

Primera Liga

Magnificent Morientes

Football

AFP, Madrid

Five goals from Fernando Morientes in Real Madrid's 7-0 thrashing of Las Palmas on Sunday sent the champions back to the top of the Spanish first division and emphatically ended a streak of four league games without a win.

However, it's tight at the top. Valencia could only draw 0-0 with Celta Vigo on Saturday but they only trail Madrid on goal difference, both clubs having 43 points from 25 games.

Celta are third, two points adrift of the leading pair, while Deportivo La Coruna are fourth, also on 41 points.

Las Palmas had never won a league game in Madrid in 30 visits and never looked like making their own bit of history against Real, who become the first team in the top flight of Spanish football for more than a year to put seven past an opponent.

Morientes headed home Real's first goal after 20 minutes, connecting with a Luis Figo cross, and the pair repeated exactly the same trick 15 minutes later.

Sandwiched in between Morientes' first two goals, Zinedine Zidane showed how much he had been missed by tapping home Madrid's second goal with his left foot.

The world's most expensive player had missed Real's last two games with a sprained ankle.

Morientes then completed his hat-trick after 53 minutes, changing the recipe for success and firing in from close range with his right foot.

Las Palmas defender Angel Lopez headed into his own net after 70 minutes and less than 60 seconds later the Canary islanders' demoralised defence showed it had learnt nothing from the first half as Figo fired over another inch-perfect pass for Morientes to head home.

Morientes hadn't finished and 11 minutes before the whistle he headed his 15th goal of the season, this time thanks to service from Pedro Munitis, which puts him well ahead in the race to be the Spanish first division's top scorer.

The only bright moment for Las Palmas goalkeeper Nacho Gonzalez was when he saved a 88th minute penalty by Morientes,



FERNANDO MORIENTES

after Oscar Minambres had been brought down.

The Spanish international became the first player for eight years - and only one of two men in the last 23 seasons - to score five goals or more in a Spanish first division game.

"Morientes is someone whose

confidence soars when he scores goals. I'm sure this performance will have a big effect on what he does in future games," added Del Bosque, which should lighten Real's next few opponents.

Not surprisingly, the 26 year-old player himself was jubilant.

"This is probably the best game

of my career," said Morientes. "I have not scored five goals in a game since I was a youngster. Before today I had never even got a hat-trick in a Real Madrid jersey, let alone five."

At the other end of the table, Real Sociedad got a valuable win at home to Real Zaragoza to climb off the bottom of the table, although they are still mired in the relegation zone in 18th position.

Yugoslav striker Darko Kovacevic repaid another installment on the club record transfer fee Real Sociedad paid for him last month, with a goal in the first minute.

Javier De Pedro put Real Sociedad further ahead just before the break and although Savo Milosevic headed one back for Zaragoza after 56 minutes, Sociedad's third from Oscar De Paula six minutes before the end sealed the victory.

Espanyol kept their eyes on the ball right until the final whistle for the second time in five days by beating Valladolid with the only goal of the game coming from second-half substitute Martin Posse a minute into injury time.

The Barcelona-based club salvaged a point in a 2-2 draw at Rayo Vallecano on Wednesday, three minutes into time added on.

Malaga were another club to get a late victory with their Panamanian striker Dely Valdes heading the winner right on 90 minutes for a 1-0 victory over Alaves, the first league win in seven games for the Costa Del Sol club.

Deportivo La Coruna, league leaders several times this season, slipped up when they could only draw 0-0 with visiting Villarreal.

The Galicians suffered further when their former Spanish international defender Donato suffering a season-ending achilles tendon injury.

The Brazilian-born defender is, at 39, the oldest player in the Spanish first division but Deportivo president Augusto Lendoiro said immediately that Donato needn't worry about being discarded.

He has played in more than half of Deportivo's official games this season and so his contract will be renewed automatically for one more year.

Catalan giants Barcelona stay in fifth place after a dismal 0-0 draw at Real Mallorca on Saturday.

Cuper says

Ronaldo will be back



AFP, Bologna

Inter Milan coach Hector Cuper insisted Sunday he expected star Brazilian striker Ronaldo to return to Italy before the day was out.

The Argentine's comments came despite a statement issued by the club late Saturday night that said the player would continue receiving treatment in Rio de Janeiro.

Cuper's terse but pointed remarks to RAI TV's Stadio Sprint programme after his side's 2-1 defeat by Bologna would seem to suggest he was not consulted over the decision to allow the player to stay in Rio.

Asked when Ronaldo returned Cuper said: "I know nothing of what has been said over the past few hours and I am expecting Ronaldo on Sunday as was originally scheduled.

"If he does not come back then we will see what needs to be done."

Earlier this week reports from Brazil said the player wanted to stay in Brazil until February 14 so he could attend the Rio de Janeiro carnival but Cuper had made it clear Saturday the player must return on Sunday.

But late Saturday night the club posted a message on the website saying the medical staff had decided Ronaldo could stay in Rio, stressing what it called the 'climatic and psychological' benefits for the player.

Allan pulls

for Mark

AFP, Sydney

Australia look set to retain below-par batsman Mark Waugh for their Test team in the upcoming series in South Africa.

Former Test skipper turned selector Allan Border said Monday Waugh was likely to play in the opening tour match against South Africa A starting on Sunday and the first Test in Johannesburg five days later.

Waugh had a poor run in the just-ended one-day series against New Zealand and South Africa but Border said Waugh and the rest of the Australian batting line-up involved in the comprehensive Test series win over South Africa earlier this year was likely to play the first Test.

"We'll probably play pretty close to our Test line-up in that first game," Border said.

"It makes sense to do that. There's no reason to change too much. They've been playing very, very well, so barring injury or illness you'd expect the Test side would be pretty much as it was during the summer." Waugh averaged 35 and 32.25 in the Test series against New Zealand and South Africa.

But Darren Lehmann, who has been included in the 15-man squad, was expected to take over from Waugh if the 36-year-old struggles for runs in South Africa.

The one-day side for a series against South Africa and Zimbabwe will not be named for two more weeks but Border did not expect to see many changes from the side that failed to reach the one-day series finals against New Zealand and South Africa.

"I don't see any reason to make wholesale changes. We've got some fantastic cricketers there," he said.

"Yes, they didn't perform at their best, particularly in those first three one-day games, which cost us a place in the final.

"Obviously we've got to have some long-term thinking about the World Cup coming up in 12 months' time and how we approach that. But I'd be very surprised if there were any major changes."

Border confirmed the unsuccessful policy of rotating the team for the one-day team had been dropped.

"That's gone," he said.

"The idea of having a squad there was to allow bowlers to have a break - not necessarily batsmen," he added.

"We've had a bit of a re-think on all of that. There'll still be players rotated, but it won't be a rotation system automatically."

The Australian Test team leaves for South Africa on Thursday.

Cameroon rule

Africa



AFP, Bamako

Cameroon became the first side to successfully defend the African Nations Cup in more than three decades here Sunday after downing Senegal in a dramatic penalty shoot-out.

The defending champions - who also won the 2000 tournament on penalties - held their nerve to prevail 3-2 and clinch a record-equalling fourth Nations Cup victory.

Goalkeeper Alioum Boukar was the hero for the 'Indomitable Lions', saving the fifth and final spotkick from Senegal skipper Aliou Cisse at the March 26 Stadium after 120 minutes player left the teams locked at 0-0.

The win made Olympic champions Cameroon the first side since Ghana in 1965 to record back-to-back victories in the Nations Cup, and sees them join the Ghanaians and Egypt with four outright triumphs.

They went one up when defender Ferdinand Coly powered his own spot-kick home, and though Cameroon substitute Patrick Suffo levelled the Senegalese remained in control.

Senegal's Khalilou Fadiga and Cameroon's Arsenal star Lauren Mayer both successfully converted their kicks but the tide turned in Cameroon's favour when keeper Boukar saved from Moustapha Faye.

Real Madrid's Geremi Njitap converted his kick and suddenly the

pressure was back on Senegal. It proved too much for striker Al-Hadju Diouf.

Diouf, who plays for French league leaders Lens, dragged his

Song to give Senegal a lifeline. Cisse was unable to grab it however and Cameroon were champions.

With the score locked 0-0 after 90 minutes, it was Cameroon who

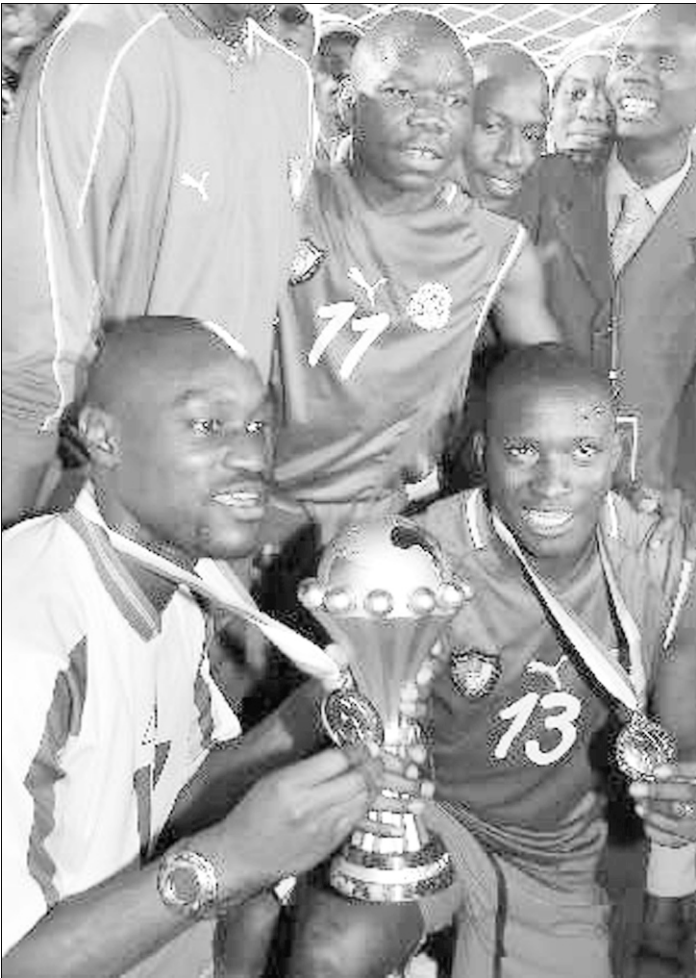


PHOTO: INTERNET

Cameroon's Pius Ndiefi (11) and Luciene Mettomo (13) and Patrick Mboma (front L) celebrate with the African Nations Cup after the final against Senegal on Sunday.

shot wide to leave Cameroon captain Song needing to convert his penalty to clinch the win.

Their was a final twist to the tale though, with Sylva saving from

came closest to breaking the drought in extra-time when striker Pius Ndiefi sent a free header just wide with Senegal goalkeeper Sylva scrambling.

Premiership

Solskjaer sinks Charlton

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United replaced Liverpool at the top of the English Premiership Sunday after a double strike from Norwegian international Ole Gunnar Solskjaer gave the reigning champions a 2-0 win at Charlton.

United, boosted by the news earlier this week that inspirational manager Alex Ferguson is not retiring at the end of the season, top the table with 54 points from 27 matches, two clear of Liverpool, 6-0 winners at Ipswich on Saturday.

Elsewhere Sunday a freak second-half goal from French international Sylvain Wiltord handed Arsenal a narrow 1-0 win at Everton, a result which keeps them in fourth place, three points off the lead.

Solskjaer, whose two goals took his Premiership tally for the season to 12, was delighted with the win at Charlton, United's 11th in their last

12 Premiership matches.

"Obviously we are happy with a clean sheet and the three points because they are a difficult side to play against," he said. "They put men in the box, play long balls and they put us under pressure in the second half."

Solskjaer scored the opening goal at The Valley 12 minutes from half-time.

The United striker, who made his name as a goalscoring substitute but has been a regular in the first team this season, collected Roy Keane's raking pass and unleashed a superb right foot shot which curled past Charlton goalkeeper Dean Kiely into the bottom corner of the net.

Charlton thought they had equalized midway through the second-half but Charlton striker Graham Stuart had his close range effort disallowed for offside.

The decision looked harsh as Stuart appeared to be level with United's French defender Laurent Blanc when he tucked Mark Fish's cross past United goalkeeper Roy Carroll, deputising for the injured

Fabien Barthez.

Solskjaer wrapped up the points 16 minutes from time, superbly hooking the ball into the net from a tight angle after Kiely had parried Ryan Giggs' speculative shot on the turn.

Wiltord netted the only goal at Goodison Park as Arsenal secured their ninth away win in the Premiership this season.

The French striker scored in the 62nd minute, his mishit effort looping over Everton goalkeeper Steve Simonsen and nestling in the corner of the net.

Everton went close in the first half when debutant David Ginola, on loan from Aston Villa until the end of the season, hit the post from a free-kick.

A bumpy pitch and pouring rain prevented a good spectacle but Arsenal's veteran defender Lee Dixon was just happy to grind out the win.

Hayden best

Australian

REUTERS, Melbourne

Matthew Hayden won the Allan Border Medal on Monday as Australia's cricketer-of-the-year, joining Glenn McGrath (2000) and Steve Waugh (2001) as the winner of the country's newest and most prestigious cricketing prize.

The left-handed opening batsman was a clear-cut winner of the award, which was decided by a poll of players, umpires and media, and broadcast live on national television.

Leg-spinner Shane Warne finished second in the voting while Tasmanian middle-order batsman Ricky Ponting was named one-day player-of-the-year.

While the Allan Border medal recognises players' performances in test and one-day cricket Hayden won the award largely through his superb displays in the test arena.

The 30-year-old was the world's leading run-scorer in tests last year and scored 1,509 runs at an average of 71.85 during the 12-month voting period, which ended last weekend.

Ponting was also a clear winner of the one-day award after scoring 689 runs in 17 matches at an average of 45.93 over the year, finishing ahead of Australian vice-captain Adam Gilchrist.

South Australian all-rounder Darren Lehmann won the state player-of-the-year for the third season in a row while 20-year-old Tasmanian all-rounder Shane Watson was named young player-of-the-year a week after being included in the touring team for South Africa.

Greg Chappell and Stan McCabe were inducted into the Australian cricket hall of fame.

Chappell is a former Australian test captain and one of the greatest batsmen the game has seen, scoring over 7,000 runs at an average in excess of 50. Among his many feats were that he scored a century on his test debut, his final test and his first as captain.

Serie A

Roma, Juve fire blank

Football

AFP, Milan

AS Roma were held 0-0 by 10-man Juventus at the Olympic Stadium in the much-hyped Italian first division match of the season but still saw their overall position in the title race improve.

After a round of games when none of the top five sides at the start of the weekend won defending champions and leaders Roma remain a point clear of Juve whose run of six consecutive wins comes to an end.

But Juve will be relieved to get something out of this game after having Italian international defender Mark Iuliano sent off in the first half

and defending stoutly.

The side from Turin now has sole position of second place, moving a point ahead of third-placed Inter Milan whose title aspirations where dented by a 2-1 defeat at the hands of Bologna at the Stadio Dell'Ara.

At Bologna second-half goals from Fabio Pecchia and Lamberto Zauli killed off Inter who, despite a consolation goal from Clarence

Seedorf, are now winless in three matches.

It was also a day to forget for Lazio whose miserable run continued with a 1-0 defeat at Parma whose scorer was the prolific Marco Di Vaio who ironically is a Lazio fan while AC Milan again failed to impress, having to settle for a 1-1 draw with nine-man Perugia at the San Siro.

Serie A's top six

Italian first division table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):									
AS Roma	22	12	9	1	33	14	45		
Juventus	22	12	8	2	41	15	44		
Inter Milan	22	12	7	3	37	19	43		
Chievo	22	11	4	7	40	33	37		
Bologna	22	10	5	7	24	23	35		
AC Milan	22	8	10	4	31	24	34		

Midfielder Pecchia headed the first and then Zauli scored a fine solo goal on the counter-attack for the second. Dutch substitute Seedorf pulled one back but the equaliser proved elusive.

Inter's Argentine coach Hector Cuper said: "We simply did not get the result we needed today. We must think about it and find a solution."

At the San Siro a penalty from Brazilian Serginho gave AC Milan the lead against bogey team Perugia who won the last three Serie A matches between the clubs.

Immediately after the interval Fabio Bazzani equalised but the balance tilted back towards Milan when Perugia midfielder Davide Baiocco, who will join Juventus in the summer, was sent off.

In the closing minutes Perugia defender Sean Sogliano also saw red and later Perugia coach Serse Cosmi made a sarcastic attack on the refereeing performance of Salvatore Racalbuto, saying: "The referee really helped us today. Every decision he made just made us all the more determined and committed."

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti was perhaps guilty of stating the obvious when he said: "Things are not going well for us at the moment."

The Lombardy derby match between Atalanta and Brescia was a dull 0-0 draw with the action overshadowed by the antics of the Atalanta fans who spent the entire 90 minutes baiting Brescia coach Carlo Mazzone whose remarks about women from Atalanta's home town Bergamo were not appreciated.

Lazio's dismal run continued with a 1-0 defeat at Parma who took the lead in the second half through Italian international Di Vaio whose 15th goal of the season made him briefly the division's top goalscorer in his own right.

At Turin Piacenza striker Dario Hubner quickly matched Di Vaio with his 15th of the campaign but Torino promptly equalised through Marco Ferrante for a 1-1 draw.

Fiorentina slumped to a 2-0 defeat at bottom club Venezia.

Manchester United's Norwegian striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (L) celebrates with captain Roy Keane after scoring against Charlton Athlete in their Premiership match on February 10.