

Ligue 1
Paris sees a drama

AFP, Paris

On and off-pitch drama dominated Paris Saint Germain's 2-1 victory over Marseille on Sunday night with PSG reduced to 10 men, three spectacular goals, and the visitors having their team bus attacked near the Parc des Princes stadium.

This fixture between arch rivals is rarely uneventful whether it is the performance of the players or the behaviour of the supporters that stands out. This match had both.

Elsewhere, Lyon beat Lens 1-0 on Saturday night to earn a valuable three points away from home to ensure they remain at the top of the French league table with 29 points, a point ahead of Lille, who won 2-0 at Istres, and six points ahead of Auxerre, who drew 1-1 at Nantes.

The coach taking Marseille's football team into the stadium had its windscreen smashed as chairs, barriers and iron bars were thrown at it.

Marseille club president Christophe Bouchet said the bus was nearing the stadium when about 50 supporters arrived on the scene.

"The driver received cuts from glass fragments and was in shock. We had to persuade him to keep driving," Bouchet said. "It was human stupidity we found at that street corner."

The on-pitch drama came in the form of Sylvain Armand's scything tackle from behind on Fabrice Florese in the 19th minute and referee Gilles Veissiere immediately showed the red card.

Though a man down, PSG were first on the scoresheet from a superb piece of individual skill by striker Pauleta in the 32nd minute.

Fabrice Pancrate hit a long pass to Pauleta on the edge of the area on the left flank and the Portuguese forward pretended to cross but instead sent a curling right foot shot into the top right hand corner with Fabien Barthez rooted to the spot.

Marseille however equalised three minutes from half-time with a sublime volley from Laurent Batlles past PSG keeper Lionel Letizi.

Then came substitute Edouard Cisse's 70th minute winner with another great piece of individual skill. From outside the area, his right foot shot had Barthez well beaten and PSG fans celebrated wildly.

Florese, who signed for Marseille from PSG in the summer, was predictably whistled by the home fans when he was substituted by Steve Marlet with a quarter hour to go.

With seconds remaining, PSG had a penalty appeal turned down and then at the other end Marseille hit the post during a goalmouth scramble but the scoreline remained unchanged.

Last season's Champions League runners-up Monaco were held to a 2-2 draw by Ajaccio on Saturday when Abdelnasser Ouadah scored an equalizer three minutes into injury time, taking advantage of poor defending from the Principality side.

Monaco, who were beaten 1-0 by Greek club Olympiakos in the Champions League on Wednesday, were seconds from victory but Ouadah's goal meant Didier Deschamps side have failed to win in the league since September 22.

TOP SIX

French league table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Lyon	13	8	5	0	17	5	29
Lille	13	9	1	3	17	6	28
Auxerre	13	6	4	3	18	11	22
Sochaux	13	6	3	4	16	11	21
Monaco	13	5	6	2	17	13	21
Marseille	13	5	4	4	13	11	19

Robinho's mom kidnapped!

AFP, Sao Paulo

The mother of Brazilian striker Robinho was at the centre of a kidnap drama after being abducted at gunpoint on Saturday night.

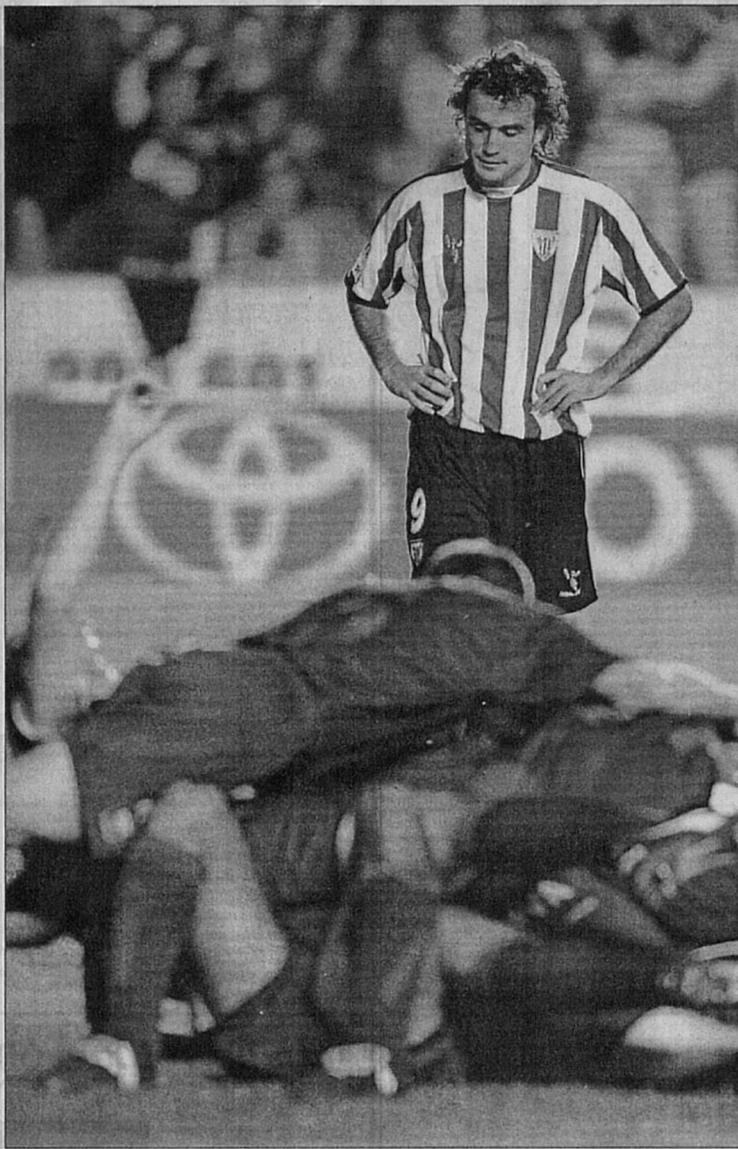
Marina Lima de Souza was visiting friends when two armed men burst into the house in the middle of the night.

While the rest of her group were locked in a bathroom the kidnapppers took the 46-year-old mother off to an unknown destination using her own car.

Police found the vehicle abandoned on Sunday morning.

The kidnap follows media reports on Saturday linking the 20-year-old Robinho to a move to Spanish giants Real Madrid.

The young Santos star has also been linked to a move to Chelsea, Benfica and Dutch side PSV Eindhoven.



WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? Athletic Bilbao's Santiago Ezquerro reacts after a goal while Levante players converge to celebrate at the Ciudad de Valencia stadium of Valencia on November 7.

Primera Liga

Real moving up

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid moved up to second place after goals from Luis Figo and Michael Owen helped the 29-times Spanish champions to a 2-0 win at Malaga on Sunday.

Luis Figo opened the scoring from the penalty spot midway through the first half, after Zinedine Zidane had been brought down on the edge of the area, although the Malaga players protested long and loud that the foul happened outside the box.

Owen then ensured three points with his fifth goal in six games for Real, his strike coming 12 minutes from the whistle.

The England striker had only been on the pitch eight minutes, coming on for a lacklustre Ronaldo, after Real coach Mariano Garcia Remon had decided to bolster his midfield and leave Owen on the bench.

Real now have 19 points from their 10 games but they are still seven points in arrears of league leaders

Barcelona, who extended their unbeaten streak to 10 games with a 2-1 win over Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday.

Levante carried on their remarkable start to the season with a 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao to move up to third, just behind Real Madrid on goal difference.

Athletic were reduced to 10 men just three minutes after the break when Luis Prieto received his second yellow card and the Valencia-based side made the most of their advantage

when Jesule Barbadilla got the only goal of the game from a Vladimir Manchev corner.

"Perhaps Athletic were a little tired after their UEFA Cup game (on Thursday) in Turkey," commented Levante coach Bernd Schuster.

"Maybe we should have also scored more goals, but we are not used to playing against 10 men. I could be something we have to work on," added the German.

"As far as how we are going to finish this season, I don't want to predict anything. It's too early, but what pleased me about this game is the way we played. It's nice to be riding high in the table but more importantly, we are playing good football," said Schuster.

The pressure increased on Valencia coach Claudio Ranieri after the reigning Spanish champions went down 1-0 at lowly Getafe earlier on Sunday.

"This has to have been our worst performance of the season," admitted Ranieri.

Valencia have now gone nine games, in all competitions, without a win and the club's disgruntled fans have started to call for the head of the Italian, who arrived in the summer from English Premiership side Chelsea.

The goal that lead to Valencia's latest embarrassment came after 18 minutes when the visitor's defence and their goalkeeper Santiago Canizares watched a relatively soft free kick by Michel Carrleros squeeze inside the post.

Despite the morale-boosting win, newly-promoted Getafe stay in the relegation zone, third from bottom.

AFP, Berlin

Two controversial incidents in the Bundesliga over the weekend have reopened the debate as to how competent top-flight German referees are in what has been a season for officials to forget.

Referee Lutz Froblich was the main man in the spotlight after handing Bayern Munich's Michael Ballack a second booking in the 38th minute of their 3-0 win over Hannover on Saturday.

The yellow card was for a foul on striker Thomas Christiansen but Ballack looked dumbfounded by the decision and with good reason, as it was his German international teammate Bastian Schweinsteiger who had in fact committed the foul.

After consulting his assistant

Froblich, who had been surrounded by complaining Bayern players, reversed the decision to send off Ballack brandishing the yellow card to Schweinsteiger instead.

"Compliments to the referee," said Ballack. "That does not happen often and it was a sensible decision."

Munich coach Felix Magath was also full of praise for the referee.

"I take my hat off to the referee," added manager Felix Magath.

It is not the first example of mistaken identity this season with Hertha Berlin's Alexander Madlung wrongly dismissed for elbowing SC Freiburg striker Regis Dorn last Saturday.

Referee Wolfgang Stark sent off Madlung when his team-mate Dick van Burik was the real perpetrator.

The German Football Federation promptly overturned the suspension after reviewing television footage.

While Bayern were delighted with Froblich for acknowledging his mistake Werder Bremen coach Thomas

Real Zaragoza squandered their chance of going third, and recording their first away win of the season, when they drew 1-1 with Atletico Madrid.

Savio scored for Zaragoza after just two minutes, after Liverpool-linked David Villa had nipped down the left wing, but Atletico's Salva Ballesta levelled the scores eight minutes from the whistle.

The 25-year-old was banned for seven months by the English Football Association last week for taking cocaine. He had earlier been dismissed by English Premier League club Chelsea.

Mutu played 41 matches and scored 29 goals for Dinamo between 1998 and 2000, before moving to Inter Milan.

"Mutu spent a beautiful time at Dinamo," Andone added. "He won the (league) title with us so it seemed a normal choice to make a fresh start where he felt good."

Victor Becali, one of Mutu's agents, said he did not know how long the player would stay in Romania but added: "It's possible he would train with the national team's squad."

The national federation spokesman said no decision had been taken but said that Iordanescu had told Mutu that no one would wear his number 10 shirt until his ban expires on May 18, 2005.

TOP SIX

Spanish football league standings after Sunday's matches, (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Barcelona	10	8	2	0	20	5	26
Real	10	6	1	3	10	5	19
Levante	10	6	1	3	15	12	19
Sevilla	10	5	3	2	11	9	18
Espanyol	10	5	2	3	11	5	17
Zaragoza	10	5	2	3	18	16	17

Fergie accepting reality

AFP, London

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has come as close as he probably ever will to admitting he might have got his sums wrong.

After watching his side held 0-0 by Manchester City on Sunday he agreed his toothless strikers might cost him the Premiership title.

Their third blank in four Premiership matches left United 11 points adrift of league leaders Chelsea.

Ferguson has splashed out 46.8 million pounds on Wayne Rooney, Alan Smith and Louis Saha in the last year.

Rooney came on as a 77th minute sub for Paul Scholes on Sunday but without suspended Dutch ace Ruud van Nistelrooy, United comfortably dominated the derby clash at Old Trafford.

But, as so often this season, a failure to take the chances that came their way ended up costing Sir Alex Ferguson's side precious points.

Ryan Giggs, who started the match on the bench, squandered the best chance to secure victory when Louis Saha's clever reverse pass left him with only David James to beat.

The winger attempted to place his shot past the former England goalkeeper but succeeded only in brushing the side netting.

The afternoon was made even more frustrating for the home side two minutes from the end of regulation time when Alan Smith was ordered off after earning a second

"We can't accept the chances we are missing," grumbled the United chief.

"We had two great ones and we did not even hit the target. There is no excuse for that."

"The form we are showing is not good enough to win the championship. Nine parts of our game are right but it is the 10th, which is so important, that is not being done. The goalscoring part of our game is not giving us any encouragement."

"The belief is good and we pounded away but we have still dropped another two points and there is no way that should have happened."

Ferguson also believes United are paying the price of controversial penalty which allowed them to beat Arsenal in their previous home game a fortnight ago.

"We have been penalised for our victory against Arsenal," said Ferguson. "There were two certain penalties for us but clearly we are not going to get one now."

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Premiership

Just not happening for MU

AFP, London

Manchester United's hopes of catching Premiership pacesetters Chelsea and Arsenal suffered another setback on Sunday as the Red Devils were held to a goalless draw by local rivals Manchester City.

Without the suspended Ruud van Nistelrooy, United comfortably dominated the derby clash at Old Trafford.

But, as so often this season, a failure to take the chances that came their way ended up costing Sir Alex Ferguson's side precious points.

Ryan Giggs, who started the match on the bench, squandered the best chance to secure victory when Louis Saha's clever reverse pass left him with only David James to beat.

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