



Aston Villa's Gareth Barry scores from the penalty spot against Charlton Athletic during their Premiership match at The Valley on Saturday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

## Charlton pip Villa

INTERNET, undated

Charlton Athletic secured a crucial and dramatic late 2-1 win over 10-man Aston Villa at The Valley thanks to substitute Bryan Hughes' injury-time header.

The Addicks fell behind to Gareth Barry's penalty on the stroke of half-time, but goals after the interval from Darren Bent and Hughes claimed the three points.

Villa weathered an early storm to forge ahead and had been looking comfortable in South East London before Barry was given his marching orders for hauling down Dennis Rommedahl as the last man.

The Addicks unsurprisingly started the contest a little tentatively, while the visitors never tested keeper Scott Carson after opting for a conservative approach from the off.

The first flashpoint arrived on 10 minutes when referee Rob Styles opted to book both Olof Mellberg

and Talal El Karkouri for little more than handbags in the penalty area prior to a Villa free-kick.

Charlton began to assert themselves on the contest with Marcus Bent, who was one goal short of a century of goals, sending a long-range effort well wide of target.

The home side were desperately unlucky not to be in front minutes later when Gabor Kiraly pulled off a superb fingertip save to push Darren Ambrose's curling effort onto the crossbar.

Charlton's fans held their breath when Darren Bent stayed down following a left-footed shot, although he was able to soldier on despite landing awkwardly under a challenge from Mellberg.

Alan Pardew's side continued to press and Ambrose sent a left-footer straight at Kiraly in the visitors' goal after the former Newcastle United man was played in by Rommedahl.

A lapse in concentration by El Karkouri gifted Villa the chance to forge ahead, but Gabriel Agbonlahor's header into the ground was pushed off the bar by

Carson after the Moroccan stopper amazingly left Gavin McCann's crossing.

The mistake put The Addicks on the back foot and they were punished shortly after when Herman Heidarsson's lunge on Barry in the penalty area resulted in a spot-kick.

Replays vindicated Styles' decision and Barry needed no second invitation from 12 yards out by lashing into the roof of the net for his ninth of the season.

Juan Pablo Angel was close to doubling Villa's advantage after the break, but a fine intervention from Bryan Hughes prevented the Colombian from heading home Steven Davis' left-wing cross.

With Villa in firm control of the contest they found themselves pegged back when Mellberg misjudged El Karkouri's long ball allowing Darren Bent to nip in and head into the far post past Kiraly.

The visitors suffered another hammer blow soon after when goalscorer Barry was forced to haul down Rommedahl as the last man following a slip by colleague Gary Cahill at the back.

Styles was left with no choice but to produce red and Charlton were close to forging ahead when El Karkouri's driven free-kick crashed into the brave Aaron Hughes on the line.

Villa rode their luck again when Darren Bent's back post header crashed off the bar and from the rebound Aaron Hughes was perfectly placed to keep Ambrose's close-range effort from crossing the line.

Martin O'Neill maintained his side's shape at the back by replacing Angel with Wilfred Bouma, although Bryan Hughes came close with a volley that drifted just over.

Villa nearly stole the points late on when Agbonlahor latched on to McCann's through ball, however, with just Carson to beat sent his toe-poked effort around the keeper and the far post.

Just when it looked like Villa would bag yet another Premiership draw Bryan Hughes snatched a dramatic win when he headed home from close range after Heidarsson did well to head back across goal at the far post.

## Haller suffers heart attack

INTERNET, undated

West Germany legend Helmut Haller has suffered a heart attack and is in intensive care in hospital.

The 67-year-old scored in the 1966 World Cup final against England at Wembley and there are fears over his health.

"I am very worried," his son Juergen said on Friday.

"My father is not very well at all." The forward played in three World Cups for his country, scoring 13 goals from 33 caps.

Haller had spells in Italy with Bologna and Juventus.

## Becks offered to Inter

INTERNET, undated

Real Madrid have offered David Beckham to Inter after conceding defeat in their efforts to hold on to the midfielder, according to reports in England.

The former England captain has been at the centre of constant speculation since the arrival of new Coach Fabio Capello this summer.

The arrival of Argentine youngster Fernando Gago in Madrid has put Beckham's first-team place in further doubt as the midfielder demands guarantees over his role before signing a new contract.

His current deal expires in June and with a renewal looking increasingly unlikely it is now believed that the Merengues are prepared to cash in on the player in January.

The 31-year-old has reportedly been offered to the Nerazzurri for a fee of just 4-million-pounds, a deal that may prove too enticing for President Massimo Moratti if Luis Figo were to depart in the winter transfer window.

However, Real are still hoping that Beckham will opt to extend his current 100,000pounds-per-week contract for another two years, although Becks has insisted that his decision will not be based on financial reasons.

"After the conversations that we have maintained in the last months, David Beckham already has our offer on the table. Now it is he who has to decide," explained club President Ramon Calderon.

"We are very happy with David and we all would like him to continue playing for the club and hope that he renews his contract," added the controversial President.

Despite those comments though, it is thought that the Spanish giants are yet to receive any response to their offer. Beckham will be able to discuss a Bosman move with other clubs on January 1.

## Pele's son released

AFP, Sao Paulo

Edson do Nascimento, son of Brazilian football legend Pele, has been handed a conditional release from prison where he has spent 10 months on suspicion of money laundering, his lawyer said.

"Edinho" has been in the Tremembe jail since February, and also spent six months in jail for drug trafficking last year which ended with a conditional release.

His lawyer Sidney Goncalves has insisted that his client's latest detention was an "abuse" of his rights and had come without any proof.

Edinho is a former footballer with the Santos club, where Pele also played.

## Milan want me: Bojinov

INTERNET, undated

Juventus striker Valeri Bojinov claims Milan want to sign him, but his dream move to the San Siro could be blocked by the Serie B giants.

Bojinov has made just five appearances for the Bianconeri this season following a summer move from Fiorentina that saw Adrian Mutu go in the other direction.

It is well known that the 20-year-old wants first-team football and Bojinov, who is still part-owned by the Viola, said goal-shy Milan were after him.

"Milan want me," he told Gazzetta dello Sport. "It doesn't depend on me. It's up to Milan to deal with Juve and Fiorentina."

But Saturday's Tuttosport quotes a Juventus official as saying: "He will not leave in January."

Milan's shortage of goals this season has been well documented following the summer departure of Andriy Shevchenko to Chelsea.

With their proposed move for Real Madrid's Antonio Cassano seemingly dead in the water and Marco Borriello having been suspended for a doping offence, Milan have turned their attention to Bojinov.

Bojinov became the youngest foreigner to score in Serie A when he opened his account for Lecce aged just 16.

## Terry making good progress

AFP, London



Chelsea and England captain John Terry went jogging Friday at his club's training

ground, just a day after surgery on a back injury, the English Premier League champions announced.

Terry, 26, has not featured in the second-placed London club's last three Premiership matches, in which they have conceded six goals and fallen four points behind leaders Manchester United.

On Thursday he had an operation in France to remove what Chelsea said was a "sequestered lumbar intervertebral disc".

Chelsea club doctor Bryan English, who accompanied Terry to France, said: "The instructions from the surgeon were to run the day after surgery. That is great for

us and great for John.

"We are not going to do anything with John that is going to cause him problems. I am not in the game of pushing him out there because it is for the benefit of Chelsea -- but I also don't want to hold him back unnecessarily."

It has been suggested that Terry could be back within weeks, not months, but whether he will be fit to lead England in their first match of 2007, against Spain at Old Trafford on February 7, remains uncertain.

English added: "I won't say exactly how long he is going to take to recover."

"But when I hear so-called experts say that he is going to have a six-week recovery, when people comment when they don't know his pathology, what he has had done or who he has been working with I have a bit of a problem with that."

"With this particular diagnosis,

there is a way of removing the prolapsed disc which involves not cutting through any contractile structure -- no muscle, no ligaments -- just the disc that is causing the problem.

"It is removing it via an endoscope with an optic camera to see exactly what you are doing. It is a difficult procedure, and I am sure troublesome in the wrong hands."

"It took a few days to find out the best person to do it, because we are not going to send someone like John Terry to anybody other than who we think is the best and most experienced person in the world."

"All arrows pointed to Dr Jean Destandau, a neurosurgeon in France, to do it. If there had been someone along those lines with that level of experience doing that technique in the UK, I am sure we would have used them."

## 'Crouch going nowhere'

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez has dismissed reports that he was preparing to sell giant England striker Peter Crouch and bring Valencia forward David Villa to Anfield during the January transfer window.

Crouch's future became the subject of renewed speculation since he missed a good chance during Liverpool's 1-0 Boxing Day defeat against Blackburn Rovers.

But former Valencia boss Benitez, speaking ahead of Saturday's Premiership match away to Tottenham, insisted Crouch would be staying put.

"I can be very clear -- we do not want to buy Villa and we do not want to sell Peter Crouch. Villa is a

fantastic player but we are not interested in buying him now."

Crouch looked forlorn when replaced by Dirk Kuyt against Rovers but Benitez said he was happy with the forward's efforts.

"He is working hard and the only thing you can do with a striker in this situation is continue to support him. If he continues to work as he has been doing, I will be happy."

"You can never say you are really pleased with the strikers because it is important to take your chances. But the important thing to say to all of your strikers is just to keep going."

Australia full-back Lucas Neill could move from Blackburn to Liverpool during the transfer window but Benitez does not envisage making many new signings next month.

"If you are a top side and you

can do something you must always look for improvement but at the moment we are happy with the squad we have got and they are all playing well."

Liverpool dropped down to sixth after losing to Rovers and their next two matches see them up against fellow Champions League hopefuls Spurs and Bolton.

Benitez insisted he was happy with Liverpool's form heading into the New Year.

"You should be more worried if you do not create chances, but if you have a lot of chances and you keep doing the same thing then it will change."

"Spurs are playing well and scoring goals but we are also a strong team and had a lot of clean sheets before Blackburn. We have confidence because we are creating so many chances."

## Sicilian humour

AFP, Rome

Palermo president Maurizio Zamparini on Saturday expressed his disgust after a director of the Sicilian-based Serie A club was sent the severed head of a young goat.

Rino Foschi, Palermo's director of sport, received the macabre package on December 22. It was sent from the city and wrapped in Christmas paper.

The grisly parcel was opened by Foschi's wife on Christmas eve while he was in Cesena, a small city in the north east of Italy.

"It's a very unsavoury gesture that offends the whole city and not just the football club," Zamparini said.

Foschi gave a statement to police who are also looking into two similarly sinister incidents that took place in Palermo over the Christmas period.

Adele Mormino, Superintendent of Palermo's Culture and Environmental Heritage, was also delivered a goat's head, this time wrapped in cellophane, while Palermo mayor Diego Cammarata was sent a bullet.

The motive behind the grim packages is unknown.

## Barca deny Belletti bid

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona have moved quickly to quell speculation that right back Juliano Belletti will be sold to Milan in January. Italian press reports claim the Rossoneri have made a 5-million-euro (3-million-pound) offer for the Brazilian, who scored the winner in May's Champions League final.

They have recently targeted Belletti following complications in their efforts to sign Lazio's Massimo Oddo.

But Belletti's agent and Barca sporting director Txiki Begiristain have both denied any official contact with the Serie A giants.

"We have not spoken with Italy. Our idea is to renew his contract beyond 2008," Belletti's brother and agent Sandro told Sport.

Begiristain added: "I have no idea where the news has come from and I find it very strange, because nobody from Milan has been in contact with us."

"There is nothing at all in it. Perhaps an offer has been made to them, but nothing has arrived at the club."

## Drogba reveals Chelsea doubts

AFP, London



Chelsea striker Didier Drogba has admitted he thought about leaving the English Premier

League champions before the start of the current campaign.

The Ivory Coast international will take his tally for the season to 20 goals if he nets in Saturday's west London derby against Fulham, his fine form having secured him a new four-year-contract.

Nevertheless Drogba revealed he had doubts about staying with Chelsea but stressed they had nothing to do with the arrival of 30 million pounds forward Andriy Shevchenko from AC Milan before the season started.

"Every end of the season you have to think about what you have done," said Drogba. "I had some teams who wanted to sign me so I had to think as I had won the league here for two consecutive years."

"I was thinking but not too much because Chelsea showed how they respect me and how they wanted me to stay."

"It was not about Shevchenko but was just about Chelsea and me," he told BBC's Football Focus.

Drogba is carrying a slight thigh injury but will lead the attack against Fulham even though Blues manager Jose Mourinho had considered playing him in defence, with centre-half and skipper John Terry leading the attack and Khalid Boulahrouz suspended.

Second-placed Chelsea trail leaders Manchester United by four points heading into Saturday's fixtures having conceded six goals in their last four games.

And Drogba admitted Chelsea had missed the influence of England captain Terry.

"It is difficult to play without John. Even if Paulo Ferreira, Boulahrouz and Ricardo Carvalho are doing as well as they can, John is still the boss in this team and we are waiting for him to be back quick."

Chelsea are also without first-choice goalkeepers Petr Cech (head) and Carlo Cudicini (thigh) as well as midfielders Arjen Robben (hamstring) and Joe Cole (foot). But assistant manager Steve Clarke insisted there was no sense of panic at Stamford Bridge.

"We are leaking goals we don't normally leak. We won two of the games so that was not a drama. We dropped two points (in a 2-2 draw) against Reading which was disappointing but over the course of a season you are going to have disappointing days and you have to bounce back from it."

"They don't hand out any trophies at this time of the year. We would prefer it if the gap wasn't there or was in our favour but it is not a big drama, it is just one week-end of football really."

"If we win and they (United) lose, it is suddenly one point. Fulham is a very big game and they always want to beat us so we expect a big test. We are ready for that."

## Tyson in trouble again

Boxing

AFP, Los Angeles

Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson was arrested Friday on charges of driving under the influence and possession of drugs after nearly crashing into a police car, justice authorities said.

The notorious 40-year-old former boxer once known as the "baddest man on the planet" was stopped by police soon after leaving a nightclub in Scottsdale, Arizona at around 1:47 am, Buckeye Police Department officer Jim Garber said.

"He came out of the nightclub and almost collided with officers patrolling in a squad car outside. He was followed and stopped and arrested for DUI and possession of drugs," Garber told AFP.

Tyson, who was travelling alone, was booked at Maricopa County's Fourth Street jail and appeared in court Friday. He was released but ordered to report for drug and alcohol checks pending a further court appearance on January 16.

A police report of the arrest submitted

to the court said tests had shown Tyson was under the influence of a cocktail of drugs including depressants, stimulants and cannabis. No alcohol was found in his system.

Three bags of white powder believed to be cocaine were found after officers carried out a search and Tyson admitted he was "an addict and had a problem," according to the police statement.

The two-time heavyweight champion announced his retirement from boxing after he lost to unheralded Irishman Kevin McBride on June 11, 2005.

Tyson (50-6, 44 KOs) squandered an estimated 300 million dollars in earnings and declared bankruptcy in 2003, and recently fought in a series of exhibition bouts in order to improve his finances.

Friday's arrest is the latest in a series of brushes with the law that Tyson has had since he exploded onto the boxing scene in the mid-1980s, becoming the youngest heavyweight champion in history in 1986, at the age of 20.

Considered unbeatable for the rest of the decade, Tyson's career went off the rails when he suffered a shock upset to James "Buster"

Douglas in 1990.

In 1992, Tyson was convicted of raping a beauty queen at a pageant in Indianapolis, Indiana and was sentenced to six years in prison.

He was released in 1995, and although he regained two of his world titles in 1996, he was never to recapture the aura of invincibility he had once enjoyed.

He was knocked out by Evander Holyfield in 1996, and the following year was banned from boxing after he bit a chunk out of Holyfield's ear during their rematch in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Tyson was jailed again in 1999 for assaulting two people following a traffic accident.

After his release, he sought a money-spinning bout with British heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, which was delayed after a January 2002 press conference where Tyson sparked a mass brawl in which he sank his teeth into Lewis's leg.

He was comprehensively beaten by Lewis when their fight eventually took place and subsequently suffered a string of defeats against journeymen which prompted him to retire last year.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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**CRYPTOQUIP**  
H K G I W R F V L W K A H C Z  
G T G I N C H Q F G T G P H A L P  
U L T I A W P F L G E U W R V Q Z W R  
I G V V A N G A A H I E A G V E ?  
**Saturday's Cryptquip:** WHAT WOULD MAKE A SMALL DABBING DUCK ACT VERY FEARLESSLY? IT MIGHT BE ITS NERVES OF TEAL.  
Today's Cryptquip Clue: Z equals Y  
The Cryptquip 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.