

Primera Liga

Real's roaring reply

Football

AP, Madrid

Real Madrid made a mockery of its poor league form with an emphatic 5-1 victory against Espanyol on Saturday to record its first league victory this season.

Zinedine Zidane, Roberto Carlos, Luis Figo, Raul Gonzalez and Steve McManaman all bagged a goal as the title gave evidence of its huge potential for the first time in domestic competition.

Madrid, which had failed to win in its first three matches, now has four points out of a possible 12.

Ignoring preseason games, it was the club's first victory with Zidane as a member of the side as its two Champions League wins were achieved with the Frenchman absent through suspension.

World-record signing Zidane began the goal rush in the fourth minute, receiving Raul's layoff and firing a low shot from just outside the penalty area.

It was Zidane's second goal in successive games after he netted in Madrid's 3-1 defeat at Real Betis last week.

Six minutes later, Zidane and Figo teed Roberto Carlos up from a free kick and the Brazilian blasted a trademark shot home from outside the box for Madrid's second.

With Espanyol looking shell-shocked, Figo added a third from a 20th-minute penalty after the Portuguese international was obstructed by Argentine defender Pablo Rotchen.

The visitors pulled a goal back shortly after the interval through midfielder Enrique de Lucas.

But Spanish international Raul restored Madrid's three-goal lead after playing a clever wall pass with Pedro Munitis in the 59th minute.

England international McManaman got in on the goal spree in the 71st minute when he completed a passing movement with a simple tap-in.

Real Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque was suitably smug after all the criticism levelled at him since the start of the season.

"The supporters can leave here happy. It was a complete game with some exquisite moments," purred Del Bosque.

"The other day against Lokomotiv we played as well, but with different players, and I'll continue to tell the world that there is not one unique set of players that

are capable of winning," he added. Espanyol coach Paco Flores could not but concede that Real Madrid had been the superior side.

"They played very fluidly and

had a great first touch. Three goals in 20 minutes - Phew, it was always going to be an uphill battle after that," said Flores.

Deportivo de la Coruna and Villarreal top the table for at least 24 hours after victories against Alaves and Real Sociedad, respectively.

However, Celta can regain the leadership by beating Mallorca on Sunday.

A strike three minutes from time by international midfielder Sergio Gonzalez gave Deportivo de La Coruna a thrilling 3-2 win at Alaves.

Goals either half by former Spanish international Jose Emilio Amavisca looked to be enough for Deportivo, which plays Manchester United on Tuesday in the Champions League.

However, Alaves fought back through wing-back Carlos Llorente's long-range effort and Fabrizio Coloccini's header before Sergio fired home for Deportivo's late winner.

An 85th-minute goal by Argentine international Martin Palermo gave Villarreal a 1-0 victory over struggling Sociedad after a storm delayed the kickoff by 45 minutes.

Unbeaten FC Barcelona has eight points after a 2-0 victory against a spirited Tenerife side which deserved more from an untidy match played in incessant rain.

Geovanni Deiberson opened the scoring in the 34th minute after the Canary Island club had failed to score from several chances.

Deiberson took the ball around goalkeeper Sergio Aragonenes and slid the ball home after receiving a pinpoint pass from Spanish international midfielder Xavi Hernandez.

It was Deiberson's first goal in an official match for Barcelona since his summer move from Brazilian club Cruzeiro.

It was not until injury time that Javier Saviola added a brilliant second, also for his debut goal for Barcelona.

Saviola made a dart from the touchline, before evading Aragonenes and several Tenerife defenders to slot home.

Las Palmas played out a dull goalless tie with visitors Malaga, which was most notable for the first half dismissal of the away side's Argentine striker Ariel Zarate.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Real Madrid ace Raul celebrates his strike against Espanyol with teammate Pedro Munitis at Madrid on September 22.

Primera Liga's top six

Spanish First Division table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

	Deportivo	4	3	0	1	9	4	9
Villarreal	4	3	0	1	6	3	9	
Barcelona	4	2	2	0	5	2	8	
Celta Vigo	3	2	1	0	6	0	7	
Valencia	3	2	1	0	3	1	7	
Alaves	4	2	1	1	6	3	7	

Deiberson's opposite number Marcelo Lippi had omitted Alessandro Del Piero from the starting line-up, pairing Frenchman David Trezeguet with Chilean Salas.

Del Piero made a belated appearance in the 83rd minute as a replacement for Salas but could not find the opening.

Juve's slip-up will allow Milan clubs AC and Inter to go level on points at the top when the remaining weekend games are played.

Inter travel to Juve's Stadio Delle Alpi home to play Torino while AC Milan host Lazio in a match where visiting coach Alberto Zaccheroni will make his debut against the club he led to the Italian First Division title three seasons ago.

Liverpool's win was overshadowed by a hamstring injury to England striker Michael Owen, who limped off after coming on as a substitute.

This time, Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier was on the wrong end of the squad rotation conundrum, when Owen came off the bench cold and limped back 17 minutes later.

Houllier confirmed Owen would be out for at least three weeks and would miss England's crucial World Cup qualifier against Greece on

went to shoot.

"We will not know for sure the extent of the injury until after he's had a scan on Sunday. But I feel it is just a pull rather than a more serious tear."

Arsene Wenger's Arsenal failed to capitalise after Bolton's Jamaican midfielder Ricardo Gardner was sent off on the half hour when he appeared to pull back Arsenal striker Dennis Bergkamp.

It was not until the 74th minute when Arsenal's Francis Jeffers struck for his first goal for his new club to break the deadlock.

Bolton manager Sam Allardyce was relieved when Michael Ricketts equalised on 83 minutes but he was still fuming over Gardner's dismissal.

"If Ricardo touched him it must have been with a feather," said Allardyce.

"It wasn't even the referee's decision. His assistant made it but if we saw something then I certainly didn't."

"For me it was never a sending off and it could have cost us dear."

Meanwhile, in Group A, Iraq stopped their run of three consecutive defeats thanks to a second-half Emad Ridha goal that earned them a 1-1 draw with fellow nohoppers

Qatar are in second on eight points and two points cover the teams in second, third and fourth. The next two weeks will be crucial to the outcome of the group, with Qatar due to entertain both Uzbekistan and the UAE in Doha.

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