

We are team to beat: Kahn

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn insisted on Sunday his side's record 4-0 win over Werder Bremen sent out a clear message to the Bundesliga - the German giants are the team to beat.

Bayern's French midfielder Franck Ribery was the star of Saturday's show as he masterminded his side's attack and opened the scoring when he slotted home a 31st minute penalty.

Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni extended the lead with an expert strike before second-half substitutes Hamit Altintop and Andreas Ottl scored to add to Bremen's misery as their make-shift side was put to the sword.

"I said beforehand that if we won in Bremen it would send out an unmistakable signal. It's an important result," Bayern's skipper Kahn boasted as his side top the Bundesliga having scored seven goals without reply this season.

"It was a very good display from us, we played very well in defence and in attack.

"It's a real pleasure watching Ribery at times, but it's just as important that we kept it tight at the back.

"I've always said that if we play well in defence, we'll not only play good football, we'll win trophies."

But the win - Bayern's highest score at Bremen's Weser Stadium - came at a price as German striker Miroslav Klose, the top scorer at last year's World Cup, picked up a knee injury after he was scythed down in the third minute.

Coach Ottmar Hitzfeld says there is a long way to go this season, although Bayern look determined to be crowned German champions for the 21st time.

"We didn't really settle in the first half hour, and Bremen

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Juninho naturalised

AFP, Lyon

Six-time French champions Lyon have been given the green light to go in search of another two non-European players.

Brazilian midfield star Juninho has been awarded a French passport, and league chiefs have bowed to a request for the club to be able to replace injured Brazilian defender Cris with another non-European.

Club president Jean-Michel Aulas announced on the club's website that Juninho, who joined the club in 2001, had been awarded double nationality on Friday.

That allows Lyon to sign another non-European, and Aulas could now be looking to add another after the French Professional League (LFP) bowed to his request to be able to replace Cris.

Aulas said: "We can now sign two non-European players, if we feel the need."

Clubs in UEFA's jurisdiction are allowed only four non-European players.

Lyon currently have four, all of whom are Brazilian: Juninho, Cris, Fred and Fabio Santos.

Cris, who is bidding to be awarded a Portuguese passport, has been ruled out for six months after sustaining a serious knee injury on August 11.

Lyon have dominated the French championship for the past six seasons but are currently in mid-table with one win and two defeats from their three matches so far, including a 2-1 defeat to Lorient on Saturday.

German injury woes mount

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich striker Miroslav Klose has pulled out of Germany's friendly against England on Wednesday due to a knee injury picked up during his club's 4-0 drubbing of Werder Bremen.

Klose played only the first half of the Bundesliga match on Saturday after being sidelined by a crunching tackle from Brazilian Naldo.

The knock was serious enough to seriously compromise his participation, and he will be joined in watching the match from the sidelines by Bayern teammate Bastian Schweinsteiger, who picked up a back injury in the same match.

The German football federation (DFB) had earlier announced the forfeit of Stuttgart midfielder Sami Khedira, who had been picked for the first time but sustained a foot knock during his side's 3-1 defeat to Hertha Berlin.

The DFB said in a statement: "The team manager (Joachim Loew) will announce later Sunday whether the players will be replaced."

The trio's forfeit adds to a growing list of absentees for Germany, will also be without skipper Michael Ballack, playmaker Torsten Frings, and strikers Lukas Podolski and Mario Gomez.



Bayern Munich midfielder Franck Ribery is trailed by a photographer after covering a penalty during his side's Bundesliga encounter against rivals Werder Bremen at the Weserstadion in Bremen on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Spurs strike back

AFP, London



Under-fire Tottenham manager Martin Jol was mightily relieved after Spurs got their English Premier League season back on track.

The big-spending Dutch boss was under pressure to deliver results after his side lost both their opening games and sunk to the foot of the table.

But they took their frustration out on visitors Derby, who were thrashed 4-0, while hosts Wigan beat Sunderland 3-0 to leave the Latics topping the table ahead of Sunday's matches.

"It's a relief because we need the points and to lose back-to-back games at home, it's impossible," said Jol.

"We got the first three points, we're not bottom of the league any more and that is the main thing. When we fire as a team and a club we can be a force again."

Elsewhere, previous leaders Everton lost 1-0 at Reading, Portsmouth beat visitors Bolton 3-1 and Middlesbrough won 2-1 at Fulham.

West Ham won 1-0 at

Birmingham and Newcastle shared a bore draw with visitors Aston Villa.

On Sunday, Liverpool tackle Chelsea in the first "big four" clash of the new season, a resurgent City play stuttering champions United in the Manchester derby and Blackburn host Arsenal.

Last season's Championship play-off winners Derby were made to suffer as Spurs ran riot at White Hart Lane.

French midfielder Steed Malbranque scored twice before Republic of Ireland midfielder Stephen Hunt's goal just before half-time.

Darren Bent, Jol's big pre-season signing, scored his first Spurs goal to ease the pressure on the Dutch boss.

"We were makers of our own downfall," grumbled Rams boss Billy Davies.

"We've got to bring in more firepower and quality. Strikers are our number one target."

Roy Keane's Sunderland were overrun by Wigan in a 3-0 defeat at the JJB Stadium, leaving the Latics in the unusual position of topping the table.

Former Liverpool and England forward Emile Heskey scored - though television replays showed he was offside - before Denny Landzaat and Antoine Sibierski struck from the penalty spot.

"It's always about winning games and when you're winning games you get confident," Wigan boss Chris Hutchings said.

"If you get quality players, they can deal with things and you expect them to produce, and in the last two games they have done."

Keane said: "Even after defeat, you look for some pluses. I don't know if you've found one but I haven't yet."

Reading beat Everton 1-0 at the Madejski Stadium thanks to Republic of Ireland midfielder Stephen Hunt's goal just before half-time.

"The workrate probably deserved a draw, but I don't think the way we played deserved it," Everton manager David Moyes said.

Royals boss Steve Coppell said: "I have had a respect for my team for a long while, and once again today they earned it in bucket-loads."

At Fratton Park, UEFA Cup side Bolton's third straight defeat heaped the pressure on boss Sammy Lee.

Portsmouth notched their first victory of the campaign as they beat the Trotters 3-1.

France striker Nicolas Anelka gave Bolton the lead but Nwankwo Kanu equalised, John Utaka scored

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McClaren, League at crossroads

AFP, London

Premier League bosses have hit back at England manager Steve McClaren, who complained that he will have only an hour to prepare his players for Wednesday's friendly with Germany because of poor scheduling.

McClaren on Saturday blasted a decision to stage four Premiership clashes, involving most of England's squad, for Sunday when Manchester United were facing Manchester City, Arsenal were playing Blackburn and Liverpool hosted Chelsea.

However the Premier League insist the Football Association were involved in the decision-making process over fixtures.

"It's disappointing to hear this because we worked very hard with the FA to accommodate the national team," Premier League spokesman Dan Johnson said in the Mail on Sunday.

"The FA were part of the fixtures working party along with the Premier League and the Football Association.

"We can't micro-manage fixtures. If we had removed the Man City v United and Liverpool v Chelsea matches and put them somewhere else we might have created problems elsewhere.

"If anything, we feel for the clubs. They just get started then they are interrupted by a friendly

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DFB looks into racism claims

AFP, Berlin

The German Football Federation (DFB) has opened an investigation into Borussia Dortmund's goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller over alleged racist comments made in a Bundesliga game, it was revealed on Sunday.

Schalke 04's German international striker Gerald Asamoah claims Weidenfeller made the comments before Asamoah scored in his club's 4-1 Bundesliga win on Saturday.

It is alleged that in the 51st minute of the match, Weidenfeller called Asamoah, the first black player to be selected for the German national team, a "black pig".

The match in Gelsenkirchen was a tense affair between the two rivals, especially as Dortmund had beaten Schalke 2-0 on the penultimate weekend of last season to deny the Royal Blues their first Bundesliga title.

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Ribery routs Bremen

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich boss Ottmar Hitzfeld was full of praise for France international Franck Ribery after the midfielder put in a five-star performance in Saturday's 4-0 humbling of Werder Bremen at the Weser Stadium.

Ribery opened the scoring and bossed Bayern's midfield as the German giants ran riot against a Bremen side depleted by injuries to key midfielders Torsten Frings and Tim Borowski.

Having finished third in last season's Bundesliga, Bremen had no reply to Bayern's newly-recruited stars as Ribery converted a 31st minute penalty and Italian striker Luca Toni found the back of the net after the break.

Super sub Hamit Altintop then struck with 10 minutes remaining before fellow replacement Andreas Ottl sealed the win which means Bayern top the league and have now scored seven goals without reply from their first two games.

In his first game back at his former club, Bayern striker Miroslav Klose was hacked down after just three minutes and was taken off at half-time as Hitzfeld rearranged his side with devastating results.

"There wasn't much between the sides at the break, but after the loss

of Miroslav Klose we had to change our attacking formations considerably," said Hitzfeld.

"That was when Ribery really came into his own and made it hard for Bremen to defend against our attacks.

"But one shouldn't forget that Bremen have a few injury problems and we had a fair bit of luck."

After seeing his depleted side humbled, Bremen coach Thomas Schaaf took the defeat on the chin.

"We just gave Bayern too much space after the break and invited them to attack us," he said.

"So we can hardly complain when we are punished for it, it was a hard lesson to learn, but we will be working hard next week to fix the problems."

The guests took the lead when Ribery calmly slotted home his penalty after Toni was brought down on the edge of the penalty area.

The 24-year-old Ribery waited for Bremen goalkeeper Tim Weise to dive to his right before slotting his shot exactly where Weise had been.

Klose stayed in the dressing room after half-time, to be replaced by Altintop, and the Turkish international broke through the defence to supply a neat pass to Toni and the World Cup winner expertly slotted home on 51 minutes.

Altintop then added to Bremen's misery on 79 minutes before fellow substitute Ottl hit a superb shot which gave Weise no chance to complete the rout.

Defending Bundesliga champi-

ons VfB Stuttgart suffered a surprise 3-1 defeat at Hertha Berlin.

The visitors' German midfielder Thomas Hitzlsperger smashed a thunderbolt shot past Hertha's goalkeeper Jaroslav Drobný at Berlin's Olympic Stadium on 15 minutes.

But Berlin came back as first midfielder Sofian Chahed slotted a penalty and then defender Malik Fathi headed home before Nigerian striker Solomon Okoronkwo hit an 81st minute goal to seal the win.

Last season's runners-up Schalke 04 enjoyed a 4-1 win at home to bitter rivals Borussia Dortmund.

First defender Marcelo Bordon scored with a header on 11 minutes before defender Christian Pander slotted home a 31st minute free-kick.

A header from German international striker Gerald Asamoah on 59 minutes made it 3-0 before Dortmund pulled a goal back only for striker Kevin Kuranyi to score in the 78th minute to complete the guests' misery.

After their 3-0 defeat at Bayern last weekend, Hansa Rostock's bad start to the season continued as they were beaten 2-1 at Nuremberg.

VfL Wolfsburg enjoyed a 3-1 win at Duisburg, while Arminia Bielefeld were held 2-2 at Eintracht Frankfurt.

On Friday night, Hanover had to come from behind to beat Karlsruhe and on Sunday Bayer Leverkusen travel to Hamburg and VfL Bochum are at Energie Cottbus.

Wenger gambling on contract



INTERNET, undated

Arsene Wenger accepts the speculation of a possible takeover at Arsenal means he is taking a "gamble" in his new contract negotiations, but he has no intention of looking for a get-out clause.

The long-term ownership of the club continues to be the subject of much debate.

Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone has admitted he is interested in buying a controlling interest, while American billionaire Stan Kroenke is reported to be keen on upping his current 12.2% holding in the Gunners' parent company.

Following the controversial departure of then vice-chairman David Dein towards the end of last season, the remainder of the direc-

tors who own 45% of the club signed an agreement not to offload any more stock for at least 12 months.

Wenger, meanwhile, is currently in advanced negotiations over a likely contract extension, with his current deal set to expire at the end of the season.

Wenger hopes a positive outcome can be announced "very soon".

However, the Arsenal manager accepted hypothetically he could be faced with a change in the balance of power from those he had struck the deal with.

Wenger, though, intends to take matters as they come, rather than worry about what may or may not happen behind the scenes.

"It is true that it is a gamble I take," he said, "but when I take a gamble at some stage, it is with people who are in charge.

"They tell me certain things, and I

believe or believe not, then I say 'listen, I want to sign only one year'.

"It is down to me if I want a longer contract or not and there is a take-over, because I know from the moment I sign that it can happen."

Wenger, however, maintained he would not be seeking any get-out clause to be put into his potential new deal.

The Arsenal boss insisted: "I hate clauses.

"I always refuse clauses, because if I sign, for example, a contract for three years, and in that I can move out after one year, for me that is not fair.

"If a player asks me that, I also refuse to sign this kind of clauses.

"You are either committed, or you are not committed.

"You cannot say 'I want to have

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Lyon forward Karim Benzema (L) spins away from Lorient midfielder Christophe Jallet during their French Ligue 1 encounter at the Moustoir Stadium in Lorient on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Crisis beckons for PSG

AFP, Paris



Unheralded Lorient moved into a share of top spot in the French first division on Saturday with a 2-1 defeat of champions Lyon while Paris Saint Germain faced up to an early-season crisis.

Lorient, who defeated PSG 3-1 in midweek, showed that win was no fluke with their victory over the champions who have now suffered two defeats in their three games and are marooned in mid-table.

Lorient now have 10 points from their four games and are top along with Le Mans, who drew 1-1 with Lille, who have an identical points and goal record.

Toulouse, who were beaten 1-0 by Liverpool in their Champions

League qualifier in midweek, were losers again on Saturday slumping to a 3-1 loss to Strasbourg.

Marama Vahirua scored both of Lorient's goals, the first a spectacular volley after 14 minutes to put Lyon on the backfoot but Karim Benzema levelled for the champions on the half-hour mark.

Tahti-born Vahirua popped up again to score the winner in the 64th minute to send his side top.

"It's very annoying to lose two games in succession especially for a team playing for the title," said Lyon coach Alain Perrin whose squad has been hit by a series of injuries to key players.

"But it's the start of the season so I'm not alarmed. We will concentrate on the positives and keep working."

Nicolas Fauvergue gave Lille a 33rd-minute lead at Le Mans with a fine header and was then unlucky not to add a second in stoppage-time at the end of the first half when a fierce

drive came back off the post.

Le Mans made the most of the let-off when Brazilian striker Grafite levelled in the 56th minute to give his side a point.

Nancy, who are third with three wins in three games, can go top on Sunday if they beat Marseille who are currently fourth from bottom.

PSG coach Paul Le Guen saw his problems pile up with a dull 0-0 draw at rock-bottom Metz.

Top scorer Pauleta was controversially dropped to the bench but the Portuguese striker had to be introduced into the action in the second half to replace Peguy Luyindula.

However, even Pauleta was unable to break the deadlock and PSG were left in 14th place.

"Tonight we didn't get the rewards for our efforts," said Le Guen.

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Tottenham Spurs midfielder Steed Malbranque celebrates scoring the second of his two stunning goals during the Premiership clash against Derby County at White Hart Lane on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP