

English Div One

Charlton go four points clear

LONDON, Jan 16: Charlton beat Crewe 1-0 at the Valley on Saturday for their sixth successive win to move four points clear at the top of the English First Division, reports AFP.

A 13th-minute goal from Graham Stuart separated the sides, but Alan Curbishley's team may see their lead cut to one point again if Manchester City defeat Fulham at Maine Road on Sunday.

Curbishley said his team deserved the three points which kept their quest for a return to the Premiership on course.

"I think we deserved the three points today and I am just pleased to keep a winning run going."

"It would have been nice to score a bit more but I'd have settled for any win beforehand."

Crewe boss Dario Gradi said that poor passing was to blame for his team's defeat.

"Our passing from the back players was a little sloppy today, we didn't bring the ball out well enough."

"Having said that we had a good share of the game and looked as though we might do something at the end - but we didn't make the amount of possession count."

Ipswich kept on the leaders' heels with a convincing 3-0 victory over bottom club Swindon.

Mike Stockwell opened the scoring after 27 minutes and young striker Richard Naylor, with goals in the 37th and 82nd minutes, sealed the win at Portman Road.

Barnsley took the points at Selhurst Park as Dave Bassett visited one of his former clubs, Crystal Palace.

Two goals in the first 15 minutes were enough to bring a 2-0 win despite having David Tutt sent off for deliberate handball.

Bruce Dyer grabbed the first and Darren Barnard converted a penalty for his 12th goal of the season.

Huddersfield's slide continued with a 2-0 defeat at Blackburn, the club rejuvenated by new manager Tony Parkes.

Damien Duff put Rovers in front after 29 minutes and Damien Johnson added the killer goal a minute before the break.

Cup heroes Tranmere found league football less inspiring than cup competitions and a 0-0 draw with Stockport did little for either club.

QPR, in the chase for the play-offs, went down to their first defeat at home with a Claus Jensen goal giving Bolton a 1-0 win.

Walsall came from behind to jump two places up the table with a 2-1 win over Sheffield United, losing in the league for the first time under Neil Warnock.

Plymouth, under new manager Tony Pulis, gave away a two-goal lead to lose 3-2 at home to Wolves, with Ade Akinbiyi scoring the decisive goal in the last minute.

Grimsby and Nottingham Forest produced a thriller at Blundell Park where the visitors finished with nine men and on the wrong end of a 4-3 scoreline.

Jack Lester and Lee Ashcroft put Town two up, only for Alan Rogers and a Mark Lever own goal to leave things all square.

Jon Olav Hjelde was sent off for a professional foul before Ashcroft netted a 67th-minute penalty to put the hosts 3-2 up before Kevin Donovan added a fourth.

Forest keeper Dave Beasant then joined Hjelde for an early bath and Rogers bagged a second for David Platt's men in the dying minutes to set up a dramatic finish but the home side held on for victory.

Birmingham got back to winning ways with two goals from Martin Grainger giving them a 2-0 victory over Norwich while West Brom and Port Vale ended goalless in the West Midlands derby.

Cerezo taking over Antlers?

TOKYO, Jan 16: Former Brazilian international Toninho Cerezo has emerged as the favourite to take over as manager of Kashima Antlers, reports Reuters.

Toninho was a member of Brazil's brilliant four-man midfield at the 1982 World Cup in Spain alongside Socrates, Falcao and Zico, who ended his playing career with Kashima in 1994 and is now the club's technical director and general manager.

Antlers, league champions in 1996 and 1998, fired Brazilian boss Ze Mario midway through last season and Zico took over as caretaker manager until the end of the year.

Toninho is now manager of Vitoria Bahia in Brazil.

Kashima officials hope to make a formal announcement early this week and have Toninho in place to prepare Antlers for the Asian Club Championship quarter-finals in the south-west Japan city of Kagoshima in the last week of February.

About half of J League soccer managers are foreigners.

Chamot may join Milan

MILAN, Jan 16: Argentina's international Juan Antonio Chamot is close to moving from Atletico Madrid to AC Milan, the Italian club's vice-president Adriano Galliani said on Saturday.

He said the clubs were not far from agreeing a transfer fee.

Galliani also said the departure of French defender Bruno Ngotty, targeted by Real Madrid and Bordeaux, depended on the purchase of central defender Chamot.

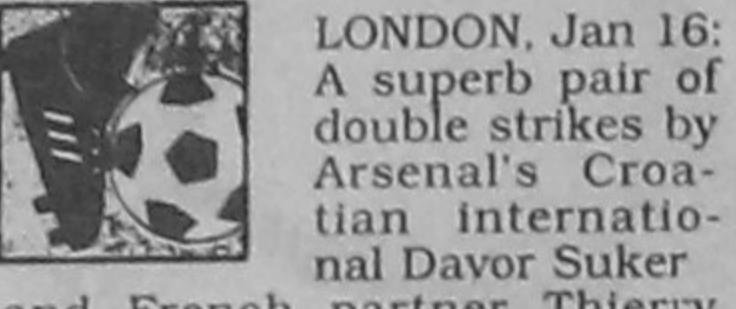


Liverpool superstar Michael Owen (C) tries to intercept a shot from Robert Page of Watford during their Premiership encounter at Vicarage Road on January 15.

— AFP photo

Premiership

Gunners gun Sunderland down



LONDON, Jan 16: A superb pair of double strikes by Arsenal's Croatian international Davor Suker and French partner Thierry Henry inspired the Gunners to a 4-1 win over Sunderland in the English Premiership on Saturday, reports AFP.

The win kept Arsenal in third, a point behind leaders Leeds United, but level on points with Manchester United, although the Red Devils, whom they meet on Monday, have three games in hand - for Sunderland, who dropped to fifth, it left them with just one point from their last 12.

In other matches Chelsea failed to capitalise on Leicester City missing six first team players only drawing 1-1 at home - Dennis Wise grabbing an 85th minute equaliser for the Blues.

Czech Republic international Vladimir Smicer came off the bench in the second-half to give Liverpool the three points and fourth place with a 3-2 win over a gassy Watford, who had fought back from 2-0 down to 2-2.

Despite their bravery Watford are now just a point off the bottom after Sheffield Wednesday prevailed 2-1 over third from bottom Bradford City.

Henry scored in the third minute beating the challenge by former Arsenal favourite Steve Bould and his right-footed shot was so powerful that despite keeper Thomas Sorensen getting a hand to it it still flew into the net.

Suker then scored the goal of the match, a memorable way to get his 10th for the club, as he curled a lob from the corner of the area that beat Sorensen and went in off the post.

The 32-year-old Croat added another a minute later hitting it first time into the Sunderland net after Henry's pullback from the by-line.

Arsenal oldboy Niall Quinn salvaged something when he fired past David Seaman with a left footed shot but Henry put the result beyond doubt as he turned Bould and shot right footed under Sorensen's body for his 10th of the season.

However Spurs, with only three Premierships away wins this season, hit back two minutes later as Chris Armstrong

franco Zola was making his 150th appearance, grabbed a late point when Wise headed a five minutes from the finish.

Derby County won their second successive Premiership match off veteran Everton defender Dave Watson and went over keeper Paul Gerrard's head.

Derby's hero was Marcus Christie who scored twice on his full debut for the club while Jamaican international striker Deon Burton also got on the act with a superb goal, flicking the ball over his shoulder with his back to goal.

Boro's dreadful day continued as their Colombian international striker Hamilton Ricard had his weakly taken penalty saved by Derby keeper Matt Poom.

Aston Villa had looked in command when Benito Carbone set up dynamic midfielder Ian Taylor for his ninth goal of the season and seventh in seven matches in the first-half.

Coventry eased home 2-0 over Wimbledon with the inspirational Gary McAllister converted a penalty for his 100th career league goal - he also set up Robbie Keane for the second.

Wednesday grabbed what could prove to be three vital points in their fight to avoid the drop with two second-half goals as Niclas Alexandersson shot home from 10 yards past keeper Matt Clarke, a former Wednesday player.

The hosts added a second, after a series of embarrassing misses by Sibor, when Bradford defender Andy O'Brien scored a brilliant own goal volleying past Clarke from Ian Nolan's cross.

However Spurs, with only three Premierships away wins this season, hit back two minutes later as Chris Armstrong

tapped in after Sol Campbell's header came off the post.

Four minutes later David Ginola's long range effort put Spurs ahead as it looks a deflection off veteran Everton defender Dave Watson and went over keeper Paul Gerrard's head.

West Ham also grabbed a late point when fiery Italian striker Paolo di Canio levelled with minutes remaining after David James spilled Steve Lomas' cross at his feet - Di Canio was later involved in a push and showed display with James at the final whistle.

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