



PHOTO: AFP

Wolfsburg striker Diego Kilimowicz (L) falls under the challenge of Stuttgart midfielder Roberto Hilbert during their Bundesliga clash at Stuttgart on Saturday.

# Schalke stuttering

AFP, Berlin



Schalke 04 striker Halil Altintop finally broke his 12-match goal drought as the Bundesliga leaders took their first points in three games on Saturday.

But VfB Stuttgart's push for a Champions League place next season suffered a setback when the league's leading goalscorer Mario Gomez was ruled out for six weeks because of a knee injury picked up in the 0-0 draw with Wolfsburg.

Turkish international Altintop scored his first goal since bagging two against Mainz last November with a volley after just two minutes in the 1-1 draw away to Hanover 96.

Altintop was delighted to find the net again before former Manchester City defender Michael Tarnat put Hanover back on level terms just two minutes later.

And Hanover's Hungarian inter-

national Szabolcs Huszti forced Schalke keeper Manuel Neuer into a good save when he drove his shot goal bound as the home side piled on the pressure in the dying stages.

Schalke coach Mirko Slomka said: "In the first half we had a small advantage. After half-time we fought really well and we had a bit of luck towards the end."

Third-placed Stuttgart suffered a massive setback when Gomez, who has scored 13 Bundesliga goals, damaged knee ligaments.

The injury will keep him out of the Euro 2008 qualifier against the Czech Republic later this month having only made a goal-scoring debut last month in Germany's 3-1 win over Switzerland.

The 21-year-old striker suffered the injury just before half-time, giving Stuttgart coach Armin Veh plenty to worry about.

He said: "I was worried before the game about knocks to several players and now I have more concerns. Mario's injury is a bitter loss for us."

Bottom side Borussia

Moenchengladbach had a rare win in front of a home crowd of 40,000.

The Bundesliga's basement side took the lead over mid-table Hertha Berlin with a bullet header from striker Nando Rafael with half an hour gone.

The visitors got back on level terms when Berlin's Argentinian striker Christian Gimenez scored with a well-taken goal.

But having shaken off his marker, Rafael used his head again to smash the ball past diving Berlin keeper Christian Fiedler.

And 21-year-old Michael Delura made it safe for Gladbach with a third goal just before the final whistle.

Gladbach coach Jos Luhukay paid tribute to his side's fighting spirit and said: "This victory proves to the team that real commitment always pays off."

After Aachen forward Sascha Roesler poached a goal at Cottbus, there was drama when striker Jan Schlaudraff missed a penalty just before half-time only to see Sascha Dumm shown a red card for abusing the referee moments later.

But 10-man Aachen rounded off a 2-0 win when midfielder Sergio Pinto stabbed the ball home after a mix-up in the home side's defence.

Mainz, seemingly doomed to relegation before the winter break, have now pulled themselves up to 10th with a 1-0 win at home to Arminia Bielefeld with a 51st minute penalty by Danish defender Leon Andreasen, as they continue their good run with only one defeat in the last nine games.

Bochum's Greek striker Theofanis Gekas bagged two goals in his side's win at home to Borussia Dortmund, who are in danger of falling into the relegation dogfight with seven clubs just one defeat away from the relegation zone.

Sunday's big game sees Bayern Munich, fresh from their Champions League win over Real Madrid, taking on second place Werder Bremen at the Allianz Arena.

# Spain hails the Messi-ah

AFP, Barcelona



Lionel Messi assured himself of a place in Barcelona history with all three of their goals in the 3-3 draw with rivals Real Madrid and the Spanish media

were not slow to acclaim him on Sunday. "Messi, Messi, Messi," ran the same headline on the front pages of both the Barcelona-based Spanish sports dailies El Mundo Deportivo and Sport in tribute to the feat, or feet, of the man who has been widely dubbed the New Maradona.

Arguably the world's most talented teenage football player, Messi does not turn 20 until June, but he left the Real defenders breathless during the game and the Spanish media exhausting their vocabulary after it.

"Not Ronaldinho, not Eto'o, the big winner on the night was Leo Messi," ran the first sentence of an editorial in Marca, the biggest selling Spanish newspaper.

His last goal came a minute into injury time to salvage a point for the stuttering Spanish champions, whose defence of the Champions League also came to an end at Liverpool last Tuesday.

"Messi has a lot of talent and saved us from defeat," commented Barca coach Frank Rijkaard with his usual economy of words.

The player himself was aware that he had achieved something in excess of even his own superior standards, not least because he has only been back in a Barca jersey for four weeks after missing three months with a broken foot.

"This was a special game. I've played two games against Madrid before, both in the Bernabeu, they went well but I didn't score," said Messi.

"There was still a bill to pay and, luckily, I was on form and above all scored three goals. The bill is resolved now.

"The sending off (of Barcelona defender Oleguer Presas just before the break) influenced what happened in the game. I think with 11 men on the field we would have definitely won.

"But under the circumstances a draw was fine and we showed that we've got pride," added Messi.

Even the Real coach Fabio Capello had words of praise for the hero of what Marca and many other newspapers called 'the best of the recent classics'.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Spanish newspaper Deportivo Mundo features Barca starlet Lionel Messi celebrating one of his goals in their pulsating draw against arch rivals Real Madrid under the caption "Messi, Messi, Messi."

## Long layoff for Gomez

AFP, Berlin

The Bundesliga's top scorer this season, VfB Stuttgart striker Mario Gomez, will be out of action for six weeks after injuring knee ligaments in Saturday's goalless draw against VfL Wolfsburg.

Stuttgart coach Armin Veh confirmed that scans had shown the 21-year-old had suffered a serious injury after he was substituted shortly before half-time.

"He will be out for at least six weeks with torn ligaments. It will really affect us. It's a bitter blow," Veh said.

The lanky forward has scored 13 times this season to lift Stuttgart into the top three of the Bundesliga.

Gomez, who scored on his full international debut for Germany in the 3-1 win over Switzerland in February, will be ruled out of the Euro 2008 qualifier against the Czech Republic on March 24.

## Chelsea silent on Terry contract

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea chose not to comment today on reports that contract negotiations with captain John Terry have collapsed.

Terry may return from his horror head injury to face Tottenham in the FA Cup quarterfinal at Stamford Bridge tomorrow.

If he is unable to agree a new deal with the Blues Terry could use FIFA rules to buy out the two years left on his current deal, which is worth a reported £90,000-a-week.

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho insisted yesterday that the club would do all it could to keep its English stars.

Mourinho said: 'We are in a good situation, we don't have players whose contracts end this summer.'

'We don't have to make quick decisions about players who are in their last year.'

'Everybody knows about the players we want to keep and Chelsea will do everything they can to keep them.'

'In the case of John and Frank Lampard and other players, Chelsea will do everything to make them stay.'

Meanwhile Kenyon says the club are hopeful that Lampard will re-sign soon.

Kenyon added: 'We have had some initial discussions. Clearly he has two years left on his contract and we would expect him to enter into serious negotiations quickly with us and hopefully re-sign him for the future as we see Frank as a long term player.'

## Brescia thump Juve

AFP, Rome

Juventus' promotion hopes were dented after a 3-1 defeat against Brescia in the Italian second division on Saturday.

Despite their second loss of the season, Juve held on to top spot in Serie B as second-placed Napoli could only manage a 1-1 draw at Rimini.

Juve's defeat took place on neutral ground at Mantova - the stadium where they suffered their first league defeat - as Brescia's stadium is not yet in line with security regulations.

Matteo Serafini scored a first-half hat-trick for Brescia, while Alessandro Del Piero was on target for Juve. Juve coach Didier Deschamps refused to make excuses for his team's lacklustre performance.

"We weren't really there today and we had problems both physically and psychologically," said the Frenchman.

"It wasn't down to individuals, the whole team played badly. We prepared for the match like all the others, but we were too slow and too predictable."

"Thankfully we play again on Tuesday, and that gives us the chance to put things right."

Juve keeper Gianluigi Buffon took some consolation from Napoli's failure to fully capitalise on his team's loss.

"The only positive to come out of today is that we are still top," said the Italian World Cup winner.

Juventus were demoted from Serie A last season and given a nine-point penalty for their role in the Italian match-fixing scandal.

# Boateng faces action

AFP, Middlesbrough



Middlesbrough skipper George Boateng faces a Football Association charge after suggesting referee Rob Styles is singling him out for unfavourable treatment this season.

Styles awarded Manchester United the second half penalty which ultimately earned the Premiership leaders a 2-2 draw on Saturday and an FA Cup quarterfinal replay at Old Trafford on March 19.

Boateng, who claimed he was simply defending his face as a Ryan Giggs corner struck both his hands, was the player penalised and it is not the first time he has fallen foul of the official.

Earlier this season Styles dismissed the Middlesbrough midfielder at Arsenal, while he lay lying on the touchline nursing a serious knee injury.

For Boateng, Saturday's subsequent punishment was no coincidence. "I am disappointed in the referee," said the scorer of the 46th minute goal which gave Middlesbrough a 2-1 lead in a thrilling encounter on Teesside.

"He sends me off at Arsenal for getting injured and then he gives a bad decision again. I was out of action for

seven or eight weeks."

Styles refused to respond to Boateng's criticism but Boro manager Gareth Southgate simply added fuel to the fire when he added: "You tend to get those decisions given against you when you play the bigger sides."

"At the time I saw the incident I thought it was harsh. He was only a few yards away when the ball was flicked against his hands but we don't complain about referee's decisions."

"It's unfortunate that George has suffered in that way (with the same referee) twice. But there's nothing that we can do about it and we go to Old Trafford in high spirits. We've won there twice in the last two years."

For United what promises to be another successful season at home and abroad is still very much alive on three fronts.

A place in the quarterfinal of this season's Champions League, a healthy domestic lead over Chelsea in the race for the Premiership title and a home replay against Middlesbrough for an FA Cup semi-final place fills the club's manager, Sir Alex Ferguson, with confidence.

"The display against Middlesbrough was one of our best performances for weeks," he said.

"The rhythm was back, the pitch was good and we just clicked."

"We have a chance to win the replay and the name of the game is to keep

winning. That's the best recipe for any team and the best energy enhancer of all time."

United, like Middlesbrough, now face the prospect of two domestic fixtures in three days before this month's break for international fixtures and Ferguson, in particular, is promising the full use of a squad fighting for success on three fronts.

"We will utilise the full pool of players just like we did against Reading in the previous round of the FA Cup," he added.

"We have a game at Bolton on Saturday and there'll be one or two changes for that match. There will be one or two more for the replay a week on Monday."

England international Wayne Rooney fired Manchester United ahead in the 23rd minute when he stroked home a Giggs pass but the Middlesbrough midfielder Lee Catmerle equalised a minute before the interval.

Southgate's team was 2-1 up within a minute of the restart after Boateng headed home a corner from the England international Stewart Downing.

However, Boateng clearly handled a Giggs corner 22 minutes from time and the Portuguese midfielder, Cristiano Ronaldo, dispatched his 17th goal of the season from the penalty spot.

# Henry vows strong return



Football

AFP, London

Thierry Henry admitted he was devastated to be ruled out for the rest of the season, but the Arsenal captain is determined to return better than ever.

Henry will be out of action for up to three months after damaging stomach and groin muscles in Wednesday's Champions League exit to PSV

Eindhoven.

The France striker has been plagued by injuries this season and this latest blow left him at a low ebb.

"I am obviously devastated. I will miss the rest of the season. It is a tough end to what has been a difficult season for me. It has been very frustrating," he told the Sun newspaper.

"But I hope to get back to full fitness soon and will then look forward to having a great season with Arsenal next year."

"This setback will make me even

more determined, yet it has certainly been one thing after another.

"Last season was a very long one for me, right up to the Champions League final and then the World Cup final with France. I only had a few weeks' break and then the Premiership started."

"First of all, there was the sciatic nerve problem, which kept me out for a while. Then, most recently of all, the foot injury. Now these injuries against PSV."

With Henry struggling to stay fit, Arsenal have slumped out of three competitions in 11 days. He is not looking forward to watching from the sidelines but believes the Gunners can still end the season on a high by clinching a place in the Champions League.

"Any player will tell you it is not nice sitting in the stands watching our team play," he said. "You would always rather be out there on the pitch."

"But, hopefully, our young team can enjoy a good end to the season."

"People must remember, most of them are still young and they have to be given time."

## Villarreal beat Levante

REUTERS, Madrid

Goals from Uruguay striker Diego Forlan and Denmark international Jon Dahl Tomasson handed Villarreal a 2-0 Primera Liga win at struggling Levante on Saturday.

Forlan put Villarreal in front after nine minutes, curling a superb right-foot shot round keeper Jose Molina.

Levante put Villarreal under heavy pressure for long periods and had several good chances but the visitors secured the victory when Tomasson fired a shot under Molina 17 minutes from time.

Forlan went off midway through the second half with a leg injury.

Villarreal's fourth away win of the season pushed them up to 11th place. Levante are two points above the relegation zone with all their immediate rivals yet to play this weekend. Barcelona host arch-rivals Real Madrid at the Nou Camp in Saturday's late match.

THIERRY HENRY

### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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8 Treat to a makeover  
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13 Meadow bet  
14 Roulette  
15 Ear-related  
16 Branch  
17 Unruly hair  
18 Boa, for one  
20 Actor  
22 Gilbert and Sullivan specialty  
26 "Lonesome George" of TV lore  
29 Sturdy wood  
30 Droop  
31 Gumbo ingredient  
32 Aliment  
33 Farm measure  
34 Cravat

35 Carrier in 36-Across  
36 Bullock-Reeves movie  
37 Iron Butterfly's genre  
40 Refuse to relinquish  
41 First game of the season  
45 Twosomes  
47 Historic time  
49 Actress Campbell  
50 Possesses  
51 Roulette bet  
52 Genealogy chart  
53 Otherwise  
54 Piggan  
55 Lancaster foe  
21 Stir-fry pan  
23 Hugh Laurie TV series  
24 Exceptional  
25 On in years  
26 Morbid form of rock  
27 Tom Joad, e.g.  
28 Burglars' entrances  
32 "Rubber baby buggy —"  
33 Galore  
35 "See ya"  
36 Fool  
38 Piece of poetry  
39 Sycophant  
42 Pianist Peter  
43 Eternally  
44 Stench  
45 "Annabel Lee" writer  
46 Piercing tool  
48 Pensioner's status (Abbr.)

Solution time: 25 mins.



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### CRYPTOQUIP

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Z RVXI V ORIVG GQQGR?  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NEW POLICE PROGRAM ABOUT CUSTOMS AGENTS AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: "LAW AND BORDER."  
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals P