



HAIL ME: Chelsea striker Didier Drogba appreciates the crowd's applause after scoring a breathtaking goal against Liverpool during their Premier League game at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

Chelsea brave out fiery Reds

AFP, London

Chelsea striker Didier Drogba's superb strike secured a hard-earned 1-0 victory over Liverpool at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, but the success was marred by the dismissal of Michael Ballack.

The Germany midfielder was shown a straight red card by referee Mike Riley for a blatant stamp on Mohamed Sissoko and can have few complaints after television replays clearly backed up the decision.

After injury in the Community Shield hampered the start to Ballack's career at Stamford Bridge, now the German star is facing a three-match suspension for the reckless challenge which led to his 51st minute dismissal.

Despite the irresponsible actions of the former Bayern Munich talisman, ten-man Chelsea managed to extend their dominance over Liverpool at Stamford Bridge, collecting their 11th win in their last 15 encounters, thanks to an inspired piece of finishing from Drogba.

The Ivory Coast player has been inspired by the pre-season arrival of Andriy Shevchenko from AC Milan and is clearly relishing the competition from the 30 million pound Ukrainian international.

Shevchenko -- in a match watched by among others golf superstar Tiger Woods -- had another disappointing afternoon and was substituted after 65 minutes for the fit-again winger Arjen Robben, but Drogba, having already scored in three of the opening four Premier League games, conjured a lead for Chelsea out of nothing in the 42nd minute.

Drogba, with his back to goal and Jamie Carragher fixed tight to him, seemed to have no options as

he controlled Frank Lampard's cross in a central area, 20 yards from goal, but a smooth swivel and shot enabled Drogba to dispatch a venomous left foot strike beyond Jose Reina.

The goal was incredibly harsh on Liverpool, who could easily have held a half-time advantage of their own.

Dutch international Dirk Kuyt rocked the crossbar with a powerful shot from the angle of the penalty area as he searched for his first goal since arriving from Feyenoord.

And England midfielder Steven Gerrard should have made more of another well thought out and executed attack in first half stoppage time.

There is no love lost between the two sides or their respective

managers after the controversial Champions League semifinal between the two 16 months ago.

Although Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho and his Liverpool counterpart Rafa Benitez did at least shake hands before the match, unlike in last month's Community Shield in Cardiff, Mourinho did little to thaw the frosty relations by constantly leaping from his seat in the first half to moan to referee Riley about what he saw as constant complaining of Liverpool players Craig Bellamy, Jermaine Pennant and Carragher.

Yet he remained passive when Ballack's cowardly attack on Sissoko, after the Liverpool midfielder had laid the ball off inside Chelsea territory, threatened to jeopardise their bid for a third

straight win.

Liverpool certainly enjoyed a dominance of possession after Ballack's departure and would have taken a point, but for the failure of Gerrard to accept their best opportunity after 68 minutes.

Gerrard had the goal at his mercy when the ball bounced invitingly for him inside the Chelsea penalty area, but shot straight at the legs of Petr Cech.

Benitez knows that his side cannot spurn such opportunities if what he regards is the best blend of home-grown and international players he has assembled at Anfield are going to challenge Chelsea for the title this season.

His mood was certainly not

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

German football to toughen up against racism

AFP, Aachen

The issue of racism has reared its ugly head in German football with two incidents inside a week giving the German Football Federation (DFB) food for thought.

Last weekend German international Gerald Asamoah, who was born in Ghana, was subjected to racist chants in Schalke 04's 9-1 cup victory against the second team of Hansa Rostock.

Hansa were fined 20,000 euros by the DFB for the conduct of their fans and must play their next cup tie behind closed doors.

German football chiefs were handed a new headache on Saturday when referee Michael Weiner threatened to abandon the Bundesliga derby match between Alemannia Aachen and Borussia Moenchengladbach after racist chants.

Gladbach's Brazilian forward Kahe, who scored twice in the 4-2 defeat, was the target of the racist remarks and the stadium announcer told the fans that the game would be stopped if the taunts continued.

"The clubs have to carry some of the blame. They have the responsibility and have to live with the consequences even if it comes to losing points," said DFB president Theo Zwanziger.

New coach at Vitoria Setubal

AFP, Lisbon

Antonio Conceicao was named on Sunday as the new coach of first division Vitoria Setubal.

Nicknamed Toni, Conceicao replaces Helio Sousa who was sacked on Friday after the club lost 3-0 to Dutch team Heerenveen in a UEFA Cup, first round, first leg match.

Last year Conceicao coached at another first division side, Estrela Amadora.

Big guns tumble

AFP, Berlin



It was the day of the underdog in the Bundesliga as last season's top three Bayern Munich, Werder Bremen and SV Hamburg all tasted shock defeats on Saturday.

Reigning champions Bayern may have crushed Spartak Moscow 4-0 in the Champions League in midweek but that did not matter to Arminia Bielefeld who pulled off the biggest sensation of the season so far with a 2-1 win.

Danish winger Jonas Kamper scored a brilliant late free-kick to condemn Bayern to their first defeat of the season.

"I do not want to make excuses but the match calendar has certainly not helped," said Bayern coach Felix Magath. "There has been an international break, the domestic cup, the Champions League and back to the league."

"I am sure we will find our rhythm soon and not lose games like this."

Bayern's loss means FC Nuremberg lead the 18-strong Bundesliga for the fourth successive week after a 1-1 draw with VfL

Bochum.

Dutch international midfielder Marc van Bommel, a six million-euro signing from Barcelona, had put Bayern ahead on his debut just six minutes in with a scrambled goal.

But Bielefeld rallied and Artur Wichniarek equalised in the 25th minute before Kamper stole the headlines with his free-kick.

"We conceded two goals from set-pieces and that can happen to any team," said Bayern's German international Philipp Lahm.

"We did not allow them many chances but we are guilty of not being purposeful enough going forward."

Fortunately for Bayern, who fell to third in the table, their rivals once again failed to capitalise on their slip with Bremen's miserable run continuing with a 3-2 defeat against VfB Stuttgart.

"We had a comfortable 2-0 lead and then we stopped putting tackles in," said a livid Bremen coach Thomas Schaaf. "Now is the time to stop talking and to start taking action."

Bremen, who fall to seventh, hoped to get back on the winning trail after a German Cup loss to third division Pirmasens and a Champions League defeat to Chelsea.

They lost their star striker

Miroslav Klose through injury shortly before the match but stormed into a two-goal lead with Roberto Hilbert heading into his own goal and Egyptian international Mohamed Zidan producing a cool finish.

But Hilbert scored at the right end in the 32nd minute and it sparked a sensational comeback as goals from Pavel Pardo and Luis Gomez secured a 3-2 win for the visitors.

"That should not be allowed to happen," fumed Bremen captain Frank Baumann. "We just invited the opposition to score goals."

Title hopefuls SV Hamburg saw their woeeful start to the season continue with a 1-0 loss at Borussia Dortmund.

"We are wobbling but we just need to keep pushing on and try to win our next match," declared Hamburg boss Thomas Doll.

It was three defeats in a row for Hamburg who had lost to Stuttgart Kickers in the German Cup and then Arsenal in the Champions League.

Former German international Christian Worns scored a late winner for Dortmund and Hamburg, third last season, now lie fourth from bottom without a win to their name. Dortmund are the big climbers going from ninth to fourth with the win.



Bayern Munich striker Roque Santa Cruz (L) shields the ball away from Bielefeld defender Markus Bollmann during their Bundesliga match at the Schueco Arena in Bielefeld on Saturday.

Kuyt taunts Blues

INTERNET, undated



Dirk Kuyt has fuelled the flames of Liverpool's rivalry with Chelsea by claiming the Premiership champions are not a big club. The Dutch international claimed that Roman Abramovich's millions will never buy them the rich history or global fame he says the Merseysiders enjoy.

"As far as the Dutch are concerned, Chelsea are not the biggest club. Liverpool are far bigger."

Kuyt has quickly become a favourite with the Anfield faithful since his 14m euro (9.5m pound) move from Feyenoord, and rubbed salt into the Chelsea wounds by saying they are the smallest of the Premiership's so-called 'Big Four'.

"It is also true of Manchester

United and Arsenal, who were very popular when Dennis Bergkamp was playing for the Gunners."

"Chelsea have a rich man at the club in Roman Abramovich. They have very good players and they have won the league the last two seasons. But Liverpool have a much bigger history."

The 26-year-old described his delight at moving to Liverpool after a summer-long transfer saga that saw Tottenham and Newcastle involved until the very last day.

But the striker insisted he only ever wanted to move to the five-time European champions, saying: "It was all about the feeling I had for Liverpool. They have a big history and have a fantastic ground."

"All these things were important but for me it's also important you get a good feeling from a club and Liverpool gave me that from the beginning."

Women's football semis tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka shared points with Khagrachhari in goalless draw yesterday's inaugural Inter-district Women's Football Tournament at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex.

Both the teams came to the game having confirmed their semifinal berths. Dhaka dominated the show only to be denied by effort of KC Chakma, the Khagrachhari goalkeeper who was adjudged player of the match.

Dhaka face Rangamati and Rajshahi played Khagrachhari in the semifinals scheduled for tomorrow.

Juve enjoy first win

AFP, Rome

Juventus beat Vicenza 2-1 in an Italian second division match on Saturday in their first match at the renovated Turin Olympic stadium through goals from David Trezeguet and Alessandro Del Piero.

Juventus, who were stripped of the first division title they won last season and denied entry into the Champions League for match-fixing, have four points from two matches having drawn 1-1 at Rimini in their opener.

Moments before the break, Trezeguet, coming back from a groin injury, scored with his outstretched right foot from a cross from the left.

Then in the second half, Juventus captain Del Piero -- who like Trezeguet and several other stars stayed with the club despite their relegation -- doubled the score from a free-kick in the 53rd minute.

Vicenza, who did not look discouraged by the two-goal deficit, managed to pull one goal back six minutes later through Cristian Raimondi. Vicenza looked impressive in the closing stages but Juventus held on for victory.

Juventus remain bottom of the table with a -13 tally however because of the 17-point penalty inflicted at the start of the season for their wrongdoings.

Hargreaves out with broken leg

AFP, London

England international midfielder Owen Hargreaves has confirmed that he sustained a broken leg playing for his club side Bayern Munich on Saturday.

Hargreaves said on his personal website that the injury to the fibula in his left leg had been x-rayed after the match against Arminia Bielefeld and that showed it had been broken.

"After we got back to Munich, we drove to see Dr Muller-Wohlfahrt," Hargreaves said. "It got x-rayed and it was revealed the left fibula was broken."

The 25-year-old Hargreaves added: "I need to wear a plaster for three weeks, then we have to wait and see how the recovery goes."

The Canadian-born player has been in top form for both club and country in recent months but he now faces a lengthy spell on the sidelines.

He will miss England's Euro 2008 qualifiers against Macedonia and Croatia next month.



Inter Milan forward Hernan Crespo is frustrated with himself as he misses a scoring opportunity against Sampdoria during their serie A match at San Siro on Saturday.

AFP, Rome



Inter Milan were left thanking a late own goal for a share of the points after a 1-1 draw at home to Sampdoria in Italy's Serie A on Saturday.

A shock defeat to Sporting Lisbon in midweek Champions League action had left a sour taste in the mouths of Inter who came close to succumbing to their first league setback of the season.

Instead Sampdoria's Massimo Bonanni put into his own net with nine minutes to go, leaving the Nerazzurri precariously top of the table ahead of Sunday's remaining league fixtures.

In the day's other fixture, Reggina beat Cagliari 2-1 thanks to goals from Rolando Bianchi, who scored a hatrick at Palermo last Sunday, and Alessandro Lucarelli.

Inter dropped Brazilian Adriano

and replaced him with Hernan Crespo while Sampdoria had Giulio Falcone and Gennaro Del Vecchio suspended.

Sampdoria went ahead in the 48th minute from a penalty by Francesco Flachi, who had been pushed by Ivan Cordoba. The Colombian had already got a yellow card but managed to stay on the pitch.

For Inter manager Roberto Mancini, the penalty -- and the quality of the refereeing -- was not to his liking.

"As far as I'm concerned, the penalty awarded to Sampdoria wasn't a penalty," Mancini told Sky television after the match.

"The referee didn't do his job well, because he did not treat both teams equally. When our strikers were fouled, he whistled against us."

Inter's Patrick Vieira had a goal ruled offside in the 71st minute and so did Adriano in the 82nd minute

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5