



Real Madrid superstar Luis Figo (L) and Osasuna's Jose Manuel Yanguas fight for the ball during their Primera Liga encounter at Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium on April 28.

Primera Liga Raul saves Real blues

Football REUTERS, Madrid An opportunistic strike by Raul saw league leaders Real Madrid come from behind to snatch a barely deserved 1-1 draw against relegation strugglers Osasuna on Saturday. Raul's 19th goal in the La Liga, which made him joint top-scorer in the league with Barcelona's Rivaldo, brought the home side back on level terms after they fell behind to a perfectly-struck free kick from Osasuna midfielder Alex Fernandez. The result meant Real stayed title on course for their first Spanish title in four years. They extended their lead to 12 points over Deportivo Coruna who play Espanyol on Sunday. A 64th minute header from striker Juan Sanchez gave third-placed Valencia a 1-0 victory over Valladolid, moving them a point behind Deportivo.

Primera Liga's top six table with columns for team, played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points.

Real had appeared in no hurry to take the initiative as they stroked the ball harmlessly around the midfield,

Bundesliga Bochum upset Schalke plans

Football AFP, Berlin Schalke 04 slipped on their way to collecting an anticipated three points away to bottom club Bochum, earning a grim 1-1 draw to leave second-placed champions Bayern Munich with a sly Saturday night smile.

Bayern had upped the stakes earlier Saturday, grabbing a hard-fought 1-0 win over Freiburg at the Olympic Stadium which took them top ahead of their rivals' evening match at Bochum.

Schalke's poor draw and one-point result hoisted them back to top spot on goals difference, but it is Bayern who will be licking their lips in anticipation of pulling back the slim difference between the sides.

Visitors Schalke went down 1-0 in the 21st minute when Paul Freier fired the home side in front, and it was not until the 70th minute that Schalke's Belgian international striker Emile Mpenza pulled the scores level.

Schalke coach Huub Stevens said he was not too happy with his side's performance but at least the 'Royal Blues' had secured a place in Europe.

something. 'At least we have achieved our primary goal of getting into Europe,' Stevens said.

In Bayern's earlier match German international midfielder Mehmet Scholl scored the game's solitary goal with a fine freekick on 65 minutes as Bayern piled the pressure on in the face of stubborn resistance by their visitors.

The Bavarians, who have a European Cup and Bundesliga double in their sights this season, 'We knew we faced a tough challenge today as Freiburg are a form side and we also took a while to get going,' said Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld. 'It was an important win for us to keep the title in reach.'

Hitzfeld warned, however, that such domestic form just will not wash in Europe. 'We played well enough to beat Freiburg - but such a showing won't do against Real Madrid,' Hitzfeld noted in allusion to next week's Champions League semi-final against the Spanish giants.

Hertha Berlin were thankful of a brace from Brazilian striker Alex Alves as they beat relegation-threatened Eintracht Frankfurt 3-0 to boost their hopes of a European place next season.

Hertha moved to within a point of Borussia Dortmund, who on Friday saw their title hopes take a knock when they could only draw 1-1 at Wolfsburg.

Dortmund had to indulge in some damage limitation after Wolfsburg opened the scoring in the 10th minute through Polish forward Andrzej Iskowiak, who outspurred former German international defender Jurgen Kohler.

Jorg Heinrich saved a point with a 22nd-minute effort which took a deflection off Nigerian Jonathan Akpobolie.

Level with Dortmund are Bayer Leverkusen, who edged out fading Kaiserslautern 1-0 away with Oliver Neuville on target.



Bochum's Paul Freier (C) celebrates his strike against Schalke with teammates during their Bundesliga match in Bochum on April 28.

Premiership Bradford go down fighting

Football AFP, London Bradford coach Jim Jeffries was bursting with pride on Saturday despite watching his side lose their Premiership status after two seasons in the top flight.

The 'Bantams', who avoided the drop on the last day last season, were relegated after losing 2-1 to fellow strugglers Everton at Goodison Park, although they might have extended their stay had they not missed two second-half penalties.

Manchester City live to fight another day after edging West Ham 1-0 thanks to an Ian Pearce own goal but Coventry look doomed after going down 2-0 at home to Liverpool.

'We have tried to keep things going in recent weeks with a couple of wins, and we battled right to the death in this one,' said Jeffries. 'We had a real go, battling for each other and we showed that we will be capable of challenging next season to win our Premiership place back.'

Jeffries conceded that the spot-kicks missed by Robbie Blake and Italian Benito Carbone gave his side ammunition to climb. 'We blew it with those two penalty misses,' said the affable Scot, who used to manage Scottish Premier League club Hearts.

'We aren't the first team to miss penalties and we won't be the last so I'm not going to blame the lads.'

Manchester City coach Joe Royle said luck played an important part in his side's narrow victory at home to West Ham.

Goalkeeper Carlo Nash made a couple of great saves to protect City's lead and his defenders cleared two goalbound efforts off the line.

Royle said he did not care how the points were won and was just thankful to still be in the Premiership for another week.

'We were lucky,' said Royle. 'I'm glad to say that and it's the first time I've said that this season.'

'We've had a little bit of luck for a change, or a lot of luck for a change.'

'Having said that the game should have been over after about 15 minutes and we should have killed it.'

With just two games to play Coventry remain second bottom with 33 points, one less than Manchester City and five less than both Derby and Middlesbrough.

Coventry are still hanging on thanks to results elsewhere despite losing to UEFA Cup finalists Liverpool.

Two goals in the last 10 minutes, from Finland defender Sami Hyypia and former Coventry idol Gary McAllister, kept Liverpool's challenge for a Champions League spot on track.

Derby are still in danger after losing 2-1 at home to second-placed Arsenal, as are Middlesbrough who were beaten 2-0 at home to champions Manchester United.

Substitute Robert Pires scored with his first touch at Pride Park to keep Arsenal on course for a Champions League place.



Sonny Anderson (R), Lyon's Brazilian goal-machine, scoring his team's first past a hapless Lille custodian Gregory Wimbee (C) during their French First Division fixture at Lille on April 28.

French First Division Lyon stay in the hunt

Football AFP, Paris A goal seconds from time by Christophe Delmotte gave Lyon a 2-1 win at Lille on Saturday to keep the French title race alive and move them to within a point of leaders Nantes.

With Nantes playing Troves on Sunday it was imperative for Lyon to go for the win in a battle of third and second and Delmotte's late goal from an acute angle ensured they kept in the hunt for a first league title.

Johnny Eckert had put Lille ahead on 26 minutes with a fine header and it seemed the hosts would themselves claim a win which would have left them second and killed off Lyon's hopes.

But Brazilian hit man Sonny Anderson grabbed his 18th goal of the season to level on the half hour and although he then had a goal disallowed for a foul on Lille keeper Gregory Wimbee the visitors redoubled their efforts in a frantic finale with Delmotte's strike giving them their just reward.

Elsewhere, Bordeaux's Portuguese striker Pauleta scored twice to send his side a point clear of Lille into third with a 2-1 win at Rennes, for whom Jocelyn Gourvenec scored a consolation.

Pauleta's double moved him to the top of the goalscorers charts with 19 - one ahead of Anderson.

But as Lyon and Bordeaux moved closer to the cash cow of the Champions League there was despair at Saint Etienne as their brief two-year stay in the top flight ended following a 1-1 home draw against Lens.

The French league authorities had opened the trapdoor for Les Verts, ten times league champions in the 1970's and 80's, by docking the club seven points for the club's role in the false passports affair and they had to win their final three games to retain hope of beating the drop.

Marseille did their best to keep Saint Etienne's hopes alive another week as they slumped to a 1-0 loss at Metz before a sellout 27,000 crowd. Mario Spartero hitting the only goal with a rasping drive on 66 minutes somewhat against the run of play.

Metz's Colombian keeper Farid Mondragon made a string of five saves, notably from Ibrahim Bakayako and George Weah, to keep former European champions Marseille at bay and the latter now still need a point to ensure that Toulouse go down alongside Saint Etienne and Strasbourg.

Going up from division two are Lorient, Montpellier and Sochaux.

Elsewhere, Paris Saint Germain and Monaco fought out a 1-1 draw at the Parc des Princes as wait-away midfielder Laurent Robert came off the sub's bench for PSG to net a late equaliser after former PSG favourite Marco Simone had scored the opener on 66 minutes.

Monaco still have a chance of competing in Europe if they can win the league cup final next week but PSG's season is set to peter out under a cloud as they are just 12th in the table.

It was a much improved performance by PSG, as Brazilian Christian and Nicolas Anelka worked hard up front but they had no reward against a tough visiting defence.

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Ginola touched

Football AFP, London Aston Villa French star David Ginola admitted he was 'overwhelmed' by the reaction of Tottenham's fans when he made an emotional return to White Hart Lane on Saturday.

Supporters and groundstaff from the north London club presented Ginola with gifts including champagne, and some even wept as they were reunited with the flamboyant winger for the first time since his controversial transfer to Aston Villa last summer.

'I am lost for words after the incredible reception I received,' said Ginola. 'It has never happened like that at a previous club.'

'The reaction of the fans was simply overwhelming - it touched my heart. The Tottenham supporters are beautiful people, I love them all. I had fans and staff coming up to me with gifts, such as bottles of champagne, because they were so happy to see me again.'

'People cried when they saw me, and I have to admit there was a tear in my eye too. It was great to see so many old friends again, and words cannot adequately describe how I felt.'

Serie A Reggina see off Napoli

Football AFP, Milan Reggina defeated fellow strugglers Napoli 3-1 Saturday evening, rekindling their hopes of staying in the first Division.

Until last week the side from Reggio Calabria looked doomed to relegation but consecutive victories in relegation dogfights with Verona and Napoli have given them renewed hope while Napoli and Vicenza, defeated 1-0 by Parma earlier Saturday, are back in trouble.

Goals from Davide Dionigi, Massimo Marazzini and Andrea Zanchetta had Reggina 3-0 in the lead after 50 minutes.

Goalkeeper Massimo Taibi saved a penalty from Napoli's Nicola Amoroso and Edmundo's goal just before the hour mark was not enough to spark a comeback for the visitors from Naples.

Both sides produced some thrilling football in the first period but both first-half goals went to Reggina.

They took the lead after only six minutes when Dionigi volleyed home his sixth goal since he joined Reggina on loan from Second Division Sampdoria in January.

Napoli came back looking for an equaliser but Taibi was outstanding with one particularly impressive save from Fabio Pecchia.

And four minutes before the interval Andrea Zanchetta made it 2-0 when Massimo Marazzini fired home after some slack defending.

J-League Jubilo's sixth on the trot

Football AFP, Tokyo Naohiro Takahara scored twice as Jubilo Iwata whitewashed nearest rivals Nagoya Grampus 1-3-0 Sunday to remain unbeaten and on top of the J-League table with six straight wins.

Nagoya slipped down to a third-place tie with Shimizu S-Pulse past Consadole Sapporo which kept up the lead from a fifth-minute goal to beat Gamba Osaka 1-0.

With many key players still weary from a 0-1 friendly international loss in Spain, Iwata got off to a slow start and perked up in the 66th minute of the home match when Takahara banged home a through pass from veteran striker Masashi Nakayama.