

## Serie A Inter's X-mas with Vieri

**Football**

AFP, Milan

Christian Vieri scored two goals as Inter Milan won 3-2 at Piacenza Sunday to ensure they end the year top of Italy's Serie A.

The Italian international striker scored with a low shot seven minutes from time to snatch the points after Piacenza's Carmine Gautieri had twice equalised after strikes from Vieri and Mohamed Kallon.

The only blot on the performance was another muscle injury for Inter's Brazilian striker Ronaldo although early indications were that it was not serious.

Inter's club doctor Andrea Combi was upbeat, saying: "It's just a re-occurrence of the strain he had against Lecce. It's nothing serious and now he will go to Brazil for Christmas where he will have checks."

Fortunately for Ronaldo he has no matches upcoming and the Italian season will resume on January 6 when leaders Inter host Lazio.

But the latest scare over Ronaldo should be tempered by Inter's one-point lead over champions AS Roma who won 3-0 at Chievo on Saturday.

Chievo, who have a game in hand, are five points behind Inter in third. In fourth are Juventus, whose 4-0 win at Brescia was their first there since 1969.

Inter struck the opener in first-half injury-time. Cristiano Zanetti fed Ronaldo and the in-form Brazilian was brought down by Piacenza goalkeeper Matteo Guardalben.

A penalty was awarded and referee Stefano Braschi also dismissed Guardalben. Vieri then stepped up to beat substitute 'keeper Paolo Orlandoni from the spot.

During the interval Inter's Colombian defender Ivan Cordoba and Piacenza's Alessandro Lucarelli were both prevented from taking further part in the game after being dismissed due to as yet unexplained events in the tunnel.

Gautieri then struck the equaliser, but just after Ronaldo had departed Sierra Leonian substitute Kallon intervened with his ninth goal of the campaign for Inter.

Gautieri equalised again but Vieri's 11th goal of what has been an injury-hit season settled matters.

Asked about the weekend wins for Roma, AC Milan and Juve, Inter's Argentinian coach Hector Cuper said: "They are all good teams. But I have confidence in Inter and I hope we can continue with results like this."



PHOTO: AFP

A Piacenza defender struggles to mark Inter Milan's ace marksman Christian Vieri (R) at Piacenza on December 23.

Meanwhile Brescia gave Juve some tricky moments early on until free-scoring Frenchman David Trezeguet headed home for the Turin giants on the half hour mark for his 10th goal of the season.

Two minutes before the interval Alessandro Del Piero also contributed following another fine counter-attack while after the break veteran defender Ciro Ferrara and Dutchman Edgar Davids got in on the act.

"We are looking like a real team now, a real group," warned Juve coach Marcello Lippi. "We will be there or thereabouts at the end of the season."

Second-half goals from Emiliano Bonazzoli and Marco Di Vaio gave Parma a vital 2-0 victory over fellow strugglers Fiorentina who had playmaker Domenico Morfeo sent off.

It was the perfect start for Parma's director of football Arrigo Sacchi who is working in tandem with coach Gedeone Carnignani. Carnignani said: "We are returning to the traditions and formulae used by Sacchi because these have always proved successful for our club."

AC Milan needed an injury time

winner from Romanian substitute Cosmin Contra to defeat Verona 2-1 at the San Siro.

Paolo Cannavaro, brother of Parma's Italian international defender Fabio, had equalised to cancel out substitute Massimo Ambrosini's opener for Milan.

"We were lucky," admitted AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti. "That was not what Verona deserved." Lecce's 1-0 win at Udinese was sealed in the first minute when their Uruguayan star Guillermo Giacomazzi scored.

Bottom club Venezia picked up three welcome points, beating Torino 2-1. They took the lead through Filippo Maniero.

Venezia goalkeeper Generoso Rossi then saved a penalty by Torino's Marco Ferrante and despite Gianluca Comotto's equaliser Maniero's injury-time header settled it.

Two second-half goals from Fabio Bazzani's gave Perugia a 2-0 win over Atalanta.

Roma's 3-0 victory over Chievo on Saturday had the hallmark of class even if the champions were flattered by the scoreline.

A header from Brazilian midfielder Emerson put Roma

ahead in the first half but shortly after the interval Roma 'keeper Francesco Antonioli was sent off for a professional foul on Massimo Marazzina who would almost certainly have scored.

But Chievo failed to make the extra man count and Roma's Argentinian defender Walter Samuel headed his side's second. Chievo's Brazilian winger Eriberto was rather harshly sent off and then Italian international midfielder Damiano Tommasi wrapped things up in injury time.

"We were perfect," said Roma coach Capello. "We had to be to beat Chievo."

Lazio threw away a 2-0 lead earned by two goals from Argentinian forward Claudio Lopez and had to settle for a 2-2 draw at home to Bologna.

Argentinian Julio Cruz reduced arrears for Bologna who were further boosted by the sending off of Lazio winger Dejan Stankovic before defender Christian Zaccardo headed an equaliser with his first Serie A goal.

## Kallon the unsung hero

**Football**

AFP, Milan

Mohamed Kallon, to coin an old showbiz phrase, has taken four years to become an overnight success at Italian First Division leaders Inter Milan.

The Sierra Leonian forward, who has bagged nine league goals so far this term, is proving Inter's secret weapon in a season where the San Siro club is threatening to win its first Serie A title since 1988-89.

Kallon, born in Freetown in 1979,



MOHAMED KALLON

was bought back in 1997 by Inter but was immediately farmed out to a succession of clubs on loan - Switzerland's Lugano and Italy's Bologna, Genoa, Cagliari, Reggina and Vicenza.

Way down in the pecking order, there seemed little prospect of him ever being called up by Inter until last season when he scored eight goals in 25 Serie A matches for Vicenza who were nonetheless relegated.

One of those goals was against Inter at the San Siro - and Kallon's refusal to celebrate his well-taken strike against the club that had first brought him to Italy further endeared him to club president Massimo Moratti.

Moratti and new Argentinian coach Hector Cuper then came up with a plan. They knew Brazilian Ronaldo and Uruguayan Alvaro Recoba would miss the early part of the season because of injury in Ronaldo's case and a one-year ban for using a bogus passport for

## Shevchenko's goal year's best

AFP, Milan

AC Milan striker Andriy Shevchenko was Sunday presented with an award for scoring the best goal of year 2001 by Italia 1 TV channel's Guida al Campionato programme.

The Ukrainian hitman was rewarded for a stunning goal scored in his side's 1-1 draw with Juventus at the San Siro on December 9.

Receiving the ball midway inside the Juve half he beat his Dutch marker Edgar Davids and then outprinted Juve defenders Mark Iuliano and Gianluca Pessotto.

Although forced wide he then unleashed a dipping volley from out on the right which looped over Juve goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, a strike compared by some to a famous goal by another former AC Milan favourite Marco Van Basten in Holland's Euro 88 Final 2-0 victory over the Soviet Union.

## Premiership Gunners show character

**Football**

AFP, London

Battling Arsenal recovered from the 37th minute dismissal of Giovanni van Bronckhorst to win 2-1 at title rivals Liverpool in a controversial Premiership encounter at Anfield on Sunday.

Arsenal were reduced to 10 men when referee Paul Durkin sent off the Dutch international for diving in the Liverpool penalty area.

However, the decision was a harsh one as the Arsenal midfielder seemed to lose his footing under the challenge of Liverpool captain Sami

moment and referees are going to get one or two wrong over the course of the season."

Man-of-the-match Ray Parlour was relieved that Arsenal's latest red card nightmare ended in a vital victory.

Parlour, sent off in Arsenal's 3-1 defeat at home to Newcastle on Tuesday, said: "We were all disappointed after the Newcastle game, when we were down to 10 men after I got sent off. It was exactly the same today (reduced to 10 men) but we've battled on and got a great victory."

"We won it with a lot of hard work. We got a goal while we were on top which helped and then we got a second."

Parlour had sympathy for van

The visitors increased their lead when Pires' inviting left wing cross was slotted home by Sweden international Ljungberg.

Litmanen, on for the ineffectual Emile Heskey, gave Liverpool a lifeline after 55 minutes, heading Owen's scuffed shot past Arsenal 'keeper Stuart Taylor from close range.

The goal lifted the Merseysiders and Patrick Berger, another half-time replacement, spurned two glorious chances to equalize, blaz-ing both efforts wide.

But despite enjoying plenty of possession against 10 men, Liverpool failed to find the second goal which would have earned them a precious point.

Arsenal's victory, their first at Anfield since 1992, takes them into second place above Liverpool on goal difference and just three points behind leaders Newcastle.

In Sunday's other match, Chelsea underlined their title credentials by fighting back from going a goal down to thump Bolton Wanderers 5-1 at Stamford Bridge.

Bolton took the lead after three minutes when Per Frandsen's curling cross was glanced home by Kevin Nolan.

But Chelsea turned the game on its head with two goals in four minutes just before half-time.

Claudio Ranieri's men drew level when Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink chased Boudewijn Zenden's punt upfield and turned smartly in the Bolton penalty area to set up strike partner Eidur Gudjohnsen.

The Iceland international, playing against his former club for the first time, drilled a low shot beyond the despairing dive of Jussi Jaaskelainen to restore parity.

And Chelsea edged in front in first-half stoppage-time when Gudjohnsen danced past three Bolton defenders before setting up Hasselbaink who rammed in Chelsea's second with a powerful left-foot shot.

Zenden's delicate lob over Juuaskelainen made it 3-1 before former Scottish international Colin Hendry turned Sam Dalla Bona's low cross into his own net.

Five minutes from time, Chelsea's England midfielder Frank Lampard netted his first league goal for the Blues with a rising drive which flew into the top corner.

Nigerian international Nwankwo Kanu played a perfectly-weighted through ball to Ljungberg, who poked the ball past Jerzy Dudek before being brought down by the Liverpool 'keeper.

Durkin decided against showing the Poland international any type of card, and Henry stepped up to coolly slot the ball into the bottom left-hand corner of the net.

"We're not even thinking about the title, we just wanted to get the three points today," said the Dutch international.

"We started very badly but with a little bit of luck we got back into it and despite not playing particularly well we killed the game off."

Chelsea manager Ranieri insisted his side will have nothing to show for their efforts this season if they play like they did in the first 45 minutes.

"If we play like the first half, Chelsea cannot win anything," said the Italian.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Liverpool's Finnish striker Jari Litmanen (C), scores with a header against Arsenal at Anfield on December 23.

Hypia and did not appear to be deliberately looking for a spot-kick.

Thierry Henry fired Arsenal ahead from the penalty spot in first half injury time and Freddy Ljungberg grabbed a second six minutes into the second half.

Substitute Jari Litmanen pulled a goal back for Liverpool four minutes later but the Gunners maintained their unbeaten away record with a sixth win in 10 games.

When quizzed about the sending-off of van Bronckhorst, referee Durkin stuck by his decision.

"I thought he was trying to deceive me to gain a penalty and I'm very confident that I got it right," he said.

"I think that it's (diving) one of the main problems in the game at the

Bronckhorst who became the eighth Arsenal player sent off this season and the 40th of Arsene Wenger's reign.

"I thought the sending off was a little bit harsh. It was quite slippery out there," he added.

Despite being a man down, the Gunners took the lead seconds before the half-time whistle.

Durkin decided against showing the Poland international any type of card, and Henry stepped up to coolly slot the ball into the bottom left-hand corner of the net.

## Premiership's top six

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

Newcastle	18	11	3	4	34	23	36
Arsenal	18	9	6	3	37	22	33
Liverpool	17	10	3	4	26	17	33
Leeds	18	8	8	2	26	17	32
Man Utd	18	9	3	6	43	28	30
Chelsea	18	7	9	2	28	13	30

## Primera Liga

# Mallorca a Real pain

**Football**

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque must dread the sight of Real Mallorca, a feeling enhanced by the 1-1 draw at the Balearic island club on Sunday.

Last season, Mallorca were the only club to do the 'double' over his team - winning both at home and away - as Madrid otherwise swept aside all on the way to their 28th league title.

This time around Mallorca snapped Real's five-game winning streak in the league, and also spoil Del Bosque's 51st birthday celebrations by ensuring they will not top the standings over the two-week festive break.

Deportivo La Coruna stay top with 33 points from 18 games, returning to pole position after a gap of nearly a month following their 2-0 win over Real Betis on Saturday.

Real Madrid are now second, slipping back a place, one point adrift of the Galicians.

Del Bosque tried to mask his disappointment at the post-match press conference but could not disguise the fact he expected more from his team.

"In the first half our passes were falling short and we were not getting forward quick enough," Del Bosque lamented.

"However Mallorca put us under a lot of pressure throughout the game and in the end it paid off for them."

Mallorca had an early chance to

take the lead but Alberto Luque hit the bar midway through the first half.

However, Real Madrid's Spanish international Raul Gonzalez broke the deadlock after 55 minutes with an outstanding diving header for his ninth league goal of the season.

Raul connected with a long-range pass from Brazilian Roberto Carlos, who was wide out on the left touchline, and Mallorca goalkeeper Leo Franco had little chance of getting to the ball.

However, Real Madrid's suspect defence was caught out with Luque's equaliser 14 minutes later.

Roberto Carlos was left stranded in the wrong part of the field as Mallorca counter-attacked and Cameroon international Samuel Eto'o produced a pinpoint pass to find Luque almost unmarked in front of goal.

Eto'o celebrated the goal with even more joy than the scorer as he had publicly vowed revenge on Madrid, who finally allowed him to sign for Mallorca in the summer.

According to Eto'o, Madrid tormented him during three miserable years on their books when he was regularly loaned out and only played in one league game for them.

The blame for the goal though could not be laid at the feet of Madrid's third-choice goalkeeper Carlos Sanchez, who was making his league debut due to suspensions and injuries of the two men ahead of him in the pecking order.

"Carlos Sanchez responded well to the occasion but I'm not going to say much more because this is a collective game," added Del Bosque, hinting strongly there had been some stern words for his

defenders, including club captain Fernando Hierro.

By contrast to Del Bosque's tight-lipped answers, little could dampen the delight of Mallorca coach Sergio Kresic, whose team are gradually climbing away from the relegation zone.

"A draw was a fair result and we were playing the number one club in the world, so I think we did very well," said the Croatian-born coach.

Real Zaragoza's 3-2 defeat of visiting Villarreal didn't silence the home support, who shouted for the head of under-fire Zaragoza coach Txetxu Rojo for the entire match.

Zaragoza were 2-0 up at the break thanks to first half goals from Chaino and Martin Vellisca but then almost threw away three points as they allowed Villarreal to draw level through Victor Fernandez and Jorge Lopez.

However, Zaragoza's Paraguayan international Toro Acuna saved Rojo's blushes - and his job, at least for a few weeks - by converting a penalty 11 minutes from the whistle after Vellisca had been brought down by defender Jesus Galvan.

Galvan got his marching orders for the challenge and Villarreal then went down lamely to their third defeat in their last four league outings.

## Snow postpones Rayo v Alaves clash

AFP, Madrid

The Spanish First Division match between Rayo Vallecano and Alaves has been called off after heavy snowfall in the Spanish capital, officials said here Sunday.

The playing surface at Rayo's Teresa Rivero de Vallecas Stadium was covered in five centimetres of snow, and the game was called off after a pitch inspection.

## Primera Liga's top six

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

Deportivo La Coruna	18	10	3	5	32	22	33
Real Madrid	18	9	5	4	33	21	32
Celta Vigo	18	8	7	3	34	20	31
Real Betis	18	9	4	5	19	15	31
Athletic Bilbao	18	8	7	3	26	23	31
Alaves	17	9	3	5	19	10	30

### Serie A's top six

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

Inter Milan	16	10	4	2	31	16	34
AS Roma	16	9	6	1	24	9	33
Chievo	15	9	2	4	28	19	29
Juventus	16	7	7	2	27	13	28
AC Milan	16	7	6	3	25	18	27
Lazio	15	6	6	3	21	12	24

Note: Chievo v Lazio will be played on January 30

## Bayern rope in Ballack

**Football**

AFP, Leverkusen

European champions Bayern Munich have beaten out a host of clubs to capture the signature of Bayer Leverkusen's German

## Wenger praises Anelka deal

**Football**

AFP, London

Liverpool were correct to take Nicolas Anelka on loan until the end of the season even though he will struggle to do well alongside Michael Owen, according to Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger.

"Liverpool have done a good deal there because they have got a hugely talented player, somebody who is certainly hungry because he comes out of a lot of disappointment - and in my opinion a very cheap deal," said Wenger.

"It's a loan deal with an option to buy so he has three or four months to

international midfielder Michael Ballack, both clubs announced Sunday.

The 25-year-old Ballack, whose contract with Bayer was due to expire in 2005, put pen to paper on a deal worth 12.7 million dollars which will run to 2006 when he moves clubs at the start of next season.

demonstrate absolutely how good he is.

"The only thing I would say is whether he will play with Owen. Will they work together? I don't know, but they have done a good trick."

Wenger was the man who transformed Anelka from a sulky teenager into an international striker.

But his temperament has always been a problem through his spells at Arsenal, Real Madrid and Paris St Germain.

"I cannot complain personally - during my period he was a very, very honest boy," said Wenger. "Sometimes he was a bit bitter, but on a daily basis he was very easy to deal with."