



PHOTO: INTERNET

AND SO FELL MARCO: A combo image shows Inter Milan and Italy defender Marco Materazzi falling victim to yet another headbutt, this time by young Italian midfielder Gennaro Delvecchio during Inter's league match against Sampdoria in Genoa on Sunday. Materazzi was infamously headbutted in the final of the FIFA 2006 World Cup on July 9 by French midfielder Zinedine Zidane.

McLeish takes over Scotland job

REUTERS, Glasgow

Former Rangers coach Alex McLeish was named as Scotland's new manager by the Scottish FA on Monday.

He replaces Walter Smith, who quit the post for Rangers on January 10, in a widely-expected appointment that was confirmed on the SFA's Web site.

"The 48-year-old former Scotland international has agreed a contract which will see him lead the national team through the rest of the Euro 2008 campaign and take Scotland towards the World Cup in 2010," the SFA said.

McLeish stepped down as Rangers manager last year after winning seven trophies in five seasons and becoming the first boss to steer a Scottish club into the Champions League knockout phase last season.

He was replaced by Paul Le Guen but the Frenchman lasted only seven months and Rangers persuaded Smith to leave the Scotland job, creating the vacancy.

David Taylor, the SFA's chief executive, said: "We have moved quickly to fill the vacancy caused by

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CHELSEA THUMP FOREST

Toure saves Gunners

AFP, London



Kolo Toure maintained Arsenal's hopes of winning the FA Cup by heading home a late equaliser against Premier ship rivals Bolton to secure a 1-1 draw here Sunday.

Bolton, Arsenal's bogey team, had gone ahead in this fourth round tie after a goalless first-half through Kevin Nolan's 50th minute shot which capped a well-worked move from the visitors at the Emirates Stadium.

Arsenal, who have now won just once in eight games against Bolton, were on their way out of the Cup when Ivory Coast defender Toure stole in at the back post 12 minutes from time to head in Cesc Fabregas's free-kick and set up a replay at the Reebok Stadium.

"I felt we lacked a little bit of sharpness and focus in the first-half," Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger told Sky Sports afterwards. "The pace of our game was too slow.

"They then had a chance to kill the game off but domination wise and chances wise, second-half it was all us," the Frenchman added.

Bolton boss Sam Allardyce was pleased by his side's display, although he rued a missed chance from Nolan at 1-0 that could have sealed the tie.

"It looked like we were going to hold out but it was a terrific performance," he said.

"The turning point for me was when Kevin Nolan tried to go round the keeper. That would have made it 2-0 and I don't think Arsenal would have come back from that."

Earlier Sunday, Premiership champions Chelsea eased into the last 16 with a 3-0 win over Nottingham Forest at Stamford Bridge.

First-half goals from Andriy Shevchenko, Didier Drogba and John-Obi Mikel saw the Blues overpower Forest, twice winners of the European Cup but now in League One, the third division of English professional football.

"We have to play these matches in a serious and professional way. If you don't do it you give hope to your opponents and today we did our job well," said Chelsea coach Jose

Mourinho.

"In the first half the game was over and that is what we needed with games coming up against Blackburn and Charlton."

Forest manager Colin Calderwood said: "I have learned a great deal from this match, but I don't think I can take any positives from it. We had hoped to be able to come here and compete more than we did."

Elsewhere, West Bromwich Albion stayed in the competition with a 3-0 win away to West Midlands rivals Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Goals either side of half-time from Diomansy Kamara and Kevin Phillips put Albion, chasing promotion to the Premiership, in a strong position against their fellow Championship side before Zoltan Gera added a third 12 minutes from full-time.

"It was a fantastic away performance," said Phillips. "And it could have been a lot better if we'd taken all our chances."

Manchester City saw off Championship Southampton 3-1 at Eastlands.

The Saints took the lead through

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Matrix pleads innocent

INTERNET, undated

Inter defender Marco Materazzi has denied that he said anything to provoke Gennaro Del Vecchio into head-butting him.

The Nerazzurri earned their 14th straight win thanks to goals by Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Maicon, but the Blucerchiati were left with 10 men after the ex-Lecce man saw red for butting the world champion under his chin.

"I did nothing wrong, I only told him to stop it," said Materazzi to Sky Italia after the match, who was furious with Del Vecchio's challenge on 'keeper Julio Cesar.

"Before he was sent off, there had already been a bad challenge on Adriano and immediately after that he did the same thing with our goalkeeper."

"I like aggressive football, but when you see that the 'keeper has the ball in his hands I think you should stop," added the Nerazzurro.

"When I saw what he did to Julio Cesar. I went to Del Vecchio and told him to stop it, but he hit me with his head. I had a cut in my mouth and it was bleeding."

"I did not fight with Coach Walter Novellino, I only explained to him what had happened."

"I sometimes cause trouble, I

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United's Hargreaves hopes on hold

AFP, London

Manchester United chief executive David Gill has admitted the Premiership leaders have next to no chance of signing midfielder Owen Hargreaves before the January transfer shuts on Wednesday.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has been keen to sign England international Hargreaves, even offering a reported 20 million pounds, but that has so far not been enough to persuade Bayern Munich, the player's current club, to sell.

However, officials from the Bundesliga side have suggested that Hargreaves could leave Germany for Old Trafford at the end of the season.

But for the time being, at least, United's pursuit has been put on hold with Gill telling BBC Radio Five on Sunday: "I can confirm we are interested in the player and we have been since last summer but at the moment Bayern Munich aren't willing to sell him and we will have to leave it at that."

MATERAZZI HEADBUTTED AGAIN

Inter continue amazing run

AFP, Rome



Inter Milan maintained their 11-point lead at the top of Serie A and extended their record run of consecutive league wins to 14 matches with a 2-0 victory at 10-man Sampdoria on Sunday.

But the game was marred by Inter's Italian international defender Marco Materazzi once again being the victim of a headbutt.

Materazzi was the man infamously butted by French superstar Zinedine Zidane in the World Cup final last year.

On Sunday, it was Sampdoria's Gennaro Delvecchio who was the guilty party and he was sent off in the seventh minute for the assault.

Angered by a late challenge on Inter keeper Julio Cesar, Materazzi exchanged angry words with Delvecchio before the Sampdoria midfielder's head hit him squarely on the chin.

Sampdoria coach Walter Novellino slammed Delvecchio.

"A professional player cannot do such a thing and I won't try to defend it," he said.

"Even if there was provocation his actions cannot be justified."

Earlier Sunday, Roma had trimmed Inter's advantage to eight points after their scrappy 1-0 home win over Siena.

But Inter rose to the challenge set by their closest rivals, defeating Sampdoria in Genoa for the second time in four days with goals from Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Maicon to move closer to retaining their title.

The champions beat Sampdoria 3-0 in the first leg of their Italian Cup

semifinal on Thursday.

Inter coach Roberto Mancini said Delvecchio's dismissal actually disrupted his team's rhythm.

"For 30 minutes we stopped doing what we normally do and we were too predictable," he said.

"But after we scored it made things easier and we took control of the match."

Inter went ahead in the 37th minute when Brazilian wingback Maicon crossed from the right and Ibrahimovic planted a firm header past Luca Castellazzi for his 10th goal of the season.

Ibrahimovic then returned the favour, crossing from the right for Maicon to prod home Inter's second goal in the 75th minute.

Roma, who face Inter next week, kept their faint title hopes alive by edging Siena at the Olympic stadium where Mirko Vucinic's first goal for the club secured the three points.

Roma's win left them in second place on 46 points, seven clear of

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TOP SIX

Team	P	W	D	LG/F	G/A	Pts
Inter Milan	21	18	3	0	46	17
Roma	21	14	4	3	43	17
Palermo	21	12	3	6	37	26
Lazio	21	9	6	6	33	18
Catania	21	8	6	7	29	36
Empoli	21	7	8	6	19	29

Platini confirms overhaul

AFP, Paris



Newly-elected UEFA chief Michel Platini confirmed Sunday he intends to reduce the number of clubs that England, Spain and Italy are allowed to qualify for the Champions League.

Platini beat incumbent chief Lennart Johansson to take over the presidency of European football's ruling body on Friday.

The 51-year-old Frenchman said his proposal was only "a minor" part of his overall project as head of UEFA over the next four years.

However, Platini has effectively confirmed the fears emanating from England, Spain and Italy by saying that of 2009 he hopes to allow only the top three finishers from the domestic league in England, Spain and Italy to qualify

for Europe's premier club competition.

"We need a re-balancing between the countries with big clubs and the clubs in other (UEFA) countries," Platini said.

"England, Spain and Italy are currently allowed to qualify two plus two (two for direct qualification, two for the third preliminary round) but I'm proposing that three clubs be qualified directly for the competition, starting in 2009."

Platini's plan will likely anger the likes of Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson and German legend Franz Beckenbauer, now a top official with Bayern Munich and who openly opposed the Frenchman's bid for the presidency.

Ferguson said after Platini was voted in: "The Champions League has been good."

"If you take away the fourth place teams, the only way to address that is by reducing the competition or by giving other

countries two places.

"But the appeal of the Champions League is when the giants of Spain or Italy or England come up against each other."

Platini however said the Champions League was only a small part of his wider ambitions.

And he suggested his detractors should concentrate on qualifying for the competition by finishing third in their respective leagues.

"There are many more important issues to focus on than who is going to be the fourth team in 2009," he added.

"They should just concentrate on finishing third."

During his campaign Platini was branded a "social romantic" by the German federation president, Theo Zwanziger.

However, the Frenchman said the issue of "solidarity" would remain a constant during his tenure.

"Today we give a lot of money to

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PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona's diminutive forward Javier Saviola (C) tries to sneak in between two Celta Vigo players during their Spanish League encounter at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

Barcelona stay top

AFP, Madrid



The win means that Barcelona preserve their one point lead at the top of La Liga after their nearest rivals Sevilla won 4-2 at Levante.

"This result was a step forward for the team," said Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard.

Barca's Argentine international Javier Saviola headed the opening goal after 34 minutes following a cross from Giovanni van Bronckhorst but the Dutch defender went from hero to villain midway through the second half.

Celta's Nene scored with his right foot shot from the spot after Van Bronckhorst had clumsily brought down Angel Lopez.

Van Bronckhorst was also the protagonist in Barca's second goal

when he fell over on the edge of the area after some minimal contact by Gabriel Tamas.

The Celta players protested strongly but the officials had no doubt and Ronaldinho scored the game's second penalty.

Barca's second half substitute Ludovic Giuly clinched the victory three minutes before the whistle.

Celta have now not won in their last nine games and lie just one place above the relegation zone.

Sevilla got their first win of 2007 after coming out top in a six-goal thriller.

"After three games without a win, the truth is that I was starting to worry we might start slipping down the table," said Sevilla coach

Juande Ramos.

Fredi Kanoute put Sevilla ahead after 35 minutes, hammering home an Alexandr Kerzhakov pass for his 16th goal of the season.

Kerzhakov then got on the scoresheet 10 minutes after the break, connecting with an Alejandro Alfaro cross, his first goal for his new club since moving to Spain from Zenit St Petersburg earlier this month.

Levante midfielder Damiano Tommasi then turned an Alfaro shot into his own net midway through the second half to put Sevilla in command but the hosts then threatened a remarkable comeback.

Frederic Dehu and Gustavo Reggi headed Levante back into contention with two goals in five minutes before Alfaro calmed Sevilla's nerves with a 76th-minute header.

Valencia's six-game winning streak came to an end when the fourth-placed team went down 2-1 at Real Betis.

David Silva caught the Betis defence sleeping and David Villa finished off his good work to put

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TOP SIX

Team	P	W	D	LG/F	G/A	Pts
Barcelona	20	12	6	2	43	18
Sevilla	20	13	2	5	41	21
Real Madrid	20	12	2	6	28	17
Valencia	20	11	3	6	29	17
Atletico	20	10	6	4	26	14
Zaragoza	20	9	5	6	31	21



PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal midfielder Cesc Fabregas grabs the ball as he lays on the ground after being fouled during their FA Cup fourth round clash against Bolton Wanderers at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday.