



Bayern Munich midfielder Ze Roberto (C) traps the ball ahead of Borussia Dortmund midfielder Jakob Blaszczykowski during their Bundesliga clash at Signal Iduna Park on Sunday.

## Hamburg cut Bayern's lead

AFP, Berlin



Vincent Kompany struck to give them a 1-0 win over Duisburg.

Bayern were held to a 0-0 draw at Borussia Dortmund, so Hamburg's win at Duisburg shaves two points off Munich's lead at the top of the Bundesliga table.

But Hamburg coach Huub Stevens warned against any ideas of Bayern's domination being broken.

"I am still quite sure Bayern will be champions at the end of the season," said Stevens.

"We are on the right path, but there is still a long way before Bayern are really threatened."

For Dortmund coach Thomas Doll his side's 0-0 draw was a disappoint-

ing result despite Borussia going close to beating Bayern who are chasing their 21st crown as German champions.

"I am a bit annoyed we wasted our chances to win the game," said Doll. "It is not usual to get so many chances against Bayern, but we can build on that."

"We certainly created our chances in the second half."

Bayern Munich boss Ottmar Hitzfeld said his side were below-par after their 3-2 UEFA Cup win at Red Star Belgrade on Thursday night.

"A point at Dortmund is never bad," said Hitzfeld.

"Particularly since we were very tired, the game in Belgrade took most of our strength out of us and we were only 70 per cent of what we should have been."

While Bayern controlled the first half, Dortmund dominated the second and missed a string of chances to win the game.

Bayern's best opportunity came when they hit the crossbar twice on 37 minutes: after Argentinian defender Martin Demichelis lobbed in a shot

from 30 metres, Klose clipped the bar seconds later.

It was 0-0 at half-time, but Klose had a good chance just after the break, but Dortmund 'keeper Roman Weidenfeller blocked his shot.

The home side raised their game as Dortmund's Croatian midfielder Mladen Petric was left with his head in his hands on the hour mark as his shot flew just over the crossbar.

And moments later Polish midfielder Jakob Blaszczykowski went close on 61 minutes as his shot just missed the target and midfielder Florian Krings also hit the post as Dortmund poured forward.

They may be the only unbeaten side in the league, but Bayern were lucky to leave Dortmund's Signal Iduna Park with a point.

Hamburg went second with a win over second-from-bottom Duisburg after Kompany gave them the lead on 37 minutes.

Their domination finally paid off when Piotr Trochowski floated in a free-kick and Kompany slammed his shot home.

The guests were never really tested

by a Duisburg side who have just three wins to their name after 11 games this season.

Werder Bremen are third in the table after their 1-1 draw with Schalke 04 on Saturday.

An early free-kick by Carlos Grossmuller at Schalke's Veltins-Arena was cancelled out by Bremen's defender Naldo heading a first-half goal in an electric game with both sides squandering numerous chances.

Hertha Berlin enjoyed a 2-0 win over VfL Bochum when defender Marcel Maltritz turned the ball into his own net in the first half before striker Marko Pantelic added the second on 35 minutes.

Wolfsburg are up to seventh in the table after their 3-1 home win over German Cup holders Nuremberg.

Bottom side Energie Cottbus drew 1-1 with Arminia Bielefeld thanks to an injury-time equaliser and Hansa Rostock drew 0-0 with fourth-placed Karlsruhe.

On Friday night, midtable Hannover and Eintracht Frankfurt thrashed out a 0-0 draw.

## Referee dropped after blunder

INTERNET, undated

Italian referee Mauro Bergonzi will not officiate in this week's matches and looks set to be dropped for a longer period after wrongly awarding two penalties against Juventus on Saturday.

Juve lost 3-1 at Napoli having been level at 1-1 before Maurizio Domizic converted both controversial spotkicks.

Bergonzi decided Giorgio Chiellini fouled Ezequiel Lavezzi despite replays showing he won the ball and the official pointed to the spot again after former Juve striker Marcelo Zalayeta dived over keeper Gianluigi Buffon.

The referee has not been selected for any of Tuesday's Serie B games or Wednesday's Serie A matches, the Italian Soccer Federation Web site (www.figc.it) said.

Media reports have said referees' chief Pierluigi Collina could now ban Bergonzi for as much as a month and then keep him in Serie B for longer.

An online petition asking for the referee to be struck off has received thousands of signatures on a well-known Juventus fan Web site.

Zalayeta could also face a suspension for diving when the league's disciplinary committee meet this week.

Juventus boss Claudio Ranieri said he hoped his club were not being victimised because of their role in last year's match-fixing scandal, which involved clubs securing favourable referees.

Juve were stripped of two titles and demoted in the affair but won promotion straight back to the top flight last term.

"We have already paid for the past, two championships and a relegation. We want to be treated like everyone else," he told Italian media.

## Redknapp extends deal

INTERNET, undated

Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp has signed a new contract which will keep him at Fratton Park until 2011, the club have confirmed.

The 60-year-old Pompey boss, who had been linked to succeed Martin Jol at Spurs before the appointment of Juande Ramos, has been rewarded for his team's fine start to the season.

With Pompey currently lying seventh in the Barclays Premier League, the Fratton Park club have moved to secure the manager's future.

Redknapp said in a statement: "I'm delighted. Since returning to Fratton Park I have had nothing but the utmost support from the owner Sacha Gadamak and chief executive Peter Storrer."

"They have backed me 100% in the transfer market and I am genuinely excited about the group of players I have with me here now."

"The club as a whole is moving in the right direction with exciting news off the field with a new training ground coming next year and a fabulous new state-of-the-art stadium also in the pipeline," added Redknapp, who left the club during the reign of previous chairman Milan Mandaric before returning to Fratton Park.

"It's a great place to be right now and I can only see that getting better." Chief executive Storrer added: "Obviously it's a great coup for us to have one of the best managers in the business pledging his long-term future to the club."

"Harry has done a great job, first rescuing the club from the jaws of relegation and then building a team now strong enough to push for a European place."

## Rooney delight at partnership

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United ace Wayne Rooney has stated playing alongside new strike partner Carlos Tevez is 'brilliant'.

Although many were unsure whether the duo could play in the same side, their recent form has put any lingering question marks over their compatibility firmly to bed.

Tevez netted twice in Saturday's 4-1 win over Middlesbrough at Old Trafford while Rooney extending his scoring run to seven games after bagging United's second.

Although Rooney acknowledges both players like operating just behind the opposition's midfield, the former Everton man believes he has adapted his game to accommodate Tevez.

"Playing with Carlos is brilliant," he told MUTV. "He's a clever player, very intelligent, and I think we both work well together."

"We've both been scoring a few goals lately so we're pleased with that. I know it's my job to score goals and I try and score in every game I play."

"I'm not getting too involved with the build-up play but I've started to score 'easy' goals which I've never really done."

"I know where Carlos plays - just in behind the opposition's midfield. That is where I like to play as well, but I feel as if I can change my game to whoever I play with."

## Arsenal assure Wenger

AFP, Liverpool



Arsene Wenger believes his Arsenal side are showing the mark of champions after returning to the head of the Premier League table following the 1-1 draw with Liverpool at Anfield.

Arsenal recovered after falling behind to an early Steve Gerrard strike to equalise through Cesc Fabregas with 10 minutes remaining to move ahead of second-placed Manchester United on goals scored with a game in hand on their nearest rivals.

The display demonstrated a level of determination and resolve within Wenger's side that has so far been overlooked during their impressive start to the campaign.

And the manager believes that, with Manchester United due to visit the Emirates Stadium next weekend, the performance against Liverpool will alert others to Arsenal's title credentials.

"I was pleased with the performance and attitude of the team," Wenger said.

"I thought they showed fantastic quality today to come back after going behind in the first few minutes against a team that is so strong on counter-attack and on set-pieces."

"And they have also shown

fantastic mental strength and togetherness. I feel we have come out of our first big test looking very strong."

"We played without nerves or any restrictions. We played the game we wanted to play based on our technical qualities and movement. I can't fault the players."

"I have always been confident about our hopes since the beginning of the season. But I hope we have convinced a few more people. In my opinion we have the talent to keep on fighting for the championship."

Arsenal offered flashes of their ability last season but failed to find the consistency needed to sustain a meaningful title challenge. Wenger, though, believes his young side has developed a new-found maturity that means they are a much stronger proposition this time around.

"They are growing as a team and getting more mature," he added. "Last year we were seven points behind the lead after the first three games but are feeling the benefit of a good start this season."

"Now we are going into another big test (against Manchester United) but we will go into it feeling even stronger on the back of today's performance."

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez is facing a growing list of injury problems to add to his disappointment at seeing his side fail to hang onto the lead against the

league leaders.

Record signing Fernando Torres was withdrawn at half-time after suffering a recurrence of a groin problem that forced him to miss last weekend's Merseyside derby and the midweek Champions League clash with Besiktas.

And Xabi Alonso pulled up with a metatarsal problem on his return after a six week absence with the same problem. To add to Benitez's woes, Javier Mascherano finished the game limping and will have a scan this week on his foot.

"We had problems with Torres and Alonso," the manager said. "Torres is the same injury in his groin area and Alonso had damaged a metatarsal again."

"Maybe Torres's injury isn't as bad but we couldn't use his pace. He wasn't fit and we don't know yet how long he will be out."

"We don't know if Alonso has broken his foot but he felt something and we will have to see what the full extent of the injury is."

Benitez refused to add his name to the growing list of Arsenal admirers insisting Liverpool's own title challenge was still alive and kicking.

"At this moment they are playing well and you can see they are a very good side," he added. "But it's too early, for example we are six points behind but there a lot of games left."

## Lyon pip PSG

AFP, Paris



Ten-man six-time reigning champions Lyon hung on to beat Paris Saint Germain 3-2 on Sunday to leave a question mark over the future of PSG coach Paul Le Guen and Marseille also took a knock this weekend.

The victory put Lyon four points ahead at the top of the French league table but this fourth consecutive home defeat for PSG left them in 15th place.

Meanwhile on Saturday, Marseille had a catastrophic match. They slumped to a humiliating 2-1 defeat at Sochaux including two headed own goals and a penalty miss leaving them third from bottom.

It has all gone pear-shaped for Le Guen recently, and PSG, in crisis for much of the last decade, have not changed that controversial pattern.

Hatem Ben Arfa scored twice for Lyon, and though Pauleta also scored twice for PSG in the second half, it was not enough to level the scores although Lyon's Anderson was sent off six minutes after the break.

Le Guen said afterwards: "We did the best we could but Lyon deserved

to win and played to a higher standard. There aren't many teams which have a lot of chances against Lyon."

And on their home slump, he added: "I do think we have the ability to win matches at home with the type of commitment and attitude the players are showing. It's worrying at the moment but I am very hopeful for future matches."

Marseille's French league slump continued also.

Mamadou Niang even put the Riviera club ahead after just nine minutes but own goals from both Ronald Zubar on the half hour and then Laurent Bonnat seven minutes after the break, and a Djibril Cisse missed penalty late on, meant they remained in the relegation zone.

European Champions League action has shown Marseille on top however as they lead Group A with seven points after wins over Besiktas and Liverpool before their 1-1 draw against Porto on Wednesday.

Marseille are struggling in France however and are not living up to their mantle at the start of the season of being the main challengers to the supremacy of six-time reigning champions Lyon.

Nothing has visibly changed on the pitch however since the sacking of Albert Remy and the installation of

new coach Eric Gerets of Belgium.

Gerets policy of not picking the out-of-form Cisse, who was on the bench at kick-off, plus the return of young sensation Samir Nasri after several months out of action, has not helped.

"This match is far from being the worst since I arrived," said Gerets. "This type of defeat is difficult for a coach to take. Is this a crisis? It's certainly not a party. There can be no excuse after a match like this."

Marseille might soon be joined near the bottom by Monaco whose 0-0 draw against promoted Caen on Saturday came after five defeats in a row to bring about a worrying situation in the Principality.

Monaco coach Ricardo said: "My team was very tense and nervous and we were not able to break the sequence with a victory. We need to regain our confidence, and move forward with hard work because after five defeats, you start to doubt your ability."

In other games, Bordeaux won 2-1 at home to Valenciennes, Strasbourg had a 3-0 away day victory at Lille, and three goalless draws came in the matches between Metz and Nancy, Lorient and Nice, plus St Etienne and Auxerre.

## Grant promises 'many' titles

INTERNET, undated

Avram Grant has promised Chelsea a handful of Premier League titles if they follow the plan he is putting in place.

Jose Mourinho's successor is not talking up their chances this season after the turmoil the club has been through, but insists he will deliver in time.

The Israeli knows that there are still doubters, even after Chelsea's 6-0 demolition of Manchester City on Saturday but has warned that his side can get better still.

He said: "What we are doing now will affect Chelsea for many years. And if we are successful in what we are trying to achieve, then Chelsea will take many titles."

"We are in the process of trying to play positive football and we are going in the right way."

"Even good players can become better if they move into the right positions at certain times and play quicker because we want to move the ball quicker."

Chelsea face Leicester in the Carling Cup on Wednesday in confident mood after goals from Michael Essien, two from Didier Drogba, Joe Cole, Salomon Kalou and Andriy Shevchenko against City moved them into fourth place in the league.

Frank Lampard pulled the strings and he insists it is about players, not managers, at Chelsea, warning Leicester they are coming to Stamford Bridge at the wrong time.

He said: "Teams who come to Chelsea should be worried if we're at our best. When you're missing big players you sometimes struggle to get the results you were getting before but now we're back. We're missing John Terry and Ashley Cole and when they're back we'll be even stronger."

"It's all about players and the players who went out there against City were all doing their stuff."

Lampard has been jeered by England fans recently and fallen behind Steven Gerrard and Gareth Barry in the pecking order.

But he said: "The England thing is not important to me at the moment."

"What's important is playing well for Chelsea. I feel like I'm on the top of my game. I've got no questions to answer. I'm happy with what I've done over the past few years."

"In the past I've dropped below the standards I want to set. What player doesn't? But when you get to the top people are waiting for you to come down. It doesn't bother me. I've got nothing to prove."

## Valencia sack Flores

INTERNET, undated



Valencia have parted company with coach Quique Sanchez Flores.

The Valencia board took the decision to release Sanchez Flores following a meeting overnight, just hours after the team's 3-0 Primera Liga defeat at Sevilla.

Reserve-team coach Oscar Fernandez has been put in temporary charge of the team.

Valencia's defeat to Sevilla at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan came hot on the heels of the team's 2-0 Champions League loss at Rosenborg last week.

In all, Valencia have now lost four of their last five competitive matches, having previously won seven on the trot before seeing that run ended by a 2-1 loss to Chelsea in Europe earlier this month.

A statement issued by the club read: "The Valencia board met and after analysing the technical report given by the sporting director (Miguel Angel Ruiz) on the situation of the first team, which was considered irreversible after the latest matches in the league and Champions League, have taken the decision to dismiss the coach Quique Sanchez Flores and name as provisional coach of the first team Oscar Fernandez, currently in charge of Valencia B." Valencia's next match pits them against reigning Spanish champions and current Primera Liga leaders Real Madrid at the Metastalla on Wednesday.

Sanchez Flores leaves with Valencia in fourth spot in La Liga, four points behind pacesetters Real.

At the halfway point of the Champions League group stages, Los Che are third in Group B on three points, a point behind Rosenborg and four adrift of leaders Chelsea.

The 42-year-old Sanchez Flores took charge of Valencia in the summer of 2005 after replacing Claudio Ranieri, and led the team to a third-placed finish in his first season and a top-four spot last term.

Sanchez Flores represented Valencia, Real Madrid, Real Zaragoza and Spain as a player before making his mark as a coach with Real Madrid's youth team and then Getafe.

And he believes he can leave Valencia with his "head held very high".

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Flores declared his belief that Valencia had been on target to achieve their objectives for the season under his guidance, but added that in many ways his dismissal had

come as a relief.

"I am going convinced that we were prepared to achieve our objectives, but we will accept the decision with goodwill if it is the solution for Valencia," he said.

"I leave with my head held very high, like all good Valencianistas, wishing Valencia the best for the future."

"I have a slight feeling of pain, but also one of relief. They have been very difficult years, rather lonely ones. I lose a job, but I get my life back."

Sanchez Flores added: "I hope (the club) achieves their goals. I have achieved a type of objective in the last two years and I left the club higher up in the table than when I took over."

"I hope the titles arrive as soon as possible. We are grateful for the good times, the complicated times, the happy times."

"I would like to thank the supporters for being so demanding because that will make us greater always. I would also like to thank the board members for choosing me and I hope they can go on to build a big project."

"I hope they demand as much of the next man, as the fans want. I have told the players to be professional, show honesty and intensity, and to help the new coach so that they can perform to the standards which the fans and history of this club deserve."

## L'pool's injuries mount

Football

THE GUARDIAN

Rafael Benitez painted the result as two points dropped by Liverpool, but it is the loss of two players that could have the greater impact on Anfield's season as Fernando Torres and Xabi Alonso limped back into the treatment room.

The Spanish pair, cited by their manager as integral to any Liverpool revival before kick-off, are facing lengthy absences after recurrences of recent injuries in a game that leaves Benitez's team unbeaten but six points behind the league leaders. Torres was withdrawn at half-time with a repeat of the adductor strain he sustained with Spain a fortnight ago. He is expected to be absent for a similar spell after Benitez admitted the £26.5m striker had been rushed back to help repair Liverpool's falter-

ing form.

It is Alonso, however, who will represent the more significant loss if, as feared, scans confirm an aggravated metatarsal injury that had kept him out for six weeks before yesterday's draw. The Spanish midfielder landed awkwardly after an aerial challenge on the Arsenal goalkeeper, Manuel Almunia, and had to be helped to his feet and from the pitch by the Liverpool club doctor. A repeat of the metatarsal injury would keep him out beyond the six weeks he served for the initial fracture, suffered at Portsmouth on September 15.

"Maybe it will be less with Torres this time but Xabi has damaged his foot again," confirmed Benitez, who must also await scan results today on Javier Mascherano, the Argentinian midfielder who also injured a foot towards the end of the game. "Xabi felt something in his foot and it is clear there is something wrong."

"I'd asked Torres if he was OK

before the game and he said he was, but in the end we had to use Crouch who was very good. We were pushing him to play against Besiktas but in the end we decided he wasn't fully fit and should use him for this game instead. We missed his pace in Istanbul. We knew Arsenal would have a lot of possession and so we would need Torres for the counter-attack."

An impressive Arsenal team struck the post twice in the second half and squandered both rebounds before Cesc Fabregas's equaliser and Benitez said: "If you analyse the chances that we had then I think you can say we dropped two points, but if you analyse the whole game then you have to say they deserved to score."

He insisted the draw or the respective performances would have no bearing on the title race. "We are only six points behind and it is a long race. The commitment of the players really pleased me," he said.



Lyon winger Sidney Govou (C) lies on the ground in delight after netting the winning goal in their Ligue 1 encounter against PSG at the Parc des Princes on Sunday.

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