

The Middlesbrough defence having a hard time containing Arsenal's French striker Thierry Henry (C) at Highbury on December 21.

PHOTO: AFP

# Premiership A Gunners milestone

## Football

AFP, London

Arsenal will spend Christmas at the top of the league for the first time since the Premiership was launched but it will be a gloomy Noel for West Ham, who blew their chance to move off the bottom.

A 1-1 draw at home to fellow strugglers West Brom means the Hammers will spend the festive season contemplating a position from which no team has ever avoided relegation.

Arsenal stayed top with a 2-0 win over Middlesbrough at Highbury. England centre-back Sol Campbell headed home from a Giovanni van Bronckhorst cross on the stroke of half-time to break down Middlesbrough's dogged resistance.

The visitors were reduced to ten men midway through the second half when Luke Wilshire picked up a second yellow card for a clumsy tackle on Robert Pires, who celebrated his man-of-the-match award with a superbly taken late second.

Gunners' boss Arsene Wenger admitted Campbell's strike had proved decisive. "It came at the right moment and it was a big blow for them."

"They came out much more positive in the second half but after the first ten minutes I thought we were always going to win."

"Overall I'm very happy because I felt the attitude was right and our concentration for 90 minutes was very good."

Chelsea kept up the chase and, with Manchester United not playing until Sunday, moved up to second place with a comfortable 2-0 win over Aston Villa at Stamford Bridge, secured by goals from Eidur Gudjohnsen and Frank Lampard.

"It was very important to win today because Villa played very well tactically," Chelsea boss Claudio Ranieri said. "It was very difficult to break their lines."

West Ham's lack of a cutting edge in front of goal cost them dear in their draw with Bolton.

After centre-back Ian Pearce put them ahead in the 17th minute, the Hammers played some scintillating football and looked set to run out comfortable winners.

But a first victory at home this season slipped through their grasp when Michael Ricketts ran on to a Jay Jay Okocha pass to equalise, albeit from an offside position.

West Ham boss Glenn Roeder was left fuming with the referee. "I am concerned that officials cannot do their job," he said.

"What annoys me is they are so arrogant and so adamant they have got it right, and yet we come down the tunnel at the end of the game and see the television pictures and they are wrong."

Even Bolton boss Sam Allardyce admitted Ricketts was offside but paid tribute to his players for battling back.

"Coming back from 1-0 down away from home in the position we

are in is a huge task," he said. "We were looking for a bit of fortune - you always need it and it's that kind of thing that might change your season."

Kevin Phillips rediscovered his goal touch to salvage a point for Sunderland with two second half goals at West Brom in the day's other relegation battle.

Danny Dichio's 27th minute strike and a free-kick from Jason Koumas six minutes later put West Brom in the driving seat at half-time.

But Phillips took advantage of a slack backpass for his first after 56 minutes and then levelled things up with a superb solo effort eight minutes later.

Controlling the ball wide on the left, he cut inside and waltzed through a succession of challenges before unleashing a drive into the corner of the net.

"You cannot defend like that at any level and certainly not in this league," moaned frustrated West Brom boss Gary Megson.

Sunderland boss Howard Wilkinson said the comeback was an illustration of how his attempts to instill a greater pride in his side were beginning to pay off.

"Taking into account how we started the second half, it's a great result for us," he said.

"The nice thing now are words we have been using like character, leadership and standards are starting to have some resonance."

Leeds and Southampton shared the points at Elland Road after Fabrice Fernandes' long-range

free-kick a minute from time cancelled out Harry Kewell's 74th minute strike for Leeds.

Ten-man Birmingham snatched an unlikely point against Charlton. Danish midfielder Claus Jensen put Charlton ahead with his fourth goal of the season after 37 minutes.

Birmingham's hopes of a fightback looked to have gone when Geoff Horsfield earned a straight red card for a dangerous tackle on Charlton's Luke Young.

But Scotland's Paul Devlin equalised from the penalty spot after Jensen pulled down Aliou Cisse in the box.

Newcastle could afford the luxury of a rare penalty miss by Alan Shearer as they ran out comfortable winners over Fulham, who had Pierre Wome sent off for a wild tackle on Andy Griffin.

Nolberto Solano put the Geordies ahead after eight minutes and Craig Bellamy completed the victory with a late strike after Wome's departure.

## TOP SIX

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

Arsenal	19	12	3	4	39	20	39
Chelsea	19	10	7	2	34	15	37
Man Utd	18	10	5	3	30	17	35
Newcastle	18	10	2	6	29	24	32
Everton	18	10	2	6	22	21	32
Liverpool	18	9	4	5	28	19	31

## Scottish Premiership Celtic celebrate

AFP, Glasgow

John Hartson scored with a superb overhead kick as Celtic shook off their Christmas party hangover with a 2-0 win over Dundee here on Saturday.

Hartson's bicycle kick after 37 minutes put the Bhoys in front after strike partner Henrik Larsson had headed the ball into the danger area.

He then turned creator to set up Larsson who headed home Celtic's second in the second half and help Martin O'Neill's side to put the party fracas which led to Joos Valgaeren, Johan Mjallby and Bobby Petta spending a night in jail behind them.

It was not as easy as the scoreline suggested however and Dundee might have snatched a point had Celtic goalkeeper Robert Douglas not saved a Fabian Caballero penalty in the first half.

Referee Douglas McDonald had awarded the spot-kick on the half-hour mark after Steve Lovell went down in the box under Bobo Balde's challenge.

The home fans roared their disapproval but were soon shouting with delight when Douglas, who has delayed a badly needed hernia operation until the New Year, guessed right to save Caballero's under-hit attempt.

The win saw Celtic close the gap to within a point of leaders Rangers who take on Partick Thistle on Sunday.

Hearts meanwhile moved up to third after Andy Kirk and Mark de Vries inspired them to a 3-0 away win over Dundee United at Tannadice.

The day's other scheduled match in the top flight between Motherwell and Dunfermline was postponed owing to a frozen pitch at Fir Park.

## Serie A Roma sail on Samuel

AFP, Rome

Walter Samuel struck a 46th minute goal to give AS Roma a 1-0 win at Torino on Saturday, a victory which moves Fabio Capello's team into eighth place in Serie A.

However, Roma, the 2001 champions, were also indebted to goalkeeper Ivan Pelizzoli who saved a Christian Lucarelli penalty in the 10th minute of the match as Torino eventually crashed to their 11th defeat in 14 league matches this season.

Earlier, a 24th minute goal from Giampiero Pinzi gave Udinese a spirited 1-0 win at Modena and moved Luciano Spalletti's men up to a respectable seventh.

Modena's misery was compounded by the sending-off of defender Jacopo Balestri in the 82nd minute for a second bookable offence.

A victory for Udinese at the Alberto Braglia stadium, where a floodlight failure forced a late kick-off, was effectively their second triumph in two days.

On Friday the northern club were awarded all three points following the abandonment of Wednesday's fiery clash at bottom club Como.

Udinese were leading the mid-week match 1-0 when play was brought to a halt as Como fans, incensed by several refereeing decisions which went against their team including three penalties awarded to Udinese (two missed, one converted), tried to invade the pitch.

## Argentina for Brazil

AFP, Buenos Aires

Brazil would be the best country to host the 2014 World Cup if the tournament was awarded to South America, the president of the Argentine Football Federation Julio Grondona said on Saturday.

"I don't think Argentina will be nominated. Brazil have not staged the tournament since 1950 and we organised it in 1978," Grondona told local radio.

But he added that if Brazil were not to organise the tournament, then Argentina would be willing to do so possibly in partnership with Chile or Uruguay.

With the 2006 finals being staged in Germany and the 2010 event promised to Africa, the 2014 tournament could return to South America if the prestigious competition is rotated around the various confederations.

South American confederation (CONMEBOL) officials have been lobbying hard for the FIFA to commit to staging the 2014 World Cup on the continent but FIFA president Sepp Blatter said the issue was not up for discussion when the world governing body met in Madrid last week.

"The principal of rotation (of the World Cup) between continents has been established and the 2010 World Cup will be staged in Africa," said Blatter.

"There had been a CONMEBOL proposal that wished South America to be considered for the 2014 World Cup but this was not heard," he added.

Blatter confirmed there were three official candidates for the 2010 World Cup, Libya, Morocco and South Africa but further nominations could still be put forward until the end of the year.

## Primera Liga

# Kluivert on fire

## Football

AFP, Madrid

Patrick Kluivert's second hat-trick of the season helped Barcelona win 4-0 at Real Mallorca on Saturday and eased the pressure on under-fire coach Luis van Gaal.

The emphatic victory was Barcelona's first win in six matches and ended one of their worst ever Spanish League streaks.

Mallorca were down to 10 men after 23 minutes when Alvaro Novo was sent off for a foul on Thiago Motta and Barca quickly took advantage, Kluivert opening the scoring three minutes later.

The hosts were then reduced to nine men shortly afterwards when Samuel Eto'o also got a red card for tackling Motta from behind, and from there a Barca victory was

headed home a Victor Fernandez free-kick just before half-time but Jesuli Mora put the game beyond their grasp after 64 minutes, when he finished off a Catanha cross.

Atletico Madrid lost at home for the first time this season when they went down 2-1 to Racing Santander.

"The supporters had every right to whistle the team," said Atletico coach Luis Aragones.

"The way we lost is worrying. We threw away two clear chances in the first half and then made a serious error that led to their first goal."

Pedro Munitis put the visitors ahead just before the break, running through the sleeping Atletico defence before scoring with his left foot.

Emerson, who had come on at half time, headed Atletico's equaliser seven minutes into the second period but Javi Guerrero got

Racing's winner just after the hour.

Athletic Bilbao ended their three-game losing streak by beating fellow Basques Alaves 2-0.

Former Spanish internationals Ismael Urzaiz and Joseba Etxeberria both headed goals that gave Athletic's under-pressure coach Jupp Heynckes a reason to smile.

## TOP SIX

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

Sociedad	14	9	5	0	26	15	32
Valencia	14	8	4	2	24	7	28
Real	14	7	6	1	29	15	27
Celta	15	8	3	4	20	13	27
Betis	14	6	5	3	24	15	23
Deportivo	14	6	5	3	19	17	23



Real Madrid superstar Luis Figo (L) going past Malaga's Vicente Valcarcel at the La Rosaleda stadium in Malaga on December 21.

PHOTO: AFP

never seriously in doubt.

Fellow Dutchman Marc Overmars got Barcelona's second just before the break, running down the left wing before putting the ball through Federico Lussenhoff's legs and past Mallorca goalie Leo Franco.

Further goals from Kluivert came after 48 and 51 minutes to take his tally to nine for the season, and he had several other close efforts, although Barca clearly stepped off the accelerator in the final half hour.

Real Madrid's centenary year ended on a high note when they staged a stunning second half fight back to win 3-2 at Malaga, after being two goals down at half-time.

"It was an interesting and unusual game," admitted Real Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque.

"Malaga were clearly superior during the first half but I am proud of the way we reacted after half-time and in the end we might even have got a goal or two more," he added.

The European and world club champions stay in third but close the gap between themselves and league leaders Real Sociedad to five points.

Sociedad play at bottom club Recreativo Huelva on Sunday.

Real were clearly in the holiday mood a few days too early during the first 45 minutes on the Costa Del Sol and nearly paid the price for their complacency.

Kiki Musampa put Malaga ahead after 17 minutes, toe-poking a Manu Sanchez pass into the net.

Five minutes before the break, Dario Silva's chip over the head of Real goalkeeper Iker Casillas hit the crossbar but Dely Valdes was on hand to send the rebound home to give Malaga a two goal lead.

However, Madrid looked a different side after the break. Zinedine Zidane got one back after barely a minute, showing some of the skills that made him the world's most expensive signing in July by going past two defenders before sending the ball past former Real Madrid keeper Pedro Contreras.

Raul equalised by side-footing the ball home from an inch-perfect cross from Ronaldo after 73 minutes and then, six minutes later, Luis Figo completed the comeback.

Juanito Gutierrez brought the Portuguese skipper down in the box and the referee had no hesitation in pointing to the spot, from where Figo duly notched the winner.

"A draw would have been a fairer result," lamented Malaga coach Joaquin Peiro.

Celta Vigo stay fourth, just behind Real on goal difference, after beating Villarreal 3-1.

The Galicians were two goals up in less than eight minutes with Edu and Catanha on target as they condemned Villarreal to their 24th away game without a win.

Martin Palermo gave Villarreal some hope of getting a point when

# Haan takes over China

## Football

AFP, Beijing

Dutchman Arie Haan, China's newly appointed national football coach, said Sunday he aimed to take the world's most populous nation to the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The 54-year-old, who appeared in front of the local press after signing up with the China Football Association, also said he wanted the team to do well at the 2004 Asian Cup in China.

"I believe... we can get a good result at the Asian Cup and qualify for Germany in 2006," said the former midfielder star. "I have a lot of confidence to do it, and I hope everybody has. Then we will also reach it."

Former China coach Bora Milutinovic quit after China's first ever appearance at the World Cup this year. China slumped to three successive first-round defeats without scoring a goal.

"We can make a lot of progress," Haan said. "But what I saw (at this year's World Cup) gives me a lot of hope to do what I'd like to do."

He will initially coach the Chinese team until the World Cup qualification rounds, and his contract will be extended if he leads the team into the World Cup finals, according to the China Football Association.

Haan arrived in the Chinese capital Friday for what turned out to be the last round of contract negotiations to become national coach.

After two days of talks, the two parties signed the contract at a Beijing hotel at 6:00 pm (1000 GMT) Saturday.

At the briefing announcing Haan's appointment, the new coach declined

to say how much money he would be making from the deal.

"We have a fair contract. I think both parties can live with it," he said. "It's better not to talk about the details."

The former Ajax great, who played for the renowned Dutch national side in the 1974 and 1978 World Cup Finals, had reportedly demanded 750,000 dollars a year.

Chinese state media have said that while football officials had qualms over Haan's lack of international coaching experience, they were impressed by his ideas on cultivating young talent.

"I'm the head coach, and the head coach always looks at what happens in the whole of football in China, and this also means the youth players, the coming players," he said. "There's a lot of talent and you can prepare them already."

Haan quit as honorary director of sport with Stuttgart Kickers last month. He has previously coached Anderlecht of Belgium and Dutch team Feyenoord.

"Like the China Football Association was looking for the right man, I was looking for the right job," Haan said. "When I heard about China with its possibilities, it was clear for me it would be a big challenge to go there."

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## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

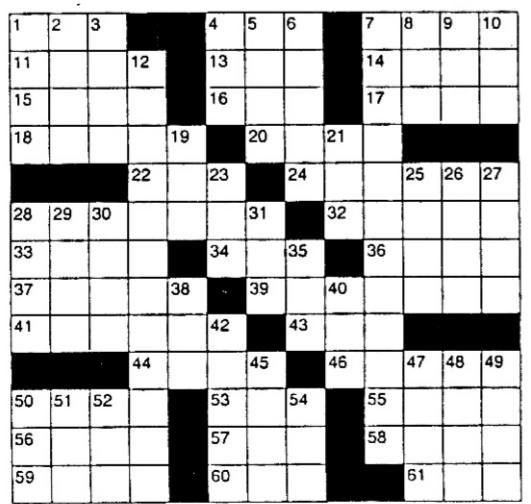
**ACROSS**  
 1 Reprehensible  
 4 Rather's employer  
 7 "Good House-keeping" award  
 11 A Baldwin  
 13 Milwau-kee product  
 14 Frat party outfit  
 15 Pop choice  
 16 Cauldron  
 17 From the beginning  
 18 Lends a hand  
 20 Rudely abrupt  
 22 "Be thou as chaste as—"  
 24 Kitchen gadget  
 28 Eternal  
 32 Horrify  
 33 On the briny  
 34 It goes on for hours  
 36 Fanatical  
 37 Dash-board

**DOWN**  
 1 "The Art of Fugue" composer  
 2 Burn remedy  
 3 Farmer's place  
 4 Upper limit  
 5 United nations  
 6 Arrange-ment  
 7 Lincoln, Penn for example  
 8 1 billion years  
 9 Season  
 10 Perry Mason's field  
 12 Profits  
 19 —fi  
 21 Scale members  
 23 Conclu-sion  
 25 Mollen rock  
 26 Green acres  
 27 Hire a decorator  
 28 "Shane" star  
 29 Largest of the seven  
 30 Actor Penn  
 31 Hiatus  
 35 People in general  
 38 West-heimer subject  
 40 "Doubtful"  
 42 Suitable  
 45 Go with the eagles  
 47 Off base  
 48 Narthex neighbor  
 49 Turned blue?  
 50 Suitable  
 51 Born  
 52 Place-kicker's pride  
 54 Practice

**Solution time: 24 mins.**

**ACROSS**  
 1 REPREHENSIBLE  
 4 RATHER'S EMPLOYER  
 7 GOOD HOUSEKEEPING  
 11 BALDWIN  
 13 MILWAUKEE  
 14 FRAT PARTY  
 15 POP  
 16 CAULDRON  
 17 BEGINNING  
 18 LENDS A HAND  
 20 RUDELY  
 22 CHASTE  
 24 KITCHEN GADGET  
 28 ETERNAL  
 32 HORRIFY  
 33 BRINY  
 34 HOURS  
 36 FANATICAL  
 37 DASHBOARD

**DOWN**  
 1 FUGUE  
 2 BURN  
 3 FARMER'S PLACE  
 4 UPPER LIMIT  
 5 UNITED NATIONS  
 6 ARRANGEMENT  
 7 LINCOLN, PENN  
 8 BILLION  
 9 SEASON  
 10 PERRY MASON  
 12 PROFITS  
 19 FI  
 21 SCALE  
 23 CONCLUSION  
 25 MOLLEN  
 26 GREEN ACRES  
 27 HIRE A DECORATOR  
 28 SHANE  
 29 SEVEN  
 30 PENN  
 31 HIATUS  
 35 GENERAL  
 38 WESTHEIMER  
 40 DOUBTFUL  
 42 SUITABLE  
 45 GO WITH THE  
 47 OFF BASE  
 48 NARTHEX  
 49 TURNED BLUE  
 50 SUITABLE  
 51 BORN  
 52 PLACE-KICKER  
 54 PRACTICE



ARIE HAAN

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.