

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 Toulouse 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 league 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.

After the good match against Liverpool I was sure the team was developing confidence," said a bemused Gerets. "Many players were off their game and we gave away a lot

of balls."

The match seemed to be heading to dull 0-0 stalemate until Geoffrey Derris 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.

"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 Wilford in the final 17 minutes.

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 knows 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."

From football to politics

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's most famous footballer was sworn in Monday as a member of parliament, replacing a Sunni lawmaker who left politics to join the insurgency.

"I will work for all Iraqis and not for a particular side," said Ahmed Radhi, the scorer of Iraq's only World Cup finals goal to date, against Belgium in 1986.

Radhi will fill the vacancy left by the ejection of Abid-Nasir al-Janabi, a member of parliament's Sunni bloc, the National Concord Front, who appeared on television in June and announced his intention to become an insurgent.

"I will join the Sports and Youth Committee at the House of Deputies to serve sports activities in the country," said Radhi, one of the most popular figures in Iraq.

He left the war-torn country last summer and went to live for a while in the Jordanian capital Amman for security reasons after the head of Iraq's Olympic committee was kidnapped.

"Through my new job, I will seek to be active in seeking consensus between the political blocs inside the parliament," said Radhi, whose candidature was approved by unanimous vote.



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



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 struggles 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.

Also on Sunday, Eintracht Frankfurt enjoyed a 2-1 win over Bayer Leverkusen which puts them seventh.

On Saturday, Armin Veh coach of defending champions VfB Stuttgart admitted his side are in crisis after they were beaten 2-0 at home by Hanover which leaves them 12th in the league.

This was Stuttgart's third defeat in a week after they were humbled

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 Wolfsburg 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.

On Friday night, 10-man Borussia Dortmund lifted themselves up the Bundesliga table after Italian midfielder Giovanni Federico scored the winner in their 2-1 home victory over VfL Bochum.

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 could 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 F; 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.

Jol remains defiant

AFP, Liverpool



Liverpool proves that his players are still right behind him.

Tottenham were denied a first league win at Anfield for 14 years when Fernando Torres salvaged a point for a below-par Liverpool side as a thrilling game ended 2-2 at Anfield on Sunday.

Robbie Keane scored either side of half time as Tottenham came from behind to take the lead after Andriy 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

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: "do not know about the future. I don't know because I'm not pulling the strings."

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

Robinson, who is expected to feature in England's crucial Euro 2008 qualifier with Estonia next Saturday, went into the match under pressure after two mistakes in the 4-4 draw with Aston Villa last Monday.

He fumbled a free-kick by Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard which allowed Voronin to strike from inside the six-yard area.

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

"I'm not concerned about Paul Robinson's form."

Despite failing to hang on to the lead, Jol said he was encouraged by his team's battling performance, although he admitted that a draw was a bad result for both clubs.

Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez was also forced to leap to the defence of one of his players.

Jamie Carragher looked a shadow of the player he was before suffering a rib injury earlier in the season but Benitez said he was not unduly concerned about the former England defender's form.

Benitez, however, could not hide his disappointment after seeing his defence make two easy goals.

"Two mistakes changed the game," said Benitez.

"We had so many chances to win the game but I am sat here having to explain why we conceded two goals and couldn't score."

"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."

Italy ignore Del Piero, Inzaghi

Football

INTERNET, undated

Italy coach Roberto Donadoni has left World Cup-winning strikers Alessandro Del Piero and Filippo Inzaghi out of his 22-man squad for Saturday's Group B Euro 2008 qualifier against Georgia in Genoa.

Del Piero's omission was on the cards after his lacklustre performance in midfield in last month's 0-0 draw against France and his subsequent declaration that he only wanted to play for the Azzurri as a striker.

The Juventus captain started his side's 1-1 draw at Fiorentina on the bench on Sunday.

But Inzaghi's failure to feature in the list was a surprise. The fact that the AC Milan forward is still seeking his first Serie A goal of the season probably influenced Donadoni's decision.

The coach has handed in-form Fiorentina midfielder Riccardo Montolivo, a former member of Italy's Under-21 outfit, his first call-up for the senior national team.

Donadoni is without suspended captain Fabio Cannavaro and injured defenders Marco Materazzi and Gianluca Zambrotta.

AS Roma midfielders Simone Perrotta and Alberto Aquilani and Juventus's Mauro Camoranesi are unfit too.

After nine games Italy are second in Group B with 20 points, one behind leaders Scotland and one ahead of France.

Donadoni is expected to send several players back to their clubs after the Georgia match and call up some fresh faces for the Oct 17 friendly against South Africa in Siena.

It will be the first time the national team play in the Tuscan city, which is being compensated for the

cancellation of a friendly against Romania there in February following the death of a police officer in rioting at a top-flight game in Catania.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Marco Amelia (Livorno), Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), Gianluca Curci (AS Roma).

Defenders: Andrea Barzagli (Palermo), Daniele Bonera (AC Milan), Giorgio Chiellini (Juventus), Alessandro Gamberini (Fiorentina), Fabio Grosso (Olympique Lyon), Massimo Oddo (AC Milan), Christian Panucci (AS Roma).

Midfielders: Massimo Ambrosini (AC Milan), Daniele De Rossi (AS Roma), Gennaro Gattuso (AC Milan), Stefano Mauri (Lazio), Riccardo Montolivo (Fiorentina), Andrea Pirlo (AC Milan).

Forwards: Antonio Di Natale (Udinese), Vincenzo Iaquinta (Juventus), Pasquale Foggia (Cagliari), Cristiano Lucarelli (Shakhtar Donetsk), Fabio Quagliarella (Udinese), Luca Toni (Bayern Munich).



PHOTO: AFP

A combo of images shows (from L-R) Heerenveen's Brazilian striker Afonso Alves preparing to stab home his seventh goal of the day on way to giving his side an astonishing 9-0 win over Heracles in the Dutch League on Sunday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37 Johnny's band-leader	DOWN	24 Copper head
1 Hallucination letters	38 Seeks restitution	1 Light purple	25 Obese
4 Eggs	7 Postpone	2 Bluster	26 Tokyo's old name
12 Jima pre-coder	39 Chown rod	3 Use a divining	28 Sailor's assent
13 Understand	41 Seaweed that provides iodine	4 Valhalla VIP	30 "not choose to run"
14 Really mad	45 Winnow	5 Sight	31 "Sesame Street" network
15 Legislation	47 Cattle call?	6 Shooface tip	32 Perfume-label word
16 Capital of Pakistan	48 Backyard game	7 It ain't worth a nickel	33 Tribute of a sort
18 Fool	52 Melody	8 Historic time	36 Picnic hamper
19 Enma Roberts, to Julia	53 Standard	9 Beatles adjective	37 Lacking, with "of"
20 Word in some French restaurant names	54 Disen-cumber	10 Greek vowel	40 Aquarium swimmer
22 Mel of Coopers-town	55 Rags	11 Scarlet	42 Spam, often
23 Protected	56 Thread	17 Perfor-mances	43 Bay of Biscay feeder
27 McKellen or McShane	57 Commer-cials	21 Insults	44 Meditated
29 Roc rider	58 Started fur-tively	23 Moved	45 Lodge
31 Floral symbol of China			46 Some footballers
34 Because of			48 Clear the tables
35 Harass			49 Cleo's slayer
			50 Pair
			51 Long March leader

Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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W N U Q S V W I E F D W U M
T I W U M O Z Q H I Y E Q H O W E
G D O F W S Y X U G W Y N X X U
O H T X S O X X Y X Y ?
Yesterday's Cryptquip: SUPPOSING DONALD OR DAISY WERE TO LOOK UP A WORD'S MEANING, MIGHT THEY CHECK A DUCKTUNARY?
Today's Cryptquip Clue: X equals E