



FA CUP IN PICTURES: (From L-R) (a) Michael Owen scrabbles in the equaliser for Liverpool, (b) A crest-fallen Arsenal striker Thierry Henry after the final whistle, (c) Owen proudly lifts the FA Cup and (d) Liverpool manger Gerard Houllier joins in the middle of a team party.

Awesome Owen

Football

AFP, Cardiff

Liverpool won their second trophy of the season Saturday lifting the FA Cup by beating Arsenal after coming from 1-0 down to win 2-1 thanks to two goals from England international Michael Owen at the Millennium Stadium.

Liverpool had claimed the League Cup earlier this year and can claim a third trophy on Wednesday if they beat Spanish side Alaves in the UEFA Cup final in Dortmund, Germany.

Owen, who lifted his tally to eight goals in four matches, struck twice in the final seven minutes to pull off a win that looked far from likely when Sweden's Fredrik Ljungberg had netted 18 minutes from the whistle in the first FA Cup final to be played outside England.

The 21-year-old English international struck

first in the 83rd minute when he reacted first to smash home a corner from veteran substitute Gary McAllister. Five minutes later he collected a long through ball from Patrik Berger, sprinted clear of the Arsenal defenders and fired an angled shot past England goalkeeper David Seaman.

"I will go to sleep remembering this every night for the rest of my life," said Owen.

"This was us down and out and then 'boom' it took off and I was fortunate to be the one who got them both.

"It's fantastic but while there is the UEFA Cup final on Wednesday our main one is to beat Charlton next weekend and qualify for the Champions League," he added.

Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier conceded Arsenal were the better team for much of the match, played in Wales because of the closure of Wembley for re-development.

"They were the better side, they are a counter-attacking side too," he said. "But we showed pride and passion qualities that are typical of this club.

We were playing a more mature team, more skilled in certain areas.

"But the skill to win is not as good as the will to win and we showed a lot of character."

Houllier claimed the introduction of 36-year-old midfielder McAllister had been the turning point.

"He gave more flow in the game," said Houllier.

Asked about goal hero Owen, the Frenchman said: "How can you describe that? He has been doing that for a month and he did it again."

Houllier's Arsenal counterpart and fellow Frenchman Arsene Wenger was left to contemplate a trophyless season in which not even a guaranteed Champions League spot could act as consolation.

"You cannot say that Liverpool deserved to win," he said.

"We did not score from the chances we created and on the first Liverpool goal we were not determined enough to clear it.

"If you don't take your chances a side like Liverpool is going to punish you," he added.

It was an amazing comeback from Liverpool who had earlier survived three goalline scares thanks to defending heroics from captain Sami Hyppia.

The opening goal came when Ljungberg, played in by Robert Pires, calmly rounded Liverpool goalkeeper Sander Westerveld before rifling the ball home in the 72nd minute.

The match might have been finished as a contest two minutes later, but despite having two bites of the cherry, French international striker Thierry Henry could not force the ball home as Hyppia cleared again.

Shortly before scoring, Ljungberg missed a glorious chance when the ball broke to him on the edge of the box after a forceful run from Henry, only for the Swede to see his chip over Westerveld headed clear by Hyppia.

Houllier gambled on a 77th-minute double substitution with Patrik Berger and Robbie Fowler

replacing Danny Murphy and Vladimir Smicer - but it was McAllister who had steadied the Liverpool ship after replacing Dietmar Hamann on the hour.

Liverpool's second half performance was in sharp contrast to their lacklustre first. When a Murphy free kick in the 48th minute was met with a powerful header from Emile Heskey, who saw his powerful effort blocked by Seaman, it was the first time the Arsenal 'keeper had been forced into a save.

Arsenal responded by increasing their tempo and only a last-ditch intervention by Hyppia prevented them taking the lead in the 57th minute.

Pires lofted a cute pass over the Liverpool defence to Henry but the striker's shot was blocked by Westerveld. The rebound broke to England left-back Ashley Cole, whose shot was cleared off the line by the Finn.

Arsenal should have taken the lead in the 17th minute through Henry who rounded Westerveld,

but his shot from a narrow angle was blocked by the arm of Swiss defender Stephane Henchoz, whose arm was raised as he appeared to slip in trying to cover back on the goal line.

Neither referee Steve Dunn nor his assistant on the right touchline signalled for a penalty.

However, while Houllier brushed aside suggestions it was a penalty Wenger was adamant a spot kick should have been given.

"It was a clear handball, Thierry told me that as well," said a bemused Wenger. "I don't think the referee saw it but the linesman did because he told me afterwards it was not on purpose. "But everything's going for Liverpool right now. The game should have been over for along time before Liverpool scored. It's not the first time this season that we've lost a game in the last 15 minutes."



AS Roma's Montella (L) taking a fall under pressure from two Atalanta defenders.

Serie A Roma nearer to title

Football

AFP, Rome

Leaders AS Roma kept on course for the Italian First Division title here at the Olympic Stadium Saturday, edging Atalanta 1-0 to stay clear of their rivals with just four games to play.

A second-half goal from Vincenzo Montella sufficed for Fabio Capello's side, ensuring they stay five points ahead of defending champions Lazio who survived the sending-off of Argentinian midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron to record a come-from-behind 4-2 victory at Napoli.

Juventus are a point further back following the 3-1 victory at Fiorentina Friday night that had seen them briefly go second and cut Roma's lead to three points.

At a tense Olympic Stadium it was looking grim for Roma when Capello replaced Francesco Totti with Japanese substitute Hidetoshi Nakata but within minutes Roma were ahead, Montella scoring from a Nakata corner.

"At this stage of the season the only thing that matters is the result," said Capello. "And also we kept a clean sheet."

"It was a game that needed patience, almost a chess match. Atalanta wanted to close us out and hit us on the break but we did not allow it."

Lazio needed all their reserves to beat Napoli in Naples.

Nicola Amoruso gave Napoli a 24th-minute lead and four minutes later the same player missed a glorious chance to double that lead.

But Argentinian Hernan Crespo struck back for the defending champions after being set up by Veron.

Two minutes into the second

period Amoruso struck again but within four minutes Crespo had again restored parity with his 21st of the season, this time set up by Czech Karel Poborsky.

Veron then got his marching orders but goals from Czech Pavel Nedved and substitute Fabrizio Ravaneli made it 4-2 to Lazio.

Lazio coach Dino Zoff said: "It was certainly a performance of character but also of skill and technique by the players. Losing Veron is a blow, he is a very important player for us.

"But we still believe," he continued. "All we can do is win our remaining games and hope something happens." Perugia roared to a 3-0 first-half lead at Udinese but had to settle for a 3-3 draw. Defender Marco Materazzi, who will join Inter Milan in the summer, opened the scoring from the penalty spot for his 11th of the season before Korean Ahn Jung-Hwan notched his third in four matches.

And on the stroke of the interval Ahn got his second and Perugia's third, apparently killing the game.

But Udinese battled back and goals from Argentinian Roberto Sosa and Roberto Muzzi pulled it back to 3-2. Stefano Fiore's injury-time penalty snatched the draw.

Two goals from Andrea Bernini gave struggling Reggina a 2-0 win at Parma that gives them renewed

hope of survival.

Goals for Vicenza from Lamberto Zauli and Marco Zanchi and two for Bari's Gionatha Spinesi ensured a 2-2 draw for the struggling sides - a result that does neither team any favours.

Lecce drew 0-0 at Verona in another relegation battle while the match between Brescia and Bologna also finished 0-0.

On Friday Juventus pulled off a 3-1 win against Fiorentina in Florence.

First-half goals from French playmaker Zinedine Zidane and Croatian defender Igor Tudor put the Turin side 2-0 up although Marco Rossi pulled one back for the Florence outfit before the interval.

But a header from French striker David Trezeguet a minute from time settled the match for the 25-time champions from Turin.

And at the San Siro AC Milan recorded a historic 6-0 thrashing of arch-rivals Inter in the Milan derby.

Two goals each from Gianni Comandini and Andriy Shevchenko and one apiece from Federico Giunti and Brazilian Serginho destroyed Inter who were technically the home side.

The brace for Shevchenko took the Ukrainian to 23 goals for the season.

Serie A's top six

After Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):									
AS Roma	30	20	7	3	58	28	67		
Lazio	30	19	5	6	57	32	62		
Juventus	30	17	10	3	51	25	61		
Parma	30	14	8	8	44	24	50		
AC Milan	30	12	11	7	52	40	47		
Inter Milan	30	12	8	10	41	44			

Houllier staying calm

AFP, Cardiff

Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier is keeping a tight rein on his side despite their dramatic 2-1 FA Cup Final victory over Arsenal here at the Millennium Stadium on Saturday.

That win meant Liverpool had equalled Arsenal's 1993 feat of winning both English domestic cup competitions and on Wednesday they have the chance to complete an unprecedented treble when they face Spanish club Alaves in the final of the UEFA Cup in Dortmund, Germany.

Houllier is determined that Liverpool's season does not end with a whimper especially as they still have a chance of securing England's third and final Champions League place from their remaining Premiership games.

That glittering prize means iron discipline will be maintained by the Anfield supremo. "The celebrations (of our FA Cup Final victory) will be so limited they will be restricted to nothing.

"We will have a meal with no alcohol at all."

"Then we will go back to Liverpool and have a training session and on Tuesday we'll fly to Germany for the Alaves game.

"But we also have to think about the Charlton game after that because it is massive for us if we are to qualify for the Champions League.

"We want to win trophies because that's what it is all about so this is the way we will do things.

"Whatever the result, we had seen other teams who win something celebrate and then, three days later, have a problem when they have to play a Champions League final or a national team game.

"We have to be very professional if we want to win trophies and that's what our job is about."

Ghana prepares to mourn

AFP, Akkra

Ghana will hold an official mourning ceremony Sunday for 126 victims of its worst sports tragedy amid tight security to prevent further attacks on police, widely blamed for the deadly stampede.

Final preparations were under way for an inter-faith prayer service to pay respects to Wednesday's victims at the forecourt of the State House in Accra. Chairs, banners and microphones were being put in place as troops swarmed the area.

The ceremony, set to begin at 4:00 pm (1600 GMT), will be attended by President John Kufor, prominent members of his government, diplomats and relatives of the dead and the injured.

Nantes reign in France



WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS: Ecstatic Nantes players celebrate after becoming French First Division champions.

Football

AFP, Paris

Nantes were crowned French champions for the eighth time and the first since 1995 on Saturday when they beat St Etienne 1-0.

With just one match remaining the Canaries - who are on a roll of seven successive league wins - lead second-placed Lyon - who romped home 5-0 over tailend Charles Strasbourg - by four points.

In the mistier climes of the relegation zone Bernard Tapie blew a relieved sigh as a double from Ibrahima Bakayoko saw off Bastia and consigned Toulouse to the drop.

Toulouse did all they could to send the battle into the last week by coming from behind to beat Metz 2-1.

However, they will have to rely on their unceasing efforts to have points awarded to them because other sides including Metz goalkeeper Farid Mondragon, who also played Strasbourg, fielded ineligible players.

However, the confetti and fireworks were all at Nantes as their normally reticent coach Raynald Denoueix put their achievement into perspective.

"It's paradise tonight after 33 hard tough matches," said Nantes coach Raynald Denoueix.

"That was a tough match and we lived through all the emotions for 90 minutes.

"However, we have lived this experience together and hopefully the players will stay so we can live through more of these next season," he added.

Marama Vahirua was Nantes hero scoring his seventh goal of the season after several clear chances had gone begging with their last titlwinning coach Jean-Claude Suaudeau watching.

Frederic Da Rocha beat a St Etienne defender and passed it inside where the 20-year-old Tahitian, apparently a favourite of legendary Hollywood actor Marlon Brando, tapped it into the net.

Sonny Anderson opened the

score for Lyon against Strasbourg slipping free in the box and shooting home for his 20th of the season.

The Brazilian created the second on the stroke of halftime when his header back across the goal was volleyed in by Swiis midfielder Patrick Muller.

Anderson was in carnival mood as he backheeled into Sidney Govou's path and the young player of the year shot home.

Anderson's box of tricks was not over yet as his curling freekick came off the bar and was met by Jean-Marc Chanelet who fired home and within a minute the salt was rubbed firmly into Strasbourg's gaping wound when Steve Marlet added a fifth.

Marseille looked to be heading for a nervous week ahead of the final match when Bastia's leading scorer Fredric Nee levelled with his 15th goal of the season as he squeezed a shot through two defenders and past the 'keeper.

However, Bakayoko, often the butt of the Marseille fans ire, added a second to his tally when the Corsican outfit failed to clear the ball and George Weah prodded it into his path.

The Cote Ivoire international had given the 1993 European Cup winners a breathing space eight minutes before the break by heading them into the lead.

Paris Saint Germain put up one of their more spirited performances to twice come back from a goal down to draw 2-2 with Lille and deal a blow to their Champions League aspirations.

Bruno Cheyrou took his tally to five for the season for Lille but his fine efforts were cancelled out by Spanish midfielder Arleta and then excitable striker Mickael Madar brought them level for a second time.

However, Lille still have hopes of making the Champions League after Bordeaux missed a great opportunity to take three points against 10-man Sedan drawing 2-2 missing a penalty and twice letting the lead slip.

Bundesliga Luck smiles on Bayern

Football

AFP, Berlin

Two 90th-minute goals, Stuttgart's winner over Schalke 04 and Bayern Munich's clincher over Kaiserslautern, left the Bavarian side three points clear of second-placed Schalke in the penultimate round of matches in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

The two sides had been running neck-and-neck for weeks in their bid for the title.

Bayern were trailing to Kaiserslautern after a fifth-minute goal from Vratislav Lokvenc before giant striker Carsten Jancker equalised in the 55th minute and Alex Zickler grabbed a last-minute winner to cap a successful week for the side who beat Real Madrid on Wednesday to reach the Champions League final.

Bayern need only draw next week against Hamburg SV to win their 17th German title ahead of that final against Valencia on May 23 at Milan's San Siro stadium.

Schalke are no longer masters of their destiny and need Bayern to lose at Hamburg next Saturday while they must triumph at Unterhaching to win their first German title for 58 years.

The Ruhr side were heading for a 0-0 stalemate at relegation-threatened VfB Stuttgart before Bulgarian international Krassimir

Balakov's last minute winner dealt a withering blow to Schalke's title dream.

Stuttgart's win saw them climb three points clear of the relegation zone, but Eintracht Frankfurt will be joining VfL Bochum in the Second Division next season after a 3-0 defeat at VfL Wolfsburg.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld sent a chilling message to anyone expecting his side to take their foot off the accelerator.

"We won't be messing around going for a draw at Hamburg next week, I assure you we'll be playing to win," he insisted.

Matthias Sammer's Borussia Dortmund consolidated third place after thumping Unterhaching 4-1 with the help of two strikes from Ghana midfielder Otto Addo.

Fourth and fifth-placed Bayern Leverkusen and Hertha Berlin slugged out a 1-1 draw in Berlin's Olympic stadium, the home side taking the lead through Sebastian Deisler in the 21st minute before Leverkusen's Olivier Neuville equalised in the second half.

Elsewhere, SC Freiburg climbed into a UEFA Cup position after flirting with relegation in mid-season, Saturday's 3-1 win at Bochum giving them 52 points.

Mid-table sides Hansa Rostock and 1860 Munich drew 0-0 and Werder Bremen beat Cologne 3-1 away.

Bundesliga's top six

After Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):									
Bayern Munich	33	19	5	9	61	36	62		
Schalke 04	33	17	8	8	60	32	59		
Dortmund	33	16	9	8	59	39	57		
Leverkusen	33	16	6	11	53	40	54		
Hertha Berlin	33	17	2	14	57	52	53		
SC Freiburg	33	14	10	9	50	36	52		



Bayern striker Carsten Jancker is jubilant after equalising against Kaiserslautern.