



Atletico Madrid's Jose Jurado (L) makes an acrobatic side-volley during their Primera Liga match against Osasuna in Vicente Calderon Stadium in Madrid on Saturday.

Sevilla stop the rot

AFP, Madrid



Seville kept on course for their first Spanish league title in 61 years after a battling goalless draw at Villarreal on Saturday to stretch their advantage to

three points.

Villarreal are not the side which reached the Champions League semi-finals last year but with Diego Forlán prompting them forward they gave Seville a tough examination and the visitors were pleased to escape with a point after successive losses, at Zaragoza and at home to Mallorca last weekend.

Those results prompted Seville coach Juande Ramos to forecast that "infernals battles lie ahead."

And a blood-and-thunder match of eleven yellow cards – five for the hosts and six for the visitors – proved him right in a match of few clear cut chances which left Seville on 38 points from 19 games, three ahead of Barcelona -- who have

had four players sent off.

The three points moved the "rojiblanco" into the top three but they needed a goal seven minutes from time by Portuguese star Ze Castro to settle the affair with a thumping finish after Torres' missed spot-kick five minutes beforehand.

Carlos Cuellar had hauled the Spain international forward down in the box and paid with a red card.

Referee Lizondo Cortes had a field day as he had banned

Atletico's Mexican coach Javier Aguirre to the stands just before the interval when the latter became over-heated in the technical area against his former club.

After Hector Font had gone close for the visitors, denied by keeper Ivan Cuellar, standing in for injured Argentine Leo Franco, Atletico began to find their feet as Sergio Aguero twice brought good saves out of Osasuna's shot-stopper Ricardo.

Cuellar's exit and Castro's goal brought the red mist down for Osasuna and former Real Madrid striker Roberto Soldado was next to go for an elbow on Ze Castro on 86 minutes before Cortes dismissed keeper Ricardo for timewasting after dishing out an earlier booking in similar circumstances.

In injury time Raul Garcia completed Osasuna's miserable night when he was red-carded for a foul on Georgios Seitaridis.

Atletico joined Real and Barca on 35 points but Real will seek to go joint top with a win Sunday at Real Mallorca, who beat them last season and who are now on a high after the win a week ago in Seville.

Champion gone

Australian Open
The Grand Slam of Asia/Pacific

AP, Melbourne

Defending champion Amelie Mauresmo and No. 3 Svetlana Kuznetsova are gone.

Seven-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams, who missed most of last season with a knee injury, showed glimpses of her peak form in a 6-3, 6-2 win over 11th-seeded Jelena Jankovic on Sunday.

"It was absolutely sensational ... I just play some of my best tennis here," said Williams, who had 31 winners and dropped serve only once. "I'm on the right track -- I like being a dangerous floatie."

Second-seeded Mauresmo floated right out of the tournament, falling 6-4, 6-3 to 70th-ranked Lucie Safarova. Kuznetsova lost 6-4, 6-2 to Shahar Peer of Israel in the women's fourth round on Sunday.

Peer made the quarterfinals at a major for the first time. Williams covered the court with ease against Jankovic, despite question marks over her fitness and the fact that Jankovic was in form, coming to Melbourne with a title at Auckland and a run to the final at last week's Sydney International.

Mauresmo was up a service break early before slumping against Safarova, a 19-year-old Czech player who had only won one match in six previous Grand Slam tournaments.

"It's amazing. I still can't believe it," Safarova said. "I'm so happy. It's incredible."

It was Safarova's first time on center court at the Australian Open and her first match against Mauresmo.

"I came out this morning and said, 'Wow this is a big court.' But I felt really comfortable here," Safarova said.

She next plays fellow Czech Nicole Vaidisova, who beat seventh-seeded Elena Dementieva 6-3, 6-3.

In post-match comments,

The 27-year-old Frenchwoman added the Wimbledon title and spent most of 2006 ranked No. 1.

She looked to be in good shape after an early break. But the left-handed Safarova, her right thigh heavily taped, quickly reversed roles and soon was hitting like the favorite.

Mauresmo, her confidence clearlywaning, was shouting at herself as her mistakes piled up.

"It's always disappointing to go

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

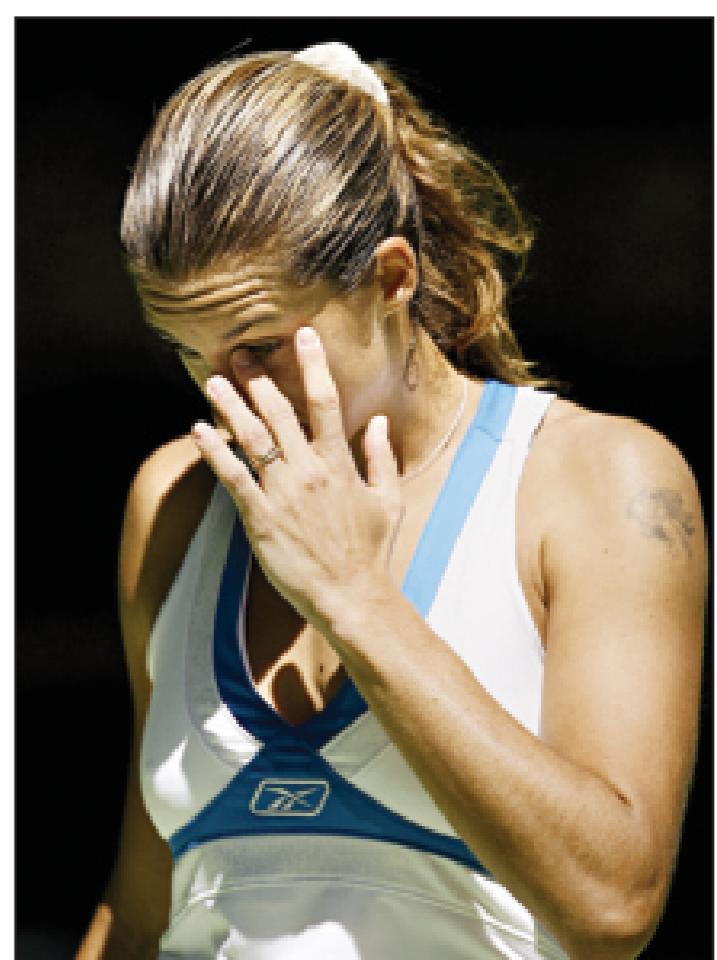


PHOTO: AFP

Defending champion Amelie Mauresmo of France vents her frustration during her match against Lucie Safarova of the Czech Republic in the fourth round of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Sunday.

FEDERER EXPRESS MARCHES ON Roddick sets up 'friendly' clash

Australian Open
The Grand Slam of Asia/Pacific

AFP, Melbourne

SERIE A

Atalanta on
the climb

REUTERS, Rome

Palermo's pursuit of second place suffered a setback after a 0-0 draw at Reggina in Serie A on Saturday.

The Sicilian side are third on 39 points, 12 behind leaders Inter Milan and three adrift of AS Roma.

Third from bottom Reggina, handed an 11-point penalty after a match-fixing scandal in the close season, kept Palermo quiet for most of the game.

The nearest the visitors came to

scoring was in the 66th minute when a corner dropped kindly for defender Christian Zaccardo, who blasted a shot narrowly over the bar.

Atalanta climbed to fourth on 27 points after two late goals earned a 3-1 win at bottom club Ascoli.

The match seemed poised for a

draw after Riccardo Zampagna's goal for Atalanta was cancelled out by home striker Michele Paolucci.

But Brazilian defender Adriano,

who provided the cross for

Zampagna's goal, headed Atalanta back into the lead on 85 minutes before Cristiano Doni grabbed the third goal on the break.

Bradley makes

winning debut

AFP, Los Angeles

The United States, with goals from

Landon Donovan, Jonathan

Bornstein and Kenny Cooper,

defeated Denmark 3-1 in an

international friendly Saturday

that marked Bob Bradley's debut as

head coach.

Bradley was put in charge of the

squad last month after talks broke

down with German World Cup

coach Juergen Klinsmann, giving

the 48-year-old American a chance

to audition for the job, likely to be

filled by the end of May.

Donovan's penalty in the 44th

minute saw the Americans level at

the interval after Dennis Sorensen

had put Denmark ahead in the 37th

minute.

Bornstein added a second goal

in the 57th minute, and Cooper

made it 3-1 in the 80th.

Although the United States cre-

ated more quality opportunities in

the first half, Danish keeper Matt Reiss

was able to keep them at bay and

give them the chance to go ahead

when Sorensen blasted home a pass

from Simon Busk Poulsen.

When US youngster Ricardo

Clark was brought down just inside

the penalty area in the 43rd minute,

Donovan took the opportunity to

equalize from the penalty spot.

Another young American,

Justin Mapp, came on after

halftime for Nate Jaqua and quickly

made an impact, using his speed to

get past the Danish defence and

delivering the ball to Bornstein,

who scored his first goal for the

national team in his first appear-

ance.

Cooper, a second-half substi-

tute, also scored in his USA debut.

Photo: AFP

Photo: AFP