



Liverpool's lanky striker Peter Crouch (C) runs for joy after scoring the first of his hatrick against Arsenal during their Premiership match at Anfield on Saturday.

# Gunners live Anfield nightmare

AFP, Liverpool



Peter Crouch hit a classic hatrick as Liverpool launched their new era under new American ownership in style with a 4-1 hammering of Arsenal at Anfield on Saturday.

The giant England striker marked his return from a broken nose with three well-taken goals while Danish defender Daniel Agger also found the net to help Rafa Benitez's side leapfrog Arsenal into third spot in the table ahead of next Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final with PSV Eindhoven.

It was just the performance Benitez had demanded with new owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett sitting in the directors box after completing their takeover of the Merseyside club earlier in the week.

Arsenal were second-best throughout and now face the real threat of ending the season outside the top three for only the second

time since Arsene Wenger took charge of the London club 11 years ago.

Having been knocked out of both the FA Cup and League Cup by Arsenal in the space of a few days in January, Liverpool were looking to prevent Wenger's side from becoming the first club to beat them at home three times in one season.

Liverpool had failed to score in their previous three outings yet found themselves ahead as early as the fourth minute as Crouch made a memorable return from injury.

The striker side-footed home from close range after good work from former Arsenal winger Jermaine Pennant allowed Spanish full-back Alvaro Arbeloa to fire in a low cross to the near post.

Arsenal's season effectively finished when they were eliminated from the Champions League by PSV Eindhoven earlier in the month and they spent most of the game as though their minds were already drifting towards the summer break.

Jose Reina did not have a save

to make before half time although the Liverpool keeper was relieved to see Emmanuel Adebayor's powerful 17th minute header land on the roof of the net moments after Jamie Carragher's crucial challenge had denied Julio Baptista a chance to equalise.

Liverpool's slick passing and eagerness to press forward at every opportunity had Arsenal pinned inside their own half for long periods and it required a superb stop by Jens Lehmann to prevent the excellent Crouch from making it 2-0 in the 22nd minute.

Having seen their side concede 12 goals to Arsenal in three games at Anfield earlier in the season, this was just the response Liverpool fans had demanded.

William Gallas came to his side's rescue when he cut out Mark Gonzalez's 25th minute centre with Crouch lurking dangerously inside the Arsenal area before the busy Crouch continued his superb match by firing across the face of goal with the visitors defence chasing shadows.

However Crouch did not have to wait long for his 15th goal of the

season, the seven-million-pound signing from Southampton leaping high to nod Fabio Aurelio's cross beyond the reach of Lehmann to seal the points in the 35th minute.

Arsenal's cause was not helped when Lehmann allowed his frustration to boil over, the German keeper booked for arguing with the referee at the end of the first half.

Wenger's side almost reduced the deficit when Adebayor let fly in the 54th minute only for his effort to hit the post before Agger sealed an impressive Liverpool victory.

He took his tally for the season to three after flicking Aurelio's free-kick beyond Lehmann in the 60th minute.

Arsenal pulled a goal back 12 minutes later through Gallas, who bundled the ball over the line after Reina had parried Adebayor's effort.

But there was no way back for Arsenal and Crouch completed his first hat-trick for the club after a superb piece of footwork in the box allowed him to collect a Pennant cross and evade the attention of two Arsenal defenders before firing a left-foot shot past Lehmann.

## Swimming

AFP, Melbourne

Michael Phelps banked his sixth gold medal of the world championships Saturday and Australia set a new world record, but their heroics were overshadowed by doping allegations against Ian Thorpe.

Phelps dethroned defending 100m butterfly champion Ian Crocker with a storming last 20 metres to touch in 50.77 seconds, the second fastest time in history and the first time the American has gone below 51 seconds.

His last-gasp victory drew him level with Thorpe as the only swimmers to win six gold at the same championships and keeps him on course for an amazing eight titles with the 400m individual medley and the 4x100 medley relay to come.

"That's how I won the Olympic medal," he said of his narrow win. "You have to nail the finish as best you can. I tried to get my hand on the wall and try to take it out in the first 50 as well."

His disappointed teammate

Crocker took the silver in 50.82 with Albert Subirats Altes of Venezuela winning the bronze.

"It's never quite the race you want to (have). It was alright," said Crocker. "I always want to go faster. I always want to put my hand first on the wall."

The on-fire Australian women held off the United States to win the 4x100m medley relay gold medal, beating their own world record when anchor Libby Lenton touched in 3:55.74.

It was Lenton's fourth gold of the meet and Leisel Jones's third.

The US took silver and China won the bronze.

While Phelps added another chapter to his extraordinary story, Thorpe was reeling from a French newspaper report that claimed a sample of his last May showed abnormally high readings for testosterone and luteinizing hormone.

FINA said it had lodged an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport on a doping test, seeking clarification of the adverse analysis, although it did not name the Australian swimmer who was poolside Saturday.

The threat to the reputation of Thorpe, who retired in November as one of the greatest swimmers in history, sparked a vigorous defence of his character from some of the world's leading coaches.

"He is a young man of unbelievably strong principles and integrity and I've known him for a long time so I will support Ian 1000 percent," said Swimming Australia executive director Glenn Tasker.

Back in the pool, Kate Ziegler upstaged French favourite Laure Manaudou to win the 800m freestyle gold in 8:18.52.

Manaudou took silver in 8:18.80 and Hayley Peirsol of the United States won the bronze (8:26.41).

Ziegler's time was the second fastest in history after Janet Evans who still holds the world record (8:16.22) which she set in Tokyo in 1989.

"To be two seconds behind, I couldn't be happier," the American said of Evans' record. "I like to take my races out fast."

The American charge on the medals continued with Ben Wildman-Tobriner splashing his way to the 50m freestyle title in 21.88 with his teammate Cullen

Jones second (21.94) and Sweden's Stefan Nystrand third (21.97.)

Another American Margarat Hoelzer swam the second fastest time in history to take the 200m backstroke gold medal in 2:07.16, with the 1991 record (2:06.62) of Hungary's Krisztina Egerszegi remaining intact.

Zimbabwe's Kirsty Coventry, the defending champion, took the silver and Reiko Nakamura of Japan won the bronze.

Sweden got its first gold of the meet when European champion Therese Alshammar sprinted harder than anyone else to win the women's 50m butterfly in 25.91 ahead of Australia's defending champion Danni Miatke (26.05).

Dutchwoman Inge Dekker (26.11) was third.

Earlier, Grant Hackett struck a psychological blow with a sub-15 minute heat win as he battles to hold on to his 1500-metre freestyle title.

Hackett, whose four-time world 1500m crown is on the line on Sunday, finished fifth fastest into the final behind Welshman David Davies (14:53.57).

## Swimming

AFP, Melbourne

Leading coaches said Saturday they are concerned Australian great Ian Thorpe's celebrated career may be smeared by doping allegations as the swim world rallied around him.

French sports newspaper L'Equipe claimed on its website Friday that Thorpe, who retired from swimming in November, provided a sample last May that showed abnormally high readings for testosterone and luteinizing hormone.

Neither FINA nor Swimming Australia would Saturday confirm the athlete's identity as being Thorpe, however world swimming's governing body did not deny the report that named the retired 24-year-old superstar.

FINA did confirm it has lodged an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport on a doping test, saying it was seeking clarification of the adverse analysis.

The news has rocked the swimming world with Thorpe recognised as a prominent campaigner against the use of performance-enhancing drugs in the sport.

"He is a young man of unbelievably strong principles and integrity and I've known him for a long time so I will support Ian 1000 percent," Swimming Australia chief executive Glenn Tasker said.

"At this very minute there isn't a positive test, it's an adverse finding."

"Hopefully reasonably-thinking people will accept that for what it is and there won't be hanging anyone until the judge has made his decision."

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said Thorpe's reputation should not be damaged unless he is proven guilty.

"As far as I'm concerned, until solid evidence of the contrary is produced Ian Thorpe remains a great Australian champion," said Howard.

Dutch head coach Jacco Verhaar, the mentor for Thorpe's greatest Olympic rival Pieter van den Hoogenband, said he was dismayed that the Australian's career was being tainted by allegations that could

prove baseless.

"This is damaging somebody's career without any reason and I think that's the worst about it," Verhaar said at the world championships here.

"The media should be very careful with this kind of information ... if it's from his own body there is no problem so there is also no use to write about it."

"I think there are people to investigate these kinds of things and I think we should first listen to these people before damaging somebody who is an exceptional sportsman and to me a very honest guy and to me he is not under suspicion."

Canadian head coach Pierre Lafontaine said he was disgusted the allegations had been raised during the world championships.

"I find it astonishing that it's done at this time," said Lafontaine.

"I just think it's ridiculous ... why is it done in the middle of this meet when we are in the middle of a celebration of swimming all around the world."

"I can only tell you that (Thorpe) has been a great ambassador for sports all around the world and I would be very surprised (if it were true)."



Australian swimming legend Ian Thorpe of (C-TOP) sits in the stands with fellow swimmers at the 12th FINA World Championships in Melbourne on Saturday.

# Maradona still in hospital

AFP, Buenos Aires

Football legend Diego Maradona remained in hospital Friday for alcoholic detoxification, two days after being admitted, with a psychiatric nurse by his side, the hospital director said.

"Maradona remains under treatment with sedatives, ... and support medications. There have been new routine tests, which have shown acceptable results," Hector Pezzella, the medical chief at Guemes Hospital, told reporters.

Pezzella said that while Maradona, 46, was "fully into a period of recovery," he was drowsy given the sedatives he has been receiving "to avoid withdrawal symptoms."

"He is stable and is progressing very well ... he did wake up and he ate breakfast," Pezzella added, noting that eating on his own was a sign of progress.

Maradona awakened twice early Friday and is aware he is in hospital, the doctor said, noting "he was at no point aggressive."

The ex footballer's personal physician Alfredo Cahe earlier had said Maradona was admitted against his will and had to be sedated.

Pezzella said Maradona was expected to be treated in hospital until some time next week as in cases of alcoholic detoxification a patient is released five to seven days after being admitted for inpatient treatment.

Should Maradona decide to leave before then, Pezzella said, doctors would allow him because "his life is not in danger."

The football icon has a psychiatric nurse as well as a clinical nurse constantly on duty. And his daughters Dalma and Giannina, and a few close friends were staying in a room alongside Maradona's.

Cahe also has said Maradona has been depressed in recent weeks.

While both Pezzella and Cahe have denied Maradona's treatment was related to use of any illegal drugs, they said it was likely he had replaced a dependency on cocaine with alcohol.

# No regrets, says Becks

## Football

AFP, London

Former England captain David Beckham has insisted he does not regret his move from Manchester United to Real Madrid, despite the likelihood he will end his four-year stint there without a trophy.

Beckham is set to join Los Angeles Galaxy when his Madrid contract runs out at the end of the season.

But the 31-year-old insists he would not change a thing about the move he made in 2003, despite the lack of success.

"It is a surprise Real Madrid haven't won anything. They have had some of the best players in the world, especially during my first year there," he said.

"There was Zinedine Zidane, Luis Figo, Roberto Carlos, Raul and so many more. It is hard to take that I haven't won anything but I don't really regret my decision to go to Spain and Real Madrid."

"The lack of success is just one of those situations you can't explain. But I've enjoyed my time there and I've loved the fans."

The current season has been the most disappointing of all with the Beckham falling out of favour with Real boss Fabio Capello and England coach Steve McClaren.

But he fought his way back into the Real team only to then be sidelined by a knee injury that will keep him out for two more weeks.

Despite his waning powers, signing Beckham was a major coup for LA Galaxy who tempted him to America with a deal

reported to be worth 128 million pounds (250 million dollars).

The midfielder denies competing in Major League Soccer is a significant step down from the Spanish or English leagues and insists he is relishing his ambassadorial role.

"I'm not worried by the standard in America because some people are also saying it's the right time for me to go because my legs have gone, he said.

"There are differences of opinion but for me it's the right time to go. I didn't want another challenge at the end of my career, I wanted to go where I felt I could make a difference. That will be my ambition out there."

"It won't just be the playing side but the ambassador role for football in the MLS and around the world."



Borussia Dortmund's Nelson Valdez shields the ball away from Arminia Bielefeld's Markus Schuler (L) during their Bundesliga match in Bielefeld on Friday.

# Barcelona set for Asia tour

AFP, Hong Kong

Spanish giants Barcelona, spear-headed by Ronaldinho, are planning pre-season matches this summer in Hong Kong, Beijing and Tokyo, a report said Saturday.

The European champions are expected to travel to China to play Guo'an in Beijing on August 5, followed by a match against Marinos FC in Tokyo on August 7.

They plan to end their tour in Hong Kong with a game on August 9 or 10 against the Carolinians or another top-flight local side, the South China Morning Post said, citing Barcelona vice-president Ferran Soriano.

A number of big European clubs are expected in the region this summer, including Manchester United.

Liverpool, Fulham and Portsmouth have already confirmed they will play in the FA Premier League Asia Trophy in Hong Kong in late July.

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Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF YOU ATE SOME PAGES FROM A FAVORITE NOVEL, PERHAPS YOU WOULD WIND UP WITH READER'S DIGEST.  
Today's Cryptquip Clue: H equals T