

SERIE A Del Piero of the old

Football

AFP, Rome

Alessandro Del Piero scored the only goal as Juventus beat Reggina 1-0 on Saturday to open up a three-point lead over AC Milan at the top of the Serie A.

The 30-year-old Juventus captain struck in the 65th minute, latching on to Zlatan Ibrahimovic's intelligent backheel to turn a left-footed shot into the bottom corner for his 11th league goal of the season.

Juve hit the bar twice before taking the lead, but they struggled to shake off a Reggina side that dominated the first-half and always looked dangerous on the break.

Juventus have 66 points from their 29 matches played, three more than title-holders AC Milan who play away to Roma on Sunday.

Defeat for Reggina, one of only three teams to have beaten Juve in Serie A, saw them fall one place to 12th.

Juve coach Fabio Capello said Del Piero deserved the man-of-the-match award for the way he almost single-handedly lifted his team in the second-half.

"Del Piero has been improving with every game and after his goal we saw him play the kind of football that earned him praise all over the world years ago," he said.

After the break, Juventus were twice denied by the woodwork with

Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Del Piero both hitting the bar.

Juve finally made the breakthrough when Jonathan Zebina's cross was flicked on by Ibrahimovic and Del Piero swept the ball home from six yards out.

Earlier on Saturday, Siena boosted their hopes of surviving the drop with a battling 1-0 home victory over Lazio.

A scrappy tussle in Tuscany was decided by Igor Tudor's towering header on the hour.

The Croatian defender, who won back-to-back league titles with Juventus in 2002 and 2003, is on loan from the Turin giants until the end of the season.

Siena's fifth victory of the campaign was their first for a month and lifted them three places in the table to 16th position on 29 points, five behind Lazio.

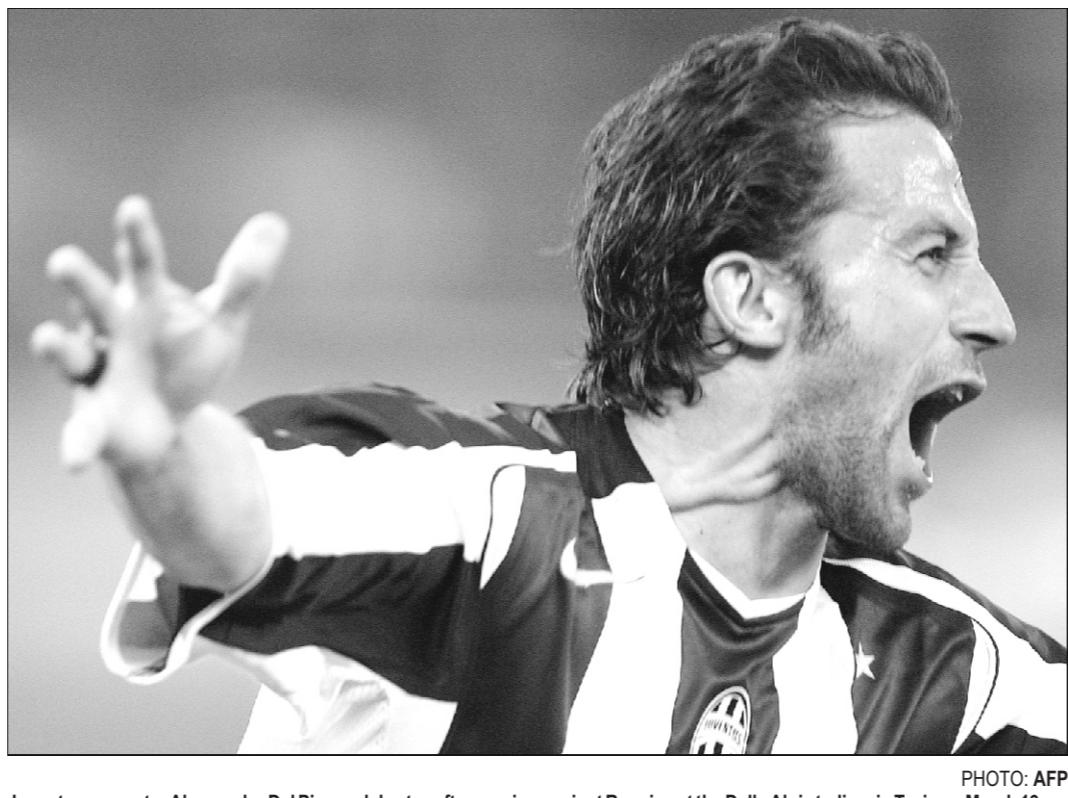


PHOTO: AFP

Juventus superstar Alessandro Del Piero celebrates after scoring against Reggina at the Delle Alpi stadium in Turin on March 19.

TOP SIX

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

Juventus	29	20	6	3	47	16	66
Milan	28	19	6	3	47	17	63
Inter	28	10	17	1	50	33	47
Sampdoria	28	14	5	9	31	21	47
Udinese	28	13	6	9	41	28	45
Palermo	28	11	10	7	31	26	43

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PRIMERA LIGA

10-man Barca prevail

Football

AFP, Madrid

Ten-man Barcelona's 1-0 victory at Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday night put them a massive and surely unbeatable 14 points ahead of the Spanish title race.

Although Rafa Marquez was sent off for a second yellow card early in the second half as they defended Ludovic Giuly's 10th-minute opener, Frank Rijkaard's men held on for victory to put pressure on second-placed Real Madrid.

Madrid are looking set for their second successive season without silverware as anything less than a good result at home to Malaga on Sunday would put yet further pressure on coach Wanderley Luxemburgo.

It was Frenchman Giuly's sixth goal of the season for the Catalonian club in a very lively match.

Following a freekick by Marquez, Deportivo keeper Gustavo Munua

punched it away. Though Barca's Brazilian defender Sylvinho intercepted the ball in the area, he completely mistimed his shot but Giuly, surging forward at the far post, got on to the end of it to find the net.

Marquez's marching orders came in the 52nd minute but Barcelona managed to hold on to their result although undermanned.

Earlier on Saturday, Real Betis took third spot after beating Albacete 2-1 at home and Barcelona's neighbours Espanyol could only draw 2-2 at home to Real Sociedad.

Barcelona 29 21 5 3 54 18 68
Real 28 17 3 8 48 25 64
Betis 29 13 9 7 47 37 48
Villarreal 28 13 8 7 48 26 47
Espanyol 29 13 7 9 37 35 46
Valencia 28 11 10 7 41 29 43

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

Barcelona	29	21	5	3	54	18	68
Real	28	17	3	8	48	25	64
Betis	29	13	9	7	47	37	48
Villarreal	28	13	8	7	48	26	47
Espanyol	29	13	7	9	37	35	46
Valencia	28	11	10	7	41	29	43

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Clijsters captures Indian Wells

Tennis

AFP, Indian Wells

Former world number one Kim Clijsters captured her second Indian Wells WTA title in three years on Saturday, capping a remarkable run in just her second tournament back from injury.

The 21-year-old Belgian continued her stranglehold on American Lindsay Davenport by beating the world number one 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 in the final.

It was the 22nd career singles title for the Clijsters, who won her first crown in more than a year after missing most of 2004 with a wrist injury.

"This is incredible," said the unseeded Clijsters, who pocketed \$32,000 dollars in prize money.

"There couldn't be any better way to start my year off."

"It is very satisfying to have this now and so soon."

Clijsters fired five aces and hammered 37 winners in the two hour, five minute match in front of 7,000 at centre court. She made 30 unforced errors to Davenport's 35.

This was the 15th career meeting between Clijsters and Davenport with Clijsters now holding a 9-6 lead.

Saturday's final was also a rematch of the 2003 championship which was won by Clijsters 6-4, 7-5.

It was at Indian Wells last year where Clijsters suffered the wrist injury that led to surgery in June.

Her first comeback attempt in October was thwarted after just three matches and she was on the sidelines until February, when she reached the quarters in Antwerp.

"This makes me more confident, especially because I was able to play five or six matches in a week's time. My wrist is holding up and I was moving well out there," Clijsters said.

Davenport looked unbeatable early on, but Clijsters cooled her off by winning six consecutive games to take the first set. But after a second-set stumble Clijsters was able to bounce back in the third.

The turning point came in the sixth game of the third set when Clijsters broke Davenport's serve to take a 4-2 lead. She then held serve

and broke Davenport again in the final game.

After playing flawless tennis through the first four games of the first set, the match ended on two errors by Davenport.

World number one Davenport was serving at deuce in the final



KIM CLIJSTERS

game when she double faulted to get to match point. She then hit a shot into the net to hand the win to Clijsters.

Davenport broke Clijsters twice to start the match and extended her winning streak to 24 consecutive games.

Satkhiria cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Munshpara Juba Sangha, Echo Club, Young Mohammadan and Kamal Nagar Club won their respective matches in the Police Super Cup Second Division Cricket Association by 28 runs.

At the Satkhira Government College, Young Mohammadan defeated Anirban Sangha by seven wickets. In another match at the same ground, Kamal Nagar Cricket Club defeated Tarun Sangha by 130 runs.

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Cricket

AFP, Wellington

Adam Gilchrist and Damien Martyn blasted Australia into an unbeatable position in the rain-affected second Test against New Zealand here Sunday with twin centuries in a masterful 256-run sixth wicket partnership.

New Zealand were left clinging to the hope they can bat out the final two days to save the match and at stumps on the third day were 122 for four in their first innings replying to Australia's 570 for eight declared.

All the New Zealand bowlers

suffered at the bats of Gilchrist and Martyn, and Shane Warne followed with a rapid half-century before Ricky Ponting put New Zealand out of their misery with the declaration just before tea.

Australia then bagged the plum wicket of New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming off the first ball he faced, and Hamish Marshall, Craig Cumming and Nathan Astle followed after tea as the home side struggled to stay in the game.

After the first day was lost to rain, as was the first hour of the third morning, Australia took a stranglehold on the Test with the inspired batting of Martyn, whose 165 was his highest Test score, while

Crystal Palace's defeat at Chelsea means Southampton could escape from the relegation zone if they beat Middlesbrough on Sunday.

Portsmouth inched a little closer

SPORTS REPORTER

REUTERS, London

International Women Master Rani Hamid and Shamina Akhter Liza won their respective eighth round games to share the lead in the 26th National Women's Chess Championship at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Rani beat Kiswara Shajrin and Liza beat Shamina Sultana to increase their tally to 7.5 points.

Nazrana Khan Eva followed them with six points after sharing point in the eighth round with Zakia Sultana.

Portsmouth inched a little closer

to safety with a controversial point against in-form Newcastle. Kieron Dyer had put the visitors ahead two minutes before half-time only to see his effort cancelled out seconds before the break by Steve Stone, who looked distinctly offside as he scored the equaliser.

Stuart Pearce's reign as Manchester City's caretaker manager started with a frustrating 2-1 defeat at Tottenham.

Jermain Defoe's early strike was cancelled out by US midfielder Claudio Reyna and City were the better side for long periods.

But it was Spurs who took the points thanks to substitute Robbie Keane's 84th-minute winner.

At the other end of the table, West Brom gave their survival chances a massive lift by beating ten-man Charlton 4-1 for their first away win of the season.

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Portsmouth inched a little closer

Rani, Liza going neck and neck

FROM PAGE 12

in Australia in January.

Pakistan's batsmen had fought to salvage draw in the first Test in Mohali after going into the final day just 53 runs ahead with four wickets in hand.

However, his reply did not satisfy the WICB.

"Brian Lara gave a non-committal response to the West Indies Cricket

Board's invitation to make himself available for the match, in which he neither accepted nor rejected the invitation," the WICB said.

"In his response, Lara put a proposition to the Board that could not have been entertained because it would require players to be selected on the team who were ineligible due to the nature of their personal endorsement contracts."

Lara, his vice-captain Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Dwayne Bravo, Dwayne Smith, Fidel Edwards and Ravi Rampaul were not included in a squad of 22 players invited earlier this month to make themselves available for the home series.

The squad will visit a training camp from March 23 in Barbados and leave for Guyana on March 28. The first Test against South Africa starts on March 31. Pakistan arrive in May.

SQUAD

Shivnarine Chanderpaul (captain), Courtney Browne (vice-captain), Wavell Hinds, Devon Smith, Donovan Pagon, Narsingh Deonarine, Darren Ganga, Ryan Hinds, Corey Collymore, Pedro Collins, Dwight Washington, Darren Powell, Jerome Taylor, Reon King.

He praised Anil Kumble.

"Kumble is a great bowler and he was tough to handle on a fifth day pitch of inconsistent bounce," he added. "We need a combined effort now, hopefully that will come in Bangalore."

Pakistan received a boost for the final Test in Bangalore starting on Thursday when fast bowler Navedul Hasan was declared fit.

He missed the Kolkata match due to a shoulder injury and rookie left-arm Mohammad Khalil went wicketless.

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