



PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid superstar Luis Figo (R), falls face down under pressure from Espanyol's Toni Velamazan (L) and Roger Garcia at Madrid on May 13.

Primera Liga

Espanyol deny Real

Football

AFP, Madrid

Spanish leaders Real Madrid dropped two home points on Sunday to give defending champions Deportivo La Coruna a glimmer of hope of retaining the title on a day when Valencia lost 3-0 and Barcelona roared back into life.

Real gave themselves a two-goal lead to Espanyol whose city rivals Barcelona thumped modest Madrid outfit Rayo Vallecano 5-1.

Deportivo beat Alaves 2-1 on Friday, not ideal preparation for the Vitoria side's date with Liverpool in the UEFA Cup final in Dortmund on Wednesday.

And with Champions League finalists Valencia stumbling, Real Mallorca consolidated their late charge with a 2-0 win over Celta Vigo.

With 12 points still to play for in Spain, Real have 70 points, Deportivo 64, Valencia and Mallorca 59, Barcelona 56, Celta Vigo 51 and Malaga and Villarreal 50 as the competition for four Champions League and two UEFA cup spots heats up.

Primera Liga's top six

After Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Real Madrid	34	21	7	6	72	38	70
Deportivo	34	19	7	8	64	40	64
Valencia	34	17	8	9	51	29	59
Mallorca	34	16	11	7	48	39	59
Barcelona	34	15	11	8	74	52	56
Celta Vigo	34	14	9	11	47	47	51

keeper Iker Casillas but his replacement Cesar was picking the ball out of his net after Espanyol pulled a first goal back through Argentinian Pablo Rotchen in the 48th minute.

Roumain Galca then converted a penalty after Madrid captain Fernando Hierro was sent off for handling a goalbound shot and Real, chasing their first league title

for four years, were forced to dig in for the draw.

Valencia, who thrashed Leeds 3-0 on Tuesday to qualify for the Champions League final for the second consecutive year, lost 3-0 after Malaga striker Dely Valdes scored a hat-trick. Valencia's misery was compounded by the sending off of Fabien Ayala.

Barcelona finally shook off their

joins the goal fest. Overmars ended a mazy run with a close-range lob and Petit's substitute appearance crowned the evening with a 90th minute left foot volley from outside the area.

A Finidi George double gave Real Mallorca a handy 2-0 win over form side Celta Vigo. Goals in the 47th and 90th minute from the Nigerian helped his side climb level on points with Valencia and into contention for European competition next season.

On Friday, two penalties from Deportivo's Argentinian Diego Tristan overcame a 15th-minute penalty scored by Alaves striker Javi Moreno, after he was brought down by Moroccan defender Nouredine Naybet who was red-carded for the incident. Alaves are stuck in eighth position.

John Toshack's Real Sociedad climbed clear of the relegation zone with a crucial 3-1 win at Villarreal on Saturday.

Elsewhere, Las Palmas beat Real Zaragoza 2-1, bottom club Numancia beat relegation rivals Osasuna 1-0 and Athletic Bilbao drew 1-1 with Valladolid.

Gunners ready to spend

AFP, London

Arsenal's French coach Arsene Wenger revealed Monday that the club are preparing a summer spending spree to turn the Gunners into trophy winners.

The north London outfit have failed to win a trophy since their league and cup double three years ago, and after Saturday's 2-1 FA Cup final defeat to Liverpool, Wenger knows he needs to strengthen his squad.

"If we are to become great again, we must buy a couple of world-class players," Wenger told the Press Association.

"This team still has huge potential but we need some extra quality to take us that step further."

"I know what I want - and we have enough time to sort it all out."

Arsenal, who despite qualifying for the Champions League for next season were knocked out of the competition at the quarter-final stage this year, are believed to have 40 million pounds to spend in the summer.

The FA Cup final defeat highlighted Arsenal's need for a goalscorer after they missed a string of chances to finish off Liverpool after Wenger's side had taken a 1-0 lead.

Arsenal paid for their profligacy in front of goal when Michael Owen scored two late goals to seal the Gunners' fate.

France international Thierry Henry, who was guilty of missing one of Arsenal's best chances, said a new striker should be a priority for the under-achieving club.

"We need a player who will be like a fox in the penalty area," said Henry. "We must get someone who does what Owen does for Liverpool."



PHOTO: AFP

FLYING AUSTRALIAN! Leeds United's Australian international striker Mark Viduka (R) scoring with an airborne header against Bradford on May 13.

Premiership

Leeds bury Bradford

Football

AFP, London

Leeds United hammered relegated Bradford 6-1 on Sunday to keep alive their chances of a second Champions League campaign while Premiership champions Manchester United lost 2-1 at Southampton.

With just one match remaining, Leeds now trail Liverpool by a point and are level with Ipswich, although Leeds emphatically achieved their aim here of bumping up their goal difference over their closest rivals.

So the race for the final place in Europe's top competition goes down to the wire on Saturday with Leeds at home to Leicester, Liverpool at Charlton and Ipswich at Derby.

David O'Leary's side were 5-1 up at half time, erasing the painful memory of last Tuesday's Champions League semi-final second-leg 3-0 defeat at Valencia.

Leeds were 2-0 up after just 20 minutes after goals from Mark Viduka and Ian Harte before Ashley Ward pulled one back on 22 but Eirik Bakke, Smith again and Harry Kewell all added goals before the interval.

Bottom placed Bradford's morale took a further blow when Stuart McCall and Andy Myers were involved in a brawl ending in Myers needing treatment for a cut, though the two Bradford men went unpun-

ished.

Lee Bowyer bagged Leeds' final goal six minutes from time to help ease the memory of Tuesday's match that he watched from the bench after being banned for a stamping incident.

His goal ensured Leeds became only the fourth team this season to score six in a Premiership game, with Manchester United (twice), Arsenal and Chelsea also achieving such a feat - one which could prove crucial in the final reckoning next Saturday.

Champions Manchester United suffered only their fifth Premiership defeat of the season in a low-key affair against Southampton at The Dell, finally giving caretaker manager Stuart Gray his first victory since replacing Glenn Hoddle.

Alex Ferguson rested a host of stars and his second-stringers were blitzed as a Wes Brown own goal and a cool finish from Marian Pahars put the home side two up

Premiership's top six

After Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Manchester United	37	24	8	5	78	28	80
Arsenal	36	20	9	7	61	35	69
Liverpool	37	19	9	9	67	39	66
Leeds	37	19	8	10	61	42	65
Ipswich	37	20	5	12	56	41	65
Chelsea	37	16	10	11	66	44	58

*Manchester United champions, Arsenal qualify for Champions League, Bradford, Coventry and Manchester City relegated

Solbakken to quit football

AFF, Oslo

Norway international Staale Solbakken, who suffered a heart attack while training with his Danish club FC Copenhagen last March, has announced his retirement, the Norwegian press agency NTB reported Monday.

The 33-year-old midfielder scored nine goals in 58 international matches including appearances at the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 championships.

Solbakken suffered the heart attack on March 13 and had to be revived by paramedics and the club doctor as shocked fellow players looked on.

He was held in intensive care on an artificial respirator and left hospital two weeks later.

Solbakken started his career with Norwegian club Lillestrom, transferring to English outfit Wimbledon in 1997 before moving several months later to Danish side AaB where he quickly became a key member of the squad. He signed for FC Copenhagen last August.

O'Leary seeks Charlton aid

Football

AFF, London

The home crowd were stunned on the half hour when Celtic fell behind to a superb Caballero goal when he curled an inch-perfect effort past the left hand of Jonathan Gould and into the bottom corner.

Dundee's Zura Khizanishvili was sent off on 33 after pulling Larsson's shirt, a harsh decision but not one that knocked the stuffing out of Dundee who doubled their lead two minutes before the break.

Javier Artero found space on the right wing and played the ball across the face of goal. Caballero was the first to react and shot home from close range with Ramon Vega dithering.

But Dundee could have killed the game in the 65th minute when Gavin Rae capitalised on some sloppy defending, but drilled his shot just past the upright.

The home side kept going and almost grabbed a goal back in the 72nd minute when Neil Lennon headed Thompson's cross down into the path of Larsson, who fired wide of the post.

Dundee player-manager Ivano Bonetti admitted after the game that Italian Claudio Caniggia had all but decided to sign for Rangers.

Bonetti, who expects the deal to be completed within the next few days, said: "He is 98 percent a Rangers player with around two percent that's not sure. That's football, it's strange."

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