



Juventus captain Alessandro Del Piero (R) is challenged by AC Milan midfielder Gennaro Gattuso during their Serie A encounter at the Olympic Stadium in Turin on Saturday.

German police for Euro 2008

AFP, Stuttgart

Around 500 German policemen from the regional state of Baden-Wurtemberg will be deployed to the Swiss cities of Basel and Zurich during the June 7-29 European football championships, it was announced Sunday.

"The security needs during an event like Euro 2008 are a huge challenge for the organisers," said Baden-Wurtemberg police chief Erwin Hetger.

"As we discovered in the 2006 World Cup, to ensure security during such an event is not possible without international cooperation."

Apart from Baden-Wurtemberg, a region which borders Switzerland, the regional state of Hesse will also make policemen available to the Swiss authorities.

Switzerland has also asked French police to help ensure security in cities where games in European football's showcase international event take place.

Hicks wants Parry out

AFP, London

Tom Hicks is set to "formally request" Liverpool co-owner George Gillett approve his bid to sack Rick Parry after describing the club's chief executive as someone with "an inability to manage".

Earlier this week Hicks wrote to Parry requesting he resign as Liverpool's stunning Champions League quarterfinal victory over English rivals Arsenal was overshadowed by the latest twist in the series of boardroom spats this season, that have mocked Liverpool's reputation for keeping things in-house.

Hicks is reportedly unhappy with Parry's decision to side with Gillett in the increasingly bitter power struggle between Liverpool's feuding owners.

He also believes Parry has failed to close transfer deals wanted by manager Rafa Benitez and fallen short of delivering sufficient merchandising revenue.

Hicks wants to buy out Gillett after falling out with his business partner but the pair, brought to Anfield by Parry, have been unable to reach an agreement, leading to a stalled takeover bid from the Dubai Investment Company.

And with both Hicks and Gillett each owning 50 per cent of the club, an ongoing stand-off between the two men over Parry's future seems set to continue unless one of them has a dramatic change of mind.

Hicks said he'd decided Parry had to go some time ago and said he hoped a new chief executive could be installed as soon as next month.

Liverpool won the Champions League in 2005, the fifth time the Merseysiders had lifted the European Cup, and were losing finalists last season.

But the last of Liverpool's record 18 English titles came in 1990, two years before the creation of the Premier League.

Juve edge Milan in thriller

AFP, Rome



blockbuster match in Turin on Saturday.

Goals from Alessandro Del Piero, David Trezeguet and Hassan Salihamidzich gave the hosts the edge over the reigning European champions, who counted two Filippo Inzaghi goals while Daniele Bonera was dismissed in the second half.

Juve thus closed the gap on second-placed AS Roma to seven points and they look almost certain to secure a place in Europe's premier competition next season.

Not so Milan who trail fourth-placed Fiorentina, who travel to leaders Inter Milan on Sunday, by four points but also have to contend with Udinese and Sampdoria in the battle for the final qualification spot.

The game started at a frenetic pace and Del Piero put the hosts ahead on 12 minutes, latching onto a pass from Mauro Camoranesi to shoot across Australian goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac into the far corner,

although defence and keeper should have done better.

Only a minute later Inzaghi flicked a close range effort wide after he met a cross from Giuseppe Favelli.

But just a minute after that Milan were level as Kaka tricked his way past Giorgio Chiellini on the left before putting the ball on a plate for Inzaghi in the sixyard box.

Chiellini almost redeemed himself on 17 minutes but he headed a Del Piero corner just over the bar.

On 31 minutes the visitors went in front after a sublime move where Bonera played a pass into Massimo Ambrosini, who flicked the return over the defence for the full-back to square for Inzaghi to score a simple second.

But on the stroke of half-time Trezeguet put Juventus back in front with a goal that was actually credited to Salihamidzich.

Camoranesi sent over an inviting cross after Milan gave the ball away down the right and Trezeguet's header was saved by Kalac only for Salihamidzich to bundle the rebound off Trezeguet and in.

In first-half injury time Juve stopper Gianluigi Buffon, who had earlier saved a dipping, swerving Kaka volley, had to be alert to tip an

effort from Gennaro Gattuso over the bar.

Eight minutes into the second half, Kalac dived full length to his left to keep out a fierce long-range shot from Zdenek Grygera.

Milan's hopes of earning victory took a blow on 66 minutes as Bonera was shown a straight red for going in with studs up on Momo Sissoko, prompting Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti to take off his two-goal striker and replace him with veteran Brazilian full-back Cafu.

Then 10 minutes from time Salihamidzich rose to meet a Camoranesi free-kick to head home the winner. Elsewhere Fabrizio Miccoli curled home a spectacular late free-kick to give Palermo a 1-0 win at home to Catania in the Sicilian derby.

The result did nothing to improve a disappointing season for the hosts, who are languishing in midtable obscurity, but did at least give them bragging rights on the Mediterranean island.

Miccoli almost added a second in stoppage time in a game that Palermo clearly deserved to win.

Catania remain just three points above the relegation zone and the pressure is rising on new coach Walter Zenga, the former Italy goalkeeper.

Everton lose ground on Reds

AFP, London



Everton missed out on the chance to go level on points with near-neighbours Liverpool in the battle for fourth place after Birmingham City claimed a point in a 1-1 draw at Goodison Park on Saturday.

Only the Premier League's top four at the end of the season will qualify for the Champions League and Everton's draw left them two points behind fourth-placed Liverpool ahead of the Reds' match against Blackburn at Anfield on Sunday.

At St Andrews, the match was deadlocked until Everton's England defender Joleon Lescott headed in from close range in the 78th minute.

But Argentina ace Mauro Zarate drew Birmingham level seven minutes from time with a 20 yard free-kick, a point leaving the Midlands on the brink of the drop zone.

"I thought we merited three points but you've got to put the ball in the net," Birmingham manager Alex McLeish said. "It was very cruel for us to go behind but I know the spirit of these players and thanks to a bit of skill from Zarate we got a point."

One consolation for Everton was that fifth-placed Portsmouth remained four points behind them after a goalless draw at home to Newcastle in Saturday's late kick-off match at Fratton Park.

Fulham and Bolton gave themselves hope of staying up with wins over Reading and West Ham respectively.

Although they each remained in the bottom three, Bolton's 1-0 success saw them move to within

two points of Birmingham and Wanderers boss Gary Megson praised Kevin Davies, whose 100th goal of his career in the 47th minute wrapped up what could be a price-less victory.

"Kevin played really well, he led the line well and I'm delighted he got the goal. This showed what he is all about. These are the days when it's vital you get three points."

Meanwhile Fulham's 2-0 victory at the Madejski Stadium - their first league win on their travels since 2006 - left them four points adrift of relegation rivals Birmingham.

"We've made it hard for ourselves but we're still in the race and while you're in the race there's always the chance you'll find the spirit that will take you past your rivals," said Fulham manager Roy Hodgson.

Sunderland were left looking nervously over their shoulders after a late flurry of goals saw them lose 2-1 to Manchester City while their north-east rivals Middlesbrough too were left just seven points above the drop zone after a 1-1 draw away to Tottenham.

Aston Villa added to already-relegated Derby County's woes with a 6-0 thrashing of their Midlands rivals.

Reigning champions Manchester United will go six points clear at the top if they beat Arsenal at Old Trafford on Sunday. But victory for the Gunners would see them go level on points with second-placed Chelsea.

The Blues, three points behind United heading into this latest round of fixtures, are not in action again until Monday when they face Wigan Athletic at Stamford Bridge.

United States international Brian McBride put Fulham ahead in the 24th minute. The Londoners then hit the crossbar three times

Milan confirm Ronaldinho agreement

AFP, Rome

AC Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani confirmed on Sunday that the reigning European champions have come to an agreement with Brazil forward Ronaldinho over a possible summer transfer.

The Barcelona player's brother and agent Roberto de Assis had said on Saturday that there was a deal in place between player and club and that the only stumbling block was a transfer fee between the Spaniards and the Italians.

"We have a deal in principle with the player," said Galliani. "We were allowed to speak to the player by Barcelona and now we're looking to come to an agreement with Barca."

Former twice world player of the year Ronaldinho has fallen out with Barcelona this season as a dip in form and frequent off-field indiscretions have seen the love affair between club and player come to a bitter end after five years.

He is currently sidelined with a leg injury that could keep him out of Barcelona's run-in, where they are chasing La Liga and Champions League glory.

On Saturday Italian sports newspaper quoted de Assis as claiming that only a fee needs to be agreed with Barca to make the move a reality.

"Basically, Ronaldinho and Milan have come to an agreement," he said before insisting that it was not yet a done deal.

"Milan are a great team, Ronaldinho was impressed with his first contact with them."

"The important thing is that he will be happy. When will a deal be finalised? You have to be patient."

Gazzetta claimed that the deal worth eight million euros a year to the Brazilian until 2012 has been agreed while suggesting Barcelona would be willing to do business for a sale of 30 million euros.

However, it also claimed that Milan don't want to spend that kind of money, looking to spend only 16 million euros, and that higher bids could come in from Inter Milan (25 million euros) and Manchester City (40 million euros).

Marseille go third

REUTERS, Paris

Olympique Marseille boosted their Champions League hopes with a 2-1 win at relegated Metz on Saturday.

Goals from Djibril Cisse and Samir Nasri moved Marseille up to third place at the expense of Nancy, defeated 2-1 at Lille.

Marseille and Nancy are both on 55 points from 33 games but the southerners lead their rivals on goal difference.

The top two in Ligue 1 qualify for the Champions League with the third-placed team entering the showcase event's qualifying round.

Despite an early goal by Cedric Barbosa, Metz were relegated to Ligue 2 with 18 points, 17 points from safety with five games left.

Troubled Paris Saint-Germain are a place above the relegation zone and host Nice on Sunday.

Leaders Olympique Lyon were held to a 1-1 home draw by Stade Rennes earlier on Saturday after Stephane M'bia equalised for the visitors in added time.

A powerful header by Cris had put the six-times French champions ahead, the defender rising to meet a corner from fellow Brazilian Juninho on 16 minutes.

Cameroon midfielder M'bia gave Rennes a share of the points just before the final whistle, also with a header from a corner.

Lyon, chasing a seventh consecutive title, are on 68 points from 33 games, seven points ahead of second-placed Girondins Bordeaux, who host Caen on Sunday.

Slomka quits Schalke

AFP, Berlin

Schalke 04 coach Mirko Slomka has quit the Bundesliga side, ousted in the Champions League in midweek by Barcelona, the club said on Sunday.

Media reports Saturday had said his days were numbered as, despite the club standing second in the table behind Bayern Munich, Slomka, 40, had been under intense pressure since Schalke lost three Bundesliga games in succession in February.

On Saturday they were humbled 5-1 by Werder Bremen, the defeat deepening a growing crisis of confidence.

Slomka, who took over in 2006, was under contract until 2009.

Among top names to take over are Belgian Erik Gerets, currently in charge of Marseille and who has coached both VfL Wolfsburg and Kaiserslautern in the Bundesliga.

According to Bild, Schalke are also interested in Dutch coach Dick Advocaat and Fred Rutten.

L'pool cement 4th spot

INTERNET, undated



Liverpool eased to a 3-1 win over Blackburn in the Premier League at Anfield thanks to goals by Steven Gerrard, Fernando Torres and Andriy Voronin.

All three strikes came in the second half and Torres's was the 30th in all competitions in his debut season in England. Roque Santa Cruz scored late on for Rovers, who stayed ninth after the defeat.

Liverpool had the better of the first half, which remained goalless despite several excellent chances for the hosts, who also had a penalty appeal waved away and a clear foul on Gerrard denied after he was taken out by Christopher Samba when played clean through on goal.

While the penalty appeal was inconclusive - Gerrard and Brad Friedel came together on the left-hand edge of the area and contact was minimal - it was a red-card offence by Samba, who did not even concede a free-kick.

Torres had the first real opportunity when he flicked a ninth-minute Gerrard corner inches wide of the far post under pressure from Ryan Nelsen.

Steven Reid then almost gifted the Reds an opener after he played a suicidal back-pass to Friedel that was intercepted by Torres, but the former USA goalkeeper managed to block.

The subsequent throw-in was sent to the impressive Dirk Kuyt, who held the ball up for Gerrard, but he was disappointed with the finish.

Then came the two moments of controversy for the hosts.

First, on 17 minutes, Gerrard

burst onto a through-ball played into the left-hand side of the Blackburn area. Friedel rushed out to intercept and contact was made, although it was debatable as to whether it was instigated by Friedel or Gerrard.

Referee Alan Wiley waved Gerrard's protests away, and he responded in a similar manner when, eight minutes later, Gerrard was pushed over on the edge of the area by Samba.

He was racing through on goal when the Congo defender barged him off the ball. Gerrard was incredulous that the obvious foul was missed by Wiley and his assistant.

Blackburn had their own tough decision to go against them, when Jason Roberts saw a goal disallowed after the offside flag was hastily raised for an infringement by Roque Santa Cruz, who was not interfering with play.

Otherwise, Liverpool somehow failed to make their dominance count. Gerrard mis-hit another clear-cut chance laid on by Kuyt, who himself missed a great opportunity when he headed a Gerrard corner wide after being found unmarked at the far post.

The hosts continued to dominate from the start of the second half, although Reina was forced to punch a Morten Gamst Pedersen freekick from under his bar.

And they took a deserved lead through a moment of brilliance from Gerrard.

Roque Santa Cruz gave the ball away to substitute Yossi Benayoun, and the Israeli looked to his right for Gerrard, who still had it all to do.

With England boss Fabio Capello watching in the stands, the Liverpool skipper cut inside, played a clever one-two with Lucas Levia and nutmegged Samba to play himself one-on-one with

Friedel, who he then beat with a low finish.

Blackburn woke up, and Roberts felt aggrieved that he did not win a free kick on the edge of the box when he tangled with Martin Skrtel. He was further irritated when, moments later, Skrtel pulled him back and was only given a yellow card. Roberts and Blackburn thought a clear goalscoring opportunity had been denied and believed the Slovakian should have been sent off.

Liverpool were in danger of handing Blackburn a lifeline, and David Bentley went close with an audacious free-kick from over 30 yards out that flashed inches wide of Reina's goal.

Rafael Benitez's men had another penalty claim turned down when Brett Emerton slid in on Torres, but the former Atletico Madrid man had the last laugh when he headed Gerrard's right wing centre across Friedel and into the bottom right.

It was his 30th goal of the season and a seventh in seven matches at Anfield - the first time a player has achieved the feat.

There was a late scare for the home fans when Xabi Alonso gave the ball away to Benni McCarthy, but the South African's finish went the wrong side of the post.

Substitute Voronin got a rare goal in the last minute when he slid in to finish John Arne Riise's low cross, and Santa Cruz volleyed in a spectacular injury-time consolation goal after Skrtel failed to clear an aerial ball.

The victory consolidated Liverpool's grip on fourth place, sending them five points clear of Mersey rivals Everton, while Blackburn have lost out on any realistic hope of qualifying for Europe next season, nine points off fifth with four games remaining.

Recreativo hold Barca

AFP, Madrid



continue to gift the championship to rivals Real Madrid.

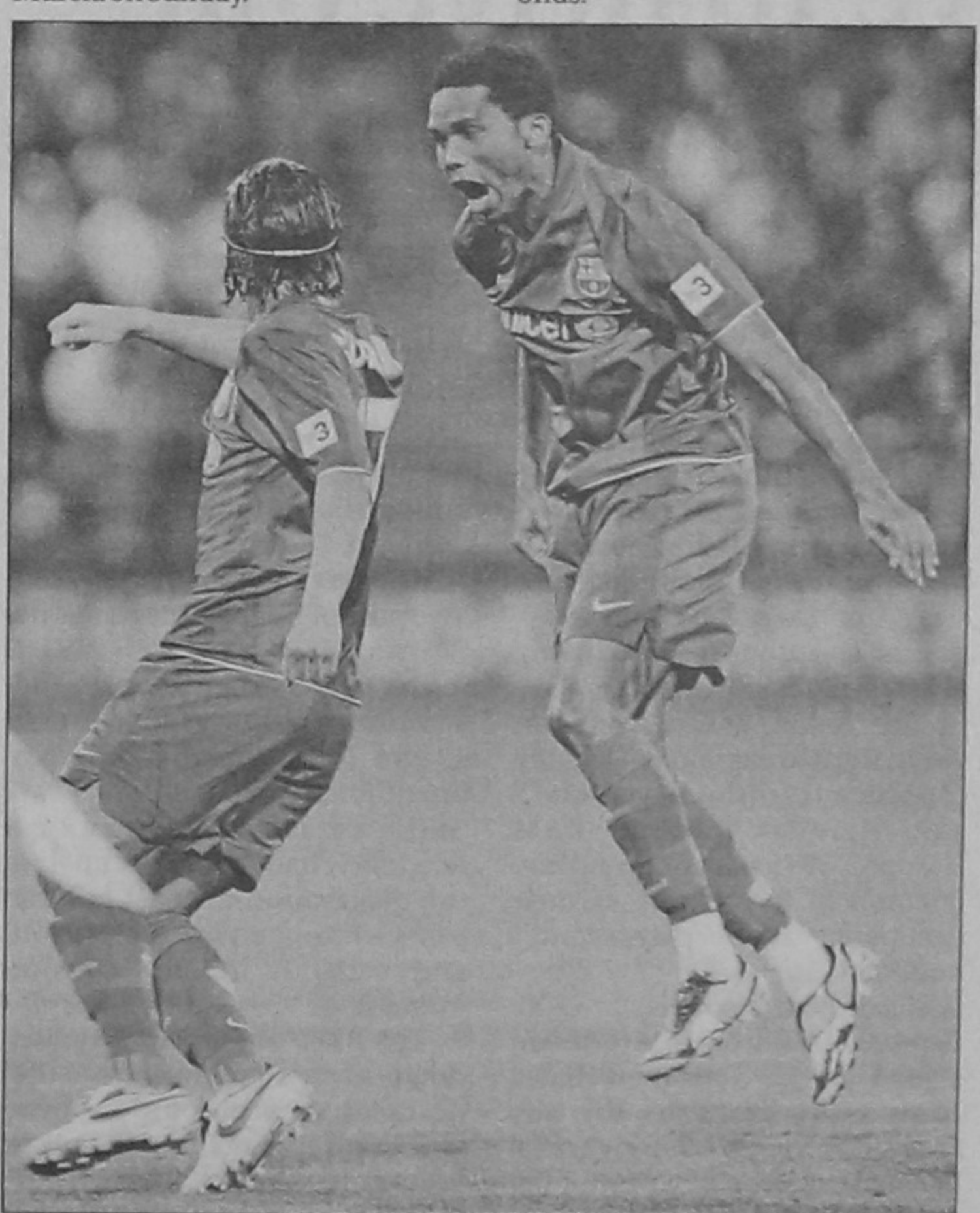
Barca twice went in front through Cameroon forward Samuel Eto'o but Marco Ruben levelled with a brace (41 min, 70) of his own and Real can now move nine points clear of their rivals with victory over Real Murcia on Sunday.

The Champions League now appears Barcelona's only hope of silverware this season and the comeback of Argentine winger Messi is a real boost ahead of the semifinal against Manchester United on April 23.

Messi had been sidelined since tearing a muscle in his left leg on March 5 but returned to action coming on a substitute on 64 minutes.

Rijkaard had been jeered by the Camp Nou fans as his team defeated Schalke 1-0 to reach the Champions League semifinals so he was probably glad to be away from home at Recreativo.

Eto'o got Barca off to the best possible start heading in a Giovanni dos Santos cross after just 70 seconds.



Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o (R) is ecstatic after scoring his second goal against Recreativo Huelva during their Primera Liga match at the Nuevo Colombino Stadium in Huelva on Saturday.

Bremen rout Schalke

AFP, Berlin



Bayern lead by seven points from Werder Bremen, by nine points from Schalke 04 and by 10 from fourth-placed Hamburg.

Schalke 04, who were ousted from the Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday by Barcelona, started the match better than Werder with Halil Altintop having a chance in the 14th minute.

Werder came out of their lethargy in the 19th minute when Frank Baumann put them ahead, making the most of a major mistake by Schalke in defence. The Schalke rearguard was responsible for the second goal by Boubacar Sanogo in the 32nd minute.

Kevin Kuranyi pulled a goal back for Schalke three minutes before the break through a goal from Markus Rosenberg (59) and two

from Ivan Klasnic completed Werder's win.

Werder coach Thomas Schaaf said afterwards: "This victory against fellow European challengers shows that little by little we have regained our best form and we are on our way."

Midfielder Torsten Frings said: "This is three points more towards our goal to qualify for the Champions League and we just need to keep on working."

Werder's victory will not be troubling Bayern, who look set to be without Franck Ribery, who received a knock in their 3-3 draw in the UEFA Cup quarterfinal, second leg on Thursday, enough to put them into the last four, for their match against Borussia Dortmund on Sunday.