



BLAST FROM THE PAST: Fiorentina striker Christian Vieri (L) celebrates his strike that was set up by teammate Adrian Mutu (R) during their UEFA Cup match against Villarreal at El Madrigal on Thursday.

SPURS FALL, BOLTON HELD

Perfect night for Germans

AFP, Paris



A potentially low key start to Thursday's UEFA Cup match with Getafe - in which the players could not give him a winning send-off as they lost 2-1 at home - both The Sun and The Times were reporting that he had agreed severance terms with the board.

It should be confirmed on Friday when the Stock Exchange opens. He was also seen leaving the dressing room shortly after the final whistle to go to the boardroom as many Spurs fans stayed behind after

the match shaking their heads in disbelief.

Ironically the man slated to replace him Juande Ramos took his present club Sevilla to two successive UEFA Cups, and last season knocked out Spurs in the quarter-finals.

Another Premiership club due to come under new management, Bolton, managed a slightly better result as they drew 1-1 at home to unheralded Portuguese side Sporting Braga at the Reebok Stadium - watched by the man brought in to replace Sammy Lee, Gary Megson.

The other Premiership side in action Everton gained a predictable 3-1 win over Cypriot outfit Larissa with the most notable aspect being a goal by Australian international Tim Cahill on his return to frontline action.

The individual performance of the night was a double by German international striker Miroslav Klose, whose rejuvenation since he signed for Bayern Munich from Werder Bremen continues apace - the

German giants edging another former European Cup champion Red Star Belgrade 3-2 in Belgrade.

Klose struck first to knock in a rebound after Lucio's long range effort had been parried by the goalkeeper in the 19th minute to level at 1-1 and the Polish-born star was to their rescue again in the second-half as his header from Bastien Schweinsteiger's cross once again equalised the match.

Teenage substitute Toni Kroos made it a memorable night for him on only his second appearance for Bayern by scoring directly from a right wing free kick in the fourth minute of injury time to seal a late victory just 14 minutes after coming on.

While Kroos faces a potentially starlight future, two giants of the past also struck for their respective clubs and not for the first time saved their teammates from defeat.

Bayern Leverkusen beat Toulouse 1-0 in Group E. Stefan Kiessling scored his fourth goal in three UEFA Cup matches in the 35th

minute, chipping over goalkeeper Nicolas Douchez.

The seemingly ageless Swedish icon Henrik Larsson scored to see the 35-year-old former Barcelona and Celtic star give his side Helsingborgs a 1-1 home draw over Greek side Panionios while former Italian international striker Christian Vieri struck for Fiorentina against in-form Spanish side Villarreal in another 1-1 draw.

For Vieri, who was set up by Romanian striker partner Adrian Mutu, it was the 34-year-old's 31st goal in European club competition.

The modest three French clubs left in the competition had a mixed bag of results with Bordeaux the only winners, confirming their hold over Turkish giants Galatasaray with a 2-1 win at home, adding to a draw and a win in their Champions League group last term.

Jol can only wish his hold over Spurs was that firm.

BUNDESLIGA FIXTURES

(all times 1330 GMT unless stated)
Saturday
Aminia Bielefeld v Energie Cottbus,
Hansa Rostock v Karlsruhe SC,
Hertha Berlin v VfL Bochum, Schalke 04 v
Werder Bremen, VfB Stuttgart v Bayer
Leverkusen, VfL Wolfsburg v Nuremberg
Sunday
Borussia Dortmund v Bayern Munich
(1600)

Two month layoff for Vieira

AFP, Rome

Patrick Vieira is set to be out of action for the rest of this year after suffering a right calf injury in Inter Milan's Champions League win over CSKA Moscow on Tuesday.

The French midfielder came off after just 17 minutes in the game in what was only his second appearance of the season with a number of Italian medical experts predicting a two month spell on the sidelines.

After further medical tests Inter confirmed the initial diagnosis in a statement on Thursday without specifying how long the midfielder would need to recover from this latest setback.

Vieira will miss a string of key Serie A games for Inter as well as their Champions League fixtures and an international friendly against Morocco on November 16 followed by France's key Euro 2008 qualifier against Ukraine in Kiev five days later.

Last Saturday Vieira returned for his first match of the season against Reggina after recovering from a thigh problem he picked up in France's 1-0 home loss to Scotland in their Euro 2008 qualifier last month.

Kasper moves to Cardiff

INTERNET, undated

Cardiff have signed Manchester City goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel on a month's loan.

Schmeichel goes straight into the squad for the visit of Scunthorpe on Saturday after a proposed move to Coca-Cola Championship rivals Coventry collapsed earlier this week.

The 20-year-old started the campaign as Sven-Goran Eriksson's first choice at Eastlands but has lost his place to fellow youngster Joe Hart in recent weeks.

"The Bluebirds confirm the signing of Kasper Schmeichel from Manchester City initially on a month's loan," read a Cardiff statement.

"The keeper will link up with the squad and will take the number one shirt vacated by Ross Turnbull, who has returned to Middlesbrough."

Spurs look to Ramos

Football

AFP, London

Sevilla coach Juande Ramos has emerged as the front-runner to take over from Martin Jol after the Dutchman was sacked by struggling English Premiership club Tottenham.

Spurs, lying third from bottom of the Premier League, announced after their 2-1 UEFA Cup defeat to Getafe late Thursday that Jol and assistant boss Chris Hughton were sacked following the club's dismal start to the season.

Jol waved to fans and there were songs criticising chairman Daniel Levy, who infamously was among the Spurs officials who met Ramos at the start of the season.

Ramos spoke of an offer from Spurs and then vowed to stay in Spain for the rest of the season, but bookmakers have stopped taking bets on him succeeding Jol.

Former Spurs midfielder Gus Poyet - currently at Leeds - has been widely tipped to join as assistant.

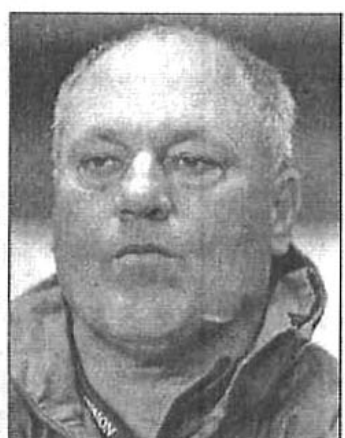
Jol had been in charge at Spurs for three years, and managed fifth-placed finishes in the Premier League during his only full seasons at White Hart Lane.

They were within touching

distance of the Champions League two seasons ago but were hit by a mystery virus on the final day of the season.

Heavy investment in the squad this summer - and retaining the services of Dimitar Berbatov - saw expectation rise in the boardroom.

The aim was the top four but Jol could only manage one win with more than a quarter of the season



MARTIN JOL

already gone.

Levy said: "For me, Martin and Chris' departure is regrettable. Our greatest wish was to see results turn in our favour and for there to be no need for change."

"They have been professional, popular and respected members of the coaching staff and there will always be a warm welcome for them both at the Lane."

Jol added: "I can understand the position of the club in light of the results. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here. Tottenham Hotspur is a special club and I want to thank the terrific staff and players."

"For me the fans were always amazing with their support so I would also like to say thank you - I shall never forget them."

Development coach Clive Allen and youth team boss Alex Inglethorpe will take charge of the first team for the time being.

Two defeats in the opening week of the season put pressure on Jol - then the meeting with Ramos in Spain emerged.

Jol appeared a "dead man walking" from then. He was not helped by Berbatov appearing moody, and the Bulgaria striker appeared to undermine his boss when he looked reluctant to warm up as a substitute against Newcastle on Monday.

Jermian Defoe was also upset after finding himself out of the match day squad on occasions or used as an impact substitute, while Darren Bent has not settled in following his 16.5million pound move from Charlton.

Milan eye league fillip

AFP, Rome



AC Milan host Roma this weekend desperate to do something they haven't managed to accomplish so far

this season in Serie A - and that's win at the San Siro.

Milan's poor league form has left Carlo Ancelotti's European champions struggling to keep tabs on the leaders - last weekend's painful 1-0 home defeat to Empoli left the Rossoneri 10 points off city rivals Inter Milan.

Club vice-president Adriano Galliani admitted Milan were in crisis following the Empoli setback.

"To say 'chaos' (Italian newspaper headline) is incorrect. I think crisis is more accurate," he noted.

Spirits were lifted by the 4-1 midweek Champions League demolition of Shakhtar Donetsk with Clarence Seedorf for one hoping a corner had been turned.

Seedorf, who contributed a double to that lopsided score line, said: "Having something concrete is very important for us and will help raise our morale. It will at least give us a little bit of relief after a tense few days."

The Dutch star added: "We know that in Europe the game is played differently to Italy, but that isn't an excuse."

"We have the quality to play in tighter spaces as well. We won the title a few years ago and we can't

forget that."

Ancelotti, while playing down talk of a crisis and suggesting a charge for the title was by no means beyond them, cautioned that there were still issues to iron out despite Wednesday's win.

"Everything has not been resolved and we will probably run into certain problems again in the future," said the coach before adding: "No, it's not crazy (to talk about the title)."

"For sure though it's difficult because we've got to get back a lot of points. And the main objective is to qualify for the Champions League that is one of the first four places."

Roma are in fourth on 15 points after splitting the spoils in last weekend's eight goal thriller against Napoli.

After a decent start coach Luciano Spalletti's side have lost a little momentum with only one win from their last five games.

One player Spalletti will be counting on to reinvigorate their campaign is new French import Ludovic Giuly who has by his standards had a quiet time since his summer move from Barcelona.

Giuly said: "The month of October is always difficult. The same thing happened to me at Lyon, Monaco and Barcelona."

"It has been tough because the preparation here is more demanding than I'm used to and I have been a bit tired."

"I'm yet to find my best position on the pitch for Roma, but I'm sure

I will. This is a great team with a fantastic attitude and I think I will succeed here."

At the top of the table Inter travel down to Sicily to tackle Palermo seeking their fifth consecutive success but without Patrick Vieira, who is facing a lengthy spell on the sidelines.

The former Arsenal midfielder injured his right calf in Tuesday's Champions League win over CSKA Moscow on only his second appearance of the season.

Juventus are on Inter's coat tails just three points off the pace in second and Claudio Ranieri's men travel to fellow promoted side Napoli aiming to retain their unbeaten record on the road.

Ranieri is missing Pavel Nedved, handed a two match suspension in last week's win over Genoa, and injured midfielders Marco Marchionni and Imanolu Camaranesi.

Third-placed Fiorentina, flying high after last week's 3-0 rout of Siena and like Inter yet to taste defeat this term, have a tricky date at sixth-placed Genoa.

FIXTURES

Saturday
Napoli v Juventus (1830), Torino v Cagliari (1600)
Sunday
(1300 GMT)
Catania v Sampdoria, Empoli v Atalanta, Genoa v Fiorentina (1830), Lazio v Udinese, AC Milan v Roma, Palermo v Inter Milan, Parma v Livorno, Siena v Reggina

Arsenal face tough test

AFP, London



Arsene Wenger knows greatness is within Arsenal's grasp but even the Gunners manager concedes this weekend's clash at Liverpool is the true test of his side's title credentials.

Wenger believes his current crop of talented youngsters is the best he has ever assembled and their superb start to the season leaves no doubt just how good they can be.

The Gunners are playing the most eye-catching football in Europe and go to Anfield on Sunday boasting a 12 match winning run which has propelled them to the top of the Premier League table.

Two more victories would equal the London club's best winning streak set 20 years ago, while their 7-0 rout of Slavia Prague was their joint-best European score.

On top of their fabulous passing, movement and finishing, Wenger's side have developed a solid backbone, with the defence keeping seven clean sheets in their last eight games.

Statistics alone don't do justice

to Arsenal's majestic play in the first three months of the campaign. But their opponents so far have not been of the highest standard and Wenger knows Sunday's game will give a clearer indication of whether they dethrone Manchester United.

Gunners captain William Gallas, whose side were last crowned champions four seasons ago, is convinced his team-mates now have the desire, as well as the talent, to win the league.

"What has changed this year is drive, collective desire and fighting spirit," he said. "What I see is a group that is fantastic, our start to the season is amazing and we have great fun playing in such a team."

"But at the same time, all that is a little frightening. On Sunday at Anfield, we will know much more."

While it seems Arsenal will face Rafa Benitez's side at the perfect time, appearances can be deceiving.

The Reds' midweek defeat against Besiktas has left their European challenge in severe trouble, but they remain unbeaten in the league and can close the gap on Arsenal to three points with a win.

Jamie Carragher was one of the few players to come out of the loss in Turkey with any credit and he knows Arsenal's visit gives

Liverpool the perfect chance to bounce back.

"We've got a big game against Arsenal and we've got to be up for it," Carragher said. "We will have to improve a touch because Arsenal are probably playing as well as any side in Europe at the moment."

"But our record against Arsenal in the last few years is quite good and we want to keep that going."

Another team aiming to show they are more than just a flash in the pan are Manchester City, who face resurgent Chelsea.

Sven Goran Eriksson has quickly transformed City into one of the most entertaining and effective sides in the Premier League. They sit third in the table and are unbeaten in six matches, while Chelsea have won their last four matches.

Something has to give at Stamford Bridge, where Avram Grant is finally earning some respect after his controversial appointment as Jose Mourinho's successor.

Blues midfielder Joe Cole is certainly relishing Grant's style. "A new manager comes in with a new style and you have to adjust," he said. "I'm enjoying working with him."

By the time Arsenal kick off, they could have been displaced at the

top by United, who host Middlesbrough on Saturday looking to extend a run of seven successive league wins.

Ferguson's side, who have scored four times in each of their last three matches, look in the rudest of health despite injuries to several key players.

At the bottom of the table, manager-less Tottenham are in disarray. Martin Jol has finally been put out of his misery after failing to convince the club's owners that he could turn round their dismal form.

Spurs coach Clive Allen will be in charge for Sunday's game against Blackburn but the London club are certain to renew their attempt to lure Sevilla boss Juande Ramos to White Hart Lane.

FIXTURES

Saturday
(all 1400 GMT unless stated)
Birmingham v Wigan, Chelsea v Manchester City, Manchester Utd v Middlesbrough, Portsmouth v West Ham (1615 GMT), Reading v Newcastle, Sunderland v Fulham
Sunday
Bolton v Aston Villa (1230 GMT), Derby v Everton (1300 GMT), Liverpool v Arsenal (1500 GMT), Tottenham v Blackburn (1400 GMT)

Robinho comes clean

Football

AFP, Madrid

After scoring two goals which helped Real Madrid defeat Olympiakos 4-2 in the Champions League, Robinho took his chance on Thursday to explain the other episode which has kept him in the spotlight.

The Brazilian international had been criticized by most parties after his late night celebrations which followed Brazil's 5-0 thrashing of Ecuador last week and which delayed his return to Madrid from international duty.

After arriving back in the Spanish capital last Friday, Schuster dropped Robinho for 2-1

loss at Espanyol on Saturday, the Spanish giants' first defeat of the season, before recalling him to face the Greek side.

"I don't have to apologise for going out (after the Brazil match). I was with the Brazilian team and when we lose we go straight back home, but if we win we choose to go out," Robinho told a press conference on Thursday.

"What I do have to apologise for is returning late because I have an obligation to the club."

"I have talked with the boss (Real coach Bernd Schuster) who was very unhappy that I came back (to Madrid) late. I hope I don't make the same mistake again," added the contrite Brazilian.

"In Brazil, there were a lot of problems with the planes and I

also thought that Real's game was on the Sunday not Saturday but the responsibility for this is also mine."

"It was a complicated week but in the end it finished well. There were a lot of things said that were not true but in the end I gave my answer on the field," added Robinho.

"I'm grateful for the confidence that Schuster has shown in me."

The 23-year-old winger was back in most people's good books following his contribution to Real's win over Olympiakos, which took them to the top of European Champions League Group C.

His after 67 and 83 minutes turned an embarrassing 2-1 deficit to the Greeks, who had been play-

ing with 10 men since the 12th minute, into a 3-2 lead before Javier Balboa added Real's fourth in injury time.

"Robinho carries on the party," commented Spanish sports daily Marca on its front page on Thursday.

The rest of the Spanish media didn't spare the puns and references relating to Robinho's nocturnal activities, both on and off the field.

"Robinho's night on the town," added the more sober mainstream El Mundo newspaper.

Club directors are still mulling over what punishment to exact for Robinho's recent tardiness but Spanish media reports have suggested that it is likely to be a fine of between 3,000 and 4,000 euros.

FIXTURES

Saturday
(all times in GMT)
Real Mallorca v Espanyol (1800), Athletic Bilbao v Real Betis (2000)
Sunday
Levante v Atletico Madrid (1600), Murcia v Recreativo Huelva (1600), Osasuna v Valladolid (1600), Racing Santander v Getafe (1600), Real Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna (1600), Real Zaragoza v Villarreal (1600), Barcelona v Almeria (1800), Sevilla v Valencia (2000)



Bayern Munich striker Miroslav Klose (R) fights for possession with Red Star Belgrade defender Segundo Castillo (L) during their UEFA Cup encounter at the Marakana stadium in Belgrade on Thursday.