



Tottenham Hotspur's Didier Zokora (R) eludes a tackle from Liverpool hardman Momo Sissoko during their Premiership clash at Anfield on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Reds punish wasteful Spurs

AFP, Liverpool



Mark Gonzalez, Dirk Kuyt and John Arne Riise made Jermaine Jenas pay for a terrible miss as Liverpool beat Tottenham 3-0 at Anfield on Saturday.

Martin Jol's Spurs fell to their third straight away defeat this season, but it could all have been so different had England midfielder Jenas converted a golden chance less than sixty seconds before Gonzalez made the breakthrough for Liverpool.

Having been picked out unmarked at the far post by Edgar Davids, Jenas merely had to get a firm touch on the ball to send it past goalkeeper Jose Reina for the opening goal.

But his effort squirmed wide and he paid the ultimate price as

Gonzalez, Kuyt and Riise, scored at the other end to hand the home side all three points.

Liverpool's midweek victory over Newcastle at Anfield came on the back of successive league defeats against Everton and Chelsea and Rafa Benitez's team had to build on that win if they were to maintain any serious hopes of challenging for the title. But Spurs made life difficult for the home side from the first whistle and the first-half was a tale of missed chances for both sides.

It was a hugely frustrating opening period until Spurs midfielder Danny Murphy's throughball split apart the Liverpool defence on 17 minutes.

It seemed a perfect pass for Robbie Keane to latch onto, but the presence of Sami Hyypia distracted the Irish forward and Liverpool escaped.

Former Liverpool midfielder Murphy caused another moment of

panic at the heart of the home defence shortly afterwards when his in-swinging free-kick picked out King unmarked six yards out.

All King had to do to direct the ball into net was get the faintest of touches with his attempted header, but the ball whistled past his head and he failed to trouble Reina.

Liverpool rallied, though, and Gonzalez's corner was deflected onto the post by Spurs defender Pascal Chimbonda.

Then, ten minutes later, Craig Bellamy latched onto a Gonzalez pass and hit a first-time left-foot strike at goal from 20 yards. The effort forced keeper Paul Robinson into a full-stretch save, the only save of the first-half.

The game improved dramatically after the interval, however, and Kuyt should have scored when he headed over from close range on 53 minutes.

Spurs blew their best chance to

score, though, when Jenas wasted his chance on 62 minutes. Jermain Defoe had released Davids down the left flank and his cross was perfect for Jenas, but only the midfielder will know how he failed to hit the target.

Seconds later, Liverpool were ahead. Gerrard's burst down the right flank took him past defender Benoit Assou-Ekotto and his cross to Bellamy saw the Welshman hit the post. But Chilean winger Gonzalez was on the spot to fire home the rebound from a tight angle.

Spurs were now chasing the game and Kuyt put it beyond them when he latched on to Luis Garcia's pass before aiming a right-foot strike past Paul Robinson from 20 yards.

Norwegian midfielder Riise saved the best for last when he fired a 30-yard strike past Robinson for the third goal in the final minute.

'I'm not superman'

AFP, Lisbon

Jose Mourinho has acknowledged that his Premiership champions Chelsea, who faced Manchester United on Saturday, had yet to slip into top gear.

"I recognise that we still haven't done 90 completely good minutes this season," Mourinho told Portuguese daily Correio da Manhã on Saturday.

"The pre-season was terrible because we almost had no time to practice and only had two training matches before the competition started," he said.

He went on to insist in the interview that he was not feeling under extra pressure from the London club's billionaire Russian owner Roman Abramovich to win the Champions League this season.

Mourinho has won two English Premiership titles with Chelsea but has so far been unable to add Europe's elite club prize to the Stamford Bridge trophy cabinet.

"Only let those who I want to put pressure on me and the pressure I put on myself is already enough for me to accept someone else putting any more on top of me.

"Today I don't have to prove anything to anyone. I have already passed that phase.

"I think that in football there are no supermen, only men who win more times than others."

Chelsea have been beaten by the eventual winners in both seasons since Mourinho arrived from FC Porto, losing to Liverpool in the semi-finals in 2005 and crashing out against Barcelona in the second round last time.

He joined the English club in June 2004 less than one month after winning the European title with the unfancied Portuguese side.

M'gladbach claim lead

AFP, Berlin

Borussia Moenchengladbach provisionally climbed to the top of the German table after Friday's early match following a narrow 1-0 win over Borussia Dortmund.

The former UEFA Cup winners move a point clear of Hertha Berlin and Nuremberg after recording their third win from five matches this season, albeit having played a game more than most of their rivals.

And Friday's game was a far happier event for Brazilian Kahe, who scored the winner in the 39th minute, just a week after he was racially abused in Moenchengladbach's 4-2 defeat at Alemannia Aachen.

It is the first time that Moenchengladbach, who are coached by Jupp Heynckes, have sat atop the table since the 1998-99 season.

But a measure of how close the standings are at this early stage -- other than Friday's opponents all other teams have played only four games -- Moenchengladbach actually started the day 10th and could well have fallen almost back down to that position by the time this weekend's league programme is finished on Sunday.

Despite their current heady heights, Moenchengladbach fans will not be getting too carried away or even dreaming of a return to the glory years of the 1970s, when their team claimed five titles as well as two UEFA Cups.

Previous leaders Hertha travel to Mainz on Saturday while double reigning champions Bayern Munich entertain Aachen.

The big game of the weekend, though, is the northern derby between the two teams that finished second and third last season as Werder Bremen travel to Hamburg.

Neither team has started this season well and Bremen are further hampered by the loss of World Cup top scorer Miroslav Klose.

A bionic lawnmower

AFP, Nancy

French first division high-flyers Nancy have invested in an automatic lawnmower.

The northerners are the first club in Europe to use such a high-tech bionic grass-cutter, although it is not clear how this will help improve their performances on the pitch.

"It cuts two millimetres of grass at each pass and can detect on its own when there is no more grass to cut," enthused Michel Bontemps, the club's groundsman.

"We have installed a magnetic ring around the pitch which allows it (the lawnmower) to cover the whole pitch.

"It can even detect and avoid obstacles. And after an hour it automatically connects to its terminal to recharge its batteries."

Sadly, though, the terminal does not have the same effect on tiring players.

Ronaldo happy at Real

AFP, Madrid



Brazilian legend Ronaldo said Friday he was glad he opted to stay in Madrid despite close season interest from both AC and Inter Milan.

Ronaldo cut an unhappy figure at times last season as he looked overweight, out of shape and was routinely berated by his own team's fans.

But the three-time world player of the year and twice world champion with Brazil now says he is happy he opted to remain at Real.

"(Ramon) Calderon (Real's president) was always very clear with me from the beginning," Ronaldo, known as 'el gordo' in Madrid due to his weight problems,

told Radio Marca.

"Only the people thinking about economics wanted to sell me.

"I could not decide (to go) because I am a Real Madrid player and I have two years left on my contract."

Currently recovering from injury, Ronaldo has promised to score 30 goals this season for the nine-time European champions.

"I was delighted to learn that AC Milan and Inter Milan wanted me. I treated it calmly and seriously.

"I didn't negotiate anything with anyone and sent everyone to speak to Real Madrid. I wanted to stay. That's what happened and I'm happy to stay."

Ronaldo's claims are a complete turnaround from earlier this year when he suggested his future lay elsewhere after he was jeered by Real fans during a Champions League tie with Arsenal in February.

"I don't understand why the fans don't have any patience with me," he said at the time.

"That's something important I will have to take into account when considering the future."

Ronaldo went under the knife at the end of July for a leg injury and only returned to training a week ago. He is unlikely to be ready for first team action for another fortnight.

However he may face a fight to regain his place in the team with new Dutch forward Ruud van Nistelrooy having made a great start under Italian manager Fabio Capello.

"Capello is a serious man, he is very capable and most of all he has his own ideas that demand respect," added Ronaldo.

"As for my recuperation, I am getting better every day and I am getting back to my best physical condition."

BBC to meet officials



AFP, London

Football Association officials and BBC representatives will meet next week to discuss the football bungs scandal revealed by the Panorama programme.

Formal talks have now been arranged between the two parties following the allegations that appeared in the BBC programme of rife illegal payments in England's Premier League.

"We've been talking to the Football Association and have already arranged to meet with them on Monday," said a BBC spokesperson.

It is understood Panorama had initially wanted the FA and Premier League to make specific requests for information rather than pass over every piece of evidence to the investigations.

Meanwhile, the FA have also confirmed they will contact Blackpool chairman Karl Oyston and leading agent Jon Holmes to ask them to provide further information.

tion on their claims they were offered and asked for bungs respectively.

Oyston claimed he has been offered bribes by agents on a number of occasions, and that the issue of bungs is still a major problem in football, including the Premiership.

Holmes, chief executive of SFX Europe, claimed three managers, one of them currently at a Premiership club, had intimidated them to get a kickback.

Bolton manager Sam Allardyce and his son Craig, a former agent, were at the centre of the BBC allegations of alleged illegal payments made during transfer deals.

Allardyce has already confirmed he is considering legal action and is incensed by the accusations.

"But I am very angry at the lies told about me. The individuals who appeared in the programme making accusations against me have already confirmed in writing to my lawyers that they lied to the BBC," he said earlier this week.

"They lied in the hope of being able to make millions offered by the BBC undercover reporter to buy their sports agency businesses.

"As a result of their greed my good name has been tarnished by deceit and innuendo.

"I am determined to clear my name and have asked my lawyers to determine my next steps."

Several other people were implicated including Newcastle assistant manager Kevin Bond and agents Charles Collymore and Peter Harrison.

A joint probe by the FA and Premier League will also be launched into claims by Harrison that Chelsea's director of youth football Frank Arnesen, Liverpool and Newcastle had all offered a Middlesbrough youth player money to move to their clubs.

Harrison too is considering legal action against the programme-makers and has defended his activities.

He said: "I've never given bungs. I've not given a bung to Sam Allardyce. I've never given a bung. I shall be suing the BBC."

"I haven't heard from the FA. I shall be carrying on as an agent and I shall be doing whatever the FA want me to do."

Hammers losing harmony

THE GUARDIAN

Alan Pardew has admitted that the arrival of Carlos Tevez and Javier Mascherano has "put one or two noses out of joint" in the West Ham dressing room. Pardew looks set to start the Argentinian pair ahead of Marlon Harewood and Hayden Mullins for the third game in succession when his side visit Manchester City. And for the first time since their arrival three weeks ago, the West Ham manager conceded that Tevez and Mascherano's run in the team has caused discontent at Upton Park.

"That happens at every big club and (becoming a big club) is hopefully where we are going. The situation will only get worse in terms of players feeling aggrieved they're not playing. All they can do is work hard on the training ground and convince me with their performances that they should be playing."

While Pardew heaped praise on Harewood and Mullins for their subsequent reaction to being dropped, he added that the club

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Puskas back in ICU

REUTERS, Budapest

Hungarian soccer great Ferenc Puskas has been kept in intensive care as his condition has not improved in the past week, the doctor in charge of the intensive care department of his hospital said on Friday.

Puskas, 79, known affectionately in Hungary as Ocsi bacsi, or "our little brother", was taken into intensive care early last week, although the reason has not been disclosed.

"Ocsi bacsi's condition has not improved sufficiently for him to be released," the head of intensive care at Kutvolgy hospital, Zsolt Irvanyi was quoted on saying on state news agency MTI.

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Pretty in pink

INTERNET, undated



It must be something in the water. Three games into the Serie A season, and all three of Sicily's representatives have taken up residence in the top half of the table, with two of them -- Palermo and Messina -- in first and second respectively.

Welcome to the post-Luciano Moggi era -- Palermo finished seventh last time out before Calciopoli punishments to Juventus and Lazio gave them a helping hand up to fifth place and a UEFA Cup berth. They were the only Sicilian side to finish in the top nine last season, and Messina would actually have been relegated had it not been for the scandal.

But it's not just the standings which impress -- Palermo have been playing some breathtaking attacking football on their way to the top. Already they have 11 league goals, over a fifth of their entire season's haul last time out. West Ham actually got off lightly, it would seem, but here's the caveat -- they've also already conceded seven. So much for catenaccio.

The strikes are coming from all angles too, with five different players (Giovanni Tedesco, Fabio Simplicio, Eugenio Corini, Amauri and Andrea Barzagli) on target during their latest outing, an eight-goal thriller against Catania which gave them three wins from three so far. Both keepers took turns to gift the opposition goals before Palermo eventually emerged 5-3 winners, despite a very late dismissal for Simplicio. Sadly his indiscretion was matched off the

pitch, where fans clashed in the city centre, leaving 50 injured.

I Rosanero now look down on the rest of Italian football for the first time in over 100 years, having previously shared top spot but never held it outright. President Maurizio Zamparini deserves massive credit, having made a number of shrewd signings this summer to cover the loss of World Cup winners Fabio Grosso and Simone Barone, just as he did last year when Luca Toni departed for Fiorentina. Five of Palermo's starters this weekend (Amauri, Mark Bresciano, Simplicio, Mattia Cassani and Marco Pisano) joined in the most recent transfer window.

Their next game will be away to Empoli tonight, while Catania must brace themselves for another all-Sicilian clash at home to Messina, who beat Reggina 2-0.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Palermo are enjoying life at the top, with maximum nine points from three matches so far.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Moenchengladbach goalscorer Kahe (L) celebrates with teammate Insua(C) as Dortmund defender Philipp Degen looks on during their Bundesliga clash in Borussia Park on Friday.

Chelsea go live in USA



REUTERS, New York

English champions Chelsea, fresh from a third successive pre-season tour of the USA, have signed a deal with Sirius Satellite Radio, which will broadcast their Premier League games live to North America.

When the Blues travel to play west London rivals Fulham on Saturday, fans from Los Angeles to Labrador will be able to hear live commentary from Craven Cottage.

Sirius already airs several Premier League games each week as well as American football, basketball and hockey. The new deal means it will become the exclusive satellite radio provider for Chelsea. It gave no financial details of the deal.

"More and more people in the USA are paying attention to professional soccer after such a fantastic World Cup," said former Italy and New York Cosmos striker Giorgio Chinaglia, who is a soccer analyst for Sirius.

"With World Cup stars like Andriy

Shevchenko and Michael Ballack joining John Terry and Frank Lampard on the Chelsea squad this season, now is the perfect time for soccer fans to follow one of the best teams in the world."

Chelsea are third in the standings level on points with second-placed Manchester United as they bid for a third straight league title. The club, owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, is also in the lucrative Champions League.

"The launch of the new Chelsea show on Sirius demonstrates our long-term commitment to the US market," said the London club's business affairs director Paul Smith.

"During our recent trip to the USA, we experienced a massive wave of support with thousands of fans showing up at Chelsea practices and appearances.

"As our recognition in the United States continues to increase, we want to give our growing fan base greater access to Chelsea news, interviews and exclusive content."

Record fines for racism

AFP, Frankfurt

The German football federation (DFB) has requested a record total of 100,000 euros (128,000 dollars) of fines be handed out to two teams whose fans racially abused rival players.

The DFB demanded that Alemannia Aachen be hit with a 75,000-euro fine and Borussia Moenchengladbach docked a 25,000-euro penalty after racist chanting during a match between the pair last weekend.

"A definitive decision will be announced next week," said a DFB statement, which also said the two sides could appeal.

During the match, referee Michael Weiner threatened to cancel the encounter over the chants.

Home supporters targeted Moenchengladbach's Brazilian forward Kahe, after which Weiner briefly stopped the game to ask for a public address to inform fans the game would be scrapped if the abuse continued.

However, the away fans, whose team lost 4-2, then started to dish out abuse to Aachen's Malian defender Moses Sichone.