

FORMULA 1

End of the race for Schumacher

AFP, Monza

Seven-times world champion Michael Schumacher of Germany will retire at the end of the current season, his Ferrari team announced after his victory at Monza here Sunday.

Schumacher sensationally kept in contention for an eighth world drivers' title by closing the gap to Spain's Fernando Alonso to two points in what was his 90th career victory in Formula One.

The 37-year-old German, who in emotional scenes at the old Autodromo Nazionale hugged his wife Corinna, Ferrari team president Luca di Montezemolo and team chief Jean Todt, announced his retirement in a statement issued as he crossed the line.

Fans flooded the circuit as he stood atop the podium for the 90th time having cut Fernando Alonso's lead in the drivers' championship to just two points.

In a statement, Ferrari said: "Michael Schumacher will retire from race driving at the end of the 2006 world championship."

There are three Grands Prix still left in the current season - in China on October 1, Japan on October 8 and Brazil on October 22. Schumacher is expected to compete in his last race in Brazil.

The German will now prepare to bring the curtain down on 15 years of almost unrivalled, statistical domination of the sport.

To his millions of fans worldwide, it is perhaps fitting that Schumacher's Ferrari team made the announcement at Monza, the scene of many famous moments in his story.

Sunday's achievement was his fifth win at the famed Italian circuit.

An emotional but controlled Schumacher said afterwards: "There has been a lot of discussion for a long time about my decision to retire."

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VINI VIDI VICI: Formula 1 legend Michael Schumacher of Ferrari celebrates on the podium after his victory at the Monza Grand Prix on Sunday.

Donadoni dives in to Toni debate

INTERNET, undated

Italy Coach Roberto Donadoni was so angry at a television debate on whether he should've called Luca Toni that he rang up to respond on the air.

The tactician has been under fire ever since he took over from World Cup winner Marcello Lippi, managing just one draw and two defeats on the bench.

The Euro 2008 qualifiers were particularly disappointing and, in the light of his brace against Inter last night, the debate is raging on why he chose not to call up Fiorentina hitman Toni for those games.

"Ask Toni why I didn't call him up," snapped Donadoni as he rang in live on local television channel Telelombardia.

"He hadn't played a single 90-minute match before the Italy qualifiers. I spoke to him and all the other players beforehand to discuss fitness levels and the decision over whether to bring him along or not."

Toni was the Serie A Capocannoniere last season with 31 goals and Italy's joint World Cup top scorer with two.

Magath criticises Klinsmann

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich coach Felix Magath remained critical of Germany boss Juergen Klinsmann although the national team reached the World Cup semifinals, Bild newspaper reported on Sunday.

Magath said third place at the World Cup was not that good for the host nation and added it had been a mistake to use keeper Jens Lehmann instead of Oliver Kahn at the finals earlier this year.

"The future will show if third place at the World Cup was really that good," Magath told Bild.

"You have to remember we did better in 2002 when we reached the final. It will be interesting to see where we finish in 2010."

Denilson joins Al-Nasr

AFP, Riyadh

Former Brazilian international Denilson has joined Al-Nasr from Bordeaux on a one-year contract for one million dollars, the Saudi Arabian club said.

Al-Nasr's contract with Denilson was finalised after the failure of negotiations with River Plate for Marcelo Gallardo.

The 29-year-old Denilson was part of Brazil's 2002 World Cup winning squad and won the Confederation Cup with his country in Saudi Arabia in 1997. He earned 68 caps.

Lyon ready for Real

REUTERS, Lyon

Olympique Lyon have prepared for Wednesday's Champions League opener against Real Madrid in the best way possible by beating Troyes 2-0 to top of Ligue 1.

Last season, the French champions won nine times before Champions League matches in their run to the quarter-finals. Saturday's home triumph, in which Brazil midfielder Juninho scored one and made the other, should provide a similar lift.

"Every time you play in this competition, it's a real advantage to win the game that comes just before a match, because you can prepare more calmly," Juninho told reporters on Sunday.

"Victory is the best possible preparation," echoed centre back Cris, who opened the scoring at the Gerland stadium from a Juninho free kick on Saturday.

"Everybody helped each other. There is a great team spirit in the squad. It will help us against Real Madrid."

Coach Gerard Houllier rested French internationals Eric Abidal and Florent Malouda, as they had played in last Wednesday's 3-1 win over Italy in a Euro 2008 qualifier.

Striker Sidney Govou, who scored twice against the world champions, only played one hour against Troyes.

"Whether you like it or not, these (international) games take a lot out of you, both physically and mentally," said Houllier.

"We will be fresh on Wednesday. I am not worried about this match because the motivation and the concentration will come naturally."

Weary Milan edge Lazio

AFP, Rome

AC Milan, starting on minus eight points for their role in the Italian match-fixing scandal, beat fellow

offenders Lazio 2-1 on Sunday in their opening match of the Serie A season.

Filippo Inzaghi put Milan ahead with a typically clinical finish before summer signing Ricardo Oliveira headed their second goal.

Lazio's Nigerian striker Stephen Makinwa tapped in an easy chance to reopen the contest, but Milan clung on to the three points which chipped away at their points handicap.

Lazio, who were hit with an 11-point penalty for their part in the match-fixing scandal, enjoyed a lively start at the San Siro with Macedonian striker Goran Pandev going close early on.

But Milan went ahead against the run of play in the 27th minute.

Brazilian midfielder Kaka fed Inzaghi on the edge of the box and the veteran Italy international turned quickly to face goalwards

before driving an angled shot past Angelo Peruzzi.

Brazilian striker Oliveira, signed from Spanish club Real Betis, rose unmarked to head in Andrea Pirlo's corner in the 70th minute and Milan looked home and dry.

But Lazio hit back three minutes later when Tommaso Rocchi, who looked to be in an offside position when he received the ball on the left, crossed for Makinwa to slot home. In Saturday's matches, champions Inter Milan and Roma both won.

Newly-promoted Catania claimed a win at Cagliari in their first Serie A clash, with Giorgio Corona on target in the 55th minute, while new boys Atalanta also claimed first day spoils with a 3-1 win over Ascoli.

Riccardo Zampagna got the ball rolling for the hosts in the 31st minute, and a quickfire brace from Nicola Ventola (36 & 43) completed a superb half for Atalanta.

Sasa Bjelanovic pulled a goal back for the visitors on the hour, but to no avail.

Siena completed a late turnaround to win 2-1 at Chievo.

Sergio Pellissier had given the hosts a 30th minute lead, but Ezio

Brevi equalised for Siena a quarter of an hour from time.

With the match appearing destined for a draw, Enrico Chiesa struck in the 89th minute to hand all three points to the visitors, while Matteo Brihi saw red for Chievo in stoppage time.

Palermo defeated ten-man Reggina 4-3 at La Favorita.

The hosts raced into a three-goal lead within the first half hour, as Mark Bresciano (17) on his debut, Giuseppe Biava (17) and Eugenio Corini (26) from the penalty spot all notched.

However, Palermo appeared to take their foot off the gas, and Rolando Bianchi pulled a goal back four minutes before half time and then scored again ten minutes after the interval.

Salvatore Aronica's dismissal just after the hour quelled hopes of a fightback, and Carvalho Amaru doubled Palermo's lead in the 67th minute.

To their credit, Reggina refused to lie down and Bianchi claimed his hat-trick goal from the penalty spot in the 79th minute.

Luca Saudati claimed the winner on his debut for Empoli in a 2-1

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AC Milan's Brazilian midfielder Kaka (L) runs away from his marker Gaby Mudingayi of Lazio during their Serie A clash at San Siro on Sunday.

Barcelona in cruise control

AFP, Barcelona



Samuel Eto'o, last season's top scorer in the Spanish first division, got two goals within half an hour as the reigning Spanish champions Barcelona

romped to a 3-0 win over Osasuna on Saturday.

"What more can I say, he played very well. I have to pay tribute to his generosity and talent," acknowledged Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard.

Barcelona, determined to put a couple of lacklustre displays behind them, got off their marks quickly with Eto'o scoring in under two minutes following a wonderfully worked move involving their three star forwards.

World Player of the Year Ronaldinho darted down the left

wing before playing a neat one-two inside with Deco and then the Brazilian provided a perfect pass to Eto'o for the Cameroon striker to stab the ball home from close range.

Deco then provided a long pass from the right wing after 27 minutes, which Osasuna defender Carlos Cuellar failed to cut out, and Eto'o chipped the ball over the head of the oncoming keeper Ricardo Lopez for his second goal of the night and third of the season.

Eto'o went from scorer to service provider for Barca's third goal 10 minutes later, finding Lionel Messi free in the Osasuna penalty area and the Argentine teenager put the ball into the net through the legs of the luckless Ricardo.

The Catalan club noticeably stepped off the accelerator in the second half but could still have added to their score in front of 63,000 of their cheering fans in the Nou Camp.

"I think you could interpret that as a sign of maturity," reflected

Rijkaard, defending his team's reluctance to run up a cricket score when they clearly could have done.

"In any case, the team played well and didn't leave our rival with any opening."

Messi had their best chance in the second period, and could have had Barcelona's fourth on the hour when he broke through Osasuna's weak defence only to hit the post.

Another encouraging note for Rijkaard will be the fact that Ronaldinho looked to have recovered his form after an indifferent World Cup as well as recent thigh and back problems which have meant he has only trained four times in the last month.

The win will also be a confidence boost ahead of Barcelona's first game in defence of their Champions League title, with Bulgarian club Levski Sofia visiting the Nou Camp on Tuesday.

Rijkaard surprisingly left club captain Carles Puyol on the bench but suggested that not to much

should be read into the his decision, despite Puyol's poor performance in Spain's 3-2 loss to Northern Ireland on Wednesday.

"There will be rotations to give every player a rest, and he remains the captain," said Rijkaard.

Valencia, twice champions in the last five years, also notched up their second successive victory with a 1-0 win at Atletico Madrid later on Saturday.

David Villa got Valencia's winner after just seven minutes with a deft shot from the inside of his right foot, after a cross from the left wing by his fellow Spanish international Vicente Rodriguez.

Both teams ended the game with 10 men.

Valencia had to survive the last 25 minutes after Emiliano Moretti was severely shown a red card for brutally hacking down Juan Valera and 10 minutes later Atletico's Fernando Torres got his marching orders for two quick-fire bookings.



Barcelona wunderkid Lionel Messi (F) runs to embrace teammate Samuel Eto'o after scoring against Osasuna in their Primera Liga clash at Nou Camp on Saturday.

Giggs rolls back the years

AFP, London



Alex Ferguson admitted he had been relieved to see his side extend their winning start to four matches with a nervy 1-0 win over Tottenham.

United have now made their best ever start to a Premier League campaign but they were not at their best form in the Saturday evening encounter, in which a first-half header from Ryan Giggs secured the points in front of a record Old Trafford crowd of 75,453.

"Particularly after the international break, I'm very pleased with the result," said the Scot. "We've beaten a good Spurs side who will definitely make an impact in this league."

Saturday's win kept United two points clear of Portsmouth and Everton, who both extended their

own unbeaten starts to the season on Saturday, and three clear of champions Chelsea.

Arsenal already trail United by ten points while Liverpool, who crashed to a 3-0 defeat by Everton in the Merseyside derby, have eight points to make up on the leaders, although both clubs do have a game in hand.

With United not kicking off until the early evening, Portsmouth were able to enjoy a couple of hours at the top of the table after beating Wigan 1-0.

Zimbabwean striker Benjamin Mwaruwari notched the winner for Pompey as Harry Redknapp's side claimed their third win and fourth clean sheet of the season.

Arsenal are still looking for their first league win at their new Emirates stadium after being held to a 1-1 draw at home to ten-man Middlesbrough, but Chelsea returned to winning ways with a 2-1 victory over Charlton.

England forward Andrew

Johnson was Everton's hero with two opportunistic goals on his derby debut after Australia midfielder Tim Cahill had given Everton a 24th-minute lead.

Johnson muscled past Jamie Carragher to add the second 12 minutes later and then headed in Everton's third in stoppage time after Reds goalkeeper Jose Reina had made a mess of dealing with a long-range effort from Lee Carsley.

The defeat means Liverpool have taken just four points from their opening three matches of a campaign in which they were expected to provide the biggest obstacle to Chelsea retaining their title.

"My players made far too many mistakes and they were just too nice from the very first minute," complained Reds manager Rafael Benitez.

The champions could afford the luxury of a late penalty miss by Frank Lampard at Stamford Bridge.

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Wenger a worried man

AFP, London



Arsene Wenger admitted Arsenal must improve quickly if they are to mount a Premier League title challenge after watching his side held to a 1-1 draw by 10-man Middlesbrough.

The Gunners were facing a second straight league defeat after James Morrison shot the visitors in front, but their blanches were spared when Thierry Henry struck his first goal of the season from the penalty spot.

It was not enough to prevent Arsenal - who have failed to win any of their first three games - from making their worst ever start to a Premier League season and the north Londoners are already well adrift of the early pacesetters Manchester

United and Chelsea.

Wenger's team now have just one more match - Wednesday's Champions League encounter with SV Hamburg - to find their rhythm ahead of a potentially crucial meeting with United next Sunday. Defeat at Old Trafford could signal the end of the club's Premier League hopes before the season has barely begun.

"I can't say that I am unconcerned by our start to the season," he said. "When we fail to win a game we have dominated it is always worrying and I am now aware that this our worst ever start in the Premier League."

"It was one of those games when we had all the ball and the chances against a side that refused to come out and play but we got ourselves into trouble by falling behind.

"We are lacking a little bit of sharpness because half the team has been away for the whole summer playing football but we cannot focus on that."

"Now of course the Manchester United game becomes very, very important for us. We have to win our European match in Germany so we can go there in good condition."

Wenger could not hide his disappointment at failing to win a first domestic match at the club's new Emirates Stadium, but it could have been far worse for the Frenchman.

Arsenal's football was aimless and unfocused for most of the afternoon, with Middlesbrough's defence - expertly held together by their loan signing from Real Madrid, Jonathan Woodgate - comfortably absorbing the hosts' pressure.

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