

Juventus striker David Trezeguet shoots to score against Inter Milan during their Serie A encounter at the San Siro on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Juve blank Inter

# Title race blown open

AFP, Milan



Juventus blew the Serie A title race wide open with a shock 2-0 victory at leaders Inter Milan on Saturday night.

The third-placed team produced a remarkable performance to allow AS Roma, who beat Empoli 2-1 at home earlier in the day, to close to within just four points of the champions.

Argentine-born Italy midfielder Mauro Camoranesi opened the scoring four minutes after the break from a suspiciously offside-looking position.

And just past the hour mark French forward David Trezeguet doubled the visitors' advantage to give Juve a lead they never looked like relinquishing.

Portugal midfielder Maniche gave Inter late hope with a consolation goal seven minutes from time and he also hit the post in the dying moments but it wasn't enough.

Juve captain Alessandro Del Piero claimed there was still work to be done by his team.

"We can't dwell on this, we have to keep giving everything in every match," he said. "We can't dwell on what might have been. The right thing to do is keep giving everything."

Roma overcame the loss of Simone Perrotta to a red card early in the second half to keep their title chase alive.

They were locked at 1-1 when Perrotta was dismissed but a goal from veteran defender Cristian Panucci sealed the three points.

Roma coach Luciano Spalletti praised his side for their resilience when down to 10 men.

"It was a great reaction on a heavy pitch with a numerical disadvantage," he said. "In 300 matches as a coach I've never yet had an easy one. Empoli are a good team with young players."

On loan Juventus youngster Sebastian Giovinco was a constant thorn in Roma's side. He should have put the visitors ahead on 13 minutes when he burst through into the area but he smashed his shot straight at Brazilian goalkeeper Doni, who deflected the ball over the bar.

On 33 minutes he came even

closer to giving plucky Empoli the lead with a long range strike that had Doni rooted to the spot but which cannoned back off the post and away to safety.

Two minutes later Empoli paid the price for their profligacy as Roma took the lead. Captain and talisman Francesco Totti set Max Tonetto running into the box with a clever back-heel and the left-back kept his cool to finish at the near post.

But five minutes after the break Giovinco finally got the goal his performance deserved as he latched on to a cross from the marauding Ignazio Abate to slot home.

Things got worse for Roma as Perrotta was shown a straight red card for tripping Felice Piccolo.

But on 63 minutes the 10 men took the lead as Panucci headed home a free-kick from the left from Chile international David Pizarro.

AC Milan kept up their chase for fourth place and Champions League football next season as they won 1-0 at Torino with a goal from Brazilian teenager Pato.

The 66th minute strike owed much to the work of Italy interna-

tional Alberto Gilardino, who moments earlier had seen a shot from seven yards blocked by Torino goalkeeper Alberto Fontana.

But Gilardino got through again and despite falling over, he was up quickly to turn Fontana and beat him with a tricking cross shot that Pato poked over the line from centimetres out.

Torino had a great chance to equalise in the last quarter of an hour but Milan's Australian goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac made a point blank save from Roberto Stellone.

"We had to win this match at all costs. We have to look at those ahead of us and Fiorentina won," said Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti.

Milan are still fifth, four points behind fourth-placed Fiorentina who beat Lazio 1-0 in Florence.

Fiorentina came close to scoring when Giampaolo Pazzini headed a pass from Romania forward Adrian Mutu onto the bar midway through the second half.

But on 77 minutes Pazzini finally broke the deadlock as he turned on to a pass from Fabio Liverani and shot low past veteran goalkeeper Marco Ballotta at the near post.

## Terry backs refs protection

AFP, London

Chelsea captain John Terry has backed plans to curb dissent against referees even if it requires changing the rules of the game.

Terry, who also skips England, said he was in favour of a rule change which would only allow team captains to speak to officials over contentious decisions on the pitch.

His comments came in the wake of the incident in his side's 4-4 draw with Tottenham which saw teammate Ashley Cole turn his back on referee Mike Riley after he had booked him for a wild tackle on Alan Hutton.

"I do agree there has to be a line drawn and confronting the referee has to be taken out of the game," said Terry.

"I think we have to give it a go and if it doesn't work then the FA and the officials have to say that. But we have to try these things."

Terry came under fire for running over to Riley when he saw the Tottenham staff react angrily to Cole's challenge on Wednesday night. But Terry played down suggestions he was trying to influence the official.

"I saw their bench jump up and I ran forward to tell Mike Riley not to listen or be intimidated by their bench trying to force him into a decision," explained Terry.

"I spoke to him and he told me 'It was a high tackle and it was going to be a booking', I agreed and walked away."

"There was no argument from me or anyone else close to Mike Riley and I thought he handled it fantastically well."

## 'It's not over yet'

REUTERS, Berlin

Luca Toni rejected the idea Bayern Munich had clinched the Bundesliga title with Saturday's 2-1 victory over Bayer Leverkusen.

"No, not until we've mathematically clinched the championship will we be able to relax," the two-goal striker told Premiere Television after Bayern opened a seven-point lead at the top of the table with nine games left.

"Until then we've got to keep battling. We had to win this match and we did."

With 26 goals in 34 matches in all competitions this season, the Italian international has proved to be worth the 11 million euros (\$17.01 million) fee Bayern paid Fiorentina for him.

The most valuable contribution the 30-year-old has made in his first season in Germany is consistency. Toni is the top scorer in the Bundesliga with 16 goals.

"I never think about slumps," he replied when asked how he managed to avoid the goal droughts that have plagued team mates Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski.

"I don't worry about them. I just hope things keep going the way they are."

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said: "We saw once again (today) Luca Toni has an incredible nose for finding the goal."

"He's extremely valuable for us."

## Ribery flattered by comparison

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's French midfielder Franck Ribery admitted on Sunday he is flattered by comparisons to Zinedine Zidane, but wants to match his compatriot's achievements to be worthy of such praise.

"It is an enormous honour to be compared to Zinedine Zidane," said Ribery in Sunday's edition of Die Welt.

"He is a huge player, perhaps the biggest in history."

"I want to try to achieve the same things he did."

Since his arrival in Munich last July, Ribery, 24, has earned superstar status at Bayern with a string of high level performances and has won over many fans.

Bayern captain Oliver Kahn was the first to compare him to Zidane earlier this month, but so far former Galatasaray-star Ribery has only a German League Cup and a Turkish Cup winners medal to show for his efforts.

In comparison, Zidane won the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 with his country, while lifting the 2002 Champions League title and two Spanish championships with Real Madrid.

His personal awards list is also impressive - along with Ronaldo he is one of only two players to be voted three-time FIFA World Player of the Year when he was named in 1998, 2000 and 2003.

He was European Footballer of the Year in 1998 and in 2004 fans voted him top in UEFA's fiftieth anniversary Golden Jubilee Poll.

But Bayern star Ribery insists he just wants to "concentrate on doing well at Bayern" where he is contracted until 2011 with a host of top European clubs wanting to sign him.

"I want to fulfil my mission and do well, everyone is happy with the way I am playing. What happens in the future, we will have to wait and see," added the Frenchman.

## Magpies finally win

REUTERS, London



Newcastle United eased their relegation fears with a 2-0 home win over Fulham on Saturday as attention focused on the battle to stay in the Premier League.

Sunderland, Reading and Middlesbrough also claimed important wins but nowhere was there more relief than at a wintry St James' Park.

Mark Viduka's early shot and a late Michael Owen header gave Kevin Keegan the winning feeling for the first time since returning as Newcastle manager in January.

"It was a great result," Keegan told Sky Sports television. "We showed character... and when we had to dig in we stuck together and that's what these players have been criticised for in the past."

"Michael Owen has been magnificent, not just his goals but his leadership on the pitch."

Viduka, who has recently returned to the side after niggling injuries, fired past keeper Casey Keller after six minutes and Owen

should have made the points safe before finally ending Fulham's resistance seven minutes from time.

Newcastle rose to 13th, six points above third from bottom Bolton Wanderers who snapped a run of five consecutive league defeats by drawing 0-0 at home to Manchester City.

Fulham remained four points from safety.

Sunderland, who began the day fourth from bottom, beat Aston Villa 1-0 with an 83rd-minute goal by Michael Chopra to secure their first away win of the season.

Roy Keane's side moved above Birmingham City, who went down 2-1 at Reading after two headed goals by Andre Bikey.

Bolton have 26 points from 31 games, Fulham have 23 and Derby, who lost 1-0 at Middlesbrough, are almost down on 10 points.

Tuncay Sanli scored the goal that put Boro eight points above the relegation places.

Rogue Santa Cruz netted twice for Blackburn Rovers in their 3-1 defeat of Wigan Athletic.

Both sides ended with 10 men after Christopher Samba of Rovers

and Wigan's Wilson Palacios were dismissed.

In the day's late match, Everton's hopes of beating Liverpool to the fourth Champions League spot faded with a 1-1 home draw against mid-table West Ham United.

Yakubu Aiyegbeni gave Everton an early lead but West Ham got a deserved equaliser after the break through Dean Ashton and almost won the game when youngster Freddie Sears hit the post.

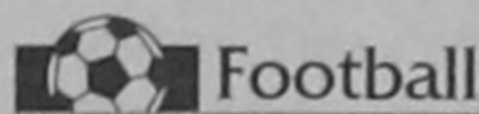
Everton remained two points behind fourth-placed Liverpool who face champions Manchester United on Sunday when the title race could become a lot clearer.

United are three points clear of second-placed Arsenal who visit Chelsea, in third, on Sunday.

In Saturday's early game, Portsmouth's chances of securing a top-six finish were dented by a 2-0 defeat at Tottenham Hotspur who grabbed late goals through substitutes Darren Bent and Jamie O'Hara.

There have now been 101 goals scored in all competitions at Tottenham's White Hart Lane this season.

## No favours, says Capello



AFP, London

If David Beckham does reach the coveted landmark of a 100th England cap against France next week, he will have earned it purely on footballing grounds according to manager Fabio Capello.

Italian supreme Capello left Beckham out of his initial England squad for the 2-1 friendly win over Switzerland last month, saying the LA Galaxy midfielder was not fit enough.

And he was adamant he had not come under pressure from Football Association officials to select Beckham on this occasion so as to help sell more tickets for Wednesday's friendly in Paris.

"Let's get one thing straight, I don't call players up to do them in a favour. I call them up with a view to future games and what I need to do in the future."

"In my career and my life as a football coach and manager I have always made my own decisions and I have never been put under pressure because those who choose me know me."

"It's not my style to call someone up to do them a favour. I call up players who I believe are important to the team. I believe he is going to be useful."

"Good players are good players whether they play in the US or

England or in Spain," Capello, appointed after England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008, insisted.

Beckham, who kept his place in the England squad when it was reduced to 23-man on Saturday, was watched last week by Capello's longstanding assistant, Franco Baldini, has been training with Arsenal and playing practice matches ahead of the start of the Major League Soccer season.

Capello, speaking via an interpreter at the FA's London headquarters, added: "The previous match he was not fit because he had not played any games. He is now fit."

"When David is fit he can always make an important contribution because of his vision and the fact that he can cross the ball and create chances, not only from free-kicks but during open play as well."

"We have to watch him in training. The important thing is that he is available and fit."

Among those left out from Capello's provisional 30-man squad for the France game were 21-year-old Middlesbrough defender David Wheater.

Capello explained that Wheater's initial inclusion was a sign he was looking beyond established England internationals at so-called 'big' clubs.

"Having world-class players is not enough if you do not have a winning mentality," Capello said.

Michael Owen, who was left out against Switzerland, made the

France cut after the striker scored for Newcastle in Saturday's 2-0 victory over Fulham.

Owen also scored in the draw against Birmingham on Monday and Capello said: "He is fitter and more alive, better physically. I am happy with what I saw."

Capello, who has said he will only decide on a long-term captain prior to the start of England's qualifying campaign for the 2010 World Cup later this year, did not say who would lead the team out in Paris.

England begin their bid to reach South Africa away to minnows Andorra on September 6.

## Squad

**Goalkeepers:** David James (Portsmouth), Chris Kirkland (Wigan), Paul Robinson (Tottenham)

**Defenders:** Wayne Bridge (Chelsea), Ashley Cole (Chelsea), Glen Johnson (Portsmouth), John Terry (Chelsea), Wes Brown (Man Utd), Joleon Lescott (Everton), Rio Ferdinand (Man Utd), Jonathan Woodgate (Tottenham)

**Midfielders:** Gareth Barry (Aston Villa), David Bentley (Blackburn), Joe Cole (Chelsea), Frank Lampard (Chelsea), David Beckham (Los Angeles Galaxy/USA), Steven Gerrard (Liverpool), Owen Hargreaves (Man Utd), Stewart Downing (Middlesbrough)

**Forwards:** Theo Walcott (Arsenal), Peter Crouch (Liverpool), Wayne Rooney (Man Utd), Michael Owen (Newcastle)

## Del Piero left out again

REUTERS, Rome

Alessandro Del Piero's Euro 2008 hopes suffered a fresh blow on Saturday when Italy coach Roberto Donadoni left the striker out of his squad for Wednesday's friendly in Spain.

The 33-year-old Juventus captain has not played for the world champions since his poor performance in a goalless Euro 2008 qualifier against France in September when Donadoni used him out of position on the wing.

Donadoni's 21-man squad for Italy's penultimate test before the Euro finals contained no major surprises.

Striker Marco Borriello kept his place after making his debut in February's 3-1 friendly win over Portugal.

Borriello, who has scored 17 league goals for Genoa this season, is expected to understudy Bayern Munich's Luca Toni in Austria and Switzerland in June.

Inter Milan defender Marco Materazzi is in line to make his first appearance for Italy since injuring his thigh in the 3-1 friendly defeat in Hungary in August.

Sampdoria forward Antonio Cassano seems to have blown his chances by picking up a five-match ban for verbally abusing a referee in a recent Serie A game, the latest in a series of incidents of indiscipline.

Italy host Belgium in Florence on May 30 in their final Euro 2008 warmup.

## Squad

**Goalkeepers:** Marco Amelia (Livorno), Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus)

**Defenders:** Andrea Barzagli (Palermo), Fabio Cannavaro (Real Madrid), Fabio Grosso (Olympique Lyon), Marco Materazzi (Inter Milan), Massimo Oddo (AC Milan), Christian Panucci (AS Roma), Gianluca Zambrotta (Barcelona)

**Midfielders:** Massimo Ambrosini (AC Milan), Alberto Aquilani (AS Roma), Mauro Camoranesi (Juventus), Daniele De Rossi (AS Roma), Gennaro Gattuso (AC Milan), Simone Perrotta (AS Roma), Andrea Pirlo (AC Milan)

**Forwards:** Marco Borriello (Genoa), Antonio Di Natale (Udinese), Vincenzo Iaquinta (Juventus), Fabio Quagliarella (Udinese), Luca Toni (Bayern Munich).

## Argentines fire Atletico

AFP, Madrid



Atletico Madrid have never qualified for the Champions League but that wait may soon come to an end after they defeated Sevilla 2-1 on Saturday

to move five points clear of their rivals.

Goals from Argentine internationals Kun Aguero and Maxi Rodriguez saw Atletico overcome ten-man Sevilla, who had Enzo Maresca sent off in the second half, and they sit fourth with a five-point cushion over Sevilla.

It was the first time Atletico had won at Sevilla's Sanchez Pizjuan stadium since the 1992/93 season and the historic victory puts them in pole position for a Champions League berth.

For Sevilla, the team that have collected the most points in 2008, it represents a major setback but they still have nine games left to fight for a second successive season in the Champions League.

The last time the teams met Atletico won 4-3 and goals were

## Anderson takes Kaka's spot

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Manchester United's Anderson will replace the injured Kaka in the Brazil squad for Wednesday's friendly international against Sweden in London.

The Brazilian Football Confederation confirmed on their Web site (<http://cbfnews.uol.com.br>) that World Player of the Year Kaka had been ruled out and that midfielder Anderson would step in.

Brazil will also be without Ronaldinho for the game after he was left out of the squad by coach Dunga.

expected in the rematch between two sides that put the emphasis on attack rather than defence.

Atletico started the stronger with Portuguese international Simao looking very threatening and the left winger created the opener on 18 minutes with his cross side-footed in by Maxi.

It was a shock for Sevilla but they were almost gifted an equaliser when Italian goalkeeper Christian Abbiati dropped a high ball but his defence smothered Luis Fabiano's effort.

Aguero then went close for Atletico on the half-hour mark with his shot flashing wide of the post. Sevilla boss Manolo Jimenez was forced into change before the interval with Tom de Mul replacing the injured Jesus Navas who had been struggling since a knock early in the match.

But the hosts levelled shortly after the interval with Diego Capel following up after Frederic Kanoute's initial shot was well-saved.



Atletico Madrid star Kun Aguero is ecstatic after scoring against Sevilla during their Primera Liga tie at the Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Toni brace lifts Bayern

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich's Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni struck twice as the German giants went seven points clear at the top of the Bundesliga with a 2-1 win over title rivals Bayer Leverkusen.

With nine rounds of the Bundesliga left, Bayern look like a good bet to pick up their 21st crown as German champions.

Bayern took an early lead on 17 minutes as Germany forward Miroslav Klose passed back into the five-yard box for Toni to rifle home his 15th league goal of the season.

And Toni struck again on 59 minutes to put the game beyond doubt when he headed home defender Philipp Lahm's spectacular cross to put him on 26 goals for the season in all competitions.

The Italian is now the league's top scorer with 16 goals while between them Klose and Toni have hit 46 goals for Bayern since they both moved to Munich last summer.

Bayer hit a late consolation goal through Russian striker Dmitriy Bulkin on 83 minutes and the result means Toni is now the league's top scorer with 16 goals.

"We played well for 83 minutes and we deserved the victory," said Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld.

"It was a good win for us and we could have been three, four or five goals up."

"But we switched off late in the game and had a nervous wait for the final whistle when Bayer grabbed the consolation goal."

The defeat leaves Bayer Leverkusen third in the table - nine points behind Bayern - and in danger of slipping back to fourth if Werder Bremen win at strugglers Arminia Bielefeld on Sunday.

Second-placed Hamburg are now seven points behind Bayern after they slipped to a 1-1 draw with VfL Wolfsburg.

Defender Bastian Reinhardt headed home a Piotr Trochowski pass on 14 minutes to put Hamburg ahead, but Wolfsburg striker Danijel Ljuboja equalised in the second-half to share the points.



Bayern Munich striker Luca Toni runs off to celebrate his team's victory over Bayer Leverkusen after their Bundesliga match at the Allianz Arena on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP