



Inter Milan forward Hernan Crespo (L) congratulates Adriano after his strike partner bagged a first -minute goal during their Serie A match against Chievo in Verona on Sunday.

Inter continue unabated

AFP, Rome



Leaders Inter Milan maintained their 11-point lead at the top of the table with a 2-0 win at Chievo on Sunday as Serie A resumed after the suspension imposed following last week's riot in Sicily.

Domestic football was halted after a policeman was killed when fans went on the rampage at the derby match between Catania and Palermo, forcing the Italian government to introduce strict new security measures to curb hooliganism.

Clubs whose stadium security is not in line with legal requirements are being forced to play their games behind closed doors and Chievo's was one of four grounds without fans.

A minute's silence was observed at the start of all of the day's matches in memory of Filippo Raciti, the policeman who died after being attacked by Catania fans on February 2.

Inter Milan coach Roberto Mancini slammed the decision to play matches behind closed doors.

"To play without the public makes no sense," he told SKY Italia.

"It would be better to stop (the championship) altogether and restart in September when everything has been sorted out."

Goals from Adriano and Hernan Crespo sealed Inter's victory in Verona and extended the club's Serie A record of consecutive league wins to 15 games, equalling the best winning sequence in the Spanish and German leagues.

Spain's Real Madrid won 15 games on the trot in the 1960-61 season, while Germany's Bayern Munich equalled the feat in the 2004-05 and 2005-06 seasons.

Second-placed Roma remain 11 points off the pace after their 3-0 home win over Parma at the Olympic stadium, which was open to fans.

Inter, the reigning champions, have 60 points from their 22 matches played, followed by Roma on 49.

Empoli climbed to fourth with a 1-0 victory at third-placed Palermo, while Lazio are tied with Catania for

11th place after both sides drew.

Lazio were held to a goalless draw at Atalanta, while Catania, whose match at Sicilian rivals Messina kicked-off an hour late due a waterlogged pitch ended 1-1.

AC Milan boosted their hopes of a Champions League spot after a 2-1 home win over Livorno at the San Siro where new signing Ronaldo made his debut, coming on as a substitute in the 63rd minute.

The San Siro was open but only to its 37,000 season-ticket holders after the club updated their security arrangements.

Reggina boosted their survival hopes with a 2-1 win at Torino while Fiorentina beat Udinese 2-0. Cagliari drew 2-2 with Siena and Sampdoria defeated bottom club Ascoli 2-0.

Inter got off to a perfect start at Chievo.

Dejan Stankovic fed Adriano who was forced wide, but despite shooting from a very acute angle the Brazil international's left-footed drive from the edge of the box went in off the post.

Chievo went close to levelling in the 37th minute when Victor Obinna's goalbound effort was

superbly intercepted by Brazilian defender Maxwell.

Inter went further ahead six minutes after the break when Crespo's right-footed shot bobbed awkwardly, completely deceiving Chievo keeper Vincenzo Sicignano.

Francesco Totti gave Roma the lead against Parma with a flicked header before further second-half goals from Simone Perrotta and Rodrigo Taddei wrapped up the three points.

Czech midfielder Marek Jankulovski was AC Milan's match-winner with a fierce 25-yard shot.

Gennaro Gattuso gave AC Milan the lead before Livorno captain Cristiano Lucarelli equalised.

TOP SIX							
Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Inter Milan	22	19	3	0	48	17	60
Roma	22	15	4	3	46	17	49
Palermo	23	13	3	7	39	28	42
Empoli	22	8	8	6	20	19	32
Lazio	22	9	7	6	33	18	31
Catania	23	8	7	8	31	39	31

Eto'o snubs Barca

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard was prepared to wait for an explanation from striker Samuel Eto'o, after the Cameroon international refused to come on as a late substitute in Sunday's Primera Liga match.

Barca were beating Racing Santander 2-0 in the Nou Camp thanks to goals from Ronaldinho but Eto'o, who is returning from four months out with a knee injury, said he did not want to play the last few minutes.

"Eto'o warmed up but afterwards told my assistant he did not want to come on. It's a shame but I haven't been able to speak to him to find out the reasons," Rijkaard told the news conference after the game.

Later on Sunday, Rijkaard told radio station Cadena Ser: "It is best to sleep on it. I have to hear his side and we'll probably speak on Monday."

Barca president Joan Laporta told reporters: "Samuel has suffered for four months and needs to be playing and scoring goals. We have to stand by him. Rijkaard is an expert in these situations and knows how to handle them."

Eto'o made his return from injury in the goalless draw away to Osasuna on February 4, coming on to play the last five minutes as a substitute.

Jankulovski pens new Milan deal

REUTERS, Rome

Czech Republic defender Marek Jankulovski has extended his contract with AC Milan until June 2011, the Serie A club said.

The 29-year-old joined Milan from Udinese at the start of last season.

He scored the winner in a 2-1 victory over Livorno that lifted Milan to sixth place in Serie A on Sunday.

Several of Milan's leading players have recently signed extensions until the end of the 2010-11 season, including midfielders Gennaro Gattuso and Clarence Seedorf, and playmaker Kaka.

Marseille juggernaut halted

AFP, Paris



Lens handed out a 3-1 beating to Sochaux on Sunday to consolidate second place in the French league, 11 points adrift of leaders Lyon, to move them closer to a Champions League berth next season.

In Sunday's other game Marseille failed in their bid to end a 29-year winless spell at Bordeaux, losing 1-0 to keep them in fourth.

Lens came up with the perfect reply to Lyon's 1-0 win over Lorient 24 hours earlier -- the five time champions' first success of the year -- in emphatic fashion.

Vitorino Hilton, with a header, and Seydou Keita had them 2-0 up inside half an hour with Aruna Dindane adding their third, and his ninth of the season, on 58 minutes.

Olivier Monterrubio, signed from Rennes in the final hours of the January transfer window, played a decisive part in the victory, setting up the opening and closing goals.

Dusko Tosik came up with a late consolation for Sochaux who are placed sixth, 18 points off Lyon.

Lens boss Francois Gillot said: "There are only three or four teams who are in contention for a Champions League spot, but with 14 games left a lot can still happen."

He added: "You have to pay tribute to the entire team, the defence, midfield and forwards, who produced a great game. We could have scored five in the end."

Marseille manager Albert Emon had noted before the trip to Bordeaux most of his side weren't even born when the south coast club last won there in 1977.

And Julian Foubert's 74th minute close range blast ensured that dubious distinction will last at least another 12 months.

Marseille are lying 17 points off Lyon who took on Lorient aiming to avoid a fourth defeat of 2007 and they duly accomplished that mission thanks to Fred, the Brazilian striker who produced the only goal of the game in the eighth minute.

Lyon's France international keeper Gregory Coupet set Fred up with a long ball and the striker produced an unstoppable drive to beat Lorient stopper Remy Riout from 30 metres.

Manager Gerard Houllier said: "I'm very happy to have won. I'm proud and satisfied with the players' performance in tricky conditions."

"We know what we've got to do to become champions. I liked this match because I feel Lyon's spirit has returned."

Third-placed Lille lost 1-0 at Toulouse, with the goal scored in injury time by their own Gregory Tafforeau.

Paris Saint Germain beat Monaco 4-2 to register their first win since the arrival of Paul Le

Guen as manager and their first since October in the league.

The valuable three points left the struggling capital side one point above the relegation zone in fifth from bottom.

Amare Diane opened the scoring after five minutes, with the second an own-goal from Monaco keeper Flavio Roma.

PSG's winter recruit from Argentina, Marcelo Gallardo, got the third in the 84th minute with Uruguayan Cristian Rodriguez completing a good night's work.

Monaco's second half goals came from Frederic Piquionne, who then had a penalty saved by Mickael Landreau, with Jan Koller coming up with a face savour late on.

"That will do us some good in terms of the table. We showed lots of heart against Monaco who played well," said former Rangers manager Le Guen.

On a night when the goals were raining down Valenciennes swept aside Nantes, with Fabien Barthez between the nets, 5-2 with Steve Savidon celebrating a four timer.

TOP SIX							
Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Lyon	24	17	3	4	42	17	54
Lens	24	12	7	5	38	27	43
Lille	24	10	9	5	30	21	39
Marseille	24	11	4	9	31	24	37
St Etienne	24	10	6	8	38	30	36
Sochaux	24	9	9	6	25	25	36

Wenger defends Henry



INTERNET, undated

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger backed Thierry Henry's stance against time-wasting after his side's 2-1 win over Wigan at the Emirates Stadium. Captain Henry exchanged words with goalkeeper Kirkland, taunting the goalkeeper with the ball after Arsenal equalised through Fitz

Hall's second-half own goal.

"Thierry was upset -- but what he did, for me, was right," said Wenger afterwards.

"People do not pay money to see people waste time, they come to see football.

"Okay, he should not have done that but it is not the biggest insult we have seen in football."

"The time-wasting started in the first half -- the goalkeeper kept crossing over his area to take kicks."

Henry and Kirkland looked to have made up as they left the field, with the Arsenal striker claiming afterwards that the altercation had been good-natured.

"Kirkland started to waste time from the first minute on, so I do not know if you can call that fair play or not," Henry said.

"There was a funny side to it, but it was a bit annoying. We were laughing about it actually."

Crespo enjoys Inter form

INTERNET, undated

Hernan Crespo could not hide his satisfaction after scoring his 10th goal of the season with Inter. "We did well today," he said.

The Nerazzurri equalled Real Madrid and Bayern Munich's European record by securing their 15th consecutive League win, defeating Chievo 2-0 in an empty Stadio Bentegodi due to the new security restrictions.

"I'm pleased with the goal I scored," Crespo said after the match.

"The Chievo keeper made a great save denying me a goal in the first half, maybe he then helped me a bit when I actually did net the ball," added the Argentine, who drew level with Zlatan Ibrahimovic as Inter's top scorer this season.

"I'm satisfied with the team's performance in a match which wasn't easy. The playing surface didn't make it possible to move the ball around quickly or keep our balance."

"Also, it's not easy to start playing again after a week's break. We did well, let's continue like this," concluded Crespo.

Pompey hopeful about Mendes

INTERNET, undated

Portsmouth are hopeful Pedro Mendes will be fit to face Blackburn in their next Premiership game despite being carried off after a horror tackle by Manchester City's Joey Barton on Sunday.

The Portuguese midfielder is waiting for the results of a scan of his torn heel that appeared to be stamped on by Barton.

Mendes was left on crutches and taking painkillers after the game but did not go to hospital and was walking freely at the club's training ground today.

Pompey do not play again until a week on Sunday at Ewood Park, because of this weekend's fifth-round FA Cup commitments. Rovers play the winners of the Arsenal-Bolton replay while Pompey were knocked out in round four by Manchester United.

And if Mendes comes back against Blackburn that will be only two days less than his return from the even more sickening incident he suffered against City earlier this season when Ben Thatcher - now with Charlton - laid him out with a forearm smash.

Mendes was in hospital on a drip after being unconscious on the pitch on that occasion but missed only one game, Pompey's 4-0 win at Middlesbrough on August 28 before an international weekend break halted the Premiership and allowed him to come back against Wigan on September 9.

Arminia coach steps down

INTERNET, undated

Thomas von Heesen has stepped down as Arminia Bielefeld head coach following his troops' 1-0 loss at Bayern Munich.

"Before the match I had agreed with the club to terminate my contract on Monday," he said at the press conference after the game.

Arminia have not won any of the last nine matches.

Von Heesen two weeks ago announced he will leave Bielefeld this summer to join a bigger club with better perspectives.

Assistant coach Frank Geideck has already agreed to take over next summer and is now expected to take the reins earlier than scheduled.

"We agreed before the match - no matter the result - that I will step down on Monday," said Von Heesen.

"I am convinced Frank Geideck is the right choice. It is important to get back on track for Arminia. I am sure they will avoid the drop."

"The reason behind my decision is that we didn't win enough points in 2007."

Kanchelskis retires

INTERNET, undated

Former Manchester United winger Andrei Kanchelskis has decided to retire from football.

The 38-year-old, who spent the twilight of his career with Saturn Moscow and Krylia Sovetov, was released by his last club Samara at the end of the 2006 campaign and has now decided to hang up his boots.

"You need to leave at the right time," he told Sport Express.

"Now seems a suitable moment to begin a new chapter in my footballing life," added Kanchelskis, who will be deciding his plans in the coming weeks.

During his time at Old Trafford, the flying winger won two Premiership titles and an FA Cup before leaving to join Everton in 1995.

He had further spells at Fiorentina, Rangers, Manchester City, Southampton and Al-Hilal in Saudi Arabia, before returning to Russia in 2004.

Despite being born in Ukraine, Kanchelskis opted to play for Russia following the fall of the Soviet Union, winning 36 caps and scoring five goals.

Robben slams critics

AFP, London



Chelsea winger Arjen Robben has hit back at the critics who claim he is injured too often.

Robben has been accused of not being tough enough to cope with the inevitable rough treatment handed out to flair players and his absence with a series of injuries this season has only added fuel to the fire.

He struggled with calf, hamstring and ankle ligament problems for several months but he marked his return by coming off the bench to create Chelsea's second goal in their 3-0 victory against Middlesbrough on Saturday.

The Dutch international was sent on with Chelsea leading 1-0 and less than 60 seconds later his run and shot had deflected in off Abel Xavier to settle any

nerves at Stamford Bridge.

Robben insists he has been as frustrated as anyone by his injuries and he is determined to make up for lost time by helping Chelsea enjoy a successful end to their campaign.

The London club face an FA Cup fifth round tie against Norwich or Blackpool on Saturday, followed by the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie against Porto and then the League Cup final against Arsenal.

Robben said: "I can imagine people seeing me playing well one week and then out again, people thinking 'he's always injured' and I can assure them there's only one person the most frustrated and that's myself."

"I always work hard to come back as quickly as possible. I always get good support when I do, so that continually keeps me going."

"The fans have been good for me so I want to give them some-

thing back. They must be tired of this as well."

"I need to get a lot of games under my belt, play consecutively a lot of matches. I can do a lot of things for the team."

Robben's return after his latest injury at Liverpool could provide a timely boost for Jose Mourinho's side as they prepare for a decisive run of fixtures, but the winger just wants a change of luck.

"I have looked at the Liverpool injury in slow motion but there was nothing I could do," Robben said.

"I was out for two or so weeks over Christmas, came back in form against Wigan and then at Liverpool went up for a header and landed very hard."

"It feels like I've had no luck -- it's hard. I've had to come back again. Sometimes it is very difficult, you get frustrated, but when you're getting back to training, it is important to stay as positive as you can."

Makaay ends losing streak

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich celebrated their first victory since the appointment of Ottmar Hitzfeld as manager with a 1-0 home win against Arminia Bielefeld on Sunday.

Hitzfeld returned for his second spell in charge of the Bavarian giants last week but suffered defeat against Nuremberg in his first match in charge of the team he led to the 2001 champions League crown.

But there was better fortune for the defending Bundesliga champions here when Roy Makaay fired them to a vital win with an eighth minute goal.

Makaay, watched by a 69,000 full house at the Allianz Arena, raced clear of Arminia's Heiko Westermann to latch on to Lucio's towering clearance before slotting a tightly angled shot past keeper Mathias Hain.

Bayern were far from scintillating after the first half but Arminia never looked like breaching their tight defence.

The victory left them in fourth and cut their deficit over leaders Schalke 04 to 11 points.

In Sunday's other game fifth-

placed Nuremberg beat VfL Bochum with two late goals from Ivan Saenko.

Schalke consolidated their position at the top of the table on Saturday with a 2-0 win over Hertha Berlin to motor six points clear of Werder Bremen, 4-1 losers to VfB Stuttgart.

Second-half goals from Kevin Kuranyi and former Rangers winger Peter Lovenkrands did the business for Mirko Slomka's Schalke who can now dream of winning the Bundesliga for the first time since 1958.

Slomka made just one change from the Bremen victory with Brazilian Rafinha returning after suspension at right back, relegating Tim Hoogland to the bench.

Schalke appeared to be feeling the pressure and were not playing to their potential before the break, though they turned up the heat in the second 45 minutes to finish off Hertha with two goals in the space of 11 minutes.

Kuranyi, who scored his 15th international goal in Germany's 3-1 friendly victory over Switzerland on Wednesday, bagged his ninth club goal of the season in the 64th minute.

Dane Lovenkrands hit

Schalke's second with 15 minutes to go to add to the brace he scored last weekend against Bremen in their top-of-the-table battle.

As for Werder, who led the championship at the halfway stage, they are losing their way with Bremen keeper Tim Wiese being beaten four times at third-placed Stuttgart who, admittedly, have not lost at home since August.

Roberto Hilbert, Marco Streller, Mario Gomez and Ludovic Magnin got on the scoresheet for Stuttgart who were particularly pleased with Gomez who also set up two other goals following his strike in midweek on his Germany debut.

The 21-year-old Gomez is also now the league top scorer with 12 goals.

TOP SIX							
Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Schalke	21	15	3	3	38	19	48
Bremen	21	13	3	5	53	28	42
Stuttgart	21	12	5	4	37	26	41
Bayern	21	11	4	6	33	25	37
Nuremberg	21	7	12	2	30	17	33
Hertha	21	9	6	6	32	33	33



PHOTO: INTERNET

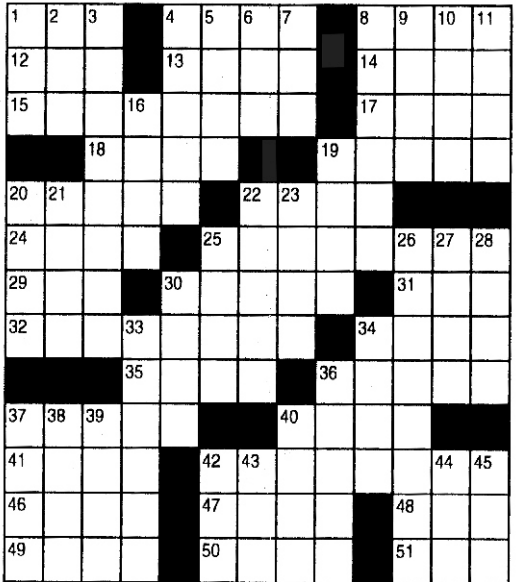
Bayern Munich forward Roy Makaay sets off on his trademark celebration after scoring the only goal of the game against Arminia Bielefeld at the Allianz Arena in Munich on Sunday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 High-lander's hat
4 Strike-breaker
8 Moistens
12 Epoch
13 Ice-cream holder
14 Idle or Ambler
15 Tenet
17 Wee bit
18 Horse-shoe site
19 Bad lighting?
20 Gather greedily
22 Hourglass fill
24 Sea eagle
25 "Ragtime" author
29 Island souvenir
30 Nasal passage
31 Biblical verb ending
32 Paper
34 London gallery
35 "You Go — Head"

DOWN
1 Slight bit
2 Past
3 Grease monkey
4 Seafood selection
5 Hairdo codes
6 Landers or Coulter
7 Spelling contest
8 Nut
9 Piccadilly statue
10 One of the Jackson 5
11 Read bar codes
16 Moved quickly
19 Picnic invaders
20 Mained
21 Sandwich treat
22 Chastity's dad
23 — above the rest
25 "Carpe —"
26 Alt
27 Preminger of Hollywood
28 "It's hot in here!"
30 Urban blight
33 180's
34 Helen's home
36 Bracelet site
37 Remain
38 Bill Clinton's hometown
39 Destruction
40 Con job
42 Mutt
43 — Locka, Fla.
44 Disen-cumber
45 Morse E

Solution time: 25 mins.
RAPT OWL AIDE
UTAH LEA EWIT
TOAL BEN SPEC
SPARS GOATS
FATTS REB VIA
EROS JAR KELP
EER GET ANDER
RAITONROUGER
OPUS PEELEER
EDIT EYE POCO
MUSE YEN AGHA
SEED SAD DOR



CRYPTOQUIP

Q G K P V Y V H U K P N K H D C
M K H B U E K V C K F Q D N G G D C
M D C K . B T Z Y T Z E F Y V E E
G D X V G V U U B Y E V X U K H .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MOTTO OF A FATHER WHO DECIDED TO HOME-SCHOOL ALL OF HIS CHILDREN: "TO TEACH HIS OWN."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals P