

# Premiership Kanu Gunners' sigh of relief

Football

AFP, London

A last-minute winner from Nwankwo Kanu maintained Arsenal's 100 percent record at Highbury this season and extended their lead at the top of the Premiership on Saturday.

With North London rivals Tottenham losing at Manchester United, the double winners are now two points clear of their nearest rivals Liverpool, who overcame West Brom 2-0 at Anfield.

A Ruud van Nistelrooy penalty returned Manchester United to winning ways and moved them up from 10th to seventh place.

Bolton, who have already beaten Manchester United this season, looked set for another shock result as the match at Highbury headed into injury time.

But after Ivan Campo had been sent off 10 minutes from the end, Bolton finally cracked in the closing seconds, when Nigerian international Kanu got on the end of a loose ball inside the six-yard box and managed to scrape it over the line.

Thierry Henry enabled Arsenal to equal yet another record when he gave them a first half lead.

The Gunners have now scored in 46 consecutive Premiership matches, equalling the record for all leagues set by Chesterfield in 1929-30 and extending their record for consecutive scoring in the top flight.

Henry, who had earlier struck a penalty against the post, latched on to a pass from the lively Freddie Ljungberg and went round the Bolton keeper before slotting home for his fifth goal of the season.

Bolton's equaliser came two minutes after the break, David Seaman misjudging a Gareth Farrelly cross that flew over his head and into the net off the top of the goal post.

Arsene Wenger was happy with the way his side had kept going to the end. "We had to fight hard and show great spirit and we know we have that in the side," he said.

Bolton's Sam Allardyce said: "A goal in the last minute of stoppage time -- I don't think the lads deserved that."

Czech striker Milan Baros made it three goals from two starts as Liverpool overcame West Brom at Anfield.

But it was another unhappy afternoon for Michael Owen, who missed a first-half penalty.

The England striker, dropped to the bench for Liverpool's two previous games, must have thought his luck was about to change when he went round Russell Hoult only to be pulled down by the West Brom keeper, who was duly ordered off.

But in a fairytale start to his Premiership career, Irish reserve keeper Joe Murphy came off the bench and dived to his right to save Owen's unconvincing effort.

Manager Gerrard Houllier voiced confidence that Owen would soon emerge from his current slump in form.

"Bad periods don't last for top strikers. At some stage he will score goals," the Frenchman said. "Don't



PHOTO: INTERNET

Gilberto Silva (No 19), Arsenal's Brazilian international, goes airborne to tackle Bolton Wanderers' Ivan Campo at Highbury stadium in London on September 21.

forget the chance he had today was one he created for himself."

Houllier ruled out giving penalty-taking responsibility to someone else.

"I don't think it is a matter of penalties. It is a matter of him getting into a scoring mind and that'll come sooner rather than later."

Ten-man West Brom might have had a penalty of their own when Jason Roberts cut inside Sami Hyypia and appeared to be pulled down from behind.

Liverpool finally broke down the visitor's resistance after excellent work by Steven Gerrard. The England midfielder robbed Neil Clement wide on the right and fired in a superb cross for Baros to head home.

Norwegian defender John Arne Riise added a second for Liverpool right at the end.

Van Nistelrooy's penalty brought relief to the Old Trafford crowd after another frustrating day in front of goal for the United strikers.

United played some lovely football and their territorial domination was overwhelming, but once again they did not turn that into goals.

Spurs' had the inspirational form of their American goalkeeper Kasey Keller to thank for keeping them in the game but they might easily have scored in a good spell after the break.

First Robbie Keane caught Rio Ferdinand in possession on the half-way line and broke clear only to be denied by the fine anticipation of Fabien Barthez, who sprinted 35 yards off his line to clear with a fine sliding tackle.

Then Dean Richards should have scored after Steffen Iversen had headed Keane's corner back across goal. The ball fell to Richards six yards out but the centre-half's effort was directed straight at Barthez.

United's pressure finally paid off in the 63rd minute when Gary Docherty, was adjudged to have

pulled down Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Van Nistelrooy confidently converted.

Manager Alex Ferguson declared himself satisfied with the way his side played after defeats in their last two Premiership outings, although he admitted it had been a nervous 90 minutes on the touch-line.

"As the game went on I was worrying about the missed chances and whether we were going to regret them," he said.

Spurs manager Glenn Hoddle felt his side had been worth a point. "We had a handball at the other end and did not get it but it was definitely a penalty (for United) and that made the difference on the day."

As well as relief at securing the three points, United received a bonus when England fullback Gary Neville came on as a late substitute for his first appearance since breaking a bone in his foot four months ago.

French defender Franck Queudrue earned Middlesbrough the points against Birmingham with a stunning 29th-minute free-kick.

At the bottom of the table, Southampton and Charlton fought out a dull 0-0 draw while West Ham picked up only their second point of the season with a scoreless draw, at home to Manchester City.

Earlier in the day, Newcastle added to the woes of Sunderland boss Peter Reid with a 2-0 win at St James' park, Craig Bellamy and Alan Shearer getting the goals.

Premiership's top six							
English Premiership table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Arsenal	7	5	2	0	17	7	17
Liverpool	7	4	3	0	15	8	15
Tottenham	7	4	1	2	11	9	13
Leeds	6	4	0	2	10	4	12
Chelsea	6	3	3	0	13	8	9
Middlesbrough	7	3	2	2	8	5	11

# Wenger foresees invincibility

Football

INTERNET, London

Arsene Wenger last night set his Arsenal players the ultimate target.

In a statement of intent that mixed supreme confidence and an awareness of the impact it will have, the Highbury boss told his squad that he won't just settle for a Treble this season - he wants it achieved without a single defeat.

No team has gone through a domestic season undefeated since Preston won the Double in 1889 but Wenger insisted: "It's not impossible."

"I know it will be difficult for us to go through the season unbeaten. But if we keep the right attitude it's possible we can do it."

"It was done by Milan in Italy (in 1992) and I can't see why it's shocking to say that we can do it this season."

"Every manager says it. Do you not think that they say something similar at the start of the season at Manchester United or Liverpool or Chelsea?"

"They think exactly the same but they don't say it because they're scared of looking ridiculous."

"If we lose, people will turn to me and say 'you have a big mouth.' But I can only be honest."

"If I say I've no confidence in a team that has won 27 games unbeaten you'd call me a complete liar."

"It's everybody's dream to go through a season without losing so let's give it our best shot. If it doesn't happen it's not the end of the world."

"We just want to improve and enjoy what we're doing. But I have a great belief in this squad and the team."

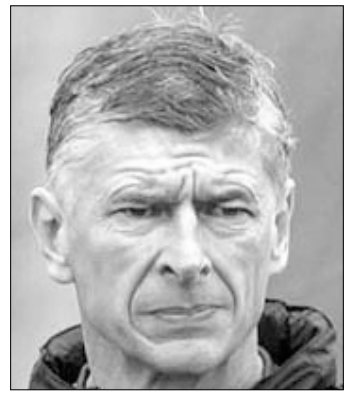
Wenger is firing a psychological

"We want to be respected and loved by our fans and play the sort of football that means other people can still respect us even if they want us to lose.

"Neutrals like us because of the way we play but I would love us to be so good that we were seen as arrogant!"

Wenger, without the suspended Patrick Vieira today, smiled as he said that, aware that commitment to aristry backed by a physical presence have made the Gunners the team to beat.

What has made his Arsenal side so refreshing to watch is their attacking zeal, equivalent to Kevin Keegan's 1996 Newcastle side but



ARSENE WENGER

with the steel and resilience that wins silverware.

Wenger added: "I think trophies are the consequence of the quality of the game you play. I feel that I can only be good if I am faithful to how I think football should be played, so I am determined to stick to that and try it and see if it works. Even if it doesn't work, at least I will have tried."

"When I see this team playing, there are moments when I think to

myself that I would pay to watch them."

What is evident is that Wenger has never been more at ease with the players under his command.

He added: "I feel the vibes coming out of the team are positive and you can't cheat people with that. They feel that the unit is there with great team-work. I'm relaxed when I send the team out because I'm confident. But I wasn't ever nervous even when we were lying second in the table last season."

"Last September or October I felt we had the potential to win the title but we didn't really believe enough in ourselves."

"We'd been frustrated for a few years by finishing second. It can become something you accept but I had a true belief that the team was fed up with finishing second and that the potential had to come out."

"One turning point came when we lost at La Coruna in November. A few days later were 1-0 down at half-time against Manchester United but won 3-1."

"In that game we had the mental strength to change things and reverse the situation."

When United boss Ferguson suggested before the start of the season that Highbury skipper Vieira had wanted to move to Old Trafford, the Frenchman said it was too early for mind-games.

It seems it isn't any longer and he clearly wants his words to reverberate around Old Trafford and Anfield, to see what impact they have.

Wenger will decide tomorrow whether to ask Dennis Bergkamp to travel by land to Eindhoven for Wednesday's Champions League game, although the signs are that the Dutchman will not be returning to his homeland.

# McManaman, Solari Inter's choices

AFP, Madrid

England international Steve McManaman or Argentina's Santiago Solari are the players who could move to Inter Milan as part of a swap deal for Ronaldo, according to a Spanish press report.

Real Madrid sporting director Jorge Valdano, quoted in Saturday's As sports newspaper, said either player could transfer to Inter, or, if neither player moved, they would pay Inter 10 million euros (10 million dollars).

The Spanish giants have already paid the Italian club 35 million euros for Brazil's twice FIFA World Player of the Year Ronaldo.

# Bundesliga Ballack powers Bayern

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich fought back to beat minnows Energie Cottbus 3-1 in the German League on Saturday to consolidate their lead at the top of the championship.

Munich, beaten 3-2 at home by Deportivo La Coruna in the Champions League in midweek, bounced back from a goal down to add another three points as they go for their 18th domestic league title.

Energie Cottbus went ahead against the run of play in the 19th minute. Bayern failed to clear the ball from a corner and Paulo Rink pounced on the right side of the area to fire past Bayern keeper Oliver Kahn.

Bayern went level on the stroke of half-time however thanks to good play from a freekick. Michael Ballack played the ball to Ze Roberto who set up Alexander Zickler, who sidefooted the ball home with his right foot from six metres.

Bayern motored into the lead two minutes after the break through their man-of-the-moment Ballack.

Germany's best midfielder Ballack, who joined from Leverkusen in the summer and who scored both goals in their 2-1 win at Nuremberg last Saturday, fired home from eight metres three minutes after the break after good work from Ze Roberto and Michael Tarnat.

In the 76th minute, Tarnat was again involved, running from the halfway line into the box before feeding Brazilian Giovane Elber who beat Cottbus' Bosnian keeper Tomislav Piplica with a superb lob.

Meanwhile Hansa Rostock lost to visitors Borussia Dortmund 1-0 through a 13th minute goal.

Giuseppe Reina made a good run and passed to giant Czech striker Jan Koller who shot immediately from the edge of the box to score in the bottom left-hand corner.

Werder Bremen beat Bayer Leverkusen 3-2 with all the goals coming in a whirlwind first-half.

A Thomas Brdaric left-foot shot put Leverkusen ahead in the 11th minute though Brazilian Ailton equalised for the northern port city from the penalty spot on 25 minutes.

Goals from Greek striker Angelos Charisteas in the 27th and 31st minutes completely turned the game around for Bremen but an own-goal by Canadian midfielder Paul Stalteri three minutes before the break pulled a goal back for Leverkusen.

Earlier Bundesliga pacesetters VfL Bochum just sneaked a 2-2 draw at Hannover 96 thanks to an equaliser by Croatian Filip Tapalovic in the 89th minute.

Bayern lead the table with 16 points from six matches with Rostock second on 12 points ahead of Bremen on goal difference, and Bochum in fourth spot with 11 points.

In other matches, Hertha Berlin beat SV Hamburg 2-0, Nuremberg won 2-0 at VfL Wolfsburg, and Kaiserslautern and 1860 Munich played out a goalless draw.

# Strasbourg sue Chilavert

AFP, Strasbourg

Strasbourg have sued their former goalkeeper Jose-Luis Chilavert for producing a false document to back up his demand for a further 2.4 million euros, the club said on Saturday.

The Paraguayan keeper accused the club of not paying an extra 2.4 million euros (2.4 million dollars) of a 4.4-million-euro fee he said he had been promised on top of his monthly salary.

The club versus Chilavert match has become a virtual soap opera at the Alsatian club, who eventually resorted to sacking the flamboyant but overweight keeper when he refused to play after the team's number one was injured.

Chilavert's lawyer said on Friday he would be taking legal action against club president Patrick Proisy for alleged racism, a day after the player had been officially sacked from the club.

On Tuesday, both Strasbourg and Chilavert were fined by the French league over the way both parties proceeded during their acrimonious divorce last month.

# Serie A Juve, Milan sail

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Alessandro Del Piero scored twice for the second successive week as Italian champions Juventus maintained their winning start to the season with a 2-0 victory at promoted Empoli.

AC Milan, widely tipped to be Juve's closest challengers, also continued their impressive start to the campaign with a 3-0 home win over Perugia -- Filippo Inzaghi scoring his fifth goal inside a week.

After his double strike in Juve's 3-0 opening day win over Atalanta, Del Piero put Juve on the way at Empoli, scoring from the penalty spot in the sixth minute.

Del Piero himself had been brought down by Empoli goalkeeper Gianluca Bertini after latching on to a

through ball from Davide Baiocco.

The Italy striker then had a close-range goal ruled out for offside 10 minutes before the break after Bertini had parried a Marcelo Salas shot.

Del Piero secured the win in the 74th minute with a delightful goal when he brought down a Mauro Camoranesi pass with his chest, jinked inside and then chipped Bertini with a perfect lofted shot.

Milan had failed to win against Perugia in the past two seasons, suffering three defeats and a draw, but they had little trouble against Serse Cosmi's side at the San Siro stadium.

Paolo Maldini put Milan in front five minutes before the interval with a looping header from a Rui Costa corner after Fabrizio Miccoli had earlier gone close for the visitors.

Inzaghi, who scored twice in the opening day win over Modena and both goals in Wednesday's 2-1 Champions League victory over

Lens, added the second five minutes after the break.

All it needed was a simple tap-in after the Perugia defence allowed a Kakha Kaladze cross to reach the unmarked striker at the back post.

With heavy rain making passing and movement difficult on a slippery surface, Clarence Seedorf added Milan's third with his first touch after coming on as a replacement for Rui Costa, smartly finishing off a counter-attack launched by Inzaghi.

Milan should have made it four in the final minute but Brazilian Sergio Pinho put a penalty over the bar after Jon Dahl Tomasson had been brought down by Manele Blasi.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti started with Gennaro Gattuso and Seedorf on the bench and rested Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo ahead of Tuesday's Champions League match in Spain against his former club Deportivo Coruna.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Alessandro Del Piero the Juventus superstar goes to the fans to celebrate after scoring against Empoli on September 21.

# Primera Liga

# Barca, Real set the pace

Football

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona maintained their unbeaten run in the early stages of the Primera Liga on Saturday with city neighbours Espanyol going down 2-0 from two rapid-fire headers inside the area.

The Catalans, who now have two wins and a draw from three games, won their Champions League encounter against Bruges in midweek and returned to the Nou Camp more than motivated for this domestic duel.

Dutch international Patrick Kluyvert opened the scoring for the hosts in the 58th minute when he met a rapid cross from midfielder Enrique with a bullet header to beat 'keeper Alfredo Argenso.

Argenso failed to see a carbon copy of that goal on the 70-minute mark when Enrique got on the end of another cross from the left wing to put the hosts 2-0 up.

At the Santiago Bernabeu stadium Real Madrid lined up without

French international midfielder Zinedine Zidane and Brazilian World Cup ace Ronaldo - who is set to make his debut this week - however that made little difference to the star-studded side as they crushed minnows Osasuna 4-1.

Ivan Helguera, who scored a brace on the night, opened the scoring for the European champions after only 11 minutes for the only goal before the interval.

The hosts doubled the score two minutes after the break through Guti and Raul added a third in the 51st minute to effectively end the match.

Osasuna were given a glimmer of hope when they won and converted a penalty on the hour mark,

however despite rallying Helguera fired home his second of the night only ten minutes from the final whistle to end it.

The third match of the night featured the third Spanish team to have been successful midweek in the Champions League.

And like Barcelona and Real Madrid, Deportivo La Coruna did not disappoint as flying Dutchman Ron Makaay added another two goals to his tally as Deportivo beat Valladolid 2-0.

The majority of the weekend's 10 Spanish league matches take place on Sunday, with third-placed Valencia bidding to go top when they face Malaga away from home.

Primera Liga's top six							
Spanish league standings after matches played on Saturday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Barcelona	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Real Madrid	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Valencia	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Real Sociedad	2	2	0	0	7	3	6
Celta Vigo	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Malaga	2	2	0	0	5	3	6



PHOTO: INTERNET

Real Madrid's Argentine youngster Esteban Cambiasso tries to go past Osasuna's Alfredo Sanchez (Bottom) at Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium on September 21.