



Lyon mainstay Juninho (L) speeds past two Monaco midfielders during their Ligue 1 match at the Gerland Stadium in Lyon on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Vieira hails gritty Inter

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan's expensively-assembled squad have often been accused of lacking heart, but they showed a dogged determination to equal the Serie A record of 11 straight wins on Saturday.

Roberto Mancini's side matched Roma's 11-match winning streak of last season by fighting back from a goal down to beat a stubborn Atalanta side 2-1 at the San Siro and maintain their seven-point cushion at the top of the table.

"This afternoon we showed that we are a great team with lots of grit," Inter's hard-tackling French midfielder Patrick Vieira told the club's television station, Inter Channel.

"Atalanta had us in great difficulty in the first half, but after the break we put all our determination on the pitch and it paid off."

Cristiano Doni gave Atalanta a half-time lead before Adriano equalised with his first goal in an Inter shirt for nine months.

Inter snatched the points when Atalanta defender Simone Loria headed into his own net 15 minutes from the end.

Mancini saluted his players for reacting positively after a frustrating first 45 minutes.

"We knew it was going to be a very tough match and Atalanta played very well in the first half, denying us space and not letting us settle," he said.

"But after the break we came out fighting to get the three points."

Mancini said he hoped Adriano's confidence would be restored after the Brazil international ended his lengthy goal drought.

"The goal was very important for him and let's hope he can start the new year by playing the way that we know he can," he said.

## Lehmann keen to stay a Gunner

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany goalkeeper Jens Lehmann has said he would prefer to stay with English premier league Arsenal while remaining open to a move to Spain or back to the Bundesliga.

"I don't know," Lehmann, 37, told Bild am Sonntag when asked if he would leave Arsenal at the end of the season. "But in the talks about my future, Arsenal definitely has top priority."

Lehmann said he was not especially bothered by the tradition at Arsenal of offering one-year contracts only to players over 30, saying he had already signed three of those in London.

"A one-year contract wouldn't be so bad," he said. "But hold on, I'm not saying that there is a 100 percent chance I would stay in the event of an Arsenal offer. One has to look closely at everything. If there is no agreement with Arsenal, I'm open."

## Lyon's winter party

AFP, Paris



Five-time French champions Lyon headed into the winter break on Saturday with a 15-point lead over their rivals despite being held to a 0-0 draw by Monaco.

The visitors had chances to win the game at the Stade Gerland where Lyon have only once dropped points this season.

Toulouse were the only other side to leave Lyon with a point in a 1-1 draw in August but the champions can still look back on a successful first half to the campaign.

In 16 matches, Gerard Houllier's men have lost just once (1-0 at Rennes) and have 50 points compared to 35 for second-placed Lens who beat struggling Nice 2-1 on Saturday.

"Our aim was to be on 52 points at this stage, but we have 50," said Houllier.

"The pitch today was difficult but the quality of play was important. We created some good chances and put

together some dangerous moves. We deserved to win more than Monaco, but that's football."

Monaco's day got off to the worst possible start when giant Czech striker Jan Koller was replaced by Mohammed Kallon after just nine minutes.

Kallon was unlucky not to be awarded a penalty when he was chopped down by Anthony Reveillere but play was waved on.

Lyon goalkeeper Gregory Coupet then allowed a back-pass from former Monaco defender Sebastien Squillaci to squeeze past him but he was saved when the ball came to a halt at the foot of the right post.

But Lyon had the better openings with Monaco keeper Flavio Roma having to save from Cris as well as two sharp free-kicks from Juninho.

In the last minute, Roma also kept out Swedish international Kim Kallstrom.

PSG drew 1-1 at Troyes as the capital city side's relegation worries mounted.

Ivory Coast striker Amara Diane gave PSG a 48th-minute lead but George Ba levelled for Troyes 15 minutes from the end.

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Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Lyon	19	16	2	1	39	11	50
Lens	19	10	5	4	28	20	35
Sochaux	19	9	6	4	23	20	33
StEtienne	19	9	4	6	31	23	31
Lille	19	8	7	4	27	19	31
Marseille	19	9	3	7	25	19	30

## Mourinho a relieved man

REUTERS, London



gasp 3-2 win at Wigan Athletic on Saturday.

The champions looked to have blown a 2-0 lead when two-goal Emile Heskey deservedly put Wigan back on level terms at the JJB Stadium, only for Arjen Robben to conjure a stoppage-time winner with his first goal of the season.

The victory keeps Chelsea breathing down the necks of Premier League leaders Manchester United, who ran out 3-0 winners at Aston Villa earlier thanks to two goals from an inspired Cristiano Ronaldo and a memorable volley from Paul Scholes.

Going into the hectic holiday fixtures, Chelsea trail United by two points. United have 47 points and no

team with at least that many at the halfway stage has failed to win the title.

"I'm not proud of them (the players)," manager Mourinho told Sky Sports. "Father Christmas must wear blue because we didn't deserve to win."

"We were in complete control but with 15 minutes to go in the first half I could smell it (Wigan's comeback)...passing the ball bad, losing position, losing balance, conceding a goal in the last second of the first half."

"Wigan had a brilliant attitude," added Mourinho, who said his team were not the same without captain John Terry (back injury).

"I must give credit to the players because in the last 10 minutes they put a lot of pressure on Wigan. But we did not deserve these three points and Wigan must be very disappointed."

Chelsea were cruising after Robben put in Frank Lampard for the

opener and Salomon Kalou headed the second. Heskey then restored parity as the champions threatened to implode.

"It seems like we don't like easy matches," said Mourinho. "Some of the players were complacent...when we finished like we finished how can we play so bad for 25 minutes?"

"The worst thing for me is when you have things in your hands but you waste it."

His United counterpart Alex Ferguson could not have been more content, even if Chelsea's late winner would have taken the gloss off his evening.

"It was a fantastic performance against a very good Villa team," Ferguson said after his side made amends for last week's 1-0 defeat by West Ham United.

"We are definitely top at Christmas and that just goes to show you can't listen to Jose (Mourinho) too much because he said we wouldn't be there at Christmas."



A tensed Jose Mourinho (L) walks past Wigan manager Paul Jewell during Chelsea's Saturday night fixture at Wigan.

PHOTO: INTERNET

## Ferguson hates post-match

AFP, Manchester

Fiery Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has demanded that the English Premier League scraps the traditional post-match manager's interview.

Ferguson has not attended the written press interviews for almost five years, choosing only to honour his contractual obligations to Sky TV interviews as well as in-house TV and radio appointments.

But with several managers landing themselves in hot water with football authorities due to their emotional post-match outbursts, Fergie has called on managers to be protected by doing away with the interviews.

He cited the recent example of Gareth Southgate apparently calling Cristiano Ronaldo a cheat following United's win at Middlesbrough earlier this month, and Jose Mourinho's erroneous attack on Andrew Johnson at Goodison Park last week, as the reason for his belief.

"I don't think I would fall into the trap of criticising individual players myself but it is not easy," he said.

"Sometimes managers react after a game and leave themselves open. It is not easy. I have said this time and time again, after-match press conferences should be abandoned.

"It is a waste of time and does the manager no good whatsoever. All you end up with are sensational headlines. They should be stopped."

Any such move would be deeply unpopular with the notorious English written press that thrives on sensationalism and is already frustrated at having to feed on scraps to write headlines.

## Celta confirm Carew contact

INTERNET, undated

Celta Vigo have confirmed their interest in out-of-favour Lyon striker John Carew. Celta sporting director Felix Canero admitted to Spanish press that they would like to loan the player on the re-opening of the transfer window in January.

Canero was not, however, overly optimistic about the chances of signing the Norway international:

"The situation is currently a bit tricky and I believe there is only a 15 per cent chance of getting him," he said.

"We've still not come to agreement about this subject and it is possible that nothing will change for the next two weeks because (club president) Carlos Mourino is on holiday."

The Galician club are also believed to be interested in Spartak Moscow's Argentine forward Fernando Cavenaghi.

Carew, 26, made his name at Valerenga and Rosenborg of Norway before joining Valencia in 2000, where he stayed for an injury-ridden four seasons before a nomadic three-year period that has seen him play for Roma, Besiktas and Lyon.

## Gravesen fires Celtic

REUTERS, Glasgow

Celtic extended their lead in the Scottish Premier League to 16 points with a 1-0 home win over Falkirk while Rangers moved up to second with a 2-1 victory at Aberdeen on Saturday.

A hotly-disputed first half goal from Thomas Gravesen secured the points for Celtic but captain Neil Lennon was sent off and Kenny Miller missed a penalty in a stormy last couple of minutes.

Gravesen rattled a 28th-minute shot into the top right hand corner of the net with Falkirk furiously protesting the Dane had used a hand to control the ball.

Lennon was brought down by Kenny Milne for the late penalty but the Celtic midfielder squared up to Milne and his Falkirk teammate Anthony Stokes over diving claims and was dismissed. Miller then hit the post from the spot.

Celtic have 51 points from 20 matches while Rangers are on 35 and Aberdeen 34.

Nacho Novo and Libor Sionko struck for Rangers in quick succession midway through the first half but a late Aberdeen goal from Steve Lovell set up a frantic finish.

"We had to show great team spirit and managed to get a very good result. We carry on our good run of games and I am pleased," said Rangers manager Paul Le Guen.

Hearts won 1-0 at Dundee United with a Paul Hartley penalty while Hibernian crushed St Mirren 5-1. Bottom club Dunfermline Athletic drew 0-0 at home to Inverness Caledonian Thistle and had striker Steve Crawford sent off after 78 minutes.

Kilmarnock lost 2-1 at home to Motherwell in a game which yielded three red cards.

The visitors had Jim Paterson sent off after 56 minutes while Kilmarnock's Garry Hay and Motherwell's David Clarkson were dismissed in the final minute.

## Adriano's joy as drought ends

INTERNET, undated



Adriano has thanked Inter patron Massimo Moratti and his teammates for keeping faith in him during his nine-month drought.

"I am truly happy," he told Inter Channel after netting in the 2-1 win over Atalanta this afternoon.

"The team has always had faith in me and that really helped. Now I've been able to get through that brick wall, I hope to score many goals to help the side towards victory."

L'Imperatore hadn't scored a single official goal for his club since the March 29 Champions League quarterfinal against Villarreal.

Many questions had been

asked over his form in the past few months and he was even given a week of complete rest and recuperation in Brazil.

"I must thank all the other play-



ADRIANO

ers and everyone who stayed close to me in this time. These are difficult periods to get through, so you have to be relaxed, patient and always work to improve."

Adriano admits he hasn't always handled the situation well and missed a couple of sitters at San Siro this afternoon before finally hitting the back of the net.

"I have made many mistakes, but I did them because I care about the side, President Moratti and the fans. I felt so bad that I couldn't do things well for them."

The last to give up on the Brazilian was always oil baron Moratti, who always defended his striker in public.

"Moratti helped me a great deal. My father has gone now and I think he gave me some very important advice. He's a wonderful person and I hope to do everything I can to make him happy."

## Roeder proud of flying Magpies

AFP, Newcastle



Glenn Roeder, the Newcastle United manager, heaped credit on his players after a 3-1 home victory over Tottenham which maintained the north-east club's recent climb up the Premiership table.

Newcastle have now won five of their last six league games to move up into 11th place, turning their season around since supporters demonstrated following a defeat here at St James' Park by Sheffield United less than two months ago.

"I can't give the whole squad enough credit because we weren't in a good position 10 weeks ago," Roeder said. "We were looking over our shoulder and now we're looking up."

"I was demanding a win against Spurs to get us to 25 points at the half-way stage of the season -- and getting there is an outstanding achievement because we had every excuse to buckle under the amount of games and the amount of injuries," former Newcastle defender Roeder added after this latest win.

"Footballers have been known to take any excuse, but you can't accuse this lot of doing that."

Newcastle's win was rarely in doubt after they scored twice in the first seven minutes through Kieron Dyer and Obafemi Martins.

Spurs hit back through Danny Murphy, but a mistake by Spurs keeper Paul Robinson presented Scott Parker with the chance to score United's third.

"I couldn't have asked for a better start. I told my players at the interval that we didn't need a fourth goal -- the important thing was not to concede another," Roeder explained.

The only worry for Roeder before the game at Bolton on Boxing Day was a groin injury to keeper Shay Given, replaced for the final five minutes against Spurs by Pavel Srnicek, now in his second spell with Newcastle.

Martin Jol, the Tottenham manager, has no worries about his keeper, although England international Robinson was badly at fault for Parker's goal.

"Paul will hold his hands up that the third goal was his fault when he didn't catch the ball, but he is a fine goalkeeper who has done well for us this season," Jol said.

The Dutchman also insisted that seventh-placed Tottenham wasted chances to extend their own impres-

sive run. "Two goals in the first seven minutes -- that's just what you don't want," he said.

"All credit to Newcastle, though, because they played in an aggressive and clinical manner, particularly in the centre of the park."

"They didn't play better than us, but they took us on the break and showed us respect."

"The score was horrendous but we could have had a far better result. We just weren't clinical enough."

"Even at 2-0, we had opportunities on four or five occasions. We could have been 1-0 ahead and 10 seconds later the ball was in our net -- that's probably typical of us this (Saturday) afternoon."

"Their second goal was offside. The linesman was 10 or 12 yards away and didn't give it."

"I know Newcastle are a dangerous side, but overall our play was a bit more accurate. Our possession game was good but we couldn't finish it off -- and that's what they did."

"We could have scored more goals today. That's the difference between our home and away form, but we are not far off. We are still in a good position."



Liverpool's Spanish midfielder Xabi Alonso (L) jumps in joy after scoring against Watford during their Premiership match at Anfield on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	36 Atmosphere	DOWN	16 Dine
1 January through December	37 Sample phone bill	1 Run up the phone bill	20 Paradise
5 Tree fluid	38 Mexican menu item	2 Compass pt.	22 You
8 PC picture	41 Youngster	3 Chewed and swallowed	23 Unusual
12 Oppositionist	42 Second-hand	26 Intermittent	24 "Be-Bop--"
13 Mongrel	43 In one's heart	27 Ellipse	28 Faithful pooch
14 California wine valley	48 Place	29 Thirds of a yard	31 Close
15 Memento	49 Little demon	6 Diving bird	34 Settled a debt
17 Child's play	50 Waikiki wingding	7 Opening night	35 Hoedown instrument
18 Total	51 Reindeer herder, probably	8 Foot part	9 Is unable
19 Courage	52 Director's call	10 October stone	37 "Great Expectations" hero
24 Staffer	53 Formerly, formerly	11 Scuff of the neck	38 Right end of a gas gauge
25 Melt			39 Largest continent
26 Recover from, overnight			40 Military vehicle
30 "— the fields we go"			41 Maintained
31 Reject with disdain			44 Ostrich's relative
32 Compete			45 "— Town"
33 Tom's aperture?			46 Existed
35 Disappear gradually			47 Fanatic

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13				14	
15				16					17	
			18			19	20			
21	22	23			24					
25					26			27	28	29
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33			34						35	
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42										
48						43	44			
									50	
51							52			53

### CRYPTOQUIP

N R J B Z H R W D V K K M C K E  
S H V O B E Z R C N D H W B O O  
V B M B H S P R H . D K Z W S E Y P  
H B D Y R ' H P S J X - H X S Q R C .  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN THIN, GAUNT  
PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU RUDELY, I GUESS YOU  
ARE DRAWING LANK STARES.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals O  
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.