Hector headed the ball straight into his own net.

Depor were stung into action and Albert Luque's powerful header from Victor's right-wing cross in the 28th minute gave the visitors some hope of a comeback.

Osasuna defended bravely for the remainder of the game, though, and despite Pandiani's late strike they continued their excellent start to the season with a third win in five games.

Romero no snake-charmer!

AFP, Pamplona

League leaders Deportivo La Coruna were without their defender Enrique Romero for their match at Osasuna after the Spanish international was felled by a snake bite.

However, Romero, a member of Spain's 2002 World Cup squad, appears to have no one to blame but himself.

According to reports from Deportivo officials, Romero saw the 20 centimetre-long reptile on the tarmac of the airport runway on arrival at the Pamplona airport on Friday and tried to pick it up.

The snake objected to being manhandled and bit Romero hard on the hand.

After the squad got to their hotel, Romero started to feel ill and was diagnosed as having an allergic reaction to the venom and spent the night in hospital.

Although he rejoined the Deportivo squad on Saturday, team officials ruled him out of playing against Osasuna shortly before the kick off.

Deportivo are defending a 100 percent record after four games and if they win at Osasuna on Saturday it will equal their best ever start, when they notched up five wins in a row in the opening weeks of the 1992-93 season.

Seoul asylum for Nepalese!

AFP, Seoul