

Serie A Red-hot Roma bury Bari

Football

AFP, Rome

AS Roma coasted to a 4-1 victory to relegate bottom club Bari Sunday and keep themselves firmly on course for what would be their first Italian First Division title in 18 years.

Goals from French defender Vincent Candela and Argentinian forward Gabriel Batistuta had the game wrapped up at half-time for the leaders while Brazilian defender Cafu and Batistuta added two more.

Gionatha Spinesi scored a late consolation but could not save Bari from relegation.

Second-placed Lazio stayed in title contention with a 3-1 win against Udinese in a match played in Florence while third-placed Juventus also kept in the race with a comeback 4-1 triumph at Bologna.

But with three games left Roma, who lead Lazio by five points and Juve by six, remain firm favourites to succeed city rivals Lazio as champions.

Candela opened the scoring for Roma with a magical goal, juggling the ball before firing an acrobatic volley into the net via the fingertips of Bari keeper Antonio Narciso.

Minutes later the balance tilted further towards Roma when Bari defender Duccio Innocenti was sent off and when Batistuta doubled the lead from close range the 25,000 travelling Roma fans began their lively celebrations.

Cafu and Batistuta increased the feelgood factor before Spinesi's final salvo.

But Roma coach Fabio Capello warned that the run-in will be no cinch: "Both teams (Lazio and Juve)

Hernan Crespo scored twice in 16 minutes, putting himself on 23 goals for the season.

Stefano Fiore reduced arrears for Udinese from the penalty spot against the side he joins next season but Argentinian Lucas Martin Castroman notched a third for the champions.

Lazio coach Dino Zoff said: "We played very well in the first half today, we must keep on this path as long as we have a chance."

Bologna rocked Juventus after 20 minutes when veteran striker Giuseppe Signori netted.

But six minutes later Juve's

French forward David Trezeguet

fired an equaliser and at the end of the first half Croatian defender Igor Tudor headed the Turin side ahead.

Trezeguet killed off Bologna with his second and Yugoslav replacement Darko Kovacevic added a fourth.

Juve coach Carlo Ancelotti said: "Our objective is to win every game, we can do no more. We must be concerned only with our own form."

Vicenza and Lecce had to settle for a 0-0 draw in a relegation battle.

In another basement dogfight goals from Fabio Pecchia and Brazilian Amauri gave Napoli a priceless 2-0 victory over Verona.

Luciano Zauri gave Atalanta an early lead against struggling Reggina in Bergamo but the southerners hit back when Andrea Zanchetta equalised. Reggina goalkeeper Massimo Taibi saved an injury-time penalty from Atalanta's Marco Nappi. It finished 1-1.

At Perugia veteran striker Dario Hubner put visitors Brescia 2-0 ahead - the second from a penalty - but Greek striker Zisis Vryzas and

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