

Scottish Premiership
Rangers ride
on Tugay

REUTERS, Glasgow
Turkish international Kerimoglu Tugay conjured up his second spectacular goal in three days to help Rangers to a 2-0 home win over Dunfermline.

The victory took the champions into second place in the Scottish Premier League for the first time since August.

They trail Celtic by six points and face them twice next week.

Celtic have 63 points from 24 games to Rangers' 57 from 25, two more than Hibernian, whose match at Aberdeen was postponed because of a waterlogged pitch.

Tugay, who scored the winner against Aberdeen on Wednesday, was praised by team mate Berk Konterman for his first half volley which broke the deadlock.

Dunfermline looked like frustrating Rangers until Tugay struck in the 28th minute. Arthur Numan's cross was headed out by Dunfermline defender Scott Thomson and Tugay's volley from 25 metres found the top corner of the net.

Although Tugay hit the post with another volley, Rangers had several anxious moments until Michael Mols made it 2-0 in the 89th minute.

The Dutchman scored his seventh goal of the season from Kenny Miller's measured pass with an

angled shot past goalkeeper Marco Ruitenbeek from 12 metres.

Fourth-placed Kilmarnock saw their home jinx strike again as they lost 2-1 against Motherwell.

Ged Brannan's 29th minute penalty gave Motherwell the lead. Kevin Twaddle made it 2-0 seven minutes from time with a composed lob over goalkeeper Gordon Marshall.

Craig Dargo managed a 90th minute reply for Kilmarnock who have now taken only one point from their last six games at Rugby Park.

French First Division
Nantes reclaim
top spot

REUTERS, Paris

Nantes regained first place in the French First Division with a 1-0 home win against Paris St Germain on Saturday.

Olivier Monterrubio scored after 59 minutes, volleying home after Frederic da Rocha clipped the ball across the penalty area.

Nantes now have 43 points from 25 matches, two clear of Olympique Lyon, 3-2 winners at En Avant Guingamp thanks to a last-minute strike from Brazilian Sonny Anderson.

Nantes moved three ahead of previous leaders Lille, who face local rivals RC Lens away on Sunday.

Sedan, 1-0 victors at Bastia, and Girondins Bordeaux, held 1-1 by struggling Toulouse, also total 40 points.

Nantes created several good first half chances, but were unable to find a way past PSG goalkeeper Lionel Letizi.

He made two fine stops to thwart Nicolas Gillet, the first from a free kick. He also saved at the feet of Monterrubio, while Frederic da Rocha missed when it seemed easier to score.

PSG, who used new signings Mauricio Pochettino, Didier Domi and Vampeta, played with renewed enthusiasm but Christian and Nicolas Anelka were profligate in front of goal.

Nantes' territorial domination, achieved despite the absence of their injured leading scorer Viorel Moldovan, paid off when Monterrubio scored his seventh league goal of the season.

Monterrubio hit the outside of a post late in the game.

"It was a big performance when we needed it," he said. Nantes coach Raynald Denoueix was equally pleased.

"I thought we were very solid and when you look at the match in its totality, it was a win we merited," he said.

Anderson's 100th and 101st French league goals proved decisive at Guingamp, where the hosts scored twice through Bruno Rodriguez and looked to have done enough to share the points.

Philippe Celdran's 45th minute effort saw Sedan home at Bastia and ended a dismal away run.

Bordeaux trailed to a Victor Bonilla penalty at Toulouse but equalised with a penalty of their own from Pedro Pauleta.

Champions Monaco returned to form with a 6-1 home win over relegation-haunted Metz. Ludovic Giuly and Marcelo Gallardo each scored twice.

St Etienne managed a late equaliser through Alex di Rocco to draw 3-3 at home to Strasbourg and AJ Auxerre won 1-0 at Olympique Marseille, with Pierre Debloche the scorer.

The Troyes-Stade Rennes game was postponed because of a waterlogged pitch.



A BARCA BLITZKRIEG: Jubilant Barcelona players celebrating Abelardo's (C) strike in the 7-0 demolition of Athletic Bilbao at the Nou Camp on February 3.

Primera Liga
Barca bankrupt Bilbao

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona gave Athletic Bilbao a 7-0 Primera Liga hiding on Saturday with a brilliant display

of attacking football. Six of the goals came in the first half.

A hat-trick by Luis Enrique, a neatly-taken double from Dutch international Philip Cocu and a goal by Spain defender Abelardo completed a peerless opening 45 minutes by the Catalan club.

Marc Overmars capped a superb individual display with a fine second half goal. The former Arsenal player was given a standing ovation by an ecstatic Nou Camp crowd when he was substituted 15 minutes from time.

The result left Barcelona in second place, five points behind Real Madrid who play Malaga at home on Sunday.

Third-placed Deportivo Coruna have the chance to reclaim second spot if they defeat bottom

club Racing Santander at home, also on Sunday.

Luis Enrique began the spree on six minutes after Cocu had put Overmars through on the left. The speedy winger clipped in a first time pass to the advancing Luis Enrique who guided the ball home with ease.

Overmars was a constant threat on the left flank and gave defender Inigo Larraiz a torrid time as he sped past him to send in a succession of devastating passes.

The Bilbao defence were powerless to react to the wave of Barcelona attacks and it was only a matter of time before the tally increased.

Barcelona notched up their second on 25 minutes after Patrick Kluivert sent a perfect pass into the heart of the area leaving Luis Enrique with a simple finish.

A minute later, Cocu made it 3-0 after he exchanged a neat one-two with Kluivert and found himself alone in front of goal, slotting

home under keeper Inaki La Fuente.

With the game taking on the appearance of an exhibition, Barcelona played some sweet one-touch football in the face of an almost non-existent Bilbao defence.

Abelardo got in on the act with a goal on 31 minutes after Frank de Boer clipped a neat pass across the area with his heel.

Barcelona showed no mercy as they made it 5-0 a minute later. Once more Overmars was involved as his first time pass set Luis Enrique up for his hat-trick.

Cocu collected his second and made it an even half dozen as he latched on to a through ball, controlled with his toe and smashed home in the last minute of the first half.

The second half was tame by comparison, but Overmars was rewarded for his outstanding contribution as he finished a fine solo run with a right foot drive and made it 7-0 on 67 minutes to complete the rout.



Grounds staff spreading plastic cover to protect the turf of Ulsan's Monsu World Cup Stadium. The stadium is one of the 10 being built in South Korea for the 2002 World Cup finals.

Korean stadia on track

REUTERS, Ulsan

South Korean organisers for the 2002 World Cup finals are confident their 10 stadiums will open in time but say they still have to resolve a dispute with co-hosts Japan over the name of the event.

With less than two weeks to go before applications for tickets to the biggest event in world sport are sent out, the two co-hosts remain locked in a battle over whose name should go first on printed materials.

"This has become a very sensitive issue between Korea and Japan," said Lin Byung-taik, spokesman for the Korean Organising Committee for the World Cup (KOWOC).

Japan's organising committee have riled the Koreans by vowing to change the word order on tickets sold in Japan so that the name 'Japan precedes Korea'.

"2002 FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan" is the official title and trademark that will be used by sponsors such as McDonald's Corp, Mastercard and Hyundai Motor, the Koreans insist.

"FIFA has reconfirmed again and again that the principles [regarding the order of names] should be," KOWOC's Lin said.

The feud echoes the desperate fight both sides put up in 1996 when they sought to be the sole hosts and FIFA opted for an unprecedented co-hosting arrangement.

South Korea's top football official, FIFA vice-president Chung Mong-joon, told reporters three weeks ago that if the Japanese wanted to raise matters already

settled the Koreans might ask FIFA to reconsider holding the final in Japan.

The Japanese have sounded just as resolute. "Regarding our basic stance, we are continuing our talks with FIFA," Ko Yamaguchi, director of media at Japan's organising committee, said last week.

and drawing them to World Cup matches here will be important to fill seats, hotels and restaurants.

In less than four months, Korea and Japan will warm up for the World Cup by hosting the FIFA Confederations Cup on May 30 to June 10, including defending champions Mexico and six other nations.

Suwon, Taegu and Ulsan are the Korean cities that will unveil new World Cup stadiums to host the eight-nation event, which includes Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada and France.

KOWOC's Lin said preparations were on schedule. "The construction of 10 stadiums has been progressing satisfactorily," he said "They are 80 percent complete."

He dismissed concerns that financial troubles at Hyundai Engineering and Construction, the country's largest builder, might disrupt World Cup preparations.

The company narrowly averted bankruptcy last year and are under pressure from creditor banks to pay their debts this year.

"I'm very confident that we will have 10 elegant and very advanced stadiums by the end of the year," Lin said.

Inchon is expected to be done by May and those in Chonju, Kwangju, Pusan and Taejeon by September, he told reporters.

Asia's largest football-only stadium, with a seating capacity of almost 64,000, is due to be completed in the capital, Seoul, in December.

Sabrosa sidelined

REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona's Portuguese international Simao Sabrosa will be sidelined for at least four weeks after sustaining a groin injury in training.

The right-sided midfielder will miss the two legs of the club's UEFA Cup fourth round tie against AEK Athens later this month and the crucial league clash against arch-rivals Real

Madrid at the beginning of March, the club said on Saturday.

WC qualifier

Kyrgyzstan stun S'pore

REUTERS, Singapore

A goal seven minutes from times gave Kyrgyzstan a surprise 1-0 win over Singapore in an Asian World Cup qualifier on Saturday.

Illa Kovalenko headed home from an 83rd minute free kick to put Kyrgyzstan into second place in the Asian zone preliminary group four standings behind Kuwait, who defeated Bahrain earlier in the evening.

The game was scoreless at halftime despite Singapore's dominance. The hosts had a Zulkarnaen Zainal goal disallowed in the 56th minute because the ball was adjudged to have gone out of play in the build-up

Monaco appeal on Tuesday

REUTERS, Paris

Monaco's appeal against the deduction of two points for using a player with an allegedly

false passport will be held on Tuesday, the French League (LNF) said on Saturday.

Serie A Juventus slip up

REUTERS, Rome

Juventus threw away a second-half lead to lose 2-1 at Atalanta Bergamo on Saturday and miss out on a chance to draw level with AS Roma at the top of the Serie A.

Roma can now re-establish a six-point lead if they win at Parma in Sunday's big match.

Juventus took the lead at Bergamo in the 73rd minute courtesy of an own-goal from defender Massimo Paganin, who headed a Zinedine Zidane shot past his own keeper.

But two minutes later 20-year-old defender Stefano Lorenzi, who had come on as a substitute just a minute earlier, headed home a Domenico Morfeo cross for his first Serie A goal with his first touch of the game.

Juventus appeared strong enough for at least a draw but in the 81st minute they let former Inter Milan striker Nicola Ventola slip through their offside trap near the halfway line.

Ventola kept his cool and beat Juve keeper Edwin van der Sar to give the Bergamo side a memorable win and hand Carlo Ancelotti's side only their second defeat of the season.

Juventus stay second on 33 points to Roma's 36.

Atalanta remain fourth but move up to 29 points, one behind third-placed Lazio who face Lecce on Sunday.

In the day's other match, Marco Materazzi's seventh league goal of the season gave Perugia a 1-0 win over Verona to lift the in-form Umbrian club into sixth.

Bundesliga Elber boosts Bayern

REUTERS, Berlin

Two goals by Brazilian striker Elber helped champions Bayern Munich to win 3-1 at VfL Wolfsburg on Saturday and recapture the Bundesliga leadership.

Elber, who has irritated his bosses by criticising coach Ottmar Hitzfeld's tactics and hinting at a move to Spain, opened the scoring after 13 minutes and sealed victory in the 59th.

The Bavarians were clearly the better side in a game played in freezing temperatures and moved two points clear of previous pace-setters Schalke 04.

Schalke had midfielder Joerg Boehme sent off in the second half of a shock 4-1 defeat at Energie Cottbus.

Germany midfielder Mehmet Scholl also scored for Bayern just before the break while Polish striker Andrzej Juskowiak

exploited a blunder by Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn to record the home side's goal in the 27th minute.

"The players needed a bit of time to put themselves into place but then they played with plenty of discipline for a deserved victory," said Hitzfeld.

"We made a few mistakes in defence," said Wolfsburg coach Wolfgang Wolf. "In a few decisive situations Bayern showed that they are simply not in the same class as we are."

Cottbus, in the First Division for the first time this season, opened the scoring from a free kick by Romanian Vasile



Andy Cole (R), the Manchester United striker, trying to battle his way past Richard Gough of Everton during their Premiership fixture at Old Trafford on February 3.

Premiership MU just not beatable

REUTERS, London

Manchester United rested several players but were still good enough to beat Everton 1-0 and maintain their 15 point lead in the Premier League.

Everton defender Steve Watson deflected an Andy Cole shot into his own net in the 52nd minute to give the champions three points with Roy Keane watching from the sidelines and David Beckham taken off in the second half.

United have 62 points and Arsenal stayed second on 47 after scraping a somewhat fortunate 1-0 win at Coventry City. Dennis Bergkamp's 78th minute winner proving decisive.

Liverpool moved up to third on 44 with an impressive 3-0 home win over West Ham United. Robbie Fowler capping a great performance with two goals.

Sunderland slipped down to fourth on 43 after a 1-0 defeat at Derby County while Ipswich Town ended a miserable week with a 2-1 defeat at Leeds United and Chelsea's woeful away form continued with a 2-1 loss at Leicester City.

Bradford City remain five adrift at the bottom on 16 points after a 3-0 home defeat by Aston Villa.

Middlesbrough and Manchester City drew 1-1 at the Riverside while Tottenham Hotspur chalked up their fourth successive goalless draw, this time at home to Charlton Athletic.

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson said two weeks ago that he intended to rest players with an eye on the Champions League and he was as good as his word with Keane and Gary Neville excused boots.

He also started with Teddy Sheringham and Ryan Giggs on the bench, giving a start to Andy Cole who signed a new four year contract earlier in the day.

But in a low key first half neither side looked particularly dangerous with Everton happy to pass the ball around and hope for the best.

Giggs came on for the injured Paul Scholes after the break but there was little improvement for the champions.

But just when Everton were dreaming of a rare Old Trafford point, Cole struck.

He linked well with Dwight Yorke on the edge of the box and then Steve Watson deflected his shot over goalkeeper Paul Gerrard and into the net.

Kevin Campbell headed over for Everton late on but United took the points without ever having to be anywhere near their best.

"It was a scrappy game and we needed a bit of luck to win it," said Ferguson.

Of the decision to rest players Ferguson said: "We are paying attention to the Champions League, trying to make changes that don't affect results.

"We're in a comfortable position but things can change and we don't want to do anything silly."

Ferguson conceded that Everton were unlucky to lose and his thoughts were echoed by his opposite number.

"I thought we were a bit unfortunate not to take a point," said Everton manager Walter Smith.

"When you come to Manchester United and restrict them to as few chances as they had today you feel a bit aggrieved not to get a draw."

After last week's home FA Cup

defeat by Tranmere, Everton can turn their attention once again to fighting against relegation.

Smith, however, was confident of another escape. "If we show the same measure of commitment and the same standard of play as today then we'll be happy with that," said the Scot.

Arsenal's away form has been woeiful this season, just eight goals and two wins before today, and they struggled again on Saturday against a Coventry team who produced their best performance for weeks.

But the hosts failed to take their chances, leaving unmarked Bergkamp to secure the points and complete a good two days for Arsenal Wenger, who won his appeal against a 12-game touchline ban on Friday.

"The most important thing was to concentrate on this game and it's a credit to my staff that we did," said the Frenchman.

It has been an even better week for Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier, whose team have reached the

League Cup final, beaten Leeds in the FA Cup and now produced a great performance to sweep past West Ham.

Vladimir Smicer scored the first after 20 minutes and then set up Fowler for both his goals.

The England striker, after a troubled year, was back to his sharpest on Saturday and thought he had scored a third, only for the referee to rule it out.

"The last three or four games it's been coming together and today was probably one of the best games I've played in a couple of years," Fowler said.

"But we're also looking solid at the back now and that's making the difference."

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Miriuta a few seconds into the game. They moved 2-0 ahead courtesy of Sebastian Helbig three minutes from halftime.

Top Bundesliga scorer Ebbe Sand pulled one back for the Gelsenkirchen club in the 54th minute but eight minutes later

Boehme received his marching orders for a nasty foul on Energie captain Christian Beeck.

Schalke then collapsed and strikers Andrzej Kobylanski and Antun Labak found the target to complete a spectacular victory.

"We have 37 points out of 20 games and I'm satisfied with that but I'm certainly not happy with the way we played today," said Schalke coach Huub Stevens after his side's fifth defeat of the season.

"We should never have conceded that early goal and then Boehme's sending off was what decided the game," he added.

Borussia Dortmund, beaten 1-0 by TSV 1860 Munich on Friday, remained third, one point behind Schalke.

The most spectacular win of Saturday's programme was the 6-1 demolition of Kaiserslautern by VfB Stuttgart in an evening game.

Brazilian Adhemar, who joined during the winter break, and Romanian loan Viorel Ganea's were Stuttgart's heroes with three goals each.

The four-time German champions, who badly needed three points, jumped three spots up to 14th.

Kaiserslautern, who won the Bundesliga title in 1998, had an awful game. Their first-half goal came from a deflected free kick by midfielder Mario Basler.

Stuttgart will now take on Schalke 04 in a German Cup semi-final on Wednesday.

Second Division Borussia Muenchengladbach play amateurs Union Berlin in the other semi-final on Tuesday.

Zinedine Zidane (R), the Juventus superstar, has Atalanta's Christian Zenoni in pursuit during their Serie A game at Bergamo on February 3.