

Primiership Liverpool lesson for MU

Leeds stay a point clear

Football

AFP, London

A late strike from Australian international Harry Kewell sent Leeds United to the top of the English Premiership on Sunday with a hard-fought 2-1 home win over Tottenham.

Liverpool had temporarily taken top spot earlier Sunday with a stunning 3-1 victory over fierce rivals Manchester United at Anfield.

Leeds have 23 points from 11 games, one more than second-placed Liverpool who have a game in hand on David O'Leary's men.

Tottenham took a surprise lead through former Chelsea midfielder Gus Poyet at Elland Road just after half time but Ian Harte restored parity for Leeds.

Leeds had looked like squandering the chance to take pole position after missing a host of opportunities before Kewell struck with eight minutes to go.

At Anfield, England star Michael Owen scored goals in each half, either side of an astonishing left-foot rocket of a free-kick from John Arne Riise as Liverpool chalked up their fourth consecutive win over the Red Devils.

Owen's curling shot put Liverpool in front after 32 minutes and Norwegian international Riise doubled the home side's advantage before half time with his impressive strike.

Reigning Premiership champions United pulled a goal back through captain David Beckham after 50 minutes but another howler from French international goalkeeper Fabien Barthez allowed Owen to double his tally 60 seconds later.

The shaven-headed shot-stopper's errors have already cost United dear this season with two



John Arne Riise, Liverpool's Norwegian star, is over the moon after his strike against Manchester United at Anfield yesterday. Teammate Danny Murphy (R) rushes in to congratulate.

Premiership's top six

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

Leeds	11	6	5	0	15	5	23
Liverpool	10	7	1	2	20	10	22
Aston Villa	11	6	3	2	17	11	21
Newcastle	11	6	2	3	21	14	20
Arsenal	10	5	4	1	22	9	19
Man Utd	11	5	3	3	28	20	18

blunders gifting Deportivo La Coruna a 3-2 Champions League win at Old Trafford last month.

Owen was happy to put one over United who were outplayed by the Merseysiders.

"It was a great game obviously; any game against United is a great game," he said.

"I was really pleased to get the lads off to a decent start and we continued it. We are obviously delighted to have beaten them again."

The prolific marksman also took his hat off to Riise whose piledriver gave Liverpool a 2-0 lead.

"It was unbelievable. I've never seen a shot hit so hard and so accurate," added Owen.

"It was a fantastic strike and that alone was worthy to win any game."

South Africa international Quinton Fortune replaced Ryan Giggs on the left wing for United while in-form Ole Gunnar Solskjaer started up front alongside Ruud van Nistelrooy.

For Liverpool central defender Sami Hyypia returned from injury and Owen partnered Emile Heskey in attack.

Liverpool came close to making an early breakthrough when Jerzy Dudek's goal kick was headed on by Heskey into the path of Owen but the England striker's volley flashed wide.

United responded and only a brave headed clearance by Jamie Carragher denied Solskjaer from heading home van Nistelrooy's dangerous cross.

As play switched from end to end Owen tested Barthez after latching onto Vladimir Smicer's left-wing cross and the United goalkeeper was again kept busy, diving low to keep out Danny Murphy's low strike.

After a frenetic opening half hour with few clear-cut chances Liverpool took the lead.

Under pressure from Heskey, United defender Wes Brown failed to clear Smicer's flick and the ball fell nicely for Owen who took a touch before curling his shot beyond Barthez.

Worse was to come for United who fell further behind six minutes from the interval when Brown fouled Owen 28 yards from goal.

Steven Gerrard tapped the free-kick to Riise who fired an unstoppable shot past Barthez and into the net off the crossbar.

With the temperature raised Gerrard was fortunate not to be cautioned for a reckless challenge on Juan Sebastian Veron.

Against the run of play United reduced the deficit five minutes after half-time when Riise's sliced clearance fell to Beckham who tucked the ball past Dudek from close range.

But Barthez's poor judgement handed Liverpool their two-goal cushion back just a minute later.

The eccentric Frenchman flapped at Riise's long throw-in, allowing Heskey to flick the ball to Owen who rose to head into an empty net.

United brought on Dwight Yorke for the ineffectual Solskjaer, while Liverpool replaced Owen and Smicer with Robbie Fowler and Patrik Berger.

Beckham left the field with a quarter of an hour to go with what appeared to be an ankle injury and was substituted for Paul Scholes.

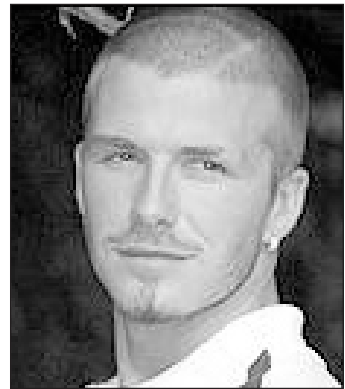
As United chased the game Dudek was forced into saves from Beckham and Fortune but the visitors failed to beat the Poland international again.

In other matches Sunday title hopefuls Arsenal host Charlton and UEFA Cup flops Chelsea entertain Ipswich.

Al Fayed will get anybody if Tigana wants

AFP, London

Fullham's billionaire owner Mohamed Al Fayed has said he will sign England skipper David Beckham if manager Jean Tigana wants him.



DAVID BECKHAM

The eccentric Egyptian tycoon has already tried to persuade Beckham to sign for his club from Manchester United.

"If Jean Tigana wants Beckham I'll get him for my manager," Al Fayed told NewsOfTheWorld.

"David is a good friend of mine - both him and his wife Victoria. They have had a holiday at my home in St Tropez."

"Sometimes when they come here together shopping, we have lunch and I'm always talking with him about playing for us. I tell him he can come shopping and spend all his wages here anytime!"

"I'd love to have him play for me if he wants to come."

"Of course I can afford him, no problem. Beckham is a maestro," he added.

Beckham is currently negotiating a new contract with his employers at Old Trafford, with the newspaper suggesting the player is reluctant to sign a new deal until he learns the identity of manager Alex Ferguson's replacement.

Scottish Premiership Larsson does it for Celtic

AFP, Glasgow

Sweden international Henrik Larsson's superb last-minute free-kick gave Scottish Premier League leaders Celtic a 2-1 win at St Johnstone on Saturday.

Martin O'Neill's men took the lead after 20 minutes when Darren Dods put through his own net, but Dods made amends by grabbing the equalizer six minutes later.

St Johnstone, without a win all season, looked to be heading for a well-deserved point until Larsson's late intervention.

The win lifts Celtic 10 points clear of Rangers for 24 hours at least with the Ibrox club hosting Aberdeen on Sunday.

Livingston returned to winning ways after their defeat at home to Rangers last week with an impressive 3-1 win over struggling Hearts at Tynecastle.

Dundee and Dundee United shared the spoils in the Tayside derby after a fiercely contested 1-1 draw at Dens Park.

Santa Cruz out for two months

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich striker Roque Santa Cruz had an operation on his left ankle on Saturday immediately after their 3-0 German league win over SV Hamburg.

Munich spokesman Markus Horwick said the 20-year-old Paraguayan international would be out of action for up to eight weeks.

Roque Santa Cruz was injured in the 42nd minute in a clash with Hamburg's Croatian defender Andrej Panadic and was replaced by Alexander Zickler.

Serie A Chievo drop points

Football

AFP, Venice

Surprise Italian First Division leaders Chievo were held to a 0-0 draw by bottom club Venezia in a four Serie A match here Saturday night.

In what was Chievo's least impressive performance in a remarkable season to date Venezia battled hard for their third point of a difficult season in which they are yet to taste victory while the dark horses from Verona extend their lead at the top to five points ahead of Sunday's matches.

But this was a moral victory for the side from Venice who were promoted alongside their near neighbours from Verona last June but have found it much harder to acclimatise to playing in the top flight.

Chievo coach Luigi del Neri admitted it had not been a classic encounter, saying: "I leave the entertaining to others, the only thing that matters for us is to get points. Venezia played very well

although we were a bit subdued. We were better after the break but a draw was a fair result."

His Venezia counterpart Alfredo Magni said: "We played well and we are improving. The table still does not make good reading but the championship is a very long race."

Venezia made an enterprising start with their Uruguayan midfielder Federico Magallanes firing just wide from outside of the box.

But Chievo also had their moments going forward and first Eugenio Corini blazed his shot too high and then their Brazilian winger Eriberto fired wide when well placed to score in the first period.

Magni had clearly given his team instructions to frustrate Chievo who with 18 goals at the start of play were boasting the best attack in the division.

Chances were equally hard to come by in the second period although Venezia goalkeeper Generoso Rossi did well to save Federico Cossato's header from a Corini freekick.

'Don't worry' says Scolari



AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Struggling Brazil will not only qualify for next year's World Cup but will be among the favourites to win it too, coach Luiz Felipe Scolari assured his soccer-mad countrymen here Saturday.

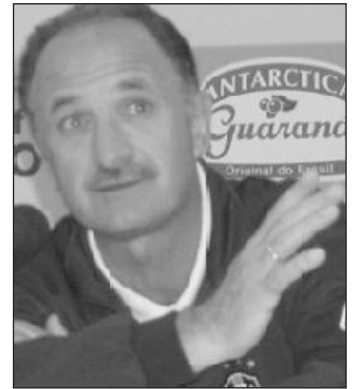
"We'll be there and we'll be on a level footing with the current favourites France and Argentina," Scolari promised in an interview with Brazilian weekly Veja.

"Some recent results have given a false impression of the Brazil team. Remember that we were runners up in France and that we haven't got worse since then," he explained.

The coach also hinted at the make-up of his squad for the World Cup.

"The boys who have been called up for the last few games are the ones I'll take to the finals. There's no really phenomenal player amongst them but they're a solid bunch who are gaining in confidence," he said.

Scolari also questioned the motives of Brazil's president



LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who recently said he felt a failure to qualify would be the worst crisis in Brazil's history.

"I'm not saying that his (Cardoso's) fears don't reflect the popular mood, but it was a stroke of political opportunism to deflect attention from the country's real problems," he said.

"People seem more worried by our form than they are about the dollar crisis, the recession in Argentina or the war in Afghanistan. But I have a simple message for those people, there's nothing to worry about," Scolari said confidently.

Four sides qualify automatically from the South American qualifying group, and Brazil are currently fourth, two points clear of the fifth placed side. With two matches remaining the Brazilians should qualify though Uruguay and Colombia can overhaul them if the four-time world champions slip up.

Primera Liga Bilbao's first at home

Football

AFP, Madrid

Athletic Bilbao got their first win at home this season with a 2-1 victory over their Basque neighbours Alaves on Saturday.

The San Mames stadium of Athletic Bilbao is usually known as La Ciudad because of its intimidating effect on opponents but this season it has been more of a fairground than a fortress as visiting teams have enjoyed themselves at Athletic's expense.

However, first half goals from Tiko Martinez and Ismael Urzaiz got Jupp Heynckes's side all three points in front of their homes fans for the first time since April, despite the fact that they were reduced to 10 men for most of the second half.

Tiko's outstanding goal after 17 minutes gave the first glimmer that Athletic's barren streak was about to come to an end, with the midfielder putting four touches on

the ball before finding an opening and blasting it home from the edge of the area.

Five minutes later Urzaiz got Athletic's second - and the striker's fifth of the season to reinforce his claims for a Spanish international recall - when he produced a bullet-like header to finish off Santi Ezquerro's cross, giving Alaves goalkeeper Martin Herrero little chance of keeping the ball out of the net.

Alaves were overwhelmed during the first half but came out fighting after the break and got

their big break when Felipe Gerendez was given his marching orders on 55 minutes, after getting his second yellow card.

The visitors needed just two minutes to take advantage of the extra space and Magno Moeclin touched home a rebound to reduce the deficit, after a Ruben Navarro thunderbolt from 25 metres had ricocheted off the bar.

Almost inevitably, there was an avalanche of yellow cards in the tense derby, with 11 bookings in addition to the dismissal of Magno.

Primera Liga's top six

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

Deportivo	10	6	2	2	18	11	20
Barcelona	10	5	4	1	17	7	19
Celta Vigo	10	4	6	0	18	8	18
Alaves	11	5	3	3	12	7	18
Valencia	10	4	6	0	12	7	18
Real Betis	10	5	2	3	13	11	17

Bundesliga Bayern's superb late-show

Football

AFP, Berlin

European champions Bayern Munich struck three times in the last 20 minutes to clinch a 3-0 win over SV Hamburg Saturday and retain a one-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga.

Bayern needed the late goals, including two from Claudio Pizarro, as their closest rivals Bayer Leverkusen kept pace with a 2-1 win over Kaiserslautern.

Hamburg managed to shut out

Bayern in the first half, as a defence considerably tightened since the arrival last month of new manager Kurt Jara repelled attack after attack at the Olympic Stadium.

Bayern were convincing winners after a storming second half in which Brazilian Paulo Sergio scored the first goal in the 70th minute after fine work from England international Owen Hargreaves before Pizarro ended the contest.

But Bayern were left counting the cost of losing Paraguayan international Roque Santa Cruz for up to eight weeks with a heel injury.

With Brazilian striker Giovane

Elber nursing a sore knee and six other players out, Santa Cruz's injury was bad news for coach Ottmar Hitzfeld as he looks ahead to the upcoming Champions League clashes against old foes Manchester United.

Hitzfeld said the match had been a slog: "It was really hard for so long as Hamburg played so defensively. But the team got there in the end through hard work and sheer will."

"I'm very happy to get the three points," he added.

Leverkusen preserved their record as the only unbeaten side in the division after coming from behind when Kaiserslautern took the lead against the run of play in the 18th minute.

Luxembourg international Jeff Strasser was left unmarked to meet a Mario Basler free kick with a powerful header but Bayer's German international Michael Ballack equalised with a right-foot shot after being supplied by Bernd Schneider on 34 minutes.

Leverkusen took the lead five minutes after half-time from a penalty converted by Ballack, who showed he was in form ahead of the first leg of Germany's World Cup playoff against Ukraine next Saturday.

Andreas Brehme's Kaiserslautern side slip down to fourth after Borussia Dortmund moved above them on goal difference with a 1-0 win at home to VfB Stuttgart.

Lars Ricken, another hoping to face Ukraine, was the scorer in the 51st minute of a tight match.

Schalke 04 bounced back from their last-place finish in their Champions League group by beating Cologne 3-1 in the Ruhr.

They also had to come from behind after Cologne's Zambian international Andrew Sinkala scored in the 37th minute. Schalke struck back through Danish striker Ebbe Sand on the stroke of half-time and took the lead on 54 minutes when veteran Andreas Moller exchanged passes with Gerald Asamoah and hammered the ball past Cologne keeper Markus Proll.

Moller himself scored the second before Ghanaian-born German international Asamoah put the match beyond doubt with an 82nd minute strike.

Werder Bremen are sixth thanks to a 1-0 away win at Hansa Rostock, whose goalkeeper Mathias Schober scored an own goal.

VfL Wolfsburg lifted themselves up the table with a 5-0 thrashing of Nuremberg, who already look relegation candidates.

Bayern's modest city neighbours 1860 Munich are riding high in ninth place after beating second-bottom side St-Pauli 3-0.



Bayern Munich's Peruvian international striker Claudio Pizarro (R) is congratulated by team-mate Samuel Kuffour (C) after scoring against Hamburg at Munich on November 3.

Bundesliga's top six

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

Bayern	12	10	1	1	30	4	31
Leverkusen	12	9	3	0	31	13	30
Dortmund	12	8	1	3	18	8	25
Kaiserslautern	12	8	1	3	25	16	25
Schalke 04	12	6	3	3	15	13	21
Bremen	12	6	2	4	17	14	20