



PHOTO: INTERNET

Portsmouth striker Nwankwo Kanu (R) puts the ball into the net during his side's Premiership encounter against Bolton at Fratton Park on Saturday.

Grosso back for Italy

AFP, Rome

Lyon defender Fabio Grosso could end his international hiatus after being named in Roberto Donadoni's Italy squad for a friendly against Hungary in Budapest on Wednesday.

The match is Italy's final warm-up before the much-anticipated Euro 2008 qualifier against France, to be played on September 8 in Milan.

Donadoni has decided to rest midfielders Daniele De Rossi and Simone Perrotta, while Juventus midfielder Mauro Camoranesi is still absent while he recovers from injury.

All three absences mean that Roma's highly rated young midfielder Alberto Aquilani gets his chance, having been injured for much of last season.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Marco Amelia (Livorno), Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), Gianluca Curci (AS Roma)
Defenders: Andrea Barzagli (Palermo), Fabio Cannavaro (Real Madrid/ESP), Fabio Grosso (Lyon/FRA), Marco Materazzi (Inter Milan), Massimo Oddo (AC Milan), Cristian Zaccardo (Palermo), Gianluca Zambrotta (Barcelona/ESP)
Midfielders: Massimo Ambrosini (AC Milan), Alberto Aquilani (Roma), Aimo Diana (Palermo), Gennaro Gattuso (AC Milan), Angelo Palombo (Sampdoria), Andrea Pirlo (AC Milan)
Strikers: Alessandro Del Piero (Juventus), Antonio Di Natale (Udinese), Filippo Inzaghi (AC Milan), Fabio Quagliarella (Udinese), Luca Toni (Bayern Munich/GER)

Comeback win for Hannover

INTERNET, undated

Hannover bounced back from their opening-day home defeat to Hamburg by beating Bundesliga newcomers Karlsruhe on Friday night.

The visitors fell behind to a Maik Franz header in the 37th minute, but second-half goals from Mike Hanke (54) and Hanno Balitsch (75) saw them turn the game on its head.

The defeat for Karlsruhe was their first of the season after they produced a stunning upset by winning 2-0 away at Nurnberg last week.

Hannover started the match stronger and Arnold Bruggink had a good chance after just five minutes which Karlsruhe keeper Markus Miller had to put behind for a corner.

Bruggink was causing problems again on the half-hour mark as he whipped a cross in which Balitsch got on the end of but he could only force it over the bar.

The away side were having the better of the chances but Karlsruhe took the lead against the run of play when Tamas Hajnal crossed in a free-kick from the right which Franz met with a bullet header after shaking off his marker.

It was almost 2-0 just after the break as Hajnal had a shot blocked on the line but three minutes later Hannover were level when Hanke got on the end of a Bruggink cross to power home a header of his own.

Hannover continued to press and the inevitable winner came following some excellent work

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Pompey bury Bolton

AFP, Portsmouth

John Utaka repaid another slice of his club record transfer fee as he inspired Portsmouth's 3-1 win over Bolton on Saturday.

Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp paid eight million pounds to sign Utaka from Rennes in the close season and the Nigeria striker already looks a bargain.

His superb run and finish gave Portsmouth the lead at Fratton Park after he had set up Nwankwo Kanu's equaliser of Nicolas Anelka's opener. Matt Taylor put the result beyond doubt with a late penalty.

While Portsmouth, who held Manchester United on Wednesday, are on the up, Bolton are in disarray after slumping to their third consecutive defeat.

Sammy Lee was a questionable choice to replace Sam Allardyce given he had no managerial experi-

ence and, after years of punching above their weight, bottom of the table Bolton could be in for a relegation battle.

It had all started so well for Lee's side. Anelka has been linked with a move to Portsmouth and he showed Redknapp just what he would be getting for his money with a 12th minute strike.

El Hadji Diouf clipped a pass through to Anelka down the left side on the area and the France striker held off Hermann Hreidarsson before sliding his shot through David James's legs.

But that lead lasted just four minutes as Bolton's defensive frailty cost them dearly.

Lee's side had conceded five goals in losing their first two matches and they were sloppy again here.

Hreidarsson was lucky to get away without conceding a free-kick when he dispossessed Anelka on the halfway line, but that can't excuse Bolton's defending from

then on.

Gary O'Neill was granted time to measure a deep cross from the right to Utaka, who was in acres of space at the far post. The Nigerian's knock-down gave Kanu the chance to bury a close range finish past Jussi Jaaskelainen.

Kanu recently signed a new contract and the Nigerian's first goal since February was the perfect way to celebrate.

It was the Nigerian duo who combined to put Portsmouth in front after half an hour.

Kanu somehow managed to flick a reverse pass to Utaka while falling to the turf and his compatriot showed tremendous pace as he accelerated away from Nicky Hunt and Gerald Cid.

Utaka's composure was perfect as well as he rounded Jaaskelainen before tapping in for his second goal for the club.

With recalled England defender

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

Real playing catch-up

AFP, Madrid

Reigning champions Real Madrid are hoping to consign their shaky pre-season form to the broom cupboard by the time they face city rivals Atletico Madrid in their Spanish league season opener next weekend.

Under normal circumstances, Real would go into the much-anticipated city derby on August 25 confident of grabbing the honours.

However the side, which is now under the stewardship of German Bernd Schuster, has some catching up to do.

Atletico's form has increased

steadily since they invested millions in their team following the sale of star striker Fernando Torres to Liverpool. Real meanwhile have lost five games in pre-season, including a 1-0 friendly defeat away to Betis on Wednesday.

The nine-times European champions finally ended a three-match losing streak the following day with an unconvincing 3-1 win over second-division Cadiz in a Carranza Cup semi-final that was lambasted by Spain's sports press.

"A Madrid without style," said sports daily AS in its front page on Friday.

"This Real plays worse and worse with every match," wrote rival sports daily Marca. Both newspapers are usually favourable to the Spanish giants.

Schuster, who replaced the

sacked Fabio Capello after he had guided the side to the league title, has promised to deliver a more entertaining, attack-minded style of football.

But the club's two new Dutch players, midfielder Wesley Sneijder, who joined from Ajax, and fullback Royston Drenthe, who signed from Feyenoord, are so far struggling to adapt.

Only the return of injured Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy appears to give fans some hope.

"We are starting from zero. We are trying to change our style of playing. It is difficult and it takes time," said van Nistelrooy, who hit the net once during Real's win over Cadiz.

The club's form will be put to

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

No 'Fantastic 4' for Eto'o

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona's Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o on Friday rejected the "Fantastic Four" label given by the media to him and the Spanish club's three other star strikers.

The nickname, a reference to a series of movies based on four comic book superheroes, started being used after Thierry Henry joined Eto'o, Brazil's Ronaldo and Argentina's Lionel Messi at Barcelona.

"It is flattering but that can be a bit deceiving, look what happened to the 'Galacticos'," said Eto'o, referring to the nickname given to Real Madrid after they signed a series of star players at the start of the decade.

Despite spending millions to sign Portugal's Luis Figo, Brazil's Ronaldo, France's Zinedine Zidane and England's David Beckham, Real Madrid struggled until they won the Spanish title last season.

Spain's sports press on Friday demanded to know what formation Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard will use during his side's first match of the new Primera Liga season on August 26 against Racing Santander.

The Dutch coach has indicated he is not keen on using the four star strikers at the same time.

Eto'o said he was aware that with so many top-quality strikers now at Barcelona he will have to start some games on the bench.

"I recognise that all players are egotistical and we always want to play. But we also know that the coach is always looking to do what is best for the team and he always tries to make the best decision," the 26-year-old said.

"If some days I am on the bench then I will accept that. The worst thing would be if I was happy with that."

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Gerrard will be risked

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez may be claiming that Chelsea's visit to Anfield is just another three points on offer but the fact that he is willing to risk Steven Gerrard's toe injury demonstrates the scale of this fixture, just a week into the new campaign.

The inspirational Reds skipper may need injections in the problem - a hairline fracture on the big toe of his right foot - suffered in a challenge from Achille Emana in the 1-0 Champions League qualifier first leg in Toulouse in midweek.

The 27-year-old has been withdrawn from England's friendly against Germany next week and may even be absent from Liverpool's trip to Sunderland next weekend but his inclusion for Sunday's match is a major statement of intent from the Reds' boss.

With Liverpool having knocked Chelsea out at the semi-final stage of the Champions League in the last two seasons only adding to the antipathy between the sides, the Reds know that a victory would be a major early blow to their title rivals, having invested 50 million pounds in the hope of launching a sustained challenge to end their 17-year wait for the league title.

Benitez knows Gerrard will be vital.

"If we push him a little bit now because it is a very important game, maybe he will need to rest after the game. It's not serious but it's also something we need to be careful about," said the manager.

Emerson pleads for Milan move

AFP, Rome

Brazilian midfielder Emerson has launched his bid to leave Real Madrid, and seal a move to AC Milan, with a scathing appraisal of the reigning Spanish champions.

Milan are currently courting the Brazilian, and according to La Gazzetta dello Sport Emerson says he has had enough of an environment in which he feels "constantly under pressure".

"I've got two years left on my contract with Real, but I would really prefer to leave," said Emerson, adding that Milan would be his first choice club.

Emerson said he hoped that the atmosphere in Milan would be "rather more relaxed" and allow him to be "relaxed and happy" instead of staying at a club where he feels "constantly under pressure and always having to justify myself".

AC Milan are set to offer five million euros for the 31-year-old, although Real, who paid Juventus 15 million for him last year, are said to be holding out for at least 11 million.

Emerson previously played six seasons in Italy's Serie A, with Roma (2000-2004) and Juventus (2004-2006).

War of words goes on

THE TIMES



Jose Mourinho may claim to have mellowed over the summer, but his new-found calm has

been tested before Chelsea's visit to Liverpool tomorrow, with his team accused of lacking "spark" and Rafael Benitez suggesting that Florent Malouda was seduced by money when rejecting Anfield for Stamford Bridge this summer.

Benitez stopped short of accusing Malouda of greed, but the Liverpool manager left little doubt about why he feels that the former Lyons winger moved to London rather than Merseyside last month. Malouda, having indicated that he would join Liverpool, is understood to have phoned Benitez to explain his decision after opting to join Chelsea in a £13.5 million transfer, but Benitez, unimpressed, implied yesterday that he was not prepared to match Chelsea's wage offer for a player whose attitude he had begun to question.

"We try to sign players we think are good enough for us," Benitez said. "Now in modern football it depends on the money. Some players prefer more money and it's something you cannot control. You must only pay the money you can

afford and the right money for each player. We can compete with other teams in the market if we want, but we will only pay the right money for the right players.

"Malouda was one of our names, but he decided to go to Chelsea. He knows why. The lifestyle in London? I don't think so. I don't want to say why, but I know the answer."

The comments about Malouda were symptomatic of Benitez's willingness to engage in verbal warfare with Mourinho in a way that he has not attempted with his other rivals. A familiar dig, one that he repeated yesterday, is that "Roman Abramovich has done a fantastic job for Chelsea", implying that the billionaire owner is the biggest reason for their success, while Mourinho's claims to have mellowed were treated with disdain.

"He forgets when he starts talking about us and then sometimes he recovers his memory," Benitez said. "He was talking about us again in the summer. Maybe he will start thinking about his team now."

Mourinho will not take kindly to Benitez's interference because he resents the Spaniard's off-repeated insinuation that Chelsea have bought success, being at great pains to point out that Liverpool and Manchester United have spent far more than the West London club

this summer, with Malouda the club's only signing who cost a fee.

The Portuguese will be equally affronted by the accusation from Javier Mascherano, the Liverpool midfielder player, that Chelsea lack spark. Neither team have hit top form in winning their first two matches this season, but Mascherano believes that Chelsea should be worried before their arrival at Anfield.

"We are playing a lot better than Chelsea at the moment," he said. "I have seen some of Chelsea's games this season and they do not seem to have the same spark as in other years. There is no doubt that Liverpool are the favourites."

Chelsea should put up more of a fight than on their previous visit to Anfield in the league, last January, when their injury-ravaged team surrendered 2-0. Mourinho will welcome back John Terry for his first time of the season after a knee injury and Michael Essien is in contention after a knee problem, but Ricardo Carvalho has been ruled out with a bruised hip.

Claudio Pizarro reacted strongly yesterday to suggestions from Reading that he dived to get Kalifa Cisse sent off in Wednesday's 2-1

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



PHOTO: AFP

Juventus midfielder Pavel Nedved (R) goes airborne to receive the ball as Milan hardman Gennaro Gattuso stands in close attention during the Silvio Berlusconi Trophy match at the San Siro in Milan on Friday.

Pippo hands Milan win

Football

INTERNET, undated

Filippo Inzaghi's brace handed Milan the prestigious Trofeo Berlusconi in a 2-0 victory over old rivals Juventus at the San Siro.

The 17th edition of this friendly tournament at San Siro saw Milan without the injured Kaka and Ronaldo while Juventus missed the services of Tiago Mendes and David Trezeguet.

It meant that Dutchman Clarence Seedorf started in the Trequartista role for the Rossoneri and he put in some early pressure after three minutes as Zdenek Grygera did well to tackle him inside the area.

The Turin giants were immediately aggressive with Vincenzo Iaquinta brought down by Kakha Kaladze on the edge of the box and Sergio Almiron drilling just wide.

Milan also pushed forward, as Massimo Oddo set up Pippo Inzaghi's diving header to bring a great save out of Gianluigi Buffon.

Alessandro Del Piero had a fantastic chance when he ran on to Pavel Nedved's pass and put two

defenders on the ground, but Kaladze bravely flung himself at the shot. Antonio Nocerino's strike was also deflected off target.

An Andrea Pirlo free kick fell to Inzaghi, who was closed down by a desperate Domenico Criscito tackle, and Oddo hit a first-time finish over the top. The Milan problems continued, as Inzaghi and Alberto Gilardino often crossed paths and held each other up.

Nocerino has been impressive in pre-season, but his error sent Inzaghi clear and Buffon smothered the strike.

Buffon was not so prepared soon after, as Inzaghi's splendid glancing header at the near post turned in Massimo Ambrosini's cross from the left. The Juventus defence made a mess of this situation, as Jorge Andrade and Criscito lost sight of SuperPippo in his first start since the Champions League final in Athens.

Del Piero's confidence was at an all-time high, as he repeatedly dribbled past sets of Rossoneri defenders, including a nutmeg on Oddo.

Both coaches made changes at the break. Claudio Ranieri appears to have abandoned the experiment

of Tiago Mendes alongside Sergio Almiron, as it proved very disappointing, so he fielded the former Chelsea midfielder with Nocerino instead.

Within 58 seconds Milan had doubled their lead with Inzaghi yet again the scorer. A corner kick was flicked on by Gilardino to the back post for Inzaghi to come sliding in and put it in.

Nedved's acrobatic volley went wide from a corner at the other end and an equally spectacular Seedorf attempt was held by Buffon, but Andrade was booked for trying to punch the ball into the net.

Nelson Dida parried Del Piero's free kick and substitute Daniele Bonera slipped in a one-on-one with Raffaele Palladino, but Del Piero's fantastic turn between two defenders was eventually closed down by a third.

Nedved's volley at the back post whistled just wide when he only had the goalkeeper to beat and he turned another effort off target.

The San Siro field was slippery, as Buffon stumbled and, as

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



PHOTO: INTERNET

Hannover strikers Mike Hanke (L) and Arnold Bruggink celebrate after the former scored the equaliser in their Bundesliga match against Karlsruhe in Karlsruhe on Friday.