

Serie A

Montella breaks Juve's heart

Football

AFP, Rome

An injury-time equaliser from Vincenzo Montella saw Italian First Division leaders AS Roma complete a stunning comeback and share a 2-2 draw with Juventus in Turin Sunday evening.

Goals in the first six minutes from Alessandro Del Piero and Zinedine Zidane had Juve cruising at 2-0 and until Roma's Japanese substitute Hidetoshi Nakata reduced arrears after 78 minutes they never looked like getting on terms.

But Montella, also a substitute, stabbed home the ball from close range after Dutch goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar failed to hold a Nakata shot.

With five games remaining defending champions Lazio, 2-0 victors over bottom club Bari earlier Sunday, are the closest challengers to their city rivals, five points adrift while Juve are a further point behind.

Two goals from Argentinian midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron at the Olympic Stadium had been enough for Lazio, who have arguably the easiest run-in of the three candidates for the title.

But after avoiding a defeat that would have seen Juve move within three points the title is there for the taking for Roma.

Roma coach Fabio Capello said: "It was all Juventus early on. We did so well to get back and as for Nakata what I can say. This was his greatest moment."

A clearly disappointed Juve coach Carlo Ancelotti said: "We have lost a great opportunity here tonight but that's football. You can't try and analyse it."

Juventus had stunned Roma in front of a capacity crowd at the Stadio Delle Alpi with two goals in the first six minutes.

First Del Piero's header beat stranded goalkeeper Francesco Antonioli and two minutes later Zidane fired home from the edge of the area.

It looked all over but Nakata's spectacular effort from 25 metres set up a spectacular finish and then Montella struck. Roma's Brazilian substitute Assuncao and Juve's Alessio Tacchinardi were sent off after a skirmish as tempers frayed in injury time.

Earlier Lazio made their move. Veron scored twice in 15 first-half minutes although his second was down to a dreadful goalkeeping error by Bari youngster Antonio Narciso.

Lazio coach Dino Zoff, speaking before the match in Turin, said: "Quite simply we have to win all our remaining matches."

In other fixtures Parma consolidated their hold on the fourth place that would earn them a place in next



PHOTO: INTERNET

A dejected Juventus goalkeeper Edwin Van der Sar (R) picks himself up off the pitch as AS Roma striker Vincenzo Montella celebrates his strike at Turin on May 6.

season's Champions League, beating Napoli 4-0.

Frenchman Johan Micoud opened the scoring while Yugoslav striker Savo Milosevic and Marco Di Vaio (two) also hit the target.

Di Vaio's second was unusual in that he profited when Italy's - and the world's - most famous referee Pierluigi Collina unwittingly deflected the ball into his path.

second half saw no further goals.

Reggina's Massimo Marazzina scored a goal early in the second-half at Vicenza but Marco Zanchi scored twice for the home side to earn a 2-1 win and the points for the hosts in a relegation dogfight.

Greek striker Zisis Vryzas gave Perugia an early advantage against AC Milan but Ukrainian forward Andriy Shevchenko equalised from

to commemorate the 100th anniversary of their first Scudetto.

Shevchenko stays one goal ahead of Fiorentina's Enrico Chiesa, also a scorer Sunday, in the Serie A goalscoring charts.

Verona boosted their survival fight when Emiliano Salvetti and Vincenzo Italiano scored second-half goals at home to Fiorentina for whom Chiesa reduced arrears in injury time from a freekick. It finished 2-1.

On Saturday Roberto Baggio bagged a hat-trick to lead Brescia to a 3-0 victory at Lecce.

The 34-year-old, whose outstanding recent form has almost single-handedly pulled his side away from the relegation zone, opened the scoring after four minutes.

His second came direct from a corner while his hat-trick goal and 10th of the season was a penalty.

Bologna were held 1-1 by Udinese whose Brazilian player Alberto equalised Renato Olive's opener for the hosts.

the penalty spot, his 21st Serie A goal of the season.

Vryzas struck again after the interval to complete a 2-1 win and a memorable double for Perugia over the Milan side wearing special shirts

Dress rehearsal

in Rome

Football

REUTERS, Rome

Rome got a taste on Sunday night of the kind of celebrations it can expect if AS Roma hold on to their lead at the top of the Italian First Division and win their first league title for 18 years.

Some 3,000 fans poured into the city's squares, honking car horns and waving huge Italian flags and standards in the club's red and gold - the colours of imperial Rome.

Police were forced to close Piazza Venezia and Piazza del Popolo, the city's two main squares, because of the crowds.

Many headed for the Circo Massimo, the old Roman chariot track on the edge of the city centre where Roma celebrated their 1983 title with a huge open-air concert.

The celebrations were largely peaceful but a few shop windows were smashed in the city centre, a bus was damaged and several rubbish skips were set alight.

This was a celebration triggered by a match played 600 kilometres away in Turin -- a match which Roma did not even win and which does not guarantee them the title.

But the manner of their 2-2 draw against Juventus convinced thousands of fans in the capital that this was their year.

Roma were 2-0 down after six minutes and were outclassed by Juventus for the entire match before hitting two goals in the last 12 minutes to claim an unlikely point.

Their draw leaves them six points ahead of Juventus, who slip

to third, and five clear of defending champions Lazio. All three clubs have five matches to play.

The fact that the other big side in the capital, Lazio, are now Roma's main rivals for the coveted "scudetto" has added an extra frisson to the title race for Roma's long-suffering fans, 500 of whom headed out to the city's main airport in the early hours of the morning to greet their heroes off the flight from Turin.

"Roma show 'scudetto' heart," ran the banner headline in Gazzetta dello Sport above a photograph of striker Vincenzo Montella, scorer of Roma's 91st-minute equaliser.

Rome-based sports daily Corriere dello Sport dedicated nine pages to coverage of the match and the celebrations.

But as Roma coach Fabio Capello was quick to point out, Roma are not champions yet.

"Let's stay calm. We're overjoyed but the euphoria is finished. We know how to keep our concentration.

Roma have a more difficult run-in than either Lazio or Juventus -- they face Atalanta, AC Milan and Parma in their final three homes matches and all three sides are pushing for European berths.

But even on that score things seem to be going Roma's way. Parma's victory on Sunday and defeats for AC Milan and Atalanta mean that Parma have taken a giant step towards clinching Italy's fourth Champions League berth.

That leaves Milan and Atalanta looking at the UEFA Cup places and by the time they come to the Olympic Stadium they may have nothing left to play for.

Romans soar on

stock market

Football

AFP, Milan

Shares in Italian First Division leaders AS Roma soared by 4.85 percent here Monday morning when trading opened, reaching a new price of 6.96 Euros.

That was a reaction to the comeback that allowed Roma to draw 2-2 in Turin with Juventus, a result that keeps them on course for the title.

But it was also a good day for shareholders in defending champions Lazio who saw their assets rise 2.35 percent to 3.45 Euros after the 2-0 win over Bari that established them as the principal challengers to the city rivals.

Scooter hurled by fans

Football

AFP, Milan

A serious incident of hooliganism marred Inter Milan's 3-0 victory over Atalanta at the San Siro Sunday.

TV pictures showed a group of fans setting on fire and vandalising a scooter they had managed to smuggle inside the ground onto the second tier of the Curva Nord of the

famous stadium, the traditional meeting place of Inter's 'Ultras'.

After they had finished vandalising the scooter the fans hurled it from the top of the second tier down several rows of seats where other supporters were congregated, although none was hit by the large projectile.

Fans then prepared to throw the scooter down onto the first tier below but were prevented from doing so by riot police.

Nakata's night

Football

AFP, Turin

AS Roma's Japanese midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata was elevated to hero status Sunday evening after a performance that has taken his side to the brink of the Italian First Division championship.

When substitute Nakata replaced playmaker Francesco Totti during Sunday's match with home favourites Juventus in Turin Roma were losing 2-0 and seemingly destined for a defeat that would allow Juve to trim their lead to only three points with five games remaining.

But the Japanese international, signed by Roma from Perugia last season, rewrote the script when he reduced arrears with 12 minutes remaining, scoring a spectacular goal from 25 metres and in injury time he created the equaliser when his shot was half-saved by Juve's Dutch goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar only for Vincenzo Montella to converted the rebound. The match finished 2-2.

"It was a day I will remember for a long time," said Nakata. "One of the most beautiful since I have been at Roma. I am happy for our feat.

"We proved we were a great team by equalising at Turin against Juventus after being two goals down," continued the avowed Atheist who earlier this season was chosen to represent non-believers in a pluralistic charity match played in front of Pope John Paul II at Rome's Olympic Stadium.

"As for the title it is closer



PHOTO: INTERNET

SUPER-SUB: AS Roma's Japanese ace Hidetoshi Nakata (L) coming on to the pitch to replace Francesco Totti (R) at Turin on May 6.

because now we are five points ahead of our rivals (Lazio) and we do not have to play any of the top teams."

Nakata only played because of Friday's landmark decision by Italian football chiefs to scrap the limit on non-European Union players.

"The rule change could change my future," said Nakata whose first-team opportunities had been limited by previous rules that had required a maximum of three non-EU players in any team. "Now there is more

room for me but we will have to wait and see.

"As for the first goal I saw the space and decided to have a crack and the ball went exactly where I wanted it to go. I had another go for the second goal and fortunately Montella was there to finish it off."

Roma coach Fabio Capello hailed Nakata's show as "his finest moment" and that emotion was echoed by Roma fans chanting the Japanese player's name into the early hours of the morning in the Eternal City.

Primera Liga

Rayo favour for Real

Football

AFP, Madrid

Spanish champions Deportivo La Coruna failed to take advantage of Real Madrid's 3-0 weekend defeat to Celta Vigo when they only scraped a 1-1 draw at Rayo Vallecano on Sunday, leaving Madrid eight points clear at the top of the *Primera Liga* with five games to go.

After dominating the Spanish league this season Real have suffered a disappointing slump in form recently with a 1-1 draw against Osasuna last weekend followed by Tuesday night's 1-0 Champions League home defeat to Germany's Bayern Munich.

A win would have made life easier for Real, but the visitors were struggling from the outset against the Gallicians with Juan Fran and Gustavo Lopez giving the home side a two-goal lead going into the break and midfielder Jesuli grabbing a last-minute third on the whistle.

Deportivo looked in trouble after Rayo scored the opener at 56 minutes from a Bolu shot which had a hint of being off-side.

But Juan Carlos Valeron equalised in the 69th after a through ball from Walter Pandiani set him up. The result means that Deportivo are just two points ahead of third-placed Valencia who have 59 points as the race for the *Primera Liga* title heats up.

Valencia were the only top-five outfit to win at the weekend, a narrow 2-1 result at relegation-threatened Real Sociedad, who were reduced to just nine men in the second half.

Slovenian Zlatko Zahovic gave Valencia a late lead on the 66th minute, with Real Sociedad grabbing the equaliser through Agustín Aranzabal's 74th-minute penalty. But Hector Cuper's side grabbed their vital three points when midfielder Pablo Aimar found the net on 82.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Manuel Pablo Garcia (L) of Deportivo la Coruña and Rayo Vallecano's Luis Cembranos battle for possession at Rayo's Teresa Rivero stadium on May 6.

Cuper decided to rest key defenders Mauricio Pellegrino and Jocelyn Angloma as well as midfielder Gaizka Mendieta for the crucial Champions League return leg at home next Tuesday against Leeds, opting to use French World Cup winning captain Didier Deschamps in midfield.

whose three points dragged them out of the relegation zone.

UEFA Cup finalists Alaves bounced back from two defeats with a 5-1 win over Racing Santander where two goals from 25-year-old striker Javi Moreno took him back to the top of the *Primera Liga* scoring

Primera Liga's top six

After matches played on Saturday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):							
Real Madrid	33	21	6	6	70	36	69
Deportivo	33	18	7	8	62	39	61
Valencia	33	17	8	8	51	26	59
Mallorca	33	15	11	7	46	39	56
Barcelona	33	14	11	8	69	51	53
Celta Vigo	33	14	9	10	47	45	51

Meanwhile Barcelona's new coach Carlos Rexach failed to revive the fortunes of the struggling Catalan outfit after they were held to a 0-0 draw in their derby match played Saturday under driving rain at city rivals Espanyol which leaves them stuck in fifth position.

Fourth-placed Real Mallorca went down 1-0 at lowly Osasuna,

charts.

Oviedo went one better thumping Basque outfit Athletic Bilbao 5-0 while Real Zaragoza beat Numancia 3-1, Villarreal saw off Las Palmas 2-1 and Real Valladolid and Mallorca drew 0-0.

Valencia to

go all-out

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Madrid

Valencia have warned Leeds to expect a full frontal assault when the two sides meet in their European Champions League semi-final second leg on Tuesday.

Valencia rode their luck to end up with a 0-0 draw at Elland Road last Wednesday, thanks to some outstanding saves from their Spanish international goalkeeper Santiago Canizares.

But coach Hector Cuper promised it will be Valencia's strikers who will be in the second leg limelight.

"This will be a completely different game. We are going to have more space to play and I'm sure they are not going to attack us as much as they did last week. I'm confident that we will win," Cuper commented on Sunday.

Last season's Champions

League finalists got a morale-

boosting 2-1 away victory at Real

Sociedad on Saturday, despite

resting several key players.

First choice strikers Juan

Sanchez and John Carew did not

play in San Sebastian, and instead it

was Zlatko Zahovic and Pablo Aimar

who pressed their claims for inclu-

sion by scoring one goal apiece.

Suddenly, after long periods this

seasons when Cuper has been

short of firepower, Cuper has an

embarrassment of riches, added to

by the return of Romanian interna-

tional forward Adrian Ilie, who has

been injured for the past two

months.

Ilie came off the bench for 30

minutes on Saturday, although

Cuper is unlikely to gamble starting

with the man nicknamed The Cobra

for Tuesday's match.

Yet while Cuper and Valencia

fancy their chances of reaching the

final, he remains wary of the threat

posed by Leeds.

"We can't lose sight of the fact

that Leeds are still a dangerous

team," he said.

"I was upset on Saturday

because we got nervous at times

when we had the ball. We can't

afford to lose patience like that

against Leeds, and I also don't want

us going into the match over-

confident, because Leeds can easily

score on the counterattack," Cuper

added.

The Argentine-born coach also

has some suspension and injury

problems to resolve before Tuesday

night.

Defender Amedeo Carboni is

suspended, which should herald a

recall for Miroslav Djukic, while



HECTOR CUPER

Mauricio Pellegrino, Carboni's counterpart in the centre of the back four, could be out after suffering a hamstring injury against Leeds and not being fit in time to face Real Sociedad.

Cuper has also lost Spanish international Ruben Baraja through suspension and, as a result, will have to reshuffle his midfield with either Miguel Angel Angulo or Kily Gonzalez coming in.

For his part, Leeds coach David O'Leary has no injury or suspension worries and is expected to name the same team that started last Wednesday.

"This is a tie of 180 minutes, and we could have scored on several occasions in the first leg," O'Leary commented.

"I'm looking at this match like the one we had against Milan we had in the first group stage. We had to go to the San Siro and got a 1-1 draw, which was enough to qualify.

"It was at that point I knew my players weren't going to fall apart when the pressure was on and I am confident it will not happen in Valencia, when the same result will do us just fine," he added.

As a testament to his ability, O'Leary got the Premiership Manager of the Month award on Friday, for the second consecutive month. But he will have much to ponder after Saturday's 2-1 defeat away at Arsenal.

That loss effectively ruled out Leeds' chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League via the Premiership.

"For us to get into the Champions League again next season, we've got to win the Champions League this year," O'Leary said.

"There's no bigger prize in football than getting to a European final. I never thought I'd be asking that of

Angloma's dream

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Valencia

Valencia's evergreen defender Jocelyn Angloma has set his sights on leading the Spanish side's thirty-something defensive line into the Champions League final.

At an age when most footballers are contemplating the end of their top-flight playing careers Angloma - who will soon be 36 - could reach his second consecutive Champions League final if Valencia beat Leeds Tuesday.

"Those who start late, finish late," is the maxim used by the player who only signed his first professional contract for French side Rennes at the age of 20.

"I knew where I was going," said Angloma, a former professional electrician from Guadeloupe, who came to Europe to try his luck at football ended up hitting the big time.

"Now I am really taking advantage of what football gives me," said Angloma, anxious to make up for lost time.

"I feel good mentally and consequently the physical fitness follows.

"The most important thing is not

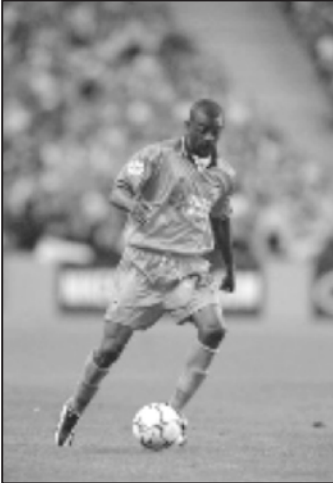
how long the legs will hold out but your mental outlook. If you really have the desire to keep running you can. Thirty-five is hardly the age of an old man."

Valencia can claim one of the best defences in Europe and have an astonishing record despite having players in the rearguard who should technically be past their sell-by date.

Angloma and his colleagues in Valencia's iron-clad defence are likely to be key figures in Tuesday's match at the Mestalla Stadium.

Angloma, Amedeo Carboni, and Miroslav Djukic - all internationals in their prime - are playing some of the best football of their careers despite having all celebrated their 35th birthdays.

The trio were expected to retire



JOCELYN ANGLOMA

after Valencia's 3-0 defeat by Real Madrid in the 2000 European Cup final at the Stade de France.

All three then signed till the end of this season before in March they decided to extend their playing days further till the end of the 2001/02 season. Carboni misses Tuesday's match through suspension.

Sweden's Joachim Bjorklund is another member of their impressive backline and is hardly a youngster at 30.

"I only expected to stay for two years when I arrived in 1997," said Angloma, who signed from Inter Milan after contracts at Torino, Marseille, PSG, Lille and Rennes.

He had three high-profile seasons with Marseille culminating in a European Cup winners medal in 1993. Marseille were later hit by a match-fixing scandal which forced their relegation to the Second Division.

That led to Angloma's departure for Torino where he spent two seasons before joining Inter.

Angloma, capped 37 times for France, has now played more than 100 matches in the Spanish championship and more 50 matches in Europe.

Scholl may miss

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

REUTERS, Munich

Bayern Munich will probably be without Germany midfielder Mehmet Scholl when they entertain Real Madrid in the second leg of their Champions League semifinal on Wednesday.

"He is very, very doubtful," Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said after Scholl, who hurt his right ankle in Bayern's 1-0 victory over Real in the first leg last Tuesday, missed Monday's training.

"We are really worried," added Hitzfeld, who has a midfield problem as playmaker and captain Stefan Effenberg is suspended after picking up a yellow card in Madrid.