

## French First Division Morale boosting win for Marseille

PARIS. Sept 27: Marseille went some way to silencing the boo-boys Sunday with a 2-1 win at Rennes, a much-needed tonic ahead of next Wednesday's Champions League showdown at Manchester United, reports AFP.

Rolland Courbis had demanded the side show their class after a poor start of just two wins in seven league games and Marseille eventually pulled the match out of the fire after Franck Gava had put Rennes ahead after just five minutes.

Italian forward Fabrizio Ravanelli levelled from the spot after 35 minutes and Frederic Brando bagged the winner ten minutes after the restart to send the Mediterranean side fifth in the table, two points behind leaders Lyon.

Both scorers blotted their copybook with bookings, however.

Rennes thought they were robbed after Jean-Luc Dogon had a header ruled out after just 60 seconds for a foul.

The win capped a good week for Courbis' side, who won at Croatia Zagreb in midweek as the French set their sights on their Old Trafford date.

Elsewhere Sunday, Lens slid to a demoralising 2-0 home defeat against promoted Saint Etienne.

Two goals in five minutes late in the first half from Brazilians Alex and Aloisio silenced the 40,000 home crowd and plunged Lens, the 1998 league champions, into the relegation zone after a dreadful start to the season.

## Bundesliga

### Kirsten takes Leverkusen atop

BERLIN. Sept 27: Bayer Leverkusen went top of the heap in the German Bundesliga on Sunday following a stylish 3-1 come-from-behind home win over Kaiserslautern, two late Ulf Kirsten goals doing the damage, reports AFP.

The veteran German international striker struck in the 82nd and 85th minutes after Thomas Brdaric had levelled Michael Schjönenberg's 27th minute opener for the visitors to leave Leverkusen a point clear of Borussia Dortmund, who scored a 1-0 victory at home to Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday.

That result, courtesy of a Lars Ricken goal before a 68,000 crowd, sent Dortmund top for the first time since March 1997.

Leverkusen quickly reestablished their pre-eminence as Kirsten's efforts gave the side their best start in 20 seasons, although coach Christophe Daum said the first half performance was like watching a team of old men.

Elsewhere, Hamburg, who have endured a long barren run since their European Cup success in 1983, place third after a 2-2 draw with Wolfsburg, while the shock of the weekend was reigning champions Bayern Munich suffering a 1-0 home defeat Friday against

Bulgarian Krassimir Balakov scored the winner from the spot with 15 minutes remaining to hand Bayern their first home loss in 19 months.

Bayern are now fourth, four points adrift of the leaders.

In Sunday's other match, Arminia Bielefeld edged SC Freiburg 2-1.

Kaiserslautern were their own worst enemies in Leverkusen, with Andreas Buck sent off shortly after half-time and have lurched perilously close to the bottom of the table less than two seasons after winning the title.

Hansa Rostock and 1860 Munich parted goalless Saturday even though Rostock had Victor Agali and Rene Schneider red carded in the final eight minutes.

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Lazio forward Alen Bokšić (L) and Lilian Thuram of Parma fight for possession during their Serie A encounter on September 26. —AFP photo

## Serie A

### Vieri does it again



MILAN, Sept 27: Inter Milan and Lazio opened up a two-point gap at the top of the Serie A on Sunday, after Christian Vieri and Matias Almeyda both scored second-half winners for Italy's title rivals, reports AFP.

Almeyda's will be a candidate for goal of the season after his 30-metre piledriver earned Lazio a 2-1 victory over Parma, whose coach Alberto Malesani is now clinging onto his job by a thread.

Vieri meanwhile made another re-payment on his world record transfer fee; the 50-million dollar man heading home in a tense 1-0 win over Torino that kept Inter ahead of Lazio on goal difference.

There was drama though after 25 minutes at Parma as home team captain Antonio Benarrivo was knocked unconscious, albeit briefly, after suffering a head injury in a collision with Lazio's Chilean striker Marcelo Salas.

Stretchered off and rushed to hospital, doctors said he was in no danger but would nevertheless keep him in overnight for observation.

Back on the pitch, Parma's World Cup winner Alain Boghossian managed the rare feat of scoring at both ends.

The Frenchman deflected in a shot by Salas in the 30th minute but then nodded Parma's equaliser in the 62nd, only for Argentinian Almeyda to unleash a match-winning drive which plunged Parma into crisis.

Candidates for the league title when the season started only a month ago, Parma are currently candidates for relegation, lying third from bottom with just two points on the board.

Malesani may have guided his team to the Italian Cup, the UEFA Cup and the Italian Super Cup trophies over the last six months, but the memories of Italian club officials are notoriously short.

There was nothing but smiles though for Inter Milan after Vieri nodded home their winner in the 75th minute.

However, the central midfielders had to share the limelight with goalkeeper Angelo Peruzzi, who made a stunning penalty save early in the second half.

Peruzzi used his fingertips to deflect the spot-kick from Torino striker Marco Ferrante, who had converted his previous 17 penalties.

Peruzzi said: "Ferrante hit the ball hard, but goalkeepers

need their share of luck when it comes to saving penalties. And today I had that."

Coach Marcello Lippi said: "The team did well in the first half and created four or five clear scoring chances, but didn't convert them.

"And after missing out like that, you're bound to let your opponents take some of the initiative and we did suffer in the second half. But then in the Serie A these days, you have to suffer for 20 or 30 minutes."

Vieri said: "Winning against Torino won't be easy for anyone. We had loads of chances in the first half, but weren't able to finish them. Unfortunately, there are days when the ball just doesn't want to go in."

Top scorer in the Serie A, Vieri has scored five and made three of Inter's nine league goals this season.

Inter and Lazio have 10 points from four games and lead four clubs on eight points apiece - AC Milan, Fiorentina, AS Roma and amazingly, newly-promoted Reggina, who are enjoying a fairytale start to the southern club's first ever season in the Serie A.

AC Milan thrashed Bologna 4-0 on Saturday night, while Fiorentina drew 1-1 with Perugia on Sunday.

Roma coach Fabio Capello was satisfied with the points, but not with the sloppy defending.

I'm very angry with the defense for having given away a goal like they did," he said. "We had chances to score more goals but lacked the killer instinct. And it was that laxity which cost us the goal."

Swedish striker Yssel Osmanovski headed Bari's winner against Verona, while Reggina snatched an identical 1-0 win over Piacenza thanks to Bruno Cirillo's 85th minute strike and Cagliari drew 1-1 with Venezia.

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would have been really uphill."

Trapattini said the team still hasn't recovered mentally from last week's 4-2 hiding in Barcelona.

"Our problem is a psychological one," he said. "In the first 10 minutes, we handed Udinese three scoring chances.

"Like the match in

Barcelona, we were frightened of our opponents, even though we were better organised this time. As soon we came under pressure, we were in crisis."

New signing Vincenzo Montella scored his first league goal for AS Roma as their beaten man Perugia 3-1.

Montella pounced on a loose ball after strike partner Marco Delvecchio's effort was blocked, while Perugia had Roberto Ripa sent off just before the break.

Brazilian newcomer Asuncao made it 2-0 with a ballistic 20-metre shot after Delvecchio laid the ball back, shortly before another Perugia defender, Alessandro Calori, was ordered off.

Both captains then made it onto the scoresheet, with Renato Oliveiro scoring for Perugia and Roma's Francesco Totti slotting home an 84th minute penalty.

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## STANDINGS

Italian Serie A table on Sunday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points)						
Inter Milan	4	3	1	0	9	1
Lazio	4	3	1	0	7	2
AC Milan	4	2	2	0	10	4
Fiorentina	4	2	2	0	8	8
AS Roma	4	2	2	0	7	3
Reggina	4	2	2	0	5	3
Juventus	4	2	1	1	6	4
Udinese	4	1	2	1	6	5
Lecce	4	1	2	1	5	5
Bari	4	1	2	1	2	2
Perugia	4	1	1	2	6	7
Torino	4	1	1	2	2	5
Verona	4	1	0	3	3	8
Venezia	4	0	2	2	4	7
Piacenza	4	0	2	2	2	6
Parma	4	0	2	2	4	9
Bologna	4	0	2	1	6	2
Cagliari	4	0	1	3	2	1

## Primera Liga

### Vallecano run ends

MADRID. Sept 27: After five matches in the big time the bubble burst for Spanish surprise package Rayo Vallecano on Sunday when they went down 1-0 at home to Real Zaragoza to concede top spot in the Primera Liga to Barcelona, the *Primerera* on Wednesday.

Both the leading pair have 12 points from five games - but Barca have a superior goal difference after thrashing Betis 4-1 at the Nou Camp on Saturday aided by a Dani hattrick.

Former Aston Villa star Savo Milosevic scored Zaragoza's winner midway through the second half to bring newly-promoted Vallecano's astonishing start to a grinding halt.

Barcelona's rivals Real Madrid were castigated by coach John Toshack following a bitterly disappointing 1-1 draw Saturday at promoted Malaga.

Real Madrid, who thrashed Molde in midweek, were unable to reproduce that form as they had to settle for a 1-1 draw at promoted Malaga, which left them third, three points behind Barca.

That was our worst performance of the season, and we go back to Madrid lucky not to have lost," raged Toshack after Malaga made his look distinctly ordinary.

Elsewhere, Atletico Madrid's former Leeds striker Hasselbaink was on target as his struggling beat Racing Santander 2-0 Sunday for their first win while promoted Numancia sprang a surprise, winning by the same score at Deportivo La Coruna.

Rayo Vallecano's Alcazar (L) and Velliesca of Real Madrid are in pursuit of the ball during their Primera Liga clash on September 26. —AFP photo

## STANDINGS

Spanish Primera Liga table after Sunday matches (Played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points)						
Barcelona	5	4	0	1	12	4
Rayo Vallecano	5	4	0	1	7	3
Real Madrid	5	2	3	0	10	6
Celta Vigo	5	3	0	2	6	4
Alaves	5	3	0	2	7	7
Espanyol	5	3	0	2	7	8
Deportivo La Coruna	5	2	2	1	8	4
Real Zaragoza	5	2	2	1	6	3
Real Sociedad	5	2	1	2	9	8
Malaga	5	2	1	2	8	7
Real Valladolid	5	2	1	2	5	7
Racing Santander	5	2	1	2	7	8
Numancia	5	2	1			