



Premiership Liverpool put icing on cake

Premiership's final standings

Final English Premiership table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Manchester United	38	24	8	6	79	31	80
Arsenal	38	20	10	8	63	38	70
Liverpool	38	20	9	9	71	39	69
Leeds United	38	20	8	10	64	43	68
Ipswich Town	38	20	6	12	57	42	66
Chelsea	38	17	10	11	68	45	61
Sunderland	38	15	12	11	46	41	57
Aston Villa	38	13	15	10	46	43	54
Charlton Athletic	38	14	10	14	50	57	52
Southampton	38	14	10	14	40	48	52
Newcastle	38	14	9	15	44	50	51
Tottenham	38	13	10	15	47	54	49
Leicester	38	14	6	18	39	51	48
Middlesbrough	38	9	15	14	44	44	42
West Ham	38	10	12	16	45	50	42
Everton	38	11	9	18	45	59	42
Derby County	38	10	12	16	37	59	42
Manchester City	38	8	10	20	41	65	34
Coventry City	38	8	10	20	36	63	34
Bradford	38	5	11	22	30	70	26

* Manchester United champions. Arsenal and Liverpool qualify for Champions League, Leeds, Ipswich and Chelsea qualify for UEFA Cup, Bradford, Coventry and Manchester City relegated

AFP, London

Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier finally lifted the alcohol ban imposed on his players as the treble winners ended their season with an emphatic 4-0 victory at Charlton on Saturday to secure a Champions League place for next season.

The win guaranteed Liverpool third place in the Premiership and a place in Europe's highly lucrative top club tournament to round off a magnificent week for the Anfield club.

The FA Cup and League Cup winners completed a unique cup treble on Wednesday when they beat Spanish club Alaves 5-4 in an astonishing UEFA Cup final.

After lifting their first European trophy for 17 years, Houllier ensured that the mini-bars in the players' hotel rooms were free of alcohol so his team would keep clear heads for Saturday's vital clash at the Valley.

But after thrashing Charlton with an awesome second-half display, the amenable Frenchman announced the party could begin.

"The boys need a celebration now," said Houllier after a four goals in 26 minutes killed off the home side.

"They are tired and I am a bit tired myself. We had to postpone celebrations until this game was out of the way and we will now look forward to a good get-together with the wives and girlfriends."

Houllier admitted his side were flattered by the scoreline after Charlton had run his side ragged in a goalless opening 45 minutes.

"It wasn't easy against Charlton and we were poor in the first half," he said.

"We were angry with ourselves at half time but after the break we showed a different side to our game."

Robbie Fowler, who insisted this week that he desperately wanted to stay at Anfield, opened the scoring with an exquisite overhead kick before substitute Danny Murphy drilled home the second.

Fowler grabbed his second with a neat finish and England colleague Michael Owen rounded off a comfortable victory with a delicate chip nine minutes from time.

Liverpool's victory denied Leeds and Ipswich, who will both qualify for the less prestigious UEFA Cup.

Leeds finish fourth after winning 3-1 at home to Leicester while Ipswich were held 1-1 at Derby and end up fifth in their first season back in the Premiership.

Chelsea ended their season on a high note after a disappointing campaign by snatching the last UEFA Cup place with a 2-1 win at relegated Manchester City.

Dutch striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink fired Chelsea's winner for his 23rd goal of the season to win the golden boot award for the Premiership's top goalscorer.

Champions Manchester United crashed to their third successive defeat with a 3-1 loss at Tottenham.

All eyes were on United coach Alex Ferguson who ended speculation over his Old Trafford future by insisting he will be in charge of the club next season.

Southampton beat second-placed Bradford 0-0 at Highfield Road while Middlesbrough, already

assured of Premiership action next season following a row with the one of the Premiership's smallest United board.

The dispute sparked speculation that the 59-year-old Scot may leave to a new 30 million pound (42 million dollar) stadium capable of holding



Sasa Ilic (C), the Charlton custodian, grabs the ball under pressure from Nick Barmby (R) of Liverpool on May 19.

2002. Ferguson had hoped for some 32,000 spectators.

kind of other role within the club when Substitute Matthew Le Tissier he stepped down as manager but that cracked home a dramatic 88th minute

will not now happen after he report-winner to give Southampton victory.

Frenchman David Ginola threw a

tantrum as Aston Villa went down 3-0 at Newcastle.

However, Ferguson said he plans to honour his contract with the English

Ginola exchanged angry words

with manager John Gregory after

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Primera Liga Overmars keeps Barca on track

Football

AFP, Madrid

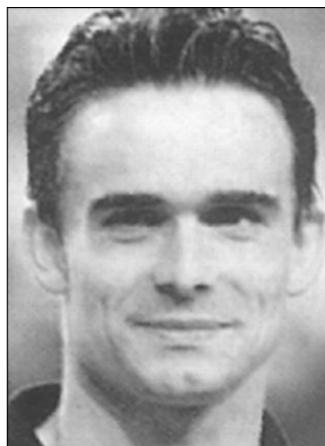
Spanish giants Barcelona continued their attempt to salvage a disappointing season by beating UEFA Cup finalists Alaves 1-0 on Saturday thanks to a superb Marc Overmars goal.

After a frenetic start to the match in Vitoria, Overmars was fed by fellow Dutch international Frank De Boer and fired a superb 18th-minute strike that Alaves goalkeeper Martin Herrera was powerless to stop.

Alaves, showing little sign of fatigue after their 5-4 defeat to Liverpool in midweek, bombarded the Barcelona goal but the Catalans hung on to remain fifth in the table and in contention to qualify for the UEFA Cup.

Valencia had warmed up for their Champions League final against Bayern Munich with an extra-time 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Friday to hold on to third place in the Primera Liga.

Valencia coach Hector Cuper rested four first-choice players ahead of Wednesday's final in Milan, but Norwegian striker John Carew crashed a powerful header



Marc overmars

Primera Liga's top six

After Saturday's match between Alaves and Barcelona (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	35	18	8	9	52	29	62
Mallorca	34	16	11	7	48	39	59
Barcelona	35	16	11	8	75	52	59
Celta Vigo	34	14	9	11	47	47	51

Bundesliga

Bayern save the best for last

scored the equaliser. The German kings face Valencia in Wednesday's Champions League final in Milan.

Bayern, who led the standings by three points from Schalke going into Saturday's matches, needed only a point to win their third consecutive domestic crown but a defeat would have handed Schalke the title by virtue of superior goal difference and their win against Unterhaching.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld praised his side for fighting all the way as the reaction of the Hamburg crowd made it clear that Schalke had gone in front in their encounter.

"I have dreamed of this and we worked so hard," said Hitzfeld. "I was convinced we could do it. The team deserved it and they gave everything they had."

"I'm happy for

Patrik Andersson. He has been fantastic in the second half of the season. He deserved to set the seal on it."

German league officials were able to breathe a sigh of relief as they had sent the championship trophy to Hamburg in full expectation of a Bayern triumph while sending a substitute trophy to Schalke.

Veteran Bayern goalkeeper Oliver Kahn admitted that playing the final few games has been no easy task.

"Every game we've played in the last few weeks has been really on a knife-edge. It's just incredible," he said.

Unterhaching's defeat against Schalke after throwing away a two-goal lead sent them to relegation along with the already doomed VfL Bochum and Eintracht Frankfurt.

Andreas Breitenreiter and Miroslav Spizak put Unterhaching two up

Bundesliga's final

standings

German league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Bayern Munich	34	19	6	9	62	37	63
Schalke 04	34	18	8	8	65	35	62
Borussia Dortmund	34	16	10	8	62	42	58
Bayer Leverkusen	34	17	6	11	54	40	57
Hertha Berlin	34	18	2	14	58	52	56
SC Freiburg	34	15	10	9	54	37	55
Werder Bremen	34	15	8	11	5	3	27
Kaiserslautern	34	15	5	14	49	5	4
50							
VfL Wolfsburg	34	12	11	11	60	45	47
Cologne	34	12	10	12	59	5	2
46							
Munich 1860	34	12	8	14	43	55	44
Hansa Rostock	34	12	7	15	3	3	4
47							
43							
35							
Eintracht Frankfurt	34	10	5	19	41	68	35
VfL Bochum	34	7	6	21	30	67	27

French First Division

Lille get Euro ticket

AFP, Paris

French First Division newcomers Lille made manager Vahid Halilhodzic a happy man Saturday as they grabbed a 2-1 away win at Monaco to snatch the last Champions League spot from Bordeaux.