

Lyon show their class

AFP, Paris



Lyon ruthlessly exposed Bordeaux's lack of title quality in a clinical 3-1 victory at their main rivals on Sunday.

After Lyon had a stuttering start to the season, Bordeaux looked likely to pose the main obstacle to a seventh straight title for Alain Perrin's men.

But this comprehensive victory has left Lyon looking just as formidable as in their previous six seasons of domination, despite their woeful Champions League form - two matches played, two 3-0 defeats suffered.

Lyon now head the table from surprise-package Nancy, who won 3-1 at Monaco on Friday night, on goal difference with Le Mans, 2-0 home winners over Nice on Saturday, in third and Bordeaux fourth and four points off the pace.

Lyon won thanks largely to the fine form of veteran Brazilian playmaker Juninho and young France forward Karim Benzema. Juninho created the opening goal for his countryman Cleber to head home from a free-kick on five minutes.

On 23 minutes Hatem Ben Arfa released Benzema with a long ball and the striker pounced to score his

10th goal of an increasingly impressive season.

Juninho set up another goal from a dead ball for Swede Kim Kallstrom to transform on the hour before another Brazilian Jussie reduced the deficit seven minutes from time.

It all proved that Laurent Blanc's team have a long way to go if they are to hope to eventually run Lyon close when the silverware is handed out at the end of the season.

In Sunday's other match, a goal from Achille Emana gave Lille a 1-0 victory at second from bottom Sochaux.

On Saturday Marseille came thudding back down to earth with a bump as St Etienne quickly made them forget their midweek Champions League heroics in a 1-0 defeat.

Marseille came into their game on a high after a stunning 1-0 victory at last season's Champions League finalists Liverpool, which left the French Riviera side top of their qualifying group with a perfect six points from two games.

Their form has been markedly different, though, and this was a case of back to reality for Eric Gerets's men, who found themselves in the relegation zone at full-time.

"I didn't say the situation was extremely serious, but it is serious," he said. "It's true that I advocated time and assured that the club should look to the medium term, but it's out of the question that we can continue to be this disappointing."

Rennes opened the scoring on 19 minutes through former PSG midfielder Jerome Leroy but Brazilian Ceara equalised for the hosts on 57 minutes.

Any hopes of pushing on from there were ended, though, by goals from Jimmy Briand and Sylvain Wiltord in the final 17 minutes.

game. They showed that we have a great spirit with this performance," Jol said.

Asked whether he expected his future to be resolved during the international break, Jol responded: "I don't know about the future. I don't know because I'm not pulling the strings."

He leapt to the defence of Paul Robinson after the goalkeeper appeared to have committed an error leading up to Voronin's 13th minute goal.

Robbie Keane scored either side of half time as Tottenham came from behind to take the lead after Andrey Voronin had opened the scoring for Liverpool.

Tottenham have now failed to win their last six league games with speculation about Jol's future in charge at White Hart Lane continuing.

Yet the Dutchman insisted his players are 100 per cent behind him after one of Tottenham's best performances since Jol took charge in November 2004.

"My team want to fight every

ofballs."

The match seemed to be heading to dull 0-0 stalemate until Geoffrey Dernis popped up three minutes into stoppage time to crash a rasping drive in off the underside of the bar from 25 yards.

The defeat means that the former giants of French football have just one win this season from their 10 matches, and that a 2-1 success over lowly Caen.

Paul Le Guen's tenure as Paris St Germain's coach looks under threat after their home woes continued with a disastrous 3-1 defeat to Rennes at the Parc des Princes.

Le Guen's men have now lost three and drawn three of their six home matches this season and PSG president Alain Cayzac admitted he is running out of patience.

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Player refuses Israel trip

AFP, Berlin

German under-21 international Ashkan Dejagah has said he will not play against Israel in Tel Aviv on October 12 for political reasons, Bild newspaper reported on Monday.

Dejagah was born in Tehran and he explained his Iranian roots meant he would not be able to play in Israel.

He said his refusal "had political reasons. Everyone now I am an Iranian-born German," he said.

The president of the German football federation Theo Zwanziger however criticised Dejagah's stance. "If we start doing things for political reasons, it will be sport itself which loses," Zwanziger said.

The DFB did however agree that he would not play in the qualifying match for the 2009 under-21 European championships.

Bruce fears Yeung axe

AFP, London

Birmingham boss Steve Bruce has made it clear that he expects to be out of a job if Hong Kong businessman Carson Yeung succeeds in buying the English Premier League club.

Bruce agreed a new contract with the current board after securing Birmingham's return to the top flight last season but that deal has yet to be signed because of the uncertainty over the club's future.

Yeung has acquired 29.9 per cent of the equity in the club and is expected to move to full control in a matter of months.

Bruce, who is under contract until the end of next season, acknowledged could spell the end of his six-year spell at the helm.

"I have to say it doesn't look very good at the moment," he said. "I found out off (Birmingham's current owner) David Sullivan on Friday night that the vibes coming back from the Chinese consortium were negative."

"I know where I stand, that's for sure. I've 20 months to run, so I'll just get on with it and see when the new people do eventually take over exactly what plans they have got."

"But I don't think at the moment there is any talk of a further contract. There's effectively a block. There we go, I'll accept that."

"If you look at the replays of the goal again you will see that the free-kick got a deflection of Jerome Janes's knee," added Jol, who was without Darren Bent because the striker was suffering from a virus.

"If you analyse both goals it is clear that they were easy to defend. It's not normal for us to concede these kind of goals."

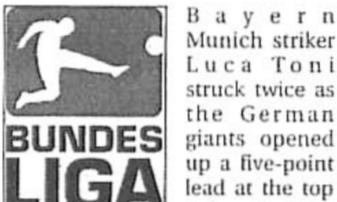


PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich midfielder Ze Roberto celebrates after scoring against Bavarian rivals Nuremberg in their Bundesliga tie on Sunday.

Toni-gol rules Bavaria

AFP, Berlin



Bayer Munich striker Luca Toni struck twice as the German giants opened up a five-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga with a 3-0 win over Nuremberg on Sunday.

Munich were without Miroslav Klose as the top-scorer at last year's World Cup struggled with a knee injury.

But Toni kept up his impressive scoring record with two goals as the win puts Bayern clear at the top, while Nuremberg remain in the relegation zone and second from bottom having picked up just one win in their last ten games.

Coach Ottmar Hitzfeld was delighted with his side's seventh win as they remain the only unbeaten side in the Bundesliga.

"We were in control from the first minute," said Hitzfeld whose side seemed destined to win their

21st crown as German champions.

"We kept our concentration and the players enjoyed the game."

"If we keep playing like this then we have a chance of winning the league."

The home side took the lead in front of a full-house of 69,000 at the Allianz Arena when Luca Toni scored his seventh league goal of the season in the 31st minute. Ze Roberto added a second five minutes from the break and then Toni added a third nine minutes from time to take his tally to nine.

Toni is now level with Klose on eight goals as the pair have now got 16 Bundesliga goals between them after just nine games.

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2-1 by Bundesliga minnows Hansa Rostock last weekend and beaten 2-0 at home by Barcelona in the Champions League in midweek.

Last season's second-division champions Karlsruhe are up to second in the league thanks to their impressive 2-0 win with two goals by striker Christian Timm at Schalke 04, who are now fifth.

Werder Bremen are back up to third thanks to their 3-1 win at third-from-bottom Duisburg on Saturday.

Hamburg went fourth in the league thanks to captain Rafael van der Vaart's 49th minute winner at Arminia Bielefeld.

VfL Bochum enjoyed a 1-0 win over Hansa Rostock at home, while Hertha Berlin's striker Marko Pantelic missed the chance to grab his sixth league goal of the season when he missed an injury time penalty as his side drew 0-0.

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Van Basten wont coach Ajax

AFP, The Hague

The Dutch football federation president Henk Kesler said he would not allow national coach Marco van Basten to coach Ajax in the near future, the De Telegraaf newspaper reported on Monday.

According to Dutch press, Ajax, who are looking for a replacement for their Chelsea-bound coach Henk ten Cate, could turn to van Basten in a double role as national coach and Ajax boss.

Kesler ruled out this scenario. "Even for 100 million euros, we will not accept it (that van Basten coaches Ajax)," said Kesler. "The coach cannot do two things at once."

Van Basten's contract ends in July next year after the Euro 2008 finals in Austria and Switzerland.

Tamudo recalled in place of Villa

AFP, Madrid

Espanyol captain Raul Tamudo has been recalled to the Spanish squad by coach Luis Aragones to replace injured striker David Villa for Saturday's Euro 2008 qualifier against Denmark.

There had been speculation as to whether Real Madrid captain Raul Gonzalez Blanco would be rewarded for his form with the Primera Liga side by getting his first call-up to the national side in a year.

But Aragones preferred the 29-year-old Tamudo, who has nine caps for the national side, but has not featured since September 2005.

Villa injured his left ankle during Valencia's 2-1 home loss against Espanyol at the weekend, and will be out of action for three weeks.

Spain lead Group E; three points ahead of Northern Ireland and Sweden. Denmark are fourth, five points back but with two games in hand on the Spaniards.

Spain will also play a friendly against Finland on October 17.

Owen tonic for McClaren



Football

AFP, London

Michael Owen gave England coach Steve McClaren a much-needed boost as he marked his return from surgery with a goal in Newcastle's 3-2 win over Everton.

Owen made an instant impact when he came on for the last 16 minutes at St James Park on Sunday just nine days after a double operation to cure hernia and groin problems.

His 90th minute strike will have brought a smile to McClaren's face ahead of his country's crucial Euro 2008 qualifiers against Estonia on Saturday and Russia the following Wednesday.

But the coach saw his attacking options dwindle after Everton manager David Moyes confirmed frontman Andrew Johnson will miss

the qualifiers to have an ankle operation.

"Andy's got an ankle operation, he's got a groin strain, so he's going to miss the next three or four weeks," Moyes said.

McClaren is already without Emile Heskey and is waiting for the results of scans on Dean Ashton, who looks likely to miss out as well after suffering a knee injury in West Ham's defeat at Aston Villa on Saturday.

As if that wasn't enough of a concern, Owen's Newcastle teammate Alan Smith has a slight knee problem, although he will report for duty.

There was one piece of good news for McClaren as Frank Lampard played the full 90 minutes of Chelsea's 1-0 win at Bolton on Sunday.

Owen's cameo appearance was enough to convince him he will be fit to start.

"I'm fine. I'm playing without

pain and will only get better," Owen said.

"It's only a minor thing but it took a lot of determination to come back so soon. I've put in a lot of hard work over the last week and I was disappointed not to actually start."

"The surgeon's advice is what I will look at more than anything else. She tells me to push it as hard as I like."

However, Newcastle manager Sam Allardyce fears Owen could suffer a setback if he plays in both matches and he plans to speak to McClaren to voice his concerns.

Chelsea midfielder Lampard was making his first appearance since August after recovering from a thigh injury and his return has left McClaren with a selection dilemma.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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