

Manchester United striker Carlos Tevez (C) scores the equalising goal with an acrobatic header against Blackburn Rovers during their Premiership encounter at Ewood Park on Saturday.

## Tevez rescues a vital point

AFP, London



Blackburn Rovers handed Chelsea a shock lifeline in the English Premier League title race by holding leaders Manchester United to a 1-1 draw on Saturday.

The champions were heading for defeat but Argentine striker Carlos Tevez rescued a precious point with just two minutes to go.

The result leaves United three points clear of the Blues ahead of their crunch clash at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge on April 26.

Liverpool prepared for the Champions League semi-finals by winning 2-0 at Fulham, while Arsenal restored some pride, beating visitors Reading by the same scoreline.

Elsewhere in the fight to avoid relegation to the Championship, Bolton Wanderers hauled themselves out of the drop zone with a 1-0 win at Middlesbrough and Wigan drew 1-1 with Tottenham. West Ham beat visitors Derby 2-1.

United's lead at the top of the Premier League was cut to two points by Chelsea after the Blues won 1-0 away to Everton on

Thursday.

It seemed Paraguay striker Roque Santa Cruz had scored the winner with his 21st-minute effort at Ewood Park, before Tevez equalised.

Liverpool, with one eye on Tuesday's Champions League semifinal first leg at home to Chelsea, rested eight players at relegation-threatened Fulham but nonetheless claimed a 2-0 win.

Winger Jermaine Pennant scored in the 17th minute at Craven Cottage and England striker Peter Crouch completed the victory in the 70th.

Fourth-placed Liverpool need two more points to be certain of earning a Champions League qualifying place via the league, while Fulham are five points from safety with three games remaining.

The Cottagers' relegation fight rivals Bolton gave their chances of avoiding the drop a big boost with an impressive 1-0 win at Middlesbrough.

Gavin McCann, once capped for England, finished off a simple tap-in in the 61st minute at the Riverside Stadium.

Bolton are one point and two places above the drop zone.

Third-placed Arsenal at least gave their fans something to cheer

with a 2-0 win over the Royals.

At Emirates Stadium, Emmanuel Adebayor scored in the 30th minute with an assured finish, before Gilberto fired in a deflected shot eight minutes later.

"We are all disappointed for the season, how it finished. I think we did pretty well all season but at the end it was disappointing," Gunners midfielder Francesc Fabregas told Sky Sports television.

"We needed a performance like this to try to finish as best we can."

"We don't want to always say 'next year, next year'. I think it is a mistake. We want to do it now."

Reading drop to one point and one place above the relegation zone, with the team below them, Birmingham City, having a game in hand.

Wigan Athletic were held to a 1-1 draw by visitors Tottenham Hotspur at the JJB Stadium, though the hosts could have done with a victory to quash their relegation fears.

Tottenham's Bulgaria striker Dimitar Berbatov, who could leave White Hart Lane once the season ends, scored in the sixth minute.

Emile Heskey scored a shock injury-time equaliser to earn Wigan a 1-1 draw at Chelsea on

Monday and it was the former England striker who equalised against Spurs, six minutes after Berbatov's opener.

The League Cup holders were unlucky not to get a first-half penalty when Latics captain Mario Melchiot pulled down Berbatov in the box.

West Ham beat rock-bottom visitors Derby County 2-1 at Upton Park.

The hosts' Bobby Zamora had not scored since April 21 last year but he headed in a 20th minute opener. Defender Tyrone Mears equalised in the 65th minute but Carlton Cole scored from two yards out 12 minutes later.

"The season has been one of frustration for everyone. It has been a catalogue of disasters," said West Ham boss Alan Curbishley.

Derby manager Paul Jewell said:

"This season has been horrendous and there is no getting away from it. The only consistent thing about us is our inconsistency."

In Sunday's fixtures, Birmingham travel to city rivals Aston Villa, Newcastle host Sunderland in the north-east derby, while FA Cup finalists Portsmouth visit Manchester City in their quest for a UEFA Cup spot.

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## Livorno dent Roma's hopes

AFP, Rome



Serie A bottom side Livorno dealt a potentially fatal blow to AS Roma's Serie A championship hopes by holding the title challengers to a 1-1 draw at the Stadio Olimpico on Saturday.

The result will have been all the harder to take for Roma with Francesco Totti suffering a serious knee injury which reports suggest could bring a premature end to the talismanic captain's season.

Roma went into this game aiming to close the gap on leaders Inter Milan to just one point and victory looked assured as their domination was finally rewarded when Mirko Vucinic's looping header put them into a 54th minute lead.

But gutsy Livorno, fighting for their top-flight lives, stunned the complacent capital side when Alessandro Diamanti's cannon ball curving left-footed freekick, awarded after a foul by Juan, flew past keeper Doni.

With only seven minutes left a frantic Roma went desperately close to finding the precious winner but despite on target attempts by Daniele De Rossi and Christian Panucci's injury time header Livorno's keeper Marco Amelia kept the hosts at bay.

Roma were forced to play the last hour of the game without Totti after he limped off the pitch having picked up an injury to his right knee.

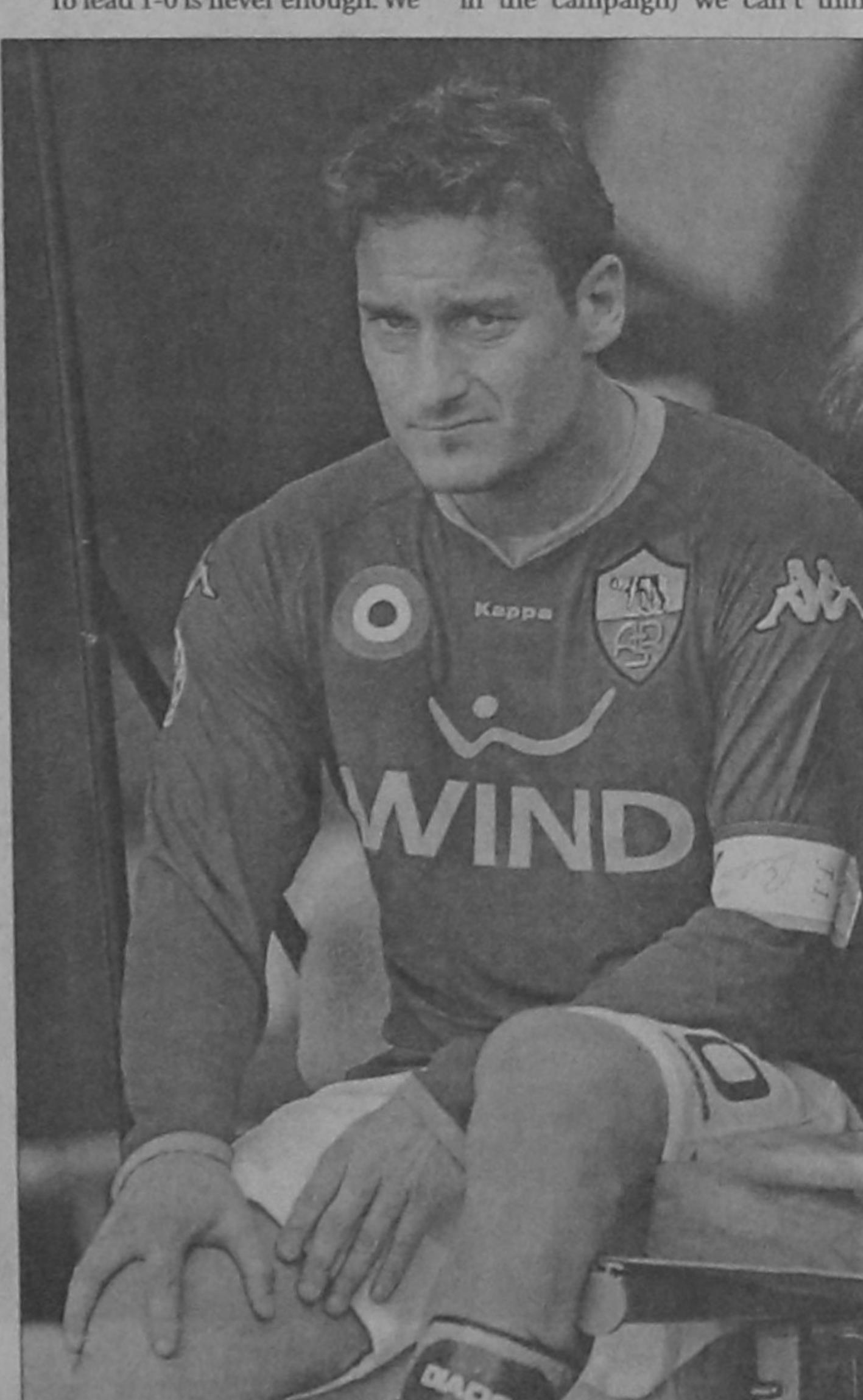
Totti, who was replaced by Amantino Mancini, was taken to a nearby clinic for a scan with news agency ANSA suggesting he could be out for as long as five months.

With two vital points squandered Roma are now three adrift of Inter who can extend the gap to six points with success away to troubled Torino on Sunday.

"The disappointment is total," said Roma manager Luciano Spalletti.

"The team were in front, and they were worth the lead even if they weren't that dangerous in the first half."

"And then, at 1-1, they created three or four shots worthy of goals."



Roma star Francesco Totti leaves the pitch holding his right knee after being injured during their Serie A match against Livorno at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Saturday.

We should have been more aggressive. We've squandered an opportunity."

Roma defender Philippe Mexes added: "That's the way it goes. We're really disappointed because we didn't merit a result like that."

"To lead 1-0 is never enough. We

should have done better, regardless of the opposition."

"It's a great pity. The Scudetto is won also by beating smaller sides."

For Livorno, who had only mustered one draw (in 1933) and one win (in 1947) from their last 15 visits to the Stadio Olimpico, this unexpected point will give them renewed hope of beating the drop with four games of the season to go.

They jumped above fellow relegation strugglers Reggina and Empoli but could find themselves back at the bottom depending on results Sunday.

In Saturday's late game fourth-placed Fiorentina beat mid-table Palermo 1-0 courtesy of a fine 20 metre shot from Marco Donadel in the 29th minute.

Totti undergoes knee operation

AFP, Rome

AS Roma captain Francesco Totti underwent a knee operation on Sunday to repair damage sustained during Saturday's disappointing 1-1 home draw against lowly Livorno.

Totti's season had already been declared as over after he suffered the injury, which saw him limp off during the first half on Saturday, and he is now expected to be out for four months, meaning he faces a race against time to be fit for the start of next season.

"After examining the player, professor Pierpaolo Mariani (Totti's surgeon) confirmed the primary diagnosis: that he has partially ruptured his cruciate knee ligament," said Roma club doctor Mario Brozzi in a statement.

"Roma have already had to deal with this kind of injury and we believe that four months is enough recovery time."

The 31-year-old Totti had vowed earlier in the day that he would come back stronger than ever.

He also explained how he felt in the moment he was injured.

"I was a little scared because I heard a crack. Even so, I've had worse happen to me," he said on Sunday morning.

## Hosts draw Brazil

AFP, Beijing

Hosts China were drawn alongside Brazil in the men's Olympic football tournament on Sunday but avoided defending champions Argentina and European powerhouse Italy.

Also in Group C with China are former champions Belgium and Nigeria.

Argentina will be pleased with the way the draw here panned out for them, pitted in Group A with Olympic newcomers Ivory Coast, surprise European qualifiers Serbia, and Australia's Olyroos.

Group B comprises three-time bronze-medallists the Netherlands,

United States, Nigeria, and Asian stalwarts Japan, while Italy take on South Korea, Cameroon, and Honduras.

The top two in each group progress to the quarter-finals of the August 6-23 tournament that will be played in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Shenyang and Qinhuangdao.

The women's competition, which features full-strength international squads, will be the biggest in history following a two-team increase to the final.

Brazil became the final qualifier when they beat Ghana 5-1 in a play-off match at Beijing's Workers' Stadium on Saturday.

The teams were split into three pools, with the top two teams in each and the top two third-placed teams moving to the knockout rounds.

China, a World Cup quarterfinalist last year, take on Canada, Argentina, and Sweden in Group A.

World Cup winners Germany will meet the team they beat to lift the cup last year, Brazil, in their group, with North Korea and Nigeria making up the third.

Group C sees former Olympic champions and one of the favourites in Beijing, Norway, up against defending champions United States, Japan and New Zealand.

Group D

Ivory Coast

Serbia

Argentina

Australia

Group B

Netherlands

USA

Nigeria

Japan

Group C

China

Belgium

New Zealand

Brazil

Group D

South Korea

Italy

Cameroun

Honduras

The draw made on Sunday for the men's football tournament at the Beijing Olympics. The top two teams in each group progress to the quarter-finals:

Group A

Ivory Coast

Serbia

Argentina

Australia

Group B

Netherlands

USA

Nigeria

Japan

Group C

China

Belgium

New Zealand

Brazil

Group D

South Korea

Italy

Cameroun

Honduras

Group E

Group F

Group G

Group H

Group I

Group J

Group K

Group L

Group M

Group N

Group O

Group P

Group Q

Group R

Group S

Group T

Group U

Group V