

Primera Liga

Bilbao baffle Barca

Football

AFP, Madrid

Athletic Bilbao maintained their reputation as the most dangerous team away from home in the Spanish First Division by winning 2-1 at Barcelona on Saturday, their fifth victory from seven outings on the road.

The defeat was the Catalans first in the league this season in front of their home fans at the Nou Camp stadium as Javier Saviola, Rivaldo and company found the Basques defence more difficult to break down than that of English Premiership side Liverpool, who Barcelona beat 3-1 on Tuesday in the European Champions' League.

Ismael Urzaiz headed Athletic into the lead after just ten minutes, rising high above the Barcelona defence to connect with a Francisco Yeste free kick.

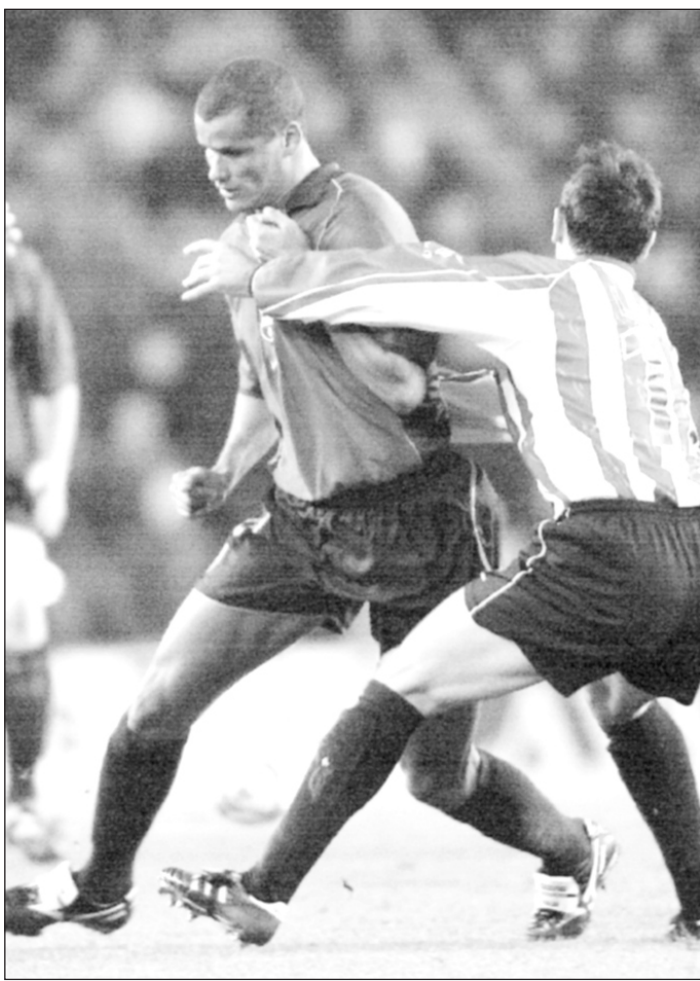
The goal was Urzaiz's sixth in the league this season, four of which have come from his head, and the game turned into a personal statement by the 30 year-old striker for recall to the a Spanish national side.

He won the last of his 21 caps against England in February but has been out of the plans of Spanish national coach Jose Antonio Camacho for recent World Cup qualifiers and friendlies.

Urzaiz also went close just three minutes into the second half when he went around three Barcelona defenders before firing off a rasping right foot shot, which whistled just past the post.

Barcelona started the game with four changes from side that took the field at Anfield but at a goal down Barcelona coach Charly Rexach decided he couldn't afford rest Rivaldo any more and the Brazilian former World Player of the Year came off the bench on 55 minutes.

Rivaldo had been suffering from



Athletic Bilbao's Jose Maria Lacruz (R) trying to stop Barcelona superstar Rivaldo at the Nou Camp on November 24.

PHOTO: AFP

Primera Liga's top six

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

Deportivo	13	8	2	3	27	16	26
Alaves	13	7	3	3	15	8	24
Barcelona	14	6	5	3	22	11	23
Valencia	13	5	8	0	14	8	23
Athletic Bilbao	14	6	5	3	19	18	23
Real Betis	13	6	3	4	15	12	21

'Safest ever' World Cup

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

The 2002 World Cup will be the "safest ever" with a host of security measures being mapped out following the September 11 attacks on the United States, FIFA's general secretary said Sunday.

Football's world governing body FIFA had held a series of meetings with hosts Japan and South Korea to overhaul security plans for the games, Michel Zen-Ruffinen told a press conference here at the end of an Asian football seminar.

He said a workshop for security officers from the two host countries originally scheduled for February had been brought forward to next month, immediately after the December 1 World Cup final draw in South Korea.

Plans were also being made to enforce a "much more difficult" and strict accreditation process to identify spectators entering the stadium, he said.

"What is sure is that a lot, a lot, a lot of steps and initiatives will be taken," Zen-Ruffinen said.

"It will be the safest ever World Cup organised in terms of steps taken by the organisers, by the states and by FIFA.

"You can never of course foresee the reaction of possible terrorists. We are however convinced that football is not the target for them. It was never the target in the past and we see no reason why it should be but it is our obligation to take steps to ensure full safety of the spectators."

Serie A

Lazio pip Juve

Football

AFP, Rome

Lazio beat Juventus 1-0 in the Italian championship on Saturday night thanks to a goal by Fabio Liverani to bring them up to provisional fourth spot in the table.

Lazio's third win in a row, which helped them leapfrog the Turin giants as they jumped four places, came courtesy of a fine goal four minutes after the restart from Fabio Liverani.

With the rest of the league playing Sunday, the Romans had a vested interest in continuing their good recent form which in the past two weeks has harvested a 5-0 win against Brescia and 4-0 win against Udinese.

Juventus, who dropped two places to fifth spot ahead of the eight matches which will change the Serie A landscape further come Sunday

Serie A's top six

Italian league table after Saturday's match between Lazio and Juventus (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Chievo	10	6	2	2	20	11	20
Inter Milan	10	5	4	1	15	9	19
Roma	10	4	5	1	14	7	17
Lazio	11	4	5	2	13	6	17
Juventus	11	4	5	2	17	11	17
Bologna	10	5	2	3	7	6	17

evening, seemed unable to conjure the form which last week gave them a 3-1 win over Parma.

Although visibly dominating possession of the ball in most areas of the field, the fact that normally free-scoring French international striker David Trezeguet was out of sorts was indicative of Juventus' form all round.

Trezeguet, who scored France's winning goal to beat Italy in the final of the 2000 European championships, was involved in an off-the-ball fracas, with the Frenchman seen to have head-butted Lazio's Simone Inzaghi.

That almost led to a riot as Lazio defender Fernando Couto rushed to defend his teammate but Trezeguet escaped immediate sanction because referee Pierluigi Collina and his assistants did not see the incident.

After an insipid first 45 Lazio upped the stakes four minutes into the second half when Liverani's attempted lob from 30 metres out

a mild cold for the last few days but the substitution proved to be just the medicine the hosts needed and three minutes after coming on, Rivaldo found the net with a spectacular volley.

Fellow forward Patrick Kluiwert flicked the ball on and Rivaldo, off-balance and falling over as he stretched for the ball on the edge of the penalty area, still managed a clean shot that went flying past Athletic goalkeeper Inaki Lafuente.

However, it was the only time all night that Lafuente was deceived in an otherwise flawless performance which contributed to thwarting the Barcelona dreams of going to the top of the Spanish First Division.

Athletic though had to survive the last 15 minutes with only 10 men as Jesus Maria Lacruz managed to talk himself into getting sent off.

The defender elbowed Rivaldo in an off-the-ball incident which earned him a yellow card once the linesman had brought it to the attention of referee Bernardino Gonzalez, and then was shown the red card for dissent after protesting about the decision.

Against the odds, and with Barcelona having had several close efforts at getting a second goal, it was Athletic who got the winner ten minutes from time.

Tiko Martinez launched a counter-attack from inside Athletic's own half and Santi Ezquerro sprinted down the field to pick up the ball before rounding Barcelona's Swedish defender Patrick Anderson, and then outpacing him, before blasting the ball past the completely exposed Barcelona goalkeeper Roberto Bonano.

Barcelona remain in third place after the defeat, with 23 points from 14 games, while Athletic rise to fifth with the same number of points but an inferior goal difference.

League leaders Deportivo La Coruna, who have 26 points from 13 games, play at Real Mallorca on Sunday while second-placed Alaves, who are two points in arrears, travel to Villarreal.

French First Division Tryoes hold leaders

AFP, Paris

Lens held off the pressure from an enterprising Troyes team to hold on to their lead at the top of the French league Saturday as Marseille and Sedan scored emphatic home wins to boost their league ambitions.

Lens, the northern club who last won the title in 1998, opened the scoring through playmaker Daniel Moreira in their 1-1 draw with Troyes who hit back five minutes after the break.

Troyes, who gave Leeds a scare in the UEFA Cup two weeks ago before being ousted by the English Premiership club, equalised through Swiss Fabio Celestini on 50 minutes to grab a valuable away point.

With some of the league's so-called heavyweights involved in league duty Sunday, including Paris St Germain, Lyon, Auxerre and lowly reigning champions Nantes, it was left to Marseille and Sedan to steal Saturday's limelight.

Marseille turned the tables on their disappointing campaign so far to register their fourth win in 15 starts with a 4-2 victory over visiting Sochaux.

Pele takes legal action

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Legendary footballer Pele has begun legal proceedings against a former colleague at Pele Sports and Marketing for fraud, Pele's lawyer confirmed on Saturday.

Pele's lawyer Nelio Machado confirmed a report in Saturday's Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper which reported that a Rio de Janeiro public ministry document accused Helio Vianna, main advisor and friend of Pele for 20 years, of the offence.

Machado said: "We are taking legal proceedings against Vianna for fraud while at PMeS when he was the managing director.



Newcastle United striker Alan Shearer (R) loses balance under pressure from Derby's Youl Mawene at St. James Park on November 24.

PHOTO: AFP

Premiership Given gives his best

Football

AFP, London

Newcastle boss Bobby Robson hailed goalkeeper Shay Given on Saturday after the Republic of Ireland international saved a second-half penalty in the Magpies' 1-0 win over strugglers Derby.

Alan Shearer's 30th-minute spot-kick won the game for United who climbed to third in the Premiership table behind leaders Liverpool on goal difference.

But Newcastle were far from convincing and had Given to thank for a string of excellent saves which denied the battling visitors a point.

Coming on the back of his heroics in Ireland's World Cup qualifier against Iran, the outlook could hardly be rosier for former Blackburn star Given.

"He's performed very consistently and highly all the time," Robson said.

"He's a top player. He plays for his country, so he's playing at the highest level. I would say it would be difficult for him to play any better really.

"He's got agility on the line, he does come for crosses, he can catch or he can punch and he's got a good leap.

"The slight weakness was always in his kicking, but he's done countless hours on his kicking and that's improved dramatically."

Asked why his side had not turned in the type of display they had in their last home game to defeat

then Premiership leaders Aston Villa 3-0, Robson replied: "It's football, isn't it?"

"It's the way it happens. You're playing a different team and it's the nature of the sport. Thank God it's not predictable.

"People were talking about us going top if we won 5-0 today, but I just blocked my ears."

Chelsea supporters are probably wishing the players strike over the division of television income had gone ahead following their side's dismal 0-0 draw at home to Blackburn.

Under Claudio Ranieri the south west London club have drawn eight of their 13 Premiership matches - hardly the form of potential title candidates.

Despite their indifferent displays the Blues could have moved up to fourth and within a point of the summit with victory over Rovers.

But another frustrating draw leaves them eighth in the table on 20 points, one place behind Arsenal who play Manchester United at Highbury on Sunday.

So it was no surprise when the home fans chanted the name of former boss Gianluca Vialli on the final whistle as a chorus of boos rang around Stamford Bridge.

Ranieri, who refused to attend the post-match press conference, will no doubt be looking over his shoulder if results don't improve quickly.

Despite the lack of entertainment on offer, Blackburn boss Graeme Souness was entitled to feel satisfied with a deserved point for a courageous display that keeps his

side in touch with the leading group.

"We have done a good job today. It may not have been the most exciting game, but we are not in the business of making things exciting, we are in the business of getting points."

Souness had particular praise for central defensive pair Henning Berg and Craig Short, who continually repelled Chelsea's best efforts.

"We had a set plan to be strong at the back and hope to nick something on the break," Souness added. "That didn't happen but I thought our central pair were outstanding."

Southampton won for the first time at their new St Mary's Stadium with a 1-0 victory over south Londoners Charlton.

James Beattie, who missed a hatful of first-half chances, produced a superb cross which Latvian international Marian Pahars powerfully headed past a helpless Dean Kiely five minutes after the interval.

The win for Gordon Strachan's men ended a run of three consecutive defeats.

Tottenham move up to sixth place after beating West Ham 1-0 in a fiercely-contested London derby at Upton Park where Les Ferdinand scored the decisive goal.

MK Ion Davies crossed from the right and former Chelsea midfielder Gus Poyl C.M.=6 header was tip was unable to play on after a clash of heads and promptly left the field.

Leicester, who have won just three of their last 24 Premiership games, were held 0-0 by Everton while early pace-makers Bolton played out a goalless draw at home to Fulham.

With the fixtures again split over the weekend, title hopefuls Leeds welcome Aston Villa to Elland Road on Sunday and Liverpool, who lost their opening phase two Champions League match to Barcelona on Tuesday, entertain Sunderland.

Also on Sunday bottom club Ipswich, buoyant after their 1-0 win over Italian giants Inter Milan in their UEFA Cup third round, first leg tie on Thursday, travel to Middlesbrough.

Premiership's top six

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

Liverpool	11	7	2	2	21	11	23
Leeds	12	6	5	1	15	7	23
Newcastle	13	7	2	4	23	17	23
Aston Villa	12	6	4	2	17	11	22
Man Utd	12	6	3	3	30	20	21
Tottenham	14	6	3	5	21	18	21

Bundesliga

Leverkusen on fire

Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayer Leverkusen underlined their dominance of the German league on Saturday with a 4-1 win over Hamburg to maintain their Bundesliga title charge.

An Oliver Neuville hat-trick laid the foundation for the win and a further effort from Michael Ballack left Leverkusen four points clear of reigning champions and nearest rivals Bayern Munich, who struggled to a pitiable goalless home draw against Nuremberg at the Olympic Stadium.

The villain of the peace for Bayern was their Peruvian striker Claudio Pizarro, who missed an early penalty after completely scuffing his kick.

It was a sad return to league action in front of the home fans for midfielder Stefan Effenberg, just back from three months out with a thigh injury.

The former German international midfielder returned last week as Bayern went down at Werder Bremen and then played against Manchester United in the Champions League - but there is an increasing feeling in Munich that

Effenberg has had his day. When he has played this season Bayern, who failed to impress a 62,000 crowd huddling in the early winter snow, have failed to win.

Pizarro's bad luck continued when he hit the post early in the second half and thus failed to move back ahead of Leverkusen's Ballack in the scoring stakes with both men on eight league goals.

Effenberg had left the arena by then, substituted at the break by Croatian Niko Kovac and Bayern officials revealed he had suffered an ankle knock which would cause him to miss next week's Intercontinental Cup against Argentina's Boca Juniors.

Pizarro also went back to the dugout with 20 minutes remaining as coach Ottmar Hitzfeld sent on Brazilian forward Giovane Elber.

He was also unable to make an impression as Nuremberg, coached by former Bayern defender Klaus Augenthaler, escaped with a point.

Hitzfeld was angry with his side's showing.

"I am very disappointed with today's performance. We could have made things easier by putting away the spotkick," said Hitzfeld.

Augenthaler was delighted, in contrast.

"We fully deserved our point -

even if we rode our luck," he said. Leverkusen, watched by a capacity crowd of 23,000, now have 36 points from 14 matches with Bayern on 32.

The Leaders had to come back from a goal down to claim a seventh straight league win as former Rangers star Jorg Albertz opened the scoring for Hamburg on seven minutes from close range.

Six minutes later and the visitors were on the way to being overrun as Ballack turned in a Neuville freekick and then Neuville began to run the show almost single-handedly.

He converted a Ze Roberto cross at the far post on the half hour and then added two second-half efforts either side of the hour mark, Ze Roberto completing, in his case, a hat-trick of assists.

Bayer coach Klaus Toppmoller saluted his side's strong showing.

"We are on a hot streak and really wanted this one. I told Neuville to get stuck in and the three goals are his reward," Toppmoller said.

Sunday sees Borussia Dortmund host Kaiserslautern as fourth meets third. Both are four points adrift of Bayern, however.

Elsewhere Saturday, Schalke slid to a 4-1 home defeat by much-improved Werder Bremen, who are now in the top five after several seasons spent in mid-table obscurity. It was the Ruhr side's first loss in their new AufSchalke Arena.

Cologne won a basement battle with tallenders Sankt Pauli, whose 2-1 home reverse sees them glued to the bottom with one solitary win all season.

Cologne, having stopped a run of seven losses, and Nuremberg both have 11 points to Sankt Pauli's seven.

Bundesliga's top six

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

Leverkusen	14	11	3	0	37	15	36
Bayern Munich	14	10	2	2	30	5	32
Kaiserslautern	13	9	1	3	30	17	28
Dortmund	13	9	1	3	21	9	28
Werder Bremen	14	8	2	4	22	15	26
Hertha Berlin	14	7	3	4	23	18	24



Lazio's Fabio Liverani (R) is over the moon after scoring against Juventus while team-mate Giuseppe Favalli lifts him at Rome on November 24.

PHOTO: AFP

beat keeper Gianluigi Buffon who had been standing at the limits of his area after coming out to meet a stray back header from his own midfielder Alessio Tacchinardi.

Lazio then just failed to increase the score prior to the hour mark after Argentine forward Hernan Crespo's shot hit the crossbar.

Juventus got their act together

Inter-Continental Cup Boca raring to go

Football

AFP, Tokyo

South American champions Boca Juniors are ready and fired up for their clash with European counterparts Bayern Munich in the defence of their world club title on Tuesday.

The Argentinians have been training hard for the Inter-Continental Cup since they arrived a week ago and have managed to shake off their jet lag. Their opponents though might have a tougher time of it, only set to arrive in Tokyo on Monday morning.

The European champions, who were held to a 1-1 draw by England's Manchester United in the Champions League last Tuesday, fought out a goalless draw with FC Nuremberg Saturday in the Bundesliga before leaving for Tokyo.

Boca Juniors beat a star-studded

Real Madrid last year but are likely to find the going a bit harder this time.

Last year, forward Martin Palermo scored early goals in the third and sixth minutes in the 2-1 win to secure their second world club title, following their 1977 victory.

However, Palermo moved to Spain after his success, and defenders Hugo Benjamin Ibarra and Jorge Hernan Bermudez also left the club.

As a result, Boca had to wait five games for their first win in the Argentine league this season until play-maker Juan Roman Riquelme returned to action from injury.

"Last year, we had players who played together for a long time," said Boca coach Carlos Bianchi, who also guided Velez Sarsfield to victory over Italy's AC Milan in the 1994 final here.

"This year, 50 percent of them have changed. So I had to form completely a new team this season."