

Premiership Chelsea do the minimum

Football

REUTERS, London

Chelsea went top of the Premier League with a 1-0 victory at Birmingham City, while Manchester United got back to winning ways by beating promoted Norwich City 2-1 on Saturday.

Chelsea, who started the season by beating United 1-0 last weekend, had been struggling to break Birmingham down before substitute midfielder Joe Cole scored with a deflected shot.

Frenchman David Bellion and new striker Alan Smith, volleying a superb first league goal, set United on their way at Old Trafford before substitute Paul McVeigh pulled one back for Norwich to set up a tense finale.

Captain Steven Gerrard fired Liverpool to a 2-1 comeback victory over Manchester City, Newcastle United suffered their first home defeat of 2004 when they went down 1-0 to Tottenham Hotspur and 10-man Everton won 3-1 at Crystal Palace.

Fulham made a winning return to Craven Cottage, beating Bolton Wanderers 2-0 with both goals from Andy Cole, and striker James Beattie converted a stoppage-time penalty to give Southampton a dramatic 3-2 win over Blackburn Rovers.

Champions Arsenal are at home to Middlesbrough on Sunday, hoping to equal Nottingham Forest's 42-game

unbeaten run in the English top flight. As in last weekend's win over the FA Cup holders, Chelsea lacked sparkle but got the result Mourinho wanted.

Cole's 68th minute strike signalled an ideal return from injury, having been ruled out of the win over United and England's midweek friendly victory over Ukraine.

Though big-spending Chelsea had to battle hard for the points, Mourinho told Sky Sports News: "I wasn't expecting any different...I knew what was waiting for us."

"People still speak about money, stars and players coming from the moon, but I can tell you it's very difficult to have top players fighting like my players are fighting. Normally, top players are not ready to fight so much."

Liverpool made heavy weather of their win, with French striker Nicolas Anelka giving City a first-half lead but it in his head that he would not let them down and he didn't.

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"We've lost a game we shouldn't have lost in the first half, where we were clearly the better side."

Spurs' new manager Santini, whose side drew with Liverpool last weekend, said: "For a young team who want good performances, having two good results like these are very important for confidence."

Spurs rounded off a miserable week for Newcastle when new Cameroon

signing Thimothee Atouba scored a superb solo goal on the break after Jacques Santini's side had soaked up all the pressure.

Newcastle were hit by controversy after England midfielder Kieron Dyer refused to play on the right flank in last weekend's draw at Middlesbrough and was on the verge of being transfer-listed before apologising.

Manager Bobby Robson then lost his best defender when Real Madrid made an unexpected midweek swoop for Jonathan Woodgate, who was presented at the Bernabeu earlier on Saturday.

"I took a risk in putting Dyer on because I trusted our public. They didn't let me down," said Robson after using the midfielder as a substitute.

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Rooney admits romp!

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AFP, London

England's teenage football sensation Wayne Rooney Sunday admitted having had sex with prostitutes after a London newspaper photographed him visiting a brothel.

Rooney, 18, one of the hottest stars of Euro 2004, admitted paying for sex after the Sunday Mirror's exposé.

"Foolish as it now seems I did on occasions visit massage parlours and prostitutes," the Everton player said in a statement to the paper, whose headline read: "Roo in a vice den".

Rooney said his relationship with prostitutes came when he was "very young and immature" and before he settled down with his fiancee Coleen McLoughlin, also 18.

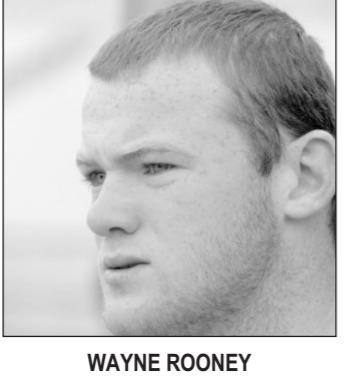
"I now regret it deeply and hope people may understand that it was the sort of mistake you make when you are young and stupid," Rooney said.

The Everton striker, who is currently not playing due to injury, visited the

back-street brothel in Liverpool, northwest England, around 10 times, the Sunday Mirror said.

He paid 45 pounds (66 euros, 82 dollars) for each session of sex, including with a 48-year-old grandmother, dressed in a rubber cat suit.

Rooney, said to be worth 30 million pounds on the transfer market following his four-goal haul in Euro 2004, even spent one visit signing autographs in the brothel's waiting room, the paper said



WAYNE ROONEY

Lens emerged as surprise new leaders of the French first division Saturday after a series of upsets left the heavy-weight title contenders reaching for their headache tablets.

Mighty Paris Saint Germain were brought to heel by Toulouse, whose 2-1 win left the French capital side still searching for their first win of the campaign.

Newcomers Caen embarrassed Champions League finalists Monaco 1-0, while down on the south coast Nice were holding former European kings Marseille to a 1-1 draw.

Lens saw off another promoted side Istres 2-0 to leave them with three other sides - Toulouse, Marseille and Bastia - on seven points but ahead on goal difference.

This quartet could be overtaken by fifth-placed Metz if they manage to beat three time titleholders Lyon to maintain their perfect start of three wins from three in Sunday's only fixture.

PSG's pretensions as serious championship contenders look a little thin after this latest defeat which follows an opening day reverse at Rennes and a 2-2 draw against Caen.

Overcoming fatigue brought on by a hectic recent international schedule and the emotional turmoil of the violence at home, Iraq beat Australia 1-0 in their quarter-final thanks to a spectacular overhead kick by Emad Mohammed.

The striker's 64th minute goal came after Australia failed to clear a cross, giving him the chance to execute his spectacular finish and send the ball just wide of diving goalkeeper Eugene Galekovic.

Seven minutes earlier, Iraqi goalkeeper Nour Sabri kept his team in the game with an equally exciting piece of play, doubling back to punch the ball off the line after Australia's John Aloisi had delicately lobbed it over his head.

The win extends the Iraqi team's emotional charge towards a second-ever Olympic medal for their country.

Abdul Wahid Aziz's weightlifting bronze in Rome in 1960 remains Iraq's only podium effort.

Mohammed said after the game that the conflict ravaging his country was a constant distraction for the team, but also a source of motivation as they wanted to give people back home something to smile about.

"We came here to play, to participate in the Olympic Games, but it's quite difficult to have our minds only on the game," Mohammed said.

"I come from a problem area where people have suffered a lot so I hope we gave a little happiness to our country."

The win gave Milan their fifth Italian Super Cup victory.

Seven minutes later and Shevchenko illustrated his eye for goal again, doubling Milan's lead with a firm header as he met a perfect cross from Maldini.

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti, without Clarence Seedorf and Andrea Pirlo in midfield, handed Portuguese midfielder Rui Costa a deeper role in front of the defence and the experi-

enced playmaker looked at home in what is usually Pirlo's role.

As Milan strolled through the second half the only cheer from the Lazio supporters came when Paolo Di Canio made his return to Italian football after eight years, coming on as a 56th-minute substitute for Brazilian Cesar to begin his second spell with the Rome club.

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troubled a Milan defence anchored by two of their former players Alessandro Nesta and Dutchman Jaap Stam.

Milan looked the more dangerous from the outset and went close in the 13th minute when captain Paolo Maldini struck the crossbar with a powerful left-foot drive from a tight angle.

It was midfielder Massimo Ambrosini who inspired the opening goal in the 36th minute with a smart drag back to lose his marker and then a well-weighted cross to pick out Shevchenko who volleyed home from inside the area.

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