

Premiership

Ipswich bid bye as Gunners celebrate

Football

AFP, London

Ipswich's relegation from the English Premiership was confirmed in a 5-0 defeat at Liverpool Saturday as Arsenal celebrated the double with a 4-3 win over Everton at Highbury.

With Arsenal already crowned champions, the major issue to be settled on the final day was whether Ipswich could avoid joining Leicester and Derby as the relegated teams.

But two first-half goals from Liverpool's Norwegian international John Arne Riise all but settled the encounter at Anfield, sending the 'Tractor Boys' ploughing a lonely furrow back to the First Division.

England striker Michael Owen, Czech international Vladimir Smicer and Frenchman Nicolas Anelka added goals in the second half to complete the rout.

The win clinched a second-place finish for Gerard Houllier's Liverpool - the club's highest final league position for 10 years - and condemned Manchester United to third place.

Defiant Ipswich manager George Burley insisted this season's experience would help his side bounce straight back into the Premiership.

"We're a great club, we're determined to learn lessons from this season and we will certainly be going for it from the start of next season," he said.

"There will be changes, we've been in the First Division before and had to sell players to balance the books, so it won't be any different."

Manchester United, who were held 0-0 at Old Trafford against Charlton, must now play in the preliminary round of the Champions League next season to confirm their place in the first phase.

There was good news for United however when midfield star and England captain David Beckham announced a two-year extension to his present deal shortly before kick-off which will keep him at Old Trafford until 2005.

Blackburn striker Andy Cole responded to his exclusion from England's World Cup squad by scoring twice in Rovers' 3-0 win over Fulham at Ewood Park.

Republic of Ireland international Damien Duff was Blackburn's other scorer as Jean Tigana's Cottagers were comfortably beaten.

Chelsea, still smarting from last week's FA Cup final defeat, plunged to a 3-1 home defeat against Aston Villa at Stamford Bridge.

Peter Crouch headed Villa into the lead in the 21st minute, rising above the Chelsea defence to nod home Steve Stone's inswinging corner.

World Cup-bound Darius Vassell made it 2-0 to Villa in the second half before Icelandic international Eidur Gudjohnsen pulled one back for Chelsea with a 70th minute spotkick.

But Dion Dublin made sure for Graham Taylor's men in the final minutes.

At Elland Road, Leeds signed off with a 1-0 win over Middlesbrough



PHOTO: INTERNET

DOUBLE WINNERS ON A DOUBLE-DECKER: The Premiership and FA Cup champions Arsenal team parades through London on May 11.

thanks to a 63rd minute right-footed strike from Alan Smith.

Meanwhile at Filbert Street, relegated Leicester bade a victorious farewell to the top flight with a 2-1 win over Tottenham Hotspur.

Spurs' skipper Teddy Sheringham fired his side ahead

Marvin Robinson levelled for the Rams.

At Upton Park, West Ham finished the season on a winning note in dramatic fashion when Ian Pearce scored an 89th-minute clincher in a 2-1 win for the Hammers over Bolton.

heavily strapped and packed with ice.

At Anfield, Liverpool midfielder Gerrard was taken off midway through the first half of his side's win against Ipswich.

The tenacious midfielder walked from the pitch after suffering a slight groin strain.

But after the match Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier said the injury did not look too serious and was confident Gerrard would fly out to Dubai on Monday with the rest of Eriksson's 23-man World Cup squad as England begin their World Cup preparations.



THIERRY HENRY

TOP SCORERS

- 24 - Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
- 23 - Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (Chelsea), Ruud van Nistelrooy (Manchester United), Alan Shearer (Newcastle)
- 20 - Peter Crouch (Aston Villa)
- 19 - Michael Owen (Liverpool)
- 17 - Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (Manchester United)
- 15 - Robbie Fowler (Leeds)
- 14 - Marian Pahars (Southampton), Ormerod (Southampton), Eidur Gudjohnsen (Chelsea)
- 13 - Cole (Blackburn)
- 12 - Juan Pablo Angel (Aston Villa), Fredrik Ljungberg (Arsenal)

German Cup

Schalke break Leverkusen hearts

Football

AFP, Berlin

Defending champions Schalke 04 beat Bayer Leverkusen 4-2 in an eventful German Cup final here on Saturday which saw both coaches sent off to the stands.

Leverkusen, once going for a treble of titles, earned another runners-up spot of the year after

being pipped for the league title by Borussia Dortmund, and now must win Wednesday's Champions League final against Real Madrid in Glasgow to avoid a trophyless season.

It was the fourth cup success by Schalke, from Germany's industrial heartland in the Ruhr, after victories in 1937, 1972, as well as last year.

It was a great send-off for Schalke's Dutch coach Huub Stevens who switches to Hertha

Berlin next season. In his time at the helm of the club, Schalke have twice won the German Cup, the UEFA Cup in 1997 and were runners-up in the league last season.

The match started with neither side taking the initiative and it was not until about the 20th minute that the game started to liven up thanks to Leverkusen's star midfielders Michael Ballack and Brazilian Ze Roberto who began to look dangerous.

Oliver Neuville just missed, Bernd Schneider had a shot pushed away and Ze Roberto skimmed the post as Schalke keeper Oliver Reck came under a period of heavy pressure.

Leverkusen deservedly went ahead in the 27th minute when their Bulgarian international Dimitar Berbatov found the net after good work by Brazilian defender Lucio.

It was all-square seconds from the break, however, when Jorg Bohme equalized with a superb, left-footed, 20 metre freekick from the right past heppless Leverkusen keeper Hans-Jorg Butt.

Stevens and his Leverkusen counterpart Klaus Toppmoller were both sent to the stands - Stevens at half-time and Toppmoller in the 61st minute, for questioning refereeing decisions in an unusual turn of events.

In the second half, both teams took turns to go on the attack and both Leverkusen keeper Butt and his opposite number Reck both made good stops on the line.

From then on eventual winners Schalke had the best of the match. First Nigerian international Victor Agali got away from Lucio and shot home in the 68th minute and then three minutes later, playmaker Andreas Moller made the score 3-1 after good work from that man Agali.

In the 85th minute, Denmark international striker Ebbe Sand headed home Schalke's fourth goal after a cross by Belgium's Sven Vermant, meaning Ulf Kirsten's last minute score for Leverkusen was too little, too late.

Mpenza blow for Belgium

AFP, Berlin

Belgium's World Cup hopes have been dealt a blow after striker Emile Mpenza admitted Sunday he had lost his fitness battle for the finals.

The Schalke 04 centre-forward has been out of action for much of the season with various injuries, and missed his club's German Cup final victory against Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday.

The highly rated 23-year-old had been included for the finals in a provisional 30-man squad and was expected to be a key figure for Belgium in Group H, where they face hosts Japan, Russia and Tunisia.

But after undergoing four days' treatment at home in Belgium, Mpenza said Sunday the muscle injury had worsened and he will not be fit to travel to the Far East from May 31 to June 30.

"It hasn't got better. I have to cure myself first," Mpenza said.

The injury means Belgium coach Robert Waseige will have to juggle his striking resources in friendlies against Algeria on Tuesday and France next Saturday.

Waseige has already seen his World Cup plans hit by injury to key defender Joos Valgaeren. The World Cup heartache is a miserable end to what has been an unhappy season for Mpenza, who was suspended by Schalke in October after refusing to take antibiotics for a groin injury.

Upbeat Kahn

INTERNET, Berlin

Germany international and Bayern Munich keeper Oliver Kahn said he has no doubts over the professional abilities and winning will of the Germany national team players who will enter the pitch in the WC-2002 tournament.

Kahn shared opinions in his interview with the weekly Welt am Sonntag:

"Bayern's failure will not have any negative impact on the national squad's performance. We have gained so many victories in the last years that we can simply strike out the last season. Considering the Leverkusen club, I think we still need to wait till the Champions League final. The Dortmund players did not succeed in the UEFA Cup but managed to achieve the Germany Championship trophy. At the same time, I would like to underscore that any national team player should leave all the negative emotions back home and realize that the World Cup tournament is the major event in the overall soccer life."

The 32-year-old Germany international seems to be self-confident and is not afraid of any competition from the younger players.

"I am very pleased with my professional achievements and I am happy to enjoy every match I play," he added.

Owen picks game one

AFP, London

Liverpool marksman Michael Owen believes England have to take something from their opening World Cup game against Sweden or risk making a swift exit from the tournament.

Owen joins up with the England squad on Monday as they head for Dubai to finalise their preparations for the Far East.

But Owen's thoughts have already turned to the opening match against Sweden on June 2. England then face Argentina five days later before tackling Nigeria on June 12.

"The first game is massive, you can't afford to get beaten. If you do, then you have to win the next two games," Owen said.

"In the group we are in, it is going to be hard to win games. Every one is going to be quite tight.

Despite being drawn in the 'Group of Death' Owen believes England are capable of going all the way in Japan and South Korea.

"There are half a dozen to eight teams that could probably win the tournament and we could be one of them," he said.

"When you get 23 lads in a group and living together for a month or so, you have to get togetherness. "You have that feeling that no-one is going to beat you. You need that team spirit."

But he admitted: "We have such a young side that probably our best football won't come for a few years.

"That's not to say we can't do well in this one but we do need to get off to a good start."

Owen believes World Cup holders France remain the team to beat.

"They are probably my favourites," he said. "They have the experience of winning it before.

"Not only that France have more or less the same team and have grown up together. That is probably a lead we would like to take and follow in their footsteps."

Primera Liga

Barca book Champions League ticket

Football

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona ensured they will play in the European Champions League next season with a 1-1 draw at Zaragoza in the final round of Spanish league matches on Saturday night.

Valencia, who won the league last weekend, finished the season

stand aside as the Barcelona coach in the coming days.

Barcelona have now gone two seasons without winning a single trophy, having even lost in the local Catalonia Cup to lower division sides.

Alaves captain Antonio Karmona doesn't score many goals and Saturday's was his first of the season but he could not have chosen a better time to find the net, heading home an Iban Begona corner after

seven minutes after the break with a shot from just inside the area off his favourite left foot.

Luque got the vital winner from close range after 73 minutes to keep Mallorca in the First Division regardless of the results of their relegation rivals.

Las Palmas could only draw 1-1 at Real Sociedad, with most of players in the visitors' dressing room in tears shortly after the end of the match.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Players of Spanish champions Valencia pose for photographers with the trophy at Valencia, on May.

on 75 points after a 2-0 win over Real Betis.

Deportivo La Coruna have 68 points after confirming second spot and an automatic qualifying berth into the Champions League first phase following their 3-0 victory over Real Madrid on Friday. Real slipped to third on 66 points.

Barcelona confirmed fourth spot on 64 points while Celta Vigo are fifth, four points in arrears after losing 1-0 at Rayo Vallecano, and will join Betis and Alaves in next season's UEFA Cup.

Barcelona got a shock after nine minutes when they went behind to a stunning left foot strike by Santiago Aragon.

The Catalans recovered their composure, and their place in Europe's premier club competition, when Argentine international Javier Saviola got his 17th goal of the season a minute before the break, connecting with a Luis Enrique cross.

However, the draw did not lead to celebrations, despite the effect of earning them a place in Europe's premier club competition.

"Other teams might think that it would have been good to finish fourth and make the semi-finals of the Champions League but at Barcelona we can't be happy at this," said Rexach, who is expected to



DIEGO TRISTAN

TOP SCORERS

- 21 goals: Tristan (Deportivo)
- 18 goals: Morientes (Real), Kluivert (Barcelona)
- 17 goals: Catanha (Celta), Saviola (Barcelona), Tamudo (Espanyol)
- 16 goals: Urzaiz (Bilbao)

37 minutes for the only goal in the Basques 1-0 win at Osasuna.

The goal meant that last season's UEFA Cup finalists won the four-way chase to finish seventh and take Spain's last place in Europe next season.

"This game was a reflection of the way we have played over the course of the season. We played well in parts but made many errors as well," said the Alaves coach Mane Ensal, remembering the fact that his club had lead the lead at the start of the year.

Two second half goals from Ariel Ibagaza and Alberto Luque ensured Real Mallorca's First Division survival with a 2-1 victory over visiting

"We have to face the fact that we are now a Second Division club, live with it and hold our heads high. This is a sad day but I believe in 12 months time there will be happier ones and we can come straight back up," sobbed Las Palmas coach Fernando Vazquez who retained his usual eloquence despite the circumstances.

Tenerife succumbed 3-2 to Athletic Bilbao, after leading 2-1 at half-time but playing the final 45 minutes of their game knowing that Mallorca had won and that they had been relegated, following a delay due to floodlight failure.

Athletic's Spain international striker Ismael Urzaiz put the

Primera Liga's final standings

| After last round of matches on Saturday(Played, Won, Drawn, Lost, Goals For, Goals Against Points) | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|--|--|
| 1 Valencia | 38 | 21 | 12 | 5 | 51 | 27 | 75 | | | |
| 2 Deportivo | 38 | 20 | 8 | 10 | 65 | 41 | 68 | | | |
| 3 Real | 38 | 19 | 9 | 10 | 69 | 4 | 4 | | | |
| 4 Barcelona | 38 | 18 | 10 | 10 | 65 | 37 | 64 | | | |
| 5 Celta | 38 | 16 | 12 | 10 | 64 | 4 | 6 | | | |
| 6 Betis | 38 | 15 | 14 | 9 | 42 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| 7 Alaves | 38 | 17 | 3 | 18 | 41 | 4 | 4 | | | |
| 8 Sevilla | 38 | 14 | 11 | 13 | 51 | 40 | 53 | | | |
| 9 Malaga | 38 | 13 | 14 | 11 | 44 | 4 | 4 | | | |
| 10 Athletic | 38 | 14 | 11 | 13 | 54 | 66 | 53 | | | |
| 11 Rayo Vallecano | 38 | 13 | 10 | 15 | 46 | 52 | 49 | | | |
| 12 Valladolid | 38 | 13 | 9 | 16 | 45 | 58 | 48 | | | |
| 13 Real Sociedad | 38 | 13 | 8 | 17 | 48 | 54 | 47 | | | |
| 14 Espanyol | 38 | 13 | 8 | 17 | 47 | 56 | 47 | | | |
| 15 Villarreal | 38 | 11 | 10 | 17 | 46 | 55 | 43 | | | |

Valladolid.

The win also condemned the two Canary Island clubs, Tenerife and Las Palmas, to Second Division football next season. They join bottom club Real Zaragoza who were relegated last week.

Mallorca looked doomed as they went behind to a Fernando Fernandez goal after 37 minutes, his 14th of the season, while Tenerife and Las Palmas both held leads at half-time in their games.

However, Argentine midfielder Ariel Ibagaza brought Mallorca level

Basques ahead after 11 minutes but Tenerife hit back immediately.

The much-travelled Jaime Sanchez equalised six minutes later when he headed home his first goal for the club he joined last September.

Argentine striker Bichi Fuertes kept Tenerife's slim hopes of survival alive when he scored from the penalty spot in injury time at the end of the first half but the demoralised Canary islanders conceded second half goals from Ismael Urzaiz, his 16th of the season, and Julien Guerrero.

Beckham signs fresh deal

Football

AFP, London

England captain David Beckham ended months of speculation Saturday by signing a new contract with Manchester United which will keep him at the club until the end of June 2005.

The new deal is believed to be worth between 90,000 and 100,000 pounds a week (between 131,000 and 146,000 dollars).

"The club has bent over backwards to be fair in their dealings with me and I always knew that Manchester United were the only club I ever wanted to play for," Beckham said after signing his new contract.

"I was never really worried about the contract, but I did want it all sorted out before the World Cup. "(United manager) Sir Alex Ferguson had made it very clear that he wanted me to be an important part of the club's future and his word was good enough for me.

"The Manchester United fans are part of my family and they have supported me through all the highs and lows of my career at Old

Trafford.

"I know I owe them a big thank you and if anything the bond between myself and the club and the fans is stronger than ever before.

"All the players at Manchester



DAVID BECKHAM

United feel that special bond and there is not a day passes when I do not feel very lucky and privileged to be part of such a fantastic club," he told the club's official website.

Manchester United chief executive Peter Kenyon expressed his delight at finally getting Beckham to put pen to paper.

"As everyone knows, it has taken a long time for us to reach agreement on this new deal," he said.

"The process of every player contract negotiation is different, and one of the unique aspects of Davids was understanding how his global image could best be utilised to the mutual benefit of Manchester United and David himself.

"We believe we have agreed a contract that does just that. It is important to point out that we never once doubted that David wanted to stay at United.

"He has made a big contribution to the club's achievements over the past decade, and we all look forward to enjoying more success together in the coming seasons."

Ferguson was relieved to secure the services of one of his star players for another three years.

"I'm really pleased David has signed a new contract," said the Scotsman.

"It's taken a long time to get here, and were all relieved its over.

"He is a terrific player who has played a big part in the team's successes, and with his new deal signed we can now settle down to enjoying the next few years with David, as an important part of the team."

The ecstatic Schalke 04 players celebrate their German Cup victory in Berlin on May 11.

PHOTO: INTERNET