

Primera Liga

Real gone with Figo

El Derby Barca's

Football

AP, Madrid

Midfielder Xavi Hernandez netted the winning goal in the 86th minute Sunday as FC Barcelona came from behind to defeat a 10-man Real Madrid 2-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, while Spanish league leader Valencia drew 1-1 with Athletic de Bilbao.

Argentine midfielder Santiago Solari scored in the 54th minute for Madrid, which had Luis Figo ejected 15 minutes later. Substitute Patrick Kluivert leveled in the 58th minute.

Meanwhile, midfielder Jorge Lopez netted a 13th-minute penalty to give Valencia a one-point lead at the top of the standings with four rounds remaining.

Valencia has 71 points from 34 games, while defending champion Madrid has 70. Barcelona is next with 66 points, four more than Deportivo de La Coruna.

Madrid's defeat, its second in succession at home, leaves it in danger of ending the season without a trophy.

"We're going to battle on. The race is not over yet," Madrid captain Raul Gonzalez said. "Although we

from goal by Roberto Carlos and Solari drove the ball past the diving Valdes.

Rijkaard quickly reacted by bringing on Kluivert and veteran midfielder Luis Enrique Martinez, and within a minute the Dutch striker had headed home an equalizer after left back Giovanni van Bronckhorst had beaten the offside trap and lobbed over Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas.

Figo, whose move from Barcelona to Madrid in 2000 infuriated the Catalan team's supporters, then received his second yellow card of the game for a wild tackle on Puyol and allowed Barcelona to take charge of the game.

Ronaldinho, who had been quiet up to then, burst into life in the 77th minute and beat three Madrid players before crossing for Kluivert to head just over the bar.

Nine minutes later, the Brazilian star created the winning goal when he cheekily lifted the ball over Madrid's defense and Xavi, played inside by Raul Bravo, flicked the ball past Casillas.

News reports said 800 police officers were at the game, with spectators who carried bags into the stadium searched as a consequence of the train bombings in Madrid last

this season's Champions League, has gone four games undefeated under caretaker coach Ramon Carrero although it stays 19th with 36 points. Osasuna stays sixth with 46.

Real Betis ended Real Sociedad's three-match run without a defeat, thanks to first-half goals by midfielder Benjamin Zarandona, who was later ejected, and striker Dani Martin.

Turkish striker Nihat Kahveci replied for Sociedad, which missed two penalties. Valery Karpin and substitute Darko Kovacevic were the culprits.

Mallorca moved out of the bottom three places with an away win against fellow struggler Valladolid.

Uruguayan forward Fernando Correa scored twice and Serbian and Montenegrin striker Andrija Delibasic got another, with midfielder Chema Jimenez replying for Valladolid.

Zaragoza striker David Villa grabbed four goals, although his team could only draw 4-4 with Sevilla.

Villa took his season's tally to 17 with three shots and a penalty, while midfielder Javi Casquero netted two of Sevilla's goals. Brazilian midfielder Julio Baptista also scored with a spot kick, which led to the dismissal of Paraguayan defender Delio Toledo, and substitute Carlos Dominguez

Rivaldo chances 50-50

INTERNET SOURCE

Bolton Wanderers chairman Phil Gartside says a deal for Rivaldo is "50-50".

"Right now, I would say it is 50/50," admitted Gartside. "We're in danger of being hijacked because of the way it has been publicised.

"I know of at least two clubs who are interested.

"There is no magic in attracting players, you just call and keep your fingers crossed."

Henry is the king

AFP, London

French striker Thierry Henry was named the Professional Footballers' Association Player of the Year for the second successive year on Sunday, hours after his club Arsenal won the English Premiership title.

Henry won the most votes of his fellow players ahead of five other nominees: his Arsenal team-mate Patrick Vieira, Alan Shearer of Newcastle, Chelsea's Frank Lampard, Jay-Jay Okocha of Bolton and Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard.

Henry's 29 Premiership goals in 33 appearances drove Arsenal to the title, which they clinched after a 2-2 draw with Tottenham earlier on Sunday.

Chelsea midfielder Scott Parker was a surprise winner of the young player of the year award, beating his club captain John Terry to the honour in the ceremony at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London.

Arsenal also contributed five players to the PFA's Premiership Team of the Year, which also included Vieira, Robert Pires, Sol Campbell, Lauren and Ashley Cole.

Baggio's last call up

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni kept his word Sunday by naming Roberto Baggio in his 21-man squad for next week's Euro 2004 warm-up friendly against fellow qualifiers Spain in Genoa.

Trapattoni wanted to give Baggio the chance to say farewell to the Italian public before the veteran striker hangs up his boots this summer.

Brescia forward Baggio has not played for Italy since making the last of his 55 appearances against Belarus in March 1999, despite numerous calls for his recall.

Even now, there are campaigns for Baggio to go to Portugal for Euro 2004 with the Azzurri, but at the age of 37 he is considered too old and injury-prone for the rigours of an international tournament.

There were doubts Baggio would be able to accept Trapattoni's offer having injured his left leg shortly after scoring from one of his trademark free-kicks in Sunday's 1-1 draw at home to Perugia.

But after hobbling off shortly before half-time, Baggio was given the all-clear by club doctors who said it was nothing more than a slight strain.

Known as 'The Divine Ponytail' because of his hairstyle and his Buddhist beliefs, Baggio enjoyed UEFA Cup success with Juventus in 1993 and was named FIFA's World Player of the Year the same year. He won two Serie A league titles, with Juventus in 1995 and with AC Milan the following year.

He also had spells at Bologna and Inter Milan before signing for Brescia in September 2000.

Earlier this season, he became only the fifth player in Serie A history to score 200 goals.

Baggio scored 27 goals for Italy, but despite a glittering career he is perhaps best remembered for missing the penalty in the 1994 World Cup final shoot-out which handed Brazil the trophy in Pasadena.

Roma striker Francesco Totti and AC Milan defender Alessandro Nesta both picked up knocks in Sunday's league games and are not available for next Wednesday's match.

The pair decided not to take any risks with Roma meeting AC Milan in a crunch title clash next Sunday.

Italy's match against the Spaniards will be their last home test before the this summer's European championships which start on June 12.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), Angelo Peruzzi (Lazio)
Defenders: Fabio Cannavaro (Inter Milan), Marco Materazzi (Inter Milan), Massimo Oddo (Lazio), Giuseppe Favalli (Lazio), Matteo Ferrari (Parma), Nicola Legrottaglie (Juventus), Christian Panucci (Roma)
Midfielders: Massimo Ambrosini (AC Milan), Andrea Pirlo (AC Milan), Aimo Diana (Sampdoria), Stefano Fiore (Lazio), Carlo Nervo (Bologna), Simone Perrotta (Chievo), Gianluigi Zambrotta (Juventus)
Forwards: Roberto Baggio (Brescia), Bernardo Corradi (Lazio), Marco Di Vaio (Juventus), Fabrizio Miccoli (Juventus), Christian Vieri (Inter Milan)

Premiership

Hip, hip Gunners!

Football

AFP, London

Arsenal have made English football history by wrapping up their 13th English title without losing a match and with four games to spare.

A 2-2 draw with north London rivals Tottenham on Sunday secured the point the Gunners needed to put themselves beyond the reach of nearest rivals Chelsea and claim their third title in eight seasons under the guidance of manager Arsene Wenger.

The Frenchman said his side's achievement in going 34 league matches without defeat -- and potentially through the whole season -- would ensure their place in history.

"We've won the championship without losing a game and that hasn't happened until now," Wenger said.

"For me that's a tremendous achievement and I'm not sure we will see it again."

Arsenal laid down a perfect foundation with a delightful first-half display, capped by exhilarating goals from French stars Patrick Vieira and Robert Pires.

But they were tested by a determined Spurs fightback in the second half and after Jamie Redknapp had scored his first Premiership goal of the season, Robbie Keane converted a stoppage time penalty to snatch a much-needed point for the home side.

The draw meant Arsenal's multitalented, multinational generation of 2003/04 emulated the achievement of the legendary 1971 double winning side, who also clinched their championship at the ground of their nearest and fiercest rivals.

"I would like to congratulate my players and staff for their attitude and the consistency they have shown," Wengersaid.

"It must have been good for the fans to see us repeat what happened in 1971 when we also won the title at Tottenham."

Keane's late penalty, conceded after he was manhandled by goalkeeper Jens Lehmann, took some of the edge off the celebrations.

But it was still an afternoon to savour for an Arsenal side who have displayed remarkable mental strength and determination this season to bounce back from the trauma of the late collapse which saw them gift the 2002-03 title to

Manchester United.

Vieira, whose influence as club captain has been enhanced by a greatly improved disciplinary record this season, said team spirit had been the key to Arsenal's season.

"There is such a good spirit in the team and I think that over the whole season we were the best team and we deserved this title.

"We wanted to do it all together. We really enjoyed ourselves on the pitch and outside as well. Every day in training we have been working really hard and in the end we won it."

Vieira admitted however that the brilliance of Henry, who has scored 29 goals in the league alone, had given the team a crucial edge at critical times.

"It is a team game but without Thierry it would be more difficult," Vieira said of his French compatriot.

"I think this year he has been tremendous, like in the last two games (against Liverpool and Leeds). When we were a bit tired and we needed someone to do something special, Thierry always stepped forward."

Wenger's achievement in outshining Manchester United and Chelsea with a fraction of their resources means he could have his pick of any job in world football.

But he has committed himself to staying in London until at least 2006, when Arsenal will move from their Highbury home to a new 60,000-seat stadium that will give them the financial firepower to compete with their rivals on a level playing field.

Wenger's previous Premiership triumphs were achieved in seasons -- 1997-98 and 2001-02 -- in which Arsenal also won the FA Cup.

Yet despite winning doubles those Arsenal sides never achieved the kind of shift in the balance of power in English football that most observers agree has taken place this season.

For Wenger, the players and the fans, memories of this season will inevitably be tainted by twinges of regret that such a talented side missed out on a fantastic opportunity to win the FA Cup and the Champions League, as well as the championship.

But the current side still has a chance to earn a place in history by becoming the first English top flight side to go through an entire season

unbeaten since Preston North End achieved that feat in a 12-team first division in 1888-89.

They must now avoid defeat against Birmingham, Portsmouth, Fulham and Leicester in their final four games to complete a defeat-free campaign.

Chelsea's defeat at Newcastle earlier in the afternoon meant Wenger's side kicked off needing only a point to move beyond the reach of their London rivals.

Within three minutes they had taken a huge step towards achieving that objective with an opening goal that epitomised why a club whose own supporters once delighted in chanting "boring, boring Arsenal," has become the club of choice for many of the world's football purists.

As so often this season, Henry was the instigator, picking up a loose ball on the edge of his own area and accelerating deep into the home side's territory before delivering a killer pass to Dennis Bergkamp on the left of the Spurs box.

The Dutch forward was equally precise with the low, left-foot cross across the six-yard line that Vieira just managed to reach at full stretch.

The second goal, ten minutes before the interval, was every bit as pleasing on the eye.

An extended phase of keep-ball suddenly gave way to an incisive attacking move in which Bergkamp played Henry in behind right-back Stephen Carr.

The striker, who has emerged this season as a real leader of the Arsenal team as well as its leading goalscorer, cut the ball back for Pires who knocked the ball past Kasey Keller with a first-time shot.

Spurs comeback knocked some of the gloss off the performance but that counted for little as the celebrations got underway.

Alan Shearer scored one of the most spectacular goals of his illustrious career to fire Newcastle to the crucial 2-1 win over Chelsea.

Shola Ameobi was also on target for Newcastle, who recovered impressively after Chelsea opened the scoring through Joe Cole and threatened to go on to achieve their first win in five league games.

Instead, the Londoners faded badly and squandered the opportunity to open up a four-point gap on Manchester United in the battle for

second place.

For Newcastle, the three points moved them level on points with Liverpool in fourth place with a game in hand over their rivals for the final qualifying place for next season's Champions League. The two sides meet at Anfield on the final day of the season.

Chelsea, stung by criticism of their recent form, signalled their attacking intentions from the start and went ahead with a well-worked 5th-minute goal.

Cole exchanged passes with his England colleague Frank Lampard and accelerated away from Jonathan Woodgate's sliding tackle before poking the ball past the keeper Shay Given.

It was Cole's first Premiership start for Chelsea and proved to be only the start of a torrid spell for Newcastle as they struggled to cope with Chelsea's pace and mobility.

Newcastle created openings for Shearer and Laurent Robert before a fine goal from Shola Ameobi pulled them level in the 43rd minute.

The striker brought down Hugo Viana's long ball on the edge of the area and held off Marcel Desailly's challenge before pivoting to drive a fierce shot into the bottom corner.

And Newcastle needed only three minutes of the second-half to take the lead through an even better goal by Shearer.

The former England captain was shadowed by Desailly as he collected the ball, turned away from the defender and hammered a stunning 25-yard shot that dipped and swerved on its way into the far corner.

There was a blow for Newcastle when Woodgate limped off in the 78th minute and Chelsea should have capitalised in stoppage time when John Terry directed Geremi's cross against the post from point-blank range.

TOP SIX

English Premiership table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Arsenal	34	24	10	0	69	24	82
Chelsea	35	22	6	7	61	29	72
Man Utd	35	22	5	8	61	33	71
Liverpool	35	14	11	10	49	36	53
Newcastle	34	13	14	7	47	34	53
Aston Villa	35	14	10	11	46	41	52



PHOTOS: AFP

IT'S LIKE THAT! (L) Barcelona's Xavi is over the moon after stabbing Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium on April 25. (R) Real Madrid captain Raul can not believe a miss.

realize we have to start winning now otherwise we'll hand the title to Valencia.

Barcelona's victory, its first in the Spanish league at Madrid's citadel for six seasons, extended its unbeaten run to 16 matches.

"The ejection of Figo was key," Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard said. "(Goalkeeper) Victor Valdes worked miracles but we won with a great team."

Madrid, which lacked injured ace Ronaldo, made a slow start but laid siege to its goal in the closing stages of the first half.

Valdes shone to thwart Raul in the 37th minute, with defender Carles Puyol then heading off the goalline as Roberto Carlos sent the rebound toward goal.

Two minutes later, Raul sent the ball onto the bar after Valdes had parried an inswinging David Beckham free kick, with Figo's follow-up header parried on the line by the Barcelona keeper.

Valdes performed more wonders early in the second half when he denied Zinedine Zidane and Figo in quick succession only for Madrid to take the lead moments later. Beckham's cross was knocked away

month, which killed 191 people. Valencia, unbeaten in seven league games, failed to take full advantage of Madrid's setback in a hard-fought game in Bilbao.

Valencia got off to a flying start when Lopez converted a penalty awarded after Jesus Maria La Cruz had headed.

The Basque team battled back and left back Asier del Horno netted in the 31st minute with a powerful header from a free kick by midfielder Fran Yeste.

Valencia played a containing game for the rest of the match and its few counterattacks barely threatened the Bilbao defense.

Other results Sunday were: Celta de Vigo 1, Osasuna 0; Real Betis 2, Real Sociedad 1; Valladolid 1, Mallorca 3; Zaragoza 4, Sevilla 4; Racing de Santander 0, Albacete 2; and Villarreal 1, Murcia 0.

Osasuna midfielder Inaki Munoz netted involuntarily as he tried to tackle Brazilian midfielder Everton Giovanella in the 50th minute to gift Celta only its third home win of the season.

Celta, which despite its relegation worries reached the second round of

netted an injury-time equalizer.

Struggling Albacete gained a 2-0 win on its visit to fellow struggler Racing de Santander. Uruguayan international striker Antonio Pacheco and midfielder Pablo Redondo scored on either side of halftime.

Villarreal captain Quique Alvarez netted a 68th-minute goal as his team, which seemed tired by the goalless first leg of its UEFA Cup semifinal match with Valencia on Thursday, edged already-relegated Murcia 1-0.

On Saturday, Deportivo drew 1-1 with Malaga, while Espanyol downed Atletico de Madrid 3-1.

TOP SIX

Spanish league table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Valencia	34	21	8	5	65	23	71
Real	34	21	7	6	66	43	70
Barcelona	34	19	9	6	57	35	66
Deportivo	34	18	8	8	54	32	62
Bilbao	34	14	10	10	46	40	52
Osasuna	34	11	15	8	36	31	48

Defeat left Empoli third from bottom on 27 points.

Reigning champions Juventus' hopes of trying to snatch second place from Roma were virtually extinguished after they lost 4-3 against Lecce at the Delle Alpi stadium where Ivory Coast striker Cedric Konan scored twice for the Puglians.

Inter Milan held on to fourth place and maintained their one-point lead over Lazio after drawing 0-0 with the Rome side at the San Siro.

Lazio defender Sinisa Mihajlovic came closest to scoring when his fierce free-kick struck the crossbar in the second-half.

Parma, the third team in contention for the fourth and final Champions League place and level on 52 points with Lazio, drew 1-1 at struggling Reggina.

Perugia are set to join Ancona in the second division after drawing 1-1 at Brescia, while Siena are still in danger of the dreaded drop after going down 3-1 at Bologna.

Modena moved up a place and are now fifth from bottom after winning 1-0 at home to Sampdoria, while Chievo won 2-0 at Ancona.

TOP SIX

Italian league table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, for, against, points):							
Milan	31	23	7	1	59	20	76
Roma	31	21	7	3	67	15	70
Juventus	31	19	6	6	62	40	63
Inter	31	15	8	8	54	33	53
Lazio	31	15	7	9	48	34	52
Parma	31	14	10	7	50	41	52

Serie A

It'll take a little longer

Football

AFP, Rome

AC Milan will have to wait another week before they can wrap up the Italian league title after they were held to a goalless draw away to Udinese and closest rivals Roma beat relegation-threatened Empoli 3-0.

Last season's European champions would have won their 17th Scudetto had they claimed three points in Udine and Roma failed to win.

However, Milan will secure their first championship since 1999 if they beat Roma at the San Siro next Sunday, while a draw would maintain their six-point gap with two games left to play. A Roma victory, on the other hand, would throw the title race wide open.

Milan, who were dumped out in the quarter-finals of the Champions League earlier this month, have 76 points from their 31 matches played, six more than second-placed Roma.

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti played down the importance of next week's showdown with Roma, saying the title would not necessarily hinge on that game alone.

"Next Sunday we play Roma and have the chance to win the Scudetto, but if it does not happen then, there will be two more games to achieve our target," he said.

"We have a six-point lead and everything is in our hands. We are in control of the title's destiny and the pressure is all on Roma."

Roma coach Fabio Capello insisted his players were capable of beating Milan at the San Siro to keep the championship alive.

"While there is a chance we will give everything we've got," he said.

"Milan are in a strong position but if we were to win next week it would make things very interesting.

"We are playing well and are very confident we can get the result we need."

Roared on by 15,000 of their expectant travelling fans, Milan's best chance to break the deadlock against a stubborn Udinese side came in the 23rd minute.

Brazilian midfielder Kaka carved his way through and shot from an acute angle, only to be denied by the lightning reflexes of Morgan De Sanctis in Udinese's goal.

Milan finished strongly and almost grabbed a late winner when John Dahl Tomasson's deflected effort looped inches over the bar.

Roma, playing in the Sicilian city of Palermo due to a two-match stadium ban for crowd trouble at last month's Rome derby, survived several scares before breaking Empoli's resistance four minutes from half-time.

Christian Panucci's deep cross sailed into the penalty box and captain Francesco Totti stole a yard on his marker to head home.

Second-half substitute John Carew scored within five minutes of coming on to put Roma in control, before Totti netted his 20th goal of the season with a delicate lob.

Football

AP, Buenos Aires