



Fellow Algerians, Sochaux midfielder Karim Ziani (L) and Lorient midfielder Yazid Mansouri race for the ball during their Ligue 1 encounter in Lorient on Sunday.

Hammers eye Wright-Phillips

INTERNET, undated

New West Ham owner Eggert Magnusson is to discuss the possible signing of Shaun Wright-Phillips with Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon.

Magnusson, who has completed an £85million takeover of the Upton Park club, has promised manager Alan Pardew money to spend in the January transfer window.

Winger Wright-Phillips, who has started just 15 of 51 appearances for the Blues following his £21million move from Manchester City in the summer of 2005, is understood to be part of the wanted list.

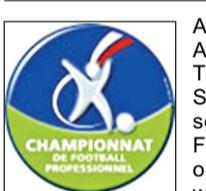
'He has not been playing regularly at Chelsea, but he's a good player and he has great possibilities to do well,' said Magnusson on BBC Radio 5 Live's Sportsweek programme.

'Alan has told me he has already asked Chelsea about him. It came out of Chelsea that we have shown an interest, but it has not gone any further.'

'I know Peter Kenyon well and I think we will sit down and try to find the right fee, whatever that might be.'

Sochaux go second

AFP, Paris



A double from Anthony Le Tallec put Sochaux joint second in the French league on Saturday with a 3-1 win at Lorient as Lille, held 1-1 by Monaco, missed the chance to close the gap on runaway leaders Lyon.

In-form Sochaux are unbeaten in their last seven matches.

But they looked as if their run was about to end as Lorient's Sylvain Marchal opened for the Bretons with a header after just a minute of play.

A quickfire double from Lorient-born Le Tallec after 23 and 26 minutes got the visitors back on track and a penalty converted by Karim Ziani just before the break ensured they move from seventh position to joint second with Lille.

'We're holding our own at the top of the table and if we can get a UEFA Cup spot it would be magic,' said Le Tallec, on loan from Liverpool for the year.

'Our success will make us less

of the underdog now but we're not going to let the pressure get to us.'

Lille, meanwhile, were always playing catch-up against Monaco after a brilliant solo effort from Serge Gakpe from 20 meters out after 36 minutes.

Midfielder Mathieu Bodmer finally equalised for Lille after 77 minutes following a pass from Nigerian international striker Peter Odemwingie.

'We got off to a bad start,' complained Lille coach Claude Puel.

'They caught us napping. We fell into a trap and weren't able to recover from that murderous goal just break the break. The equaliser was a result of team pride coming into play.'

Both Lille and Sochaux now have 26 points from 15 games with Lille marginally ahead on goal difference. But they could both be overtaken by Nancy and Lens.

Striker Toifilo Maoulida saved Marseille's blushes with a second half equaliser which gave the southern French outfit a 1-1 draw at struggling Troyes.

Relegation-threatened Troyes had taken the lead after 18 minutes when Yann Lachuer scored

his first goal of the season.

Marseille were sorely missing the services of injured France midfielder Franck Ribery.

The visitors were slow finding their rhythm in the first half before the strike force of Maoulida, Mickael Pagis and Mamadou Niang began working in tandem after the break.

Their pressing paid off when Maoulida pulled Marseille level after 62 minutes following a pass from Pagis, only for Pagis to be sent off eight minutes later for a foul on Blaise Matuidi.

Niang missed the chance to net the winner three minutes from time when he found himself alone on front of goal following a centre from Samir Nasri.

Marseille move up one place to fifth, as Troyes, with just two wins this season, moved from second to third from bottom.

Elsewhere Bordeaux followed their midweek 3-1 Champions League win over Galatasaray with a 1-0 win over Saint Etienne following a goal from Alejandro Alonso after 70 minutes.

At the bottom end of the table hosts Nice were held 2-2 by tailenders Sedan.

Basten for Ancelotti?

INTERNET, undated

Holland coach Marco van Basten is emerging as favourite to succeed Carlo Ancelotti at AC Milan.

DarioSport says Milan president Silvio Berlusconi has ordered his No2, Adriano Galliani, to move for Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard.

While both Rijkaard and Barca can go their separate ways at the end of this season courtesy of a clause in the Dutchman's contract, it's reported that both parties remain committed to each other.

The next candidate on Galliani's shortlist is former Milan star Van Basten.

Alessandro Zanardi got behind the wheel of a Formula One car on Saturday for the first time since he lost both legs in a high-speed crash five years ago.

The 40-year-old completed 12 laps during the day which was staging the Formula BMW World Final.

His fastest lap was clocked at 1min 21.63sec.

The 1999 Japanese Grand Prix at Fuji had been the last of Zanardi's 41 races in Formula One before he lost both legs in an accident in 2001.

He made his racing comeback with BMW only two years later and has since managed to win two rounds of the FIA World Touring Car Championship (WTCC) for BMW Team Italy-Spain.

'This is a special opportunity for me,' said Zanardi. 'I saw some very happy faces; everybody was surprised that everything was working so smoothly.'

'BMW always gave me maximum support, especially in the WTCC. Driving the Formula One car is another step.'

Diouf admits to diving

REUTERS, London

Bolton Wanderers' Senegal forward El Hadji Diouf has admitted diving to win penalties, but said it was common practice in the Premier League.

Diouf, a former African Footballer of the Year, was widely quoted in the British media on Saturday as saying: 'Every player dives, not just me. Sometimes when I need to dive to get a penalty it is because, in my opinion, the best footballer is a footballer who is very clever.'

'I don't leave my foot there so the guy can break my leg. I need to dive before the guy comes in. There are times when the referee gives me a free-kick and times when he doesn't, but how many penalties have I won by doing that?'

'It is just football. Sometimes I have a reputation for going down too easily, but that is like every player in the Premiership.'

Pointing the finger at Manchester United's England striker Wayne Rooney, Diouf said: 'If you see Rooney, how many times does he dive to try and get a penalty? It is just because it is me that people talk about it.'

Diouf, who has been involved in more than one spitting incident in his career and is often a target for opposing fans, was well aware of his reputation.

'Everybody thinks I am a bad boy,' Diouf said. 'I have a bad reputation everywhere in the world.'

'I know that, but what is important for me is that the people I am working with -- (Bolton manager) Sam Allardyce, the staff and the other players -- know I am a nice lad.'

Benitez salutes Gerrard

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez paid tribute to inspirational mid-fielder Steven Gerrard after he scored for the first time in the Premier League this season in a hard-earned 1-0 victory over Manchester City on Saturday.

Playing in his preferred central mid-field position because of injuries, England star Gerrard was the main factor behind a much-needed victory for Liverpool, a superb 67th-minute strike topping off a man-of-the-match display at Anfield.

With England manager Steve

McClaren watching both Gerrard and Manchester City mid-field player Joey Barton, the Liverpool man added another intriguing chapter to the season-long debate over where Benitez should be playing him for his club and whether he is wasted in his more customary wide role.

But after dominating the game from a central position, it was evident that Gerrard is revelling in a more familiar role. 'It's important for him if he can score goals and a first goal in the Premier League is really good for him,' said Benitez.

'He will have more confidence after that and it is clear that if a player plays better and scores then he is going to be happier.'

'I said before the game the other day that I think he can play better and he is playing better now.'

'Still, he can play much better because he has a lot of quality. That's a positive message, not a negative one.'

Liverpool's victory means their home record is identical -- even in the goals for and against columns -- to that of title-chasing Chelsea. But two away points on their travels all season demonstrates why the Merseysiders have little or no hope of winning the title this term.

'It's clear that we're winning at home and now we play Portsmouth here on Wednesday so hopefully we can beat them and have confidence going to Wigan next weekend,' added Benitez.

'If we can create chances as we have been doing in most matches this season then we will score goals.'

'I don't know if it's a psychological problem, we will see next weekend, but in a lot of games it has just been down to luck. That's easy to say but it's also clear when you look at some of the games and the opportunities we've had.'

Like Liverpool, City have major problems away from their Eastlands base with only a solitary point from their away games this season.

City manager Stuart Pearce packed his defence in an effort to grind out another point at Anfield but, ironically, an error by Barton handed Gerrard the goal.

'We sent the team out to frustrate Liverpool and we did that but one costly mistake cost us the game,' said Pearce.

'There weren't a great deal of chances in the game so you can't afford to give the ball to Gerrard 25 yards from goal with a written invitation because then all your hard work goes down the pan.'

'The team put their lot in for us and the organisation was spot on. At the time they scored, it looked as though they had thrown everything at us and weren't going to break us down. But that's what happens in the Premier League.'

Pearce's tactics also called for promising youngster Micah Richards, capped for the first time by McClaren this month, to play in a central mid-field role -- a job he performed admirably.

'I thought Micah did well,' said Pearce of the defender. 'In fact, next week we might play him in attack!'

'But he never turns around and asks me why he's playing in a position, he just gets on with it, and I think it's fantastic for his experience to play in different positions.'

'He's a good player and his best position of all might be centre-half -- which is the one position I don't play him!'

Bayern keep pace

AFP, Berlin



Title contenders Bayern Munich and Werder Bremen both closed the gap on surprise leaders Schalke 04 with respective wins over SV Hamburg and Arminia Bielefeld on Saturday.

Schalke, who have not won the title since 1958, had moved five points clear with a 2-1 win over VfL Bochum on Friday and reigning champions Bayern responded with a 2-1 comeback victory at Hamburg to move three points behind.

Dutch international Rafael van der Vaart put Hamburg ahead with a 18th minute penalty but compatriot Roy Makaay equalised close to the hour.

German international striker Miroslav Klose scored twice to take his season's tally to seven and cap a fine week for Bremen who defeated Chelsea 1-0 in their midweek Champions League outing.

'It's been a great week and I'm just glad my team had the strength to come through it,' declared Bremen

coach Thomas Schaaf.

'We made a few mistakes at the beginning but we were up for the fight and got better as the game progressed.'

Trailing Schalke by six points

Bayern were desperate for a win against Hamburg, but got off to a terrible start with Argentine defender Martin Demichelis chopping down Boubacar Sanogo for a penalty after 18 minutes.

Van der Vaart, who scored against Arsenal in the midweek Champions League defeat, struck his spot-kick cleanly and the ball went in off the inside of the post.

The goal injected some extra spice into a game that was already fiery due to past connections with Bayern defender Daniel van Buyten and Hamburg's Peruvian striker Paolo Guerrero playing against their old clubs for the first time.

Bayern coach Magath was clearly annoyed at his team's first half performance and introduced Brazilian defender Lucio and German international Sebastian Deisler after the break.

Deisler, playing only his second game in eight months, had an immediate impact with his mazy run and pass setting up Makaay for the goal.

'We know what Sebastian (Deisler) can do and it's nice for him to be back after such a long time out through injury,' said Makaay. 'I'm sure he can play a big role for us for the remainder of the season.'

Deisler also had a hand for the winner cutting the ball back for Pizarro to drill home 12 minutes from time.

The result keeps Hamburg, who beat Bayen home and away last season, in the bottom three with just one win from 14 matches.

'We were great in the first half but then we sat back too much and invited Bayern on to us,' explained Iranian international Mehdi Mahdavikia. 'We are not getting much luck at the moment and just keep on losing.'

On Sunday VfB Stuttgart, five points behind Schalke, host troubled Borussia Monchengladbach looking to continue their impressive start.

Fallen giants Gladbach have the worst away record in the division with just one point from their seven matches.

SWEET COMEBACK: Bayern Munich midfielder Sebastian Deisler (L) hugs teammate Claudio Pizarro after he set up the striker for the winning goal during their comeback win over Hamburg in their Bundesliga clash at the AOL Arena on Sunday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

CROSSWORD *By Eugene Sheffer*
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 6 Disgusting zither song runner
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CRYPTOQUIP

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J G H F V M C L Z G A V X T I Z Y C X

X I E D B G A A D U X C D

A G B L Z D H B I F X H I A E I G H U .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN BAKING A CAKE, YOU SHOULD ADD MUCH SUGAR. IT WILL MAKE YOUR BITTER BATTER BETTER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals T

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another