Premiership

Red heat

Football

AFP, *London*

Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier described himself as in awe of his side's resilience after a Michael Owen double sent them seven points clear at the top of the English Premiership.

With second-placed Arsenal not playing until Sunday, Houllier's men bounced back from their midweek Champions League defeat by Valencia with a 2-0 win over struggling West Ham at Anfield.

Manchester United moved up to third, eight points behind Liverpool, with a 2-1 win over Southampton that was secured by a late strike from Diego Forlan.

"The passing, running and the level of energy they put after the Valencia loss stunned me," Houllier said after watching his side make it nine wins out of 12 in the Premiership.

"It exceeded my expectations. But this is a squad that knows what they have and what they can do and when they desire something together they can be awesome.

"We will not get carried away by anything but we will enjoy our position. The players always keep their feet on the ground but they know what their purpose is and we will just carry on."

Owen could have had a hat-trick before he finally put Liverpool ahead in the 27th minute with a marvellous solo effort, eliminating three West Ham defenders before firing home.

His second, ten minutes after the break, was a scrappier affair with the England striker slipping as he prepared to shoot.

But the ball still made it over the line with the help of a touch by West Ham defender Christian Dailly and Owen will certainly be claiming it as his 11th goal this season.

Ruud van Nistelrooy, back in the side after three games out with a hamstring injury, helped put Man Utd ahead.

The Dutch striker laid the ball off to Paul Scholes, whose pass found Phil Neville charging into the box and the younger of the United brothers crashed the ball into the net for only the 5th league goal of his Old Trafford career on his 200th Premiership appearance.

With David Beckham, Ryan Giggs, Juan Veron, Laurent Blanc and Fabien Barthez all back in action after injuries or being rested, Neville's strike had the Old Trafford faithful looking forward to the floodgates opening.

But they were stunned into silence two minutes later when Southampton's French midfielder Fabrice Fernandes equalised with a curling shot from the right that left Barthez with no chance.

United responded with venom but Gordon Strachan's side held out until five minutes from the end, when Forlan let fly from 20 yards and saw his dipping shot find the top corner.

TOP SIX

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

Liverpool	12	9	3	0	24	9	30
Arsenal	11	7	2	2	26	13	23
United	12	6	4	2	16	9	22
Chelsea	11	5	4	2	20	12	19
Tottenham	11	6	1	4	17	16	19
Boro	11	5	3	3	15	8	18

"We were wasteful of a lot of our chances but we scored a wonder goal," Ferguson said.

"Diego hit it right on the meat and it looked to me it was going over the bar but it must have dipped really quickly to be a goal.

"I was pleased for the boy, as soon as he came on he had two strikes on goal right away, one just maybe hit the side of the post and one went just over the bar. But he was wanting to shoot all the time and thats a great quality to have."

Former Arsenal and Liverpool striker Nicolas Anelka scored one and made another as Manchester City continued their revival with a 2-1 win at fellow Premiership newcomers West Brom.

Anelka put City ahead six minutes after the break, tapping in from six yards after being set up by Israeli international Eyal Berkovic.

Neil Clement equalised for West Brom but Anelka presented Bermudan international Shaun Goater with an easy finish in the 71st minute to condemn West Brom to their eighth defeat of the season.

A second straight win had City boss Kevin Keegan predicting that his side could rapidly climb the table.

"The only question is why we didn't finish it off with all the chances we had," he said. "But we have got enough there to climb this division."

West Brom in contrast are anchored in the relegation zone and Gary Megson's side look to be in deep trouble.

"In terms of effort we cannot do much better but in terms of quality, particularly in front of goal, I would hope we can do a lot better than that," Megson moaned.

Bottom-placed Bolton were left cursing their luck after a 3-1 defeat at Birmingham plunged Sam Allardyce's side deeper into trouble.

Darren Purse set Birmingham on their way with his first Premiership goal just after the hour mark, moments after Bolton's Nigerian playmaker Jay Jay Okocha had seen a stunning 40-yard drive come crashing back from the cross bar.

Bolton's chances of staging a comeback looked to have disappeared when Jamaica international Ricardo Gardner was sent off for a second yellow card.

Okocha had other ideas and produced a spectacular volley to equalise.

But he had to watch in horror as Birmingham mounted an attack straight from the restart which ended with Robbie Savage waltzing round Jussi Jaaskelainen and slotting home for his first Premiership goal for the club.

With Bolton's spirit broken, Jeff Horsfield claimed Birmingham's third seven minutes from the end.

PHOTO:INTERNET

Manchester United's Uruguayan striker Diego Forlan takes off his shirt in ecstasy after scoring the winner against Southampton at Old Trafford on November 2.

Keane has to wait

Football

AFP, *London*

A European comeback for Roy Keane later this month has been ruled out by Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson who was hoping his skipper would be fit for Champions League action.

Keane's five-match domestic ban will rule him out of a League Cup match at home to Leicester on Tuesday, followed by Premiership matches with Manchester City, West Ham, Newcastle and Liverpool.

ROY KEANE

Ferguson believes however the rugged midfielder has not yet recovered quickly enough from his September hip operation to be fit for their November 13 final first round Champions League group game against Bayer Leverkusen.

"He isn't as far forward as we thought he would be," said Ferguson. "He is still a few weeks away.

"There is a long remedial period with this type of injury and he had done a lot of hard work, so we decided to give him a break last week.

"He needed a break because sometimes he can push himself a bit hard but he is back doing some good work again."

Meanwhile there is disagreement over the administration of the double guilty verdict registered against Keane over comments made in his book relating to his tackle on Manchester City's Alfie Haaland.

The English Football Association announced on Saturday that the deadline for the 31-year-old Irishman to appeal against his ban and 150,000-pound (233,000-dollar) fine had passed without reply, only for Keane's advisors to immediately claim they were in possession of an official letter which stated clearly that the deadline was November 8.

Keane was handed the double punishment at an FA disciplinary hearing after claiming in his autobiography that he deliberately set out to hurt Haaland in April 2001.

The second accusation was that he also benefited financially by describing the horror tackle and his thinking about it in graphic detail in his book.

Serie A

Bologna go up

AFP, *Rome*

Bologna moved up to fourth in the Italian First Division Saturday behind reigning champions Juventus on goal difference after taking a point from a dull 0-0 draw at Udinese.

A scrappy game of few chances was a stop-start affair with six players yellow-carded.

Had Bologna won they would have moved provisional second before Sunday's other Serie A matches.

In Saturday's late match Torino beat fellow strugglers Brescia 2-0 at the Stadio Delle Alpi.

Albanian striker Igli Tare gave Brescia the lead with a firm header just after the half hour mark before Ghanaian midfielder Stephan Appiah secured a precious win for the visitors.

On Sunday Italian league leaders Inter Milan travel to winless Como while second-placed AC Milan welcome Reggina to the san Siro.

Juventus, in third, visit newly-promoted Modena the same day.

TOP SIX

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

Inter	6	5	1	0	12	4	16
Milan	6	4	1	1	19	5	13
Juventus	6	3	3	0	10	4	12
Bologna	7	3	3	1	8	5	12
Lazio	6	3	2	1	10	6	11
Roma	6	3	1	2	14	10	10

League One

Lens keep it going

Football

AFP, *Paris*

Lens carried their impressive Champions League form into the French championship title race on Saturday when they came from behind to defeat league leaders Auxerre 3-1.

After beating AC Milan 2-1 on Tuesday to keep alive their hopes of making it through to the second stage of the Champions League, it looked as if that effort had taken its toll as Auxerre grabbed the lead after just five minutes.

Amdy Faye was the scorer heading in a cross from Khalilou Fadiga but Lens were deservedly level in the 37th minute when Rigobert Song headed in a corner from Seydou Keita with Fabien Cool in the Auxerre goal left completely flat-footed.

Antoine Sibierski started and finished the second goal on the stroke of half-time. From the centre-circle he played a neat one-two with Daniel Moreira, picked up the return pass on the edge of the area and hit a 20-yard drive to beat Cool.

Auxerre, with French international Djibril Cisse coming on as a substitute in the second half for his first taste of action after a month-long injury absence, forced corner after corner in the second half but couldn't get the breakthrough and it was Lens who celebrated by sealing the three points in the last minute.

After Lionel Mathis was sent-off, Lens compounded their visitors' misery when substitute Eric Sikora hit the third.

Auxerre stay top of the table - they have 24 points, one ahead of Paris St Germain, Nice and Marseille.

PSG can take top spot if they beat Sedan on Sunday, while Nice consolidated their third place after a last minute goal gave them a 2-2 draw at defending champions Lyon.

The home side had enjoyed the best of the first half chances but were unfortunate to fall behind to a 40th minute strike from former Arsenal player Kaba Diawara who finished off a good pass from the right from Thibault Scotto.

But veteran Brazilian striker Sonny Anderson levelled the scores six minutes after the break after being put through by Eric Carriere.

They then edged in front in the 68th minute when Christophe Delmotte was on hand to react to Sydney Govou's drive coming back off the woodwork.

Lyon then looked to be comfortably on course for the three points and what would have been a provisional place at the top of the table until Jacques Abardonado made his dramatic late intervention heading in a free-kick from Everson in the fourth minute of injury time.

Marseille moved into fourth spot thanks to a 2-0 win at home over Montpellier with Ibrahima Bakayoko grabbing both goals to take his tally to five for the season.

Four players were sent off in Saturday's matches in France - Auxerre's Lionel Mathis,

Marseille's Fabio Celestini, Flavio Roma of Monaco against Le Havre and Strasbourg's Teddy Bertin at Sochaux.

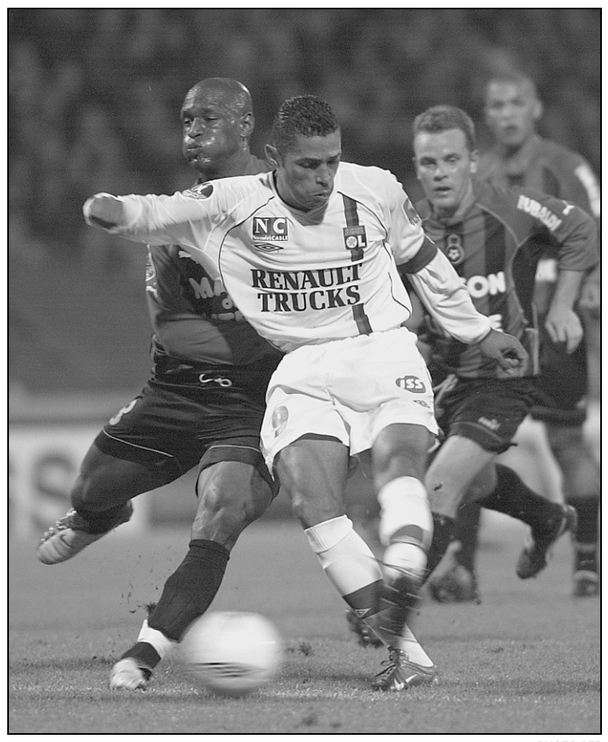


PHOTO:AFP

Lyon's Brazilian striker Sonny Anderson is under pressure from Nice's Noe Pamarot (L) in Lyon on November 2.

TOP SIX

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

Auxerre	13	7	3	3	18	13	24
Paris SG	12	6	5	1	21	8	23
Nice	13	6	5	2	18	7	23
Marseille	13	7	2	4	16	15	23
Lyon	13	6	4	3	25	15	22
Sochaux	13	6	4	3	16	10	22

'You ain't seen nothing yet!'

Football

AFP, *London*

5's 11 goals in his last 11 starts for Liverpool are a sign of things to come, Reds boss Gerard Houllier believes.

Owen's double strike sunk West Ham on Saturday and his difficult start to the season now seems a distant memory.

"I think Michael will have a tremendous year," Houllier said.

"Physically he is stronger -- I have been stunned by his physical commitment the last two or three games. He works extremely hard for the team.

"As a striker, he drops back when he has to drop and he gets hold of the ball.

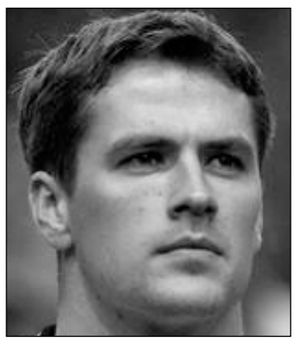
"He runs across defenders and he runs off the ball. It looks as though he's getting there now with his strength and his pace."

Owen's goals were contrasting affairs, the first a brilliant individual strike, the second a scrappier effort that West Ham defender Christian Dailly actually pushed over the line.

"The first strike was a great effort, a piece of individual brilliance.

"I like it when strikers take the initiative in that area.

"Michael had two good chances earlier, but David James denied him and stopped him getting the match ball (for a hat-trick)."



MICHAEL OWEN

Houllier was delighted at the way his team bounced back after the Champions League defeat by Valencia in midweek.

"Considering we had lost in midweek, our energy levels exceeded all my expectations", said the Reds boss.

"The players responded brilliantly, and I have to applaud our passing and movement. We've produced some good football, and James kept them in the game.

"We were very compact, and it was a good team performance with another clean sheet."

The Hammers were second best for much of the game, although midfielder Steve Lomas squandered two good chances.

Manager Glenn Roeder said: "We caught Liverpool on a good day. They were fast out of the box, and we found it difficult.

"I thought we restricted the chances to Owen earlier in the game. But then he skipped away, and we couldn't do anything about the first goal.

"Liverpool are very strong. But to be honest my biggest concern is the lack of home form we are showing."

Primera Liga

A Real damp day

Football

AFP/REUTERS, *Madrid*

Spanish giants Real Madrid and Deportivo La Coruna put on a show as miserable and uninspiring as the gloomy weather as they fought out a dour 0-0 draw on Saturday.

Real improved on their recent form but now have just one win to show from eight games in domestic and European matches.

Saturday's draw saw them slip to fifth in the league table with 13 points from eight games, and they could find themselves seven points behind Real Sociedad if the leaders win away to Villarreal on Sunday.

Deportivo, the 2000 champions, are also on 13 points, a place behind Real on goal difference.

Real Mallorca, meanwhile, moved up to second spot, with 15 points to Real Sociedad's 17, as a Walter Pandiani hat-trick earned them a 3-1 win at Valladolid -- a fifth successive league victory for the islanders.

Barcelona, in eighth place on 11 points, can climb ahead of Real Madrid and Deportivo Coruna if they win away to Racing Santander on Sunday.

Torrential rain at the Riazor, which left huge pools of water on the pitch, did nothing to aid attacking football with both sides reduced to half-hearted long-range efforts, the best of which came from Real's Roberto Carlos whose powerful drive was saved by Deportivo custodian Juan Juanmi.

With Raul missing through illness and Ronaldo still not quite looking fully fit, Real Madrid looked a little lightweight in attack against Deportivo.

They matched the Galicians in midfield, though, with Luis Figo working hard down the right, Santiago Solari in effervescent form on the left and Zinedine Zidane directing their play from the centre.

"My players worked very hard tonight," said Real coach Vicente del Bosque. "It was an intense game and either side could have won it."

Esteban Cambiasso missed Real's best chance of the first half, cracking a shot just wide after being teed up by Ronaldo.

PHOTO:AFP

Real Madrid's Ivan Helguera(L) tries to intercept Deportivo la Coruna's Dutch international Roy Makaay at Riazor stadium in La Coruna on November 2.

Ronaldo was also given a clear run on goal from a long ball over the top on 13 minutes but the Brazilian's control let him down and Depor keeper Juanmi was able to gather.

Depor midfielder Victor hit a free kick against the bar on 26 minutes as Real goalkeeper Iker Casillas misjudged the flight.

In the second half Depor were content to sit back and look to hit their opponents on the break and that tactic almost paid off as Roy Makaay started to run at the Real defence.

The visitors held firm, though, and came within a whisker of claiming their first league win away to Depor in a decade as Roberto Carlos arrived late to force Juanmi into a fine save with a rasping drive from outside the box.

Deportivo should probably have been ahead by that stage after enjoying the better chances but they couldn't quite find their range on a frustrating nights.

"We hit the bar from a free kick but we weren't quite accurate enough in front of goal," Depor coach Javier Irureta said.

"We have to continue in this attacking line, though."

Valladolid were weak in defence and clumsy up front allowing Mallorca to get off to an attacking start.

It was the home side however who found the net first with midfielder Oscar Marcos taking advantage of a mistake by Mallorca's Argentine goalie Leo Franco to find the net on 25 minutes.

The opposition were however quick to respond with Pandiani profiting from a defensive error to put Mallorca on the board just a minute later.

Confusion reigned and seconds later Valladolid's David Aganzo missed a golden opportunity to go ahead again.

After the break Valladolid showed more energy than quality and squandered several more opportunities before Pandiani added two more allowing Mallorca to equal their club record with five consecutive wins after a terrible start of the season.

In other league action Atletico Madrid scored a 2-0 win at home against Rayo Vallecano.

TOP SIX

Standings in the Spanish League after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Sociedad	7	5	2	0	19	1	2 17
Mallorca	8	5	0	3	11	1	0 15
Valence	7	4	2	1	16	5	14

Bundesliga

Dortmund miss chance

Football

AFP, *Berlin*

German champions Borussia Dortmund hopes of maintaining the pressure on leaders and Champions League failures Bayern Munich suffered a blow Saturday as they were held 1-1 at home to mid-table SV Hamburg.

Dortmund remain the only unbeaten side in the championship but it will be of little consolation as they trail Bayern - who exited the Champions League at the first hurdle earlier this week - by two points with the latter able to extend it to five if they beat Werder Bremen on Sunday.

Like Dortmund Germany's other qualifiers for the second phase of the Champions League Bayer Leverkusen also had a bad day at the office as they lost 1-0 at home to VfB Stuttgart to leave them fifth from bottom some 11 points adrift of Bayern.

Dortmund could have been even worse off if Hamburg's Bernd Hollerbach hadn't missed a penalty three minutes from time and the match ended on a sour note for the visitors as Dutch striker and former Liverpool misfit Erik Meijer was sent-off for arguing with the referee.

It had looked a very different picture when Dortmund's inspirational Czech playmaker Tomas Rosicky - who had been the architect of Arsenal's Champions League defeat on Wednesday - had given them the lead in the 67th minute.

However Hamburg shrugged aside the disappointment of the missed penalty to grab an equaliser a minute from time when Danish international Kim Christensen struck.

The other Munich side, TSV 1860, continued their impressive campaign trouncing Arminia Bielefeld 3-1 to fill third spot with Croatian veteran Davor Suker scoring their first and leave them just a point behind Dortmund.

Schalke 04 also stayed in touch as former German international midfielder Andreas Moller scored the only goal of their clash with tailenders Energie Cottbus, who failed to score in their fifth successive match to equal their worst run set a year ago.

TOP SIX

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

Bayern	10	7	2	1	26	11	23
Dortmund	11	5	6	0	17	7	21
1860 Munich	11	6	2	3	18	13	20
Schalke 04	11	5	4	2	14	10	19
Stuttgart	11	4	5	2	17	12	17
Bremen	10	5	2	3	19	19	17

Eriksson wants reassurance

AFP, *London*

England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson is to have talks with Football Association chief Geoff Thompson following the resignation of chief executive Adam Crozier it was revealed Sunday.

The Swede has dispelled rumours that he might go as well with the departure of Crozier, who was responsible for bringing him on board.

However with Crozier going and Steve McClaren also announcing he was ending his term as Eriksson's assistant to concentrate on his managerial duties at Middlesbrough, the former Lazio handler says he needs to talk to Thompson about the current situation.

"Obviously I was aware of what was going on," Eriksson told the BBC.

"But I haven't spoken to the chairman since Adam left and of course it is something I must do," Eriksson told the BBC, though it is believed he had a 90 minute conversation with Crozier who pleaded with him to stay on as manager.

Eriksson also denied McClaren had resigned because they had fallen out over Middlesbrough central defender Gareth Southgate being dropped for the Euro 2004 qualifier with Macedonia, effectively shouldering the blame for the unconvincing 2-1 win over Slovakia four days before.

"It's a pity that two people I worked really well with are leaving," Eriksson said.

O'Neill has Kleberson on his mind

AFP, *Glasgow*

Celtic manager Martin O'Neill has confirmed he is still interested in signing Brazilian midfielder Kleberson, a member of the side which lifted the World Cup this summer.

O'Neill failed to sign Kleberson from Atletico Paranaense in the summer and had previously indicated he would not be pursuing the player.

But he has now admitted Kleberson would be the ideal player for Celtic to bring in when the transfer window reopens in January.

"If we could add a player of that ability and calibre to the club it might help us," he said.

"People talk about him as a defensive midfield player, but he does get forward.

"He is more defensive-minded at times than little Juninho, who he replaced in the (World Cup) matches, but he's an attacking player.

"The idea was that it would give me somebody who could take on a few players and can definitely shoot, but we have what we have until January and we'll see where we go from there."