



Arsenal's French international mid-fielder Patrick Vieira (C) heading in his team's first goal against Tottenham Hotspurs in the first semi-final of the FA Cup at Old Trafford on Sunday.

FA Cup

Gunners in final

Football

AFP, Manchester

Arsenal booked their place in the English FA Cup final on Sunday after beating north London rivals Tottenham 2-1 in front of 66,000 fans at Old Trafford.

The Gunners will play the winners of the other semi-final at Villa Park between Liverpool and second division Wycombe Wanderers to be played later Sunday.

In their first game under new coach Glenn Hoddle, Spurs got their noses in front early in the first half thanks to Gary Doherty's header before France international Patrick Vieira nodded Arsenal back on level terms.

After almost incessant second-half pressure Vieira's compatriot Robert Pires slotted the winner for Arsenal 16 minutes from time, and only the heroics of Spurs goalkeeper Neil Sullivan prevented Arsenal winning by a bigger margin.

Tottenham lost their captain Sol Campbell, who was receiving treatment when Arsenal drew level, and

later saw striker Les Ferdinand taken off with a hamstring injury.

Campbell had passed a late fitness test after damaging ankle ligaments in England's World Cup qualifier against Albania last month. Right-back Stephen Carr was also named in Tottenham's starting line-up for the first time since Christmas in an injury-struck season for the Republic of Ireland defender.

Arsenal's only surprise was the recall of Brazilian left-back Silvinho in place of new England cap, Ashley Cole, while Cameroon international Lauren won manager Arsene Wenger's vote to partner Vieira in midfield.

Tottenham took the lead in their first attack after 14 minutes. Ferdinand collected Carr's cross on his chest and then made space for a shot inside the Arsenal penalty area.

His thunderous effort was superbly saved by David Seaman and Dixon headed the ball out to the feet of Steffen Iversen.

The Norwegian's mishit shot was going well wide until Doherty got his

head in the way and directed the ball past a stranded Seaman.

Arsenal should have drawn level after 23 minutes when Tim Sherwood played team-mate Stephen Clemence into trouble and allowed Pires a clear run at goal but the Frenchman's weak shot was comfortably saved by Sullivan.

The Spurs' keeper turned away Dixon's close-range shot as Arsenal increased the pressure and Tottenham suffered a major blow moments later when Campbell injured himself when fouling Ray Parlour.

Campbell's misery was compounded by a booking for his tussle with Parlour, and was soon complete when Arsenal equalised from the subsequent free-kick while the Tottenham captain was receiving treatment.

Pires swung the ball into the Tottenham area and Vieira ran in and rose above everyone to plant a firm header beyond Sullivan's outstretched hand and into the corner of the net.

Campbell was replaced by Ledley King before Parlour almost put

Arsenal ahead with a low fizzing drive which whistled inches past the post.

Ukraine international striker Sergei Rebrov, who had a quiet first 45 minutes, tested Seaman with a low drive three minutes after the break and at the other end Silvinho's dipping shot just cleared Sullivan's crossbar.

A series of Sullivan saves kept Tottenham in the game, as he first denied Henry and then blocked Wilford's goalbound effort with his legs.

Ferdinand hobbled off with a hamstring injury and his departure left Tottenham short on ideas in attack and inviting pressure from Arsene Wenger's motivated front line.

Arsenal finally broke through after 73 minutes and again it was Vieira who did the trick - this time as architect of a tap-in goal by Pires.

Vieira ran from the halfway line and evaded two challenges before releasing Wilford out on the right wing. The French striker's low pull-kick left Pires with an easy task to knock the ball into an empty net.

Primera Liga

Valencia back in form



Miguel Angel Angulo (R) of Valencia feels the presence of Rayo Vallecano's Carlos Mingoa at Rayo's Teresa Rivero Stadium on Saturday.

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Valencia returned to their winning ways in the Spanish First Division on Saturday, comfortably beating Rayo Vallecano 4-1 away.

Hector Cuper's side went into the match on the back of two successive defeats in the league, followed by their 2-1 loss to Arsenal in the Champions League quarter-final first leg.

But Fabian Ayala headed past Kasey Keller at the end of a scrappy opening period to settle their nerves and his fellow Argentine Kily

Gonzalez added a second four minutes after the break with a fine left-foot strike.

Vicente struck with a first-time shot from the edge of the box on 73 minutes and, after Luis Cembranos had pulled one back for Rayo, Juan Sanchez underlined Valencia's superiority with a neat finish five minutes from time.

The result kept Valencia in third place on the table, still with a faint chance of challenging for the title.

Real Madrid, who travel to Las Palmas on Sunday, lead the standings with 59 points from 28 matches. Deportivo Coruna are second on 54, with Valencia two points further back in third. Barcelona can join Valencia on 52 points if they beat Villarreal on

Sunday.

Rayo created a couple of half-chances early on before Valencia got into their stride, with Gaizka Mendietta an increasingly influential figure in midfield.

It was from Mendietta's swinging cross that Ayala nodded Valencia into the lead and the visiting captain created the second when he crossed to the far post for Kily to take advantage.

By this time, Valencia were in complete control and the third goal arrived when Vicente took a chest down from Sanchez and clipped the ball past Keller.

Cembranos, who had earlier struck the bar with a long-range freekick, gave Rayo brief hope with his strike from the edge of the box before Sanchez wrapped up a confident win.

Lazio v Parma rearranged for April 18

AFP, Milan

Lazio's home Italian First Division match with Parma - abandoned Saturday night after six minutes when torrential rain made the pitch unplayable - has been rescheduled for Wednesday, April 18, the National Professional League (NPL) has announced.

Had the match not kicked off on Saturday it would have been possible to play the game Sunday but football rules prevent players from competing on consecutive days.

Bundesliga

Bayern held

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich had Stefan Effenberg and Bixente Lizarazu sent off and drew 1-1 with title-chasers Borussia Dortmund on Saturday to leave the chasing pack a single point away.

Referee Hartmut Strampe was the busiest man on the field at Dortmund's Westfalenstadion, showing two yellow cards to French World Cup winning defender Lizarazu for fouls in the first half before Bayern captain Effenberg followed him off the pitch for a bodycheck which earned him a direct sending-off in the 56th minute.

The dismissals brought Bayern down to earth with a bump after beating Manchester United 1-0 in their Champions League quarter-final first-leg on Tuesday.

Bayern's Paraguayan striker Roque Santa Cruz put them ahead in the sixth minute from a Lizarazu cross but Iredi Bobic equalised on 52 minutes.

The referee also sent off Dortmund's Brazilian midfielder Evanilson but Bayern repelled one Dortmund attack after another to grimly hang on to their point in front of a capacity 68,600 crowd.

The result left Bayern on 50 points, with Dortmund third on 49 and Bayer Leverkusen moved up to second with a 3-1 win over Eintracht Frankfurt.

Trezeguet sorry to join Juve

AFP, Turin

Juventus and French international striker David Trezeguet regrets joining the Italian Serie A side, the daily La Stampa reported here Saturday.

"Juve has disappointed me. I wouldn't make the same choice if I had to do it again," said 23-year-old Trezeguet, who joined the Italian giants from French champions Monaco last June.

"I was expecting something else. To feel more satisfied I would have to play at least half of the remaining matches this season," said Trezeguet, whose golden goal gave France Euro 2000 victory last year.

"I feel in the same situation as (Vincenzo) Montella (AS Roma) and (Marcelo) Salas (Lazio), who are very talented but have problems finding a team place," added the Frenchman.

World Cup and European champion Trezeguet, under contract with the Turin-based outfit until June 2005, has demanded a meeting with club chief Luciano Moggi to sort out his future with the side.

Trezeguet has seen very little action this season with stiff competition for a team place from Alessandro Del Piero, Filippo Inzaghi, and Yugoslav Darko Kovacevic.

During the 15 matches he has played with the club he scored seven goals.

He will, however, be called into action for Sunday's game against Verona in the absence of compatriot Zinedine Zidane, with coach Carlo Ancelotti likely to pull Del Piero a notch into the front of midfield.

Juventus sit second in the Serie A nine points behind leaders AS Roma.

WC 2002 qualifier India baffle UAE

AFP, Bangalore

Hosts India, led by skipper and ace striker Baichung Bhutia, stunned favourites UAE 1-0 in a pulsating World Cup Group Eight qualifier here on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Bhutia struck in the 73rd minute after a goal-mouth melee forced by Indian forward I.M Vijayan and midfielder Jales Alberto, who lobbed the ball to his skipper.

The UAE midfield failed to strike rhythm and starved off their strikers of quality passes.

The second half was marred after two UAE defenders were shown the yellow cards --- Mohammed Quassim Juma and Jaleel Abdul Rahman.

Indian skipper Bhutia was also shown the card after he ran into UAE goalkeeper Mutaz Abdullah Mohammed.

UAE has a current FIFA ranking of 64, while India is placed way below at 123.

India now meet Yemen on April 15 and Brunei on May 20 in their home matches here before embarking on their away campaign against the same sides.

During the last four qualifiers India's bid to enter the World Cup finals has come out a cropper.

Scottish Premiership

Celtic the new rulers

Football

AFP, Glasgow

Celtic were crowned Scottish Premier League champions after beating bottom club St Mirren 1-0 at Parkhead on Saturday in coach Martin O'Neill's first season at the club.

Tommy Johnson's goal seven minutes before half time secured victory and earned Celtic only their second league triumph in 13 years.

Celtic's Premier League title win is the quickest in the season since Rangers won the league early in 1975.

The runaway leaders made hard work of beating the basement club but few in the capacity home crowd were bothered as Celtic won their 37th championship with a month of the season left.

Celtic's triumph leaves them on course to land the 'Treble'. They have already won the League Cup and are in the semi-finals of the Scottish Cup.

After incessant pressure on the visitors' goal, Celtic edged in front after 38 minutes.

Larsson unselfishly set up the unmarked Johnson in the penalty box and although his first touch was



Derby County's Jamaican international striker Dion Burton (R) being marked by Chelsea's Marcel Desailly at Pride Park on Saturday.

Premiership

Vintage Zola

Football

AFP, London

Uruguayan midfielder Gus Poyet is pleading with team-mate Gianfranco Zola to stay at the club after the Italian striker's sublime performance in Chelsea's 4-0 thrashing of Derby on Saturday.

Zola, who will decide whether to stay at Stamford Bridge at the end of the season, was at his brilliant best at Pride Park, making the breakthrough against a stubborn Derby defence with his 63rd-minute strike.

Poyet came off the bench to fire home two injury-time goals after leading scorer Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink had given Chelsea a two-goal lead with six minutes to go. The win moved Chelsea up to sixth and in contention for a UEFA Cup place next season.

Zola, who was a constant menace to the home side, was denied one of the goals of the season after half an hour when his vicious volley from Hasselbaink's dipping right-wing cross slammed against the woodwork.

Poyet said that the rest of the team were prepared to pay Zola's wife a visit to try and persuade her that her husband should stay at the London club for another season rather than return to Italy.

"We will need to go to his house and try to convince his wife," joked Poyet.

"We have got to try to convince him to stay with Chelsea. I have really liked playing with Gianfranco."

Poyet believes Chelsea's win - only their second on the road in the Premiership this season - has broken their away jinx and will help

build their confidence as they push for a lucrative European place for next season.

"We have had many problems with our away form but we have started playing better and we are showing more confidence," he said.

"Now we are starting to believe a little bit more in this team - the quality was always there but we were just missing that confidence. It is our only option to try and finish the season in the best possible position."

"At the beginning of the season people were talking about us winning the Premiership - now it is about the possibility of breaking into Europe and we are going to fight for it in every game."

Defeat plunged Derby to within five points of the drop zone and could have thrown up a goalkeeping crisis.

Estonia international Mart Poom injured his troublesome shoulder and Andy Oakes - his replacement since January - is out for the season with a knee ligament problem.

Southampton's caretaker boss Stuart Gray laid some of the blame for his side's 2-0 defeat at Leeds at the door of Glenn Hoddle.

Prior to Hoddle's highly-contentious departure from the south coast club to Tottenham a week ago, Southampton had won five successive league matches and not conceded a league goal since January 1.

But the Saints' have clearly been rocked by Hoddle's switch to White Hart Lane where he was a hero as a player.

With Gray in charge Southampton have now lost their last two games, conceding six goals without finding the net themselves.

Leeds made it 10 league matches without defeat to move up to third

place in the Premiership with goals from Harry Kewell and Robbie Keane securing victory.

A potential UEFA Cup place is now looking unlikely for Southampton and Gray believes Hoddle is partly responsible for the team's successive defeats.

"There has been a few strange things going on since Glenn's departure," said Gray.

"After our home game against Everton, Glenn decided to give the players an entire week's holiday."

"They were due back in on the Monday, with Glenn on the Tuesday, but nobody saw Glenn again."

"The reason (for the two defeats) is due to a mixture of things, like the break and Glenn going, but we are not going to make excuses."

Craig Bellamy scored the fastest goal of the day for strugglers Coventry in their vital 3-1 Premiership win at Leicester.

The 6 million pound (8.4 million dollar) signing from Norwich got on the end of a Mustapha Hadji cross in the first minute to net his second goal in 14 games.

Although Leicester drew level when Ade Akinbiyi banged home a rebound, the visitors regained the advantage through Lee Carseley after 19 minutes.

In the second half the Wales international striker struck a third to hand Leicester their fifth consecutive defeat.

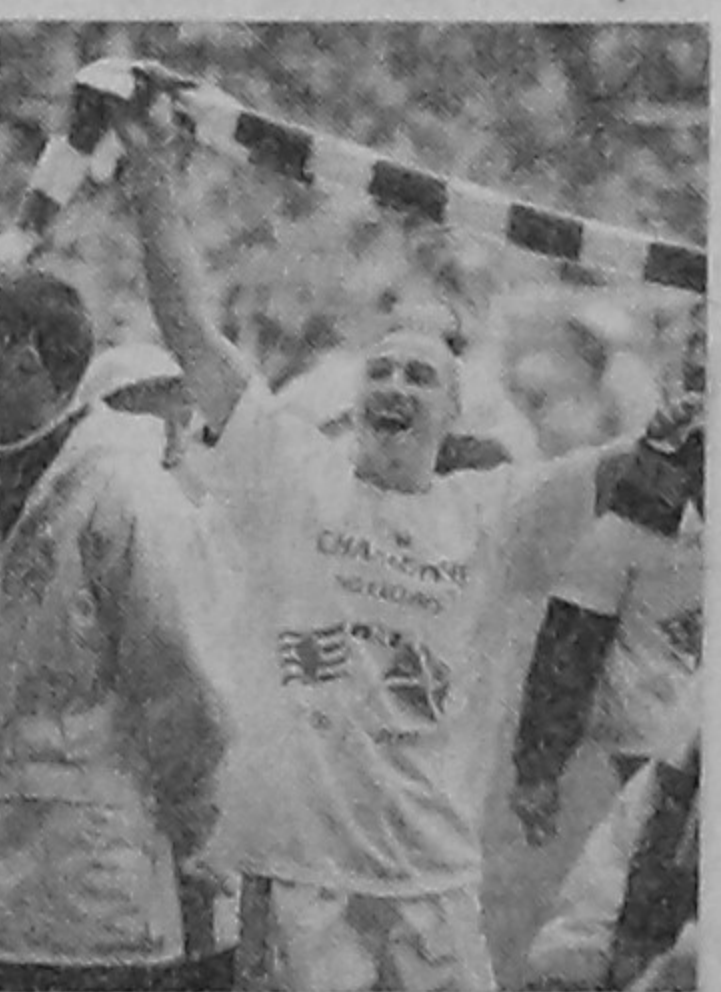
The win moved Coventry up one place to third from bottom, one point behind Middlesbrough.

Frank Lampard rescued a point for West Ham to end a run of five consecutive defeats.

Lampard made it 2-2 after David Ginola and Lee Hendrie had put Villa in front. Frenchman Frederic Kanouté had opened the scoring for the visitors.

not good, he recovered to slot the ball under Saints French goalkeeper Ludovic Roy.

Defender Scott Walker tried to



HENRIK LARSSON... The man of the season

prevent the ball crossing the line but only succeeded in deflecting the ball into the back of the net.

Although the match was scrappy, O'Neill was delighted with the result.

"It's been a fantastic day. It's all been worthwhile now," he said.

"There was a bit of tension in the dressing room beforehand with all

the build-up and the expectation.

"It's been worth waiting for. We got the all-important goal today to win it in front of our own fans."

"I would like to thank the supporters for their massive support, and we could not have won this without the players."

Goalscorer Johnson said: "It's been brilliant. It doesn't matter who scored, we just had to win and we won. It's incredible."

Striker Henrik Larsson, who has scored 47 goals so far this season and is on course to win European football's golden shoe (top scorer) award, said: "We had everything to lose today. They tried to sit back and tried to counter us."

"Luckily we scored one goal and we managed to win the game. It's a tremendous feeling to win."

"This is very special to me. We have been having a tough time since we won the championship the last time. We managed to turn that around this season."

Northern Ireland midfielder Neil Lennon, who joined Celtic from Leicester in a 5.75 (8.05 million dollar) deal in December last year, was ecstatic.

"It is a great day personally and for the club," he said. "We could not ask any more from the players or the

crowd.

"To come and win the championship here is difficult to put into words. I don't think it has really sunk in yet."

Lennon said that the majority of the work to secure the championship had already been done by the time he arrived at Parkhead.

"The groundwork was already done - I just came in and added a bit of heart," he said.

"I am really pleased with the way things have gone. It would be nice to do the Treble, but at least we have two parts."

The Scottish Premier League will now split into two groups of six.

Each team in the two groups will play the other five teams once in a round robin competition, with the top six playing for European places and the bottom six group playing to avoid relegation.

Scotland has been awarded two Champions League places for next season, with Celtic, as champions, entering the first phase stage and the second-placed finisher entering the qualifying stage.

Two UEFA Cup places are also up for grabs, with once place awarded to the third-placed finisher and one place being allotted to the Scottish Cup winner.