



Inter Milan's mercurial midfielder Alvaro Recoba takes a shot on goal as a Lazio defender fails to impede him during their Serie A clash at the San Siro on Sunday.

# Milan, Lazio seal CL spots

AFP, Rome



AC Milan and Lazio booked their places in the third qualifying round of next season's Champions League, despite both teams failing to win in Serie A on Sunday.

Lazio led Inter Milan 2-0 and 3-2 but ended up losing 4-3 to the champions - for whom Hernan Crespo scored a hat-trick - while AC Milan, who on May 23 play Liverpool in this year's Champions League final, were held to a 1-1 draw by Catania.

Defeats for Empoli and Palermo meant AC Milan and Lazio are certain to finish in the top four, and they will now participate in the two-legged qualifier for Europe's premier club competition.

AC Milan's achievement with two games of the season left is all the more impressive given the fact

they were deducted eight points for their part in 'Calciopoli', the Italian match-fixing scandal.

Lazio were also involved in the scandal and were docked three points.

The winners of the third qualifying round will enter the Champions League proper.

AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti urged his players to ensure their season would go down in history by beating Liverpool in Athens in 10 days' time.

"We've reached two important targets: at worst fourth place, and the final of the Champions League. But this season could turn out to be unforgettable - it's up to us," he said.

Lazio coach Delio Rossi said he never dreamed his side could qualify for the Champions League.

"We've achieved something that was unthinkable at the start of the season," he said.

"I would have been content with qualifying for the UEFA Cup."

Beaten 6-2 by Roma in the first

leg of the Italian Cup final on Thursday, Inter once again showed their defensive frailties as Lazio went two goals up inside the first four minutes at the San Siro.

But Inter reacted positively with Crespo converting crosses from Maicon and Patrick Vieira to bring his side level.

Christian Ledesma's free-kick gave Lazio a half-time lead, only for Crespo to complete his treble with a close range finish in the 80th minute.

Lazio defender Sebastiano Siviglia complained that Crespo was offside, and after taking his protest too far, was sent off.

Inter snatched the winner a minute from time when Italian World Cup winner Marco Materazzi headed in a corner.

Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf put Milan ahead in the sixth minute against Catania, before Gionatha Spinesi equalised with an angled volley.

AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti

resisted the temptation to field a second string side and instead fielded a team that will probably be close to his line-up in Athens, with captain Paolo Maldini, Kaka and Gennaro Gattuso all starting the match.

Down at the bottom, Siena pulled themselves out of the drop zone with a 2-0 home win over Empoli, while Reggina drew 1-1 with relegation rivals Chievo, a result that did neither team a favour.

Parma boosted their survival hopes with a 4-1 home win over already relegated Messina, but Cagliari remain in danger after a 1-0 loss at Fiorentina.

Roberto Muzzi eased Torino's relegation fears by scoring the only goal in a 1-0 win at Roma, one of the 35-year-old striker's former clubs.

Roma have already clinched second place and automatic entry into next season's Champions League.

# Blame it on Poll

AFP, Portsmouth



Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp was left fuming as the club's bid to qualify for the UEFA Cup for the first time in their history was thwarted by referee Graham Poll's decision to chalk off a goal during a 0-0 draw with Arsenal here at Fratton Park.

Pompey, for whom a win on the last day of the season would have seen them into Europe, thought they'd scored the decisive goal 15 minutes from time through Nico Kranjcar, the Croatia midfielder netting after Lomana LuaLua and Richard Hughes had been thwarted by the south coast club's former goalkeeper Mart Poom.

Poll, in what could be his final

match as a senior referee before retirement, appeared to have let the goal stand.

But the 43-year-old English official, whose international career ended in embarrassment when he showed the yellow card three times to Croatia's Josip Simunic during a World Cup match against Australia in Germany last year, consulted a linesman after Arsenal protests and ruled the goal offside.

"It was a goal," said a furious Redknapp. "When the linesman did not put his flag up I thought there was no way he could not give it."

"But then he went over to him and gave it offside. He thought it had come off Hughes but it came off (Philippe) Senderos so it could not have been offside."

"I have told Graham what I think but what can he do, we all make mistakes."

"He has robbed us of the chance (to play in Europe) for the first time

in the club's history," he added after Pompey were left two points behind Bolton, who claimed the third and final UEFA Cup place on offer to English clubs.

But Pompey, who won back-to-back English titles in 1948/49 and 1949/50, had the consolation of finishing the season in ninth place, their best finish for more than 50 years.

A key factor in their success this season has been the form of former England goalkeeper David James.

And he showed his class once more by saving Julio Baptista's first-half penalty as Arsenal missed out on the chance to pip Liverpool for third place, ending level on points with the Anfield club but fourth on goal difference.

Sunday's match threatened to be Brazilian Baptista's last for the Londoners, with Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger revealing the club are struggling to tie up a permanent deal for the striker, nick-

named 'the Beast'.

Baptista was signed on a season-long loan from Real Madrid before the current campaign started with Jose Antonio Reyes heading in the opposite direction on the understanding a swap deal would become permanent.

However, with Real close to winning their first La Liga title in four years, any negotiations regarding the two players have stalled and Wenger is still in limbo over Baptista's future.

"At the moment Madrid are still fighting for the championship and it is hard to organise a meeting."

"We have not been officially informed about what they want to do with Reyes and we have not officially informed them about Baptista," the Frenchman added.

"Baptista has been an asset for us all season and has grown into English football but unless we can sort out a deal this could be his last game in an Arsenal shirt."

# Palermo's U-turn

AFP, Rome

Palermo have reappointed Francesco Guidolin as their coach just three weeks after giving him the sack, the Sicilian-based Serie A club said on Monday.

Guidolin will be in charge for Palermo's last two games of the season, but has not yet been offered a contract beyond the end of the campaign.

He is the fourth Serie A coach this season to be reappointed after getting fired.

Guidolin, 51, was shown the door on April 23 after the club went 11 games without a win, a run which saw them slip out of contention for a Champions League place next season.

Assistant coach Renzo Gobbo and youth team coach Rosario Pergolizzi took temporary charge of the club following Guidolin's dismissal.

Palermo's 3-2 defeat at relegated Ascoli on Sunday left them in seventh place, which would be enough to clinch a UEFA Cup place next season.



Players of the Spain U-17 football team pose with their trophy after winning the European under-17 football championship against England in Tournai on Sunday.

# Maradona postpones Asian tour

AFP, Bangkok

Argentine football legend Diego Maradona will postpone his Asian tour to give him time to recover from his recent stint in a rehabilitation clinic, an Argentine embassy official said Monday.

Maradona, 46, was due to head to Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore and Thailand next week, but the tour has been postponed until late June after his treatment for alcohol abuse, the official said.

The star was released from a Buenos Aires clinic on May 6.

"He needs time for physical therapy in order to recover from his treatment for alcoholism," the embassy source told AFP, adding that no new dates for the tour have yet been set.

Maradona had planned to spend five days in Thailand, where he was due to take part in a football exhibition.

Regarded as one of the greatest figures in world football, Maradona played for Barcelona and Napoli and captained his country to victory in the 1986 World Cup, but he has struggled with cocaine and alcohol abuse for years.

He was hospitalized earlier in April for hepatitis linked to heavy drinking.

# Fenerbahce rule Turkey

AFP, Izmir

Fenerbahce celebrated their centenary year by claiming their 17th Turkish league title on Sunday after a 2-2 draw with Trabzonspor in the western city of Izmir.

With two matches to go before the end of the season, Fenerbahce top the table with 64 points, six points ahead of arch-Istanbul rivals Besiktas.

Fenerbahce have the better record from matches between the two clubs this season so even if they lose both of the remaining games and Besiktas win theirs, they would still be champions under the rules of the Turkish league.

Besiktas bade farewell to their hopes of challenging Fenerbahce's lead after losing 3-0 to Bursaspor on Sunday.

Hundreds of Fenerbahce fans poured into the streets in Istanbul after Sunday's results celebrating wildly.

# Jewell quits Wigan

AFP, London

Paul Jewell resigned as manager of Wigan on Monday, 24 hours after the club secured its Premiership status for another season with a nail-biting win over Sheffield United.

Wigan, who confirmed the decision to the BBC, had scheduled a press conference for 3pm (1400 GMT) to provide further details of a move which had been widely predicted.

According to reports, the 42-year-old had decided to leave the JJB Stadium because he felt he could not take Wigan any further after two seasons in the Premiership.

The 2-1 win over Sheffield United ensured the league's smallest club remained in the top flight courtesy of a superior goal difference over their final-day opponents.

But Jewell's departure means they will start next season among the favourites to drop back down to the Championship.

The manager is expected to seek a job at a bigger club and is seen as the leading candidate to take over at Manchester City, who are expected to sack Stuart Pearce after their disappointing season ended with a 2-1 defeat by Tottenham.

When Jewell joined Wigan in 2001, they were in the third tier of English football.

He secured promotion to Championship as winners of that division in 2002-03 and two years later took Wigan into the top flight as runners-up to Sunderland.

# Owen passed fit

AFP, Watford

Michael Owen was given the all clear after being carried off on a stretcher during Newcastle United's 1-1 draw away to Watford on the final day of the Premiership season here Sunday.

The England striker collided with the shoulder of teammate Matthew Pattison and was taken off in the 67th minute at Vicarage Road.

However, caretaker United boss Nigel Pearson said of Owen: "I saw him in the medical room after the game. He was chatting, and there is no problem at all."

"He has mild concussion, but it is nothing too serious and he is fine."

The 27-year-old injury-plagued forward, a 17 million pounds signing, was playing just his 14th senior game for Newcastle since his 2005 transfer from Real Madrid.

# MU's Malaysia leg back on track



AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian football authorities on Monday reversed a decision to cancel the Kuala Lumpur leg of Manchester United's July Asian tour following intense political pressure.

The about-turn followed intervention from Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who threw his support behind the match which was called off last week after demands from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and FIFA.

"The FAM respects the statement by the prime minister of Malaysia that the Manchester United tour should go on as planned to be part of the celebration for Malaysia's 50th anniversary" of independence, the Football Association of Malaysia said in a statement.

The body faces the wrath of AFC president Mohammed bin Hammam and his FIFA counterpart Sepp Blatter who led efforts to have the July 27 match dumped as it clashes with the Asian Cup finals which are co-hosted by Malaysia.

"FAM will probably face consequences from FIFA and the AFC,

but we are hoping to negotiate and appeal to them to sanction Man United's tour here in consideration of Malaysia's 50th anniversary," the statement added.

Bin Hammam was travelling back from Canada to Malaysia and was not immediately available for comment, although he threatened FAM with disciplinary action last week if they failed to tow the line.

Each association hosting Asian Cup matches signed guarantees not to hold any other games when the tournament was on.

Bin Hammam called for the new Premier League champion's entire Asian tour, which also takes them to Macau, South Korea and Japan, to be called off.

The AFC, which is based in Kuala Lumpur, fear the presence of such a big club in the region during the Asian Cup finals from July 7-29 will divert attention from what is the continent's flagship football competition.

FAM deputy president Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, who was re-elected as an AFC vice-president last week, had previously sided with bin Hammam and admitted changing tack could cost him his job.

"We have no objection to the match," he told a press conference.

Asked where FAM's loyalties lay, he answered: "We are bound by AFC regulations, but at the same time, we have to support the government."

On Saturday, Abdullah said seeing Manchester United in action was what everyone in the football-mad country wanted.

"All Malaysians will enjoy the game. I don't think we should reject this (tour). I hope they (AFC) understand this," he said.

Earlier Monday, Tourism Minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said the match was sponsored by his ministry and budget carrier AirAsia and had nothing to do with the AFC, highlighting government anger at their actions.

"The AFC president should not be talking for Malaysia. He has no connection with Malaysia. He has no right," Tengku Adnan told the Bernama state news agency.

United plan to kick off their pre-season commercial tour against J-League champions Urawa Red Diamonds on July 17 in Saitama before heading to the South Korean capital for a showdown with FC Seoul on July 20.

Alex Ferguson's team then travel to Macau for a match against Shenzhen on July 23, before ending the tour in Kuala Lumpur against a Malaysian XI.

# Mourinho licking his wounds

AFP, London



Jose Mourinho admitted he was unhappy with his season's work on a day when Chelsea equalled Liverpool's long-standing unbeaten home record of 63 consecutive matches.

Sunday's 1-1 draw with Everton at Stamford Bridge meant the Blues matched a record set by the all-conquering Liverpool side of the late Seventies and early Eighties, despite a below-par performance in which Mourinho lost another key player.

An injury to Jon Obi Mikel, which makes him highly doubtful for Saturday's FA Cup final against Manchester United at Wembley, overshadowed the fact that Chelsea have now gone three seasons without losing at home in the Premiership.

It means Mourinho could now struggle to name more than a 16-man squad for the final, which will be the first at the new Wembley since 2000, when the Blues won the trophy under Gianluca Vialli.

Didier Drogha, whose equaliser earned Chelsea a point, also claimed the Golden Boot as his 20th goal of the season saw him edge out Blackburn's Benni McCarthy as the league's leading marksman.

"It's nice to have levelled the record, but no more than that really," said Mourinho.

"We are in football to win trophies and championships, not to break records."

"It's an honour to have the record with a historical Liverpool team of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The culture of being strong at home, we need to keep."

"And we have the chance, if we win the first home game of next season, to make that record our own. It would be fantastic. We would become a team with some stamps."

"The second positive is that despite not playing well we fin-

ished the Premiership with some pride, some honour and with a good spirit. But this is not enough. I am not happy that we are not winners. But I am happy that we are not happy."

"It's incredible. I couldn't rest players. I just gave rest to Michael Essien and Claude Makelele. We lost Mikel and the reality is that for the final, I don't think we have 16 players."

David Moyes's Everton side, who have already qualified for the UEFA Cup, looked re-invigorated after the break after spending the majority of the first half on the back foot, and they took a surprise lead in the 50th minute thanks to striker James Vaughan.

With Chelsea struggling to get back into position following an attack of their own, Leon Osman carried the ball into the Blues half and brilliantly delayed his pass until he could pick out the unmarked Vaughan, who side footed the ball in at the far post.

Moments later it could have been game over, but this time Vaughan was denied by Peter Cech, who made a world-class one-handed save from the youngster's acrobatic effort.

Just as the visitors seemed to be dominating, Drogha came good and rescued his side with a leveller.

Shaun Wright-Phillips found room down the right in the 57th minute and his clever pull-back was met perfectly by the Ivorian, who arced the ball away from Tim Howard's despairing dive and into the far corner of the American keeper's net.

Moyes felt that Paulo Ferreira had fouled Mikel Arteta in the build-up and he was sent to the stands for remonstrating with the officials.

Everton should have won it in stoppage time. James Beattie's close-range strike was ruled offside by a linesman even though it was James McFadden in an offside position.

"This is disappointing, we thought we were going to finish fifth," said Toffees manager Moyes.

"We were incensed by the decision not to award a foul against Paulo Ferreira in the build-up to their goal, it was a terrible decision and it was wrong."

"You have to work really hard for what you get at Chelsea and Petr Cech made a great save when we were a goal up. But we played really well."



TOP SCORER: Chelsea striker Didier Drogha celebrates his goal in their Premiership clash against Everton at Stamford Bridge on Sunday. It was his 20th in the Premiership season.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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3-19 CRYPTOQUIP

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P Z E N J D T ' E P N D P X O Z F D .

Saturday's Cryptquip: IN A CERTAIN NEW YORK SUBURB, THE IMPATIENT CABBIES ARE SOMETIMES KNOWN AS YONKERS HONKERS.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: E equals S