



Chelsea striker Nicolas Anelka (L) stabs home the rebound after Aston Villa goalkeeper Brad Friedel had parried Michael Ballack's initial shot during their Premiership match at Stamford Bridge on Sunday. The Blues made light work of their injury crisis with a classy performance that put the upstarts of Villa to bed.

Capello leaves out Owen

AGENCIES, London

Michael Owen was overlooked again on Sunday when England coach Fabio Capello named his squad for the World Cup qualifiers against Kazakhstan and Belarus.

The 28-year-old Newcastle United striker has scored 40 goals in 89 appearances for England but has still not convinced Capello about his fitness this season despite playing in his club's last six games. His last cap came against France in March.

Portsmouth forward Peter Crouch and Manchester City winger Shaun Wright-Phillips return to the squad for the Group Six fixtures after good form for their clubs.

Crouch is one of four strikers in the squad, the others being Portsmouth team mate Jermain Defoe, Wayne Rooney and Emile Heskey.

Chelsea midfielder Joe Cole is ruled out with a foot injury after scoring for his club on Sunday while Blackburn Rovers goalkeeper Paul Robinson is also missing because of a calf strain.

England, who top the group after away wins against Andorra and Croatia, face Kazakhstan at Wembley on Saturday before facing Belarus in Minsk the following Wednesday.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: David James (Portsmouth), Robert Green (West Ham United), Scott Carson (West Bromwich Albion)
Defenders: Wayne Bridge (Chelsea), Wes Brown (Manchester United), Ashley Cole (Chelsea), Rio Ferdinand (Manchester United), Glen Johnson (Portsmouth), John Terry (Chelsea), Joleon Lescott (Everton), Matthew Upson (West Ham United)
Midfielders: Gareth Barry (Aston Villa), Steven Gerrard (Liverpool), Jermaine Jenas (Tottenham Hotspur), Shaun Wright-Phillips (Manchester City), Frank Lampard (Chelsea), Stewart Downing (Middlesbrough), David Beckham (LA Galaxy)
Forwards: Wayne Rooney (Manchester United), Jermain Defoe (Portsmouth), Theo Walcott (Arsenal), Emile Heskey (Wigan Athletic), Peter Crouch (Portsmouth)

Ligament damage for Skrtel

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool defender Martin Skrtel suffered posterior cruciate ligament damage in his right knee during his side's 3-2 win over Manchester City, the Premier League club confirmed on Monday.

Skrtel, 23, was stretchered off with his leg heavily strapped after falling awkwardly in a challenge with Ched Evans in the second half at Eastlands on Sunday.

Scans revealed that the Slovakian centre-back has damaged the knee ligament and he will have further tests to determine the length of his absence, likely to be several months.

"Martin underwent a scan this morning which showed damage to the posterior cruciate ligament in his right knee," club spokesman Ian Cotton said.

"He will see a specialist on Tuesday to assess the extent of the injury and will then have an accurate idea of the timescales involved before he is back playing again."

Lippi calls up Rossi

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Marcello Lippi has included young Villarreal striker Giuseppe Rossi in his 23-man squad for this month's World Cup qualifiers against Bulgaria and Montenegro.

Rossi is among four uncapped players picked in the squad alongside Udinese's Simone Pepe and Napoli pair Christian Maggio and Fabio Santacroce.

There was no place however for veteran Juventus forward Alessandro Del Piero nor the mercurial Antonio Cassano of Sampdoria.

Those omissions are perhaps all the more surprising given the long injury list handicapping Lippi with defenders Marco Materazzi, Nicola Legrottaglie, Marco Cassetti, Fabio Grosso, midfielder Andrea Pirlo and strikers Vincenzo Iaquinta and Marco Borriello all on the sidelines.

It is in the forward positions that Lippi has sprung the biggest sur-

prises with attacking midfielder Maggio and forwards Pepe and Rossi included while there was also no place for experienced AC Milan midfielder Massimo Ambrosini.

Rossi's inclusion is perhaps less surprising given his great form in Spain over the last year.

He scored 11 goals in 23 league matches for Villarreal last season and has already hit the mark this season with one goal in two games after an injury interrupted start to the campaign.



GIUSEPPE ROSSI

Defending champions Italy top Group Eight after winning their first two qualifiers against Cyprus and Georgia and play away to Bulgaria on October 11 and host Montenegro on October 15.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), Marco Amelia (Palermo), Morgan De Sanctis (Galatasaray/TUR)
Defenders: Daniele Bonera (AC Milan), Fabio Cannavaro (Real Madrid/ESP), Giorgio Chiellini (Juventus), Andrea Dossena (Liverpool/ENG), Alessandro Gamberini (Fiorentina), Fabiano Santacroce (Napoli), Gianluca Zambrotta (AC Milan)
Midfielders: Alberto Aquilani (AS Roma), Mauro Camoranesi (Juventus), Daniele De Rossi (AS Roma), Gennaro Gattuso (AC Milan), Christian Maggio (Napoli), Riccardo Montolivo (Fiorentina), Antonio Nocerino (Palermo), Simone Perrotta (AS Roma)
Forwards: Antonio Di Natale (Udinese), Alberto Gilardino (Fiorentina), Simone Pepe (Udinese), Giuseppe Rossi (Villarreal/ESP), Luca Toni (Bayern Munich/GER)

Roma keep sinking

AFP, Rome

AS Roma plunged further into crisis after suffering a 1-0 defeat at Siena on Sunday and having both their centre-backs dismissed.

Luciano Spalletti's team had already had a poor start to the season before this, their third defeat in as many away games that leaves them in the bottom half and with just seven points from six games.

They are already six points off city-rivals Lazio and champions Inter Milan at the top.

Liechtenstein forward Mario Frick scored the winner in first half stoppage time as he reached Massimo Maccarone's cross just ahead of France defender Philippe Mexes.

Any hopes Roma had of salvaging something from the game disappeared after the break as first Mexes and then Cristian Panucci received their marching orders.

One of Roma's main problems this season has been the number of injuries they've had, depriving them of top players such as Mexes, Juan and Francesco Totti and now the subsequent suspensions of Mexes and Panucci will serve could hit them even harder than the loss of three points in Siena.

Spalletti said it was those missing players that were making the difference.

"Rather than changing our system I think most of all we need to get back some players who are particularly important for us," he insisted.

Juventus are not going much better as they lost 2-1 at home to Palermo while finishing with 10 men.

Fabrizio Miccoli gave the Sicilians the lead in the first half, reacting quickest to prod the ball home after Juve goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon spilled a cross from Edison Cavani.

Italy veteran Alessandro Del

Piero restored parity with a sumptuous free-kick but on the stroke of half-time Mali midfielder Momo Sissoko was shown a second yellow card.

Georgian forward Levan Mchedlishvili then hit the winner nine minutes from time with his first ever goal in Serie A, sending Palermo up to fourth. Juve boss Claudio Ranieri complained that his side had been unlucky.

"Palermo had only one chance and they punished us," he said about the first half. "Things are tough at the moment but we have the want and desire to react."

"It's not easy to play with 10 men, but with 10 against 11 we had

more of the game than Palermo. They did well on the counter attack, though."

AC Milan also suffered a disappointing result, drawing 0-0 at rock bottom Cagliari, who picked up their first point of the season.

Milan dominated possession but Cagliari had the best chances with Robert Acquafresca firing wide when one-on-one with Milan goalkeeper Christian Abbiati and Daniele Conti failing to hit the target with a late header from just six yards out.

It was a crazy weekend in Italy with three teams finishing with nine men and nine players being

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PHOTO: AFP

AS Roma striker Julio Baptista complains loudly after the referee rules against him during their Serie A match against Siena at the Artemio Franchi Stadium on Sunday. The Giallorossi lost 1-0 and had two men sent off in a result that mired them deeper into an abyss.

Argentina call up uncapped duo

AGENCIES, Buenos Aires

Argentina called up uncapped San Lorenzo pair Pablo Barrientos and Gonzalo Bergessio on Sunday for their World Cup qualifiers against Uruguay and Chile this month.

Midfielder Barrientos and striker Bergessio were among six locally-based players who were added to the 18 foreign-based players previously named by coach Alfio Basile.

As expected, Boca Juniors playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme was also named in the squad.

Argentina, who have drawn their last six games, host Uruguay on Saturday and visit Chile on Oct 15.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Juan Pablo Carrizo (Lazio), Sergio Romero (AZ Alkmaar), Agustín Orión (San Lorenzo)
Defenders: Fabian Monzon (Real Betis), Javier Zanetti (Inter Milan), Martin Demichelis (Bayern Munich), Daniel Diaz (Getafe), Gabriel Heinze (Real Madrid), Fabricio Coloccini (Newcastle United), Nicolas Burdisso (Inter Milan)
Midfielders: Juan Roman Riquelme (Boca Juniors), Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City), Maximiliano Rodriguez (Atletico Madrid), Javier Mascherano (Liverpool), Esteban Cambiasso (Inter Milan), Angel Di Maria (Benfica), Pablo Barrientos (San Lorenzo), Cristian Ledesma (San Lorenzo), Leandro Somoza (Velez Sarsfield)
Forwards: Gonzalo Bergessio (San Lorenzo), Lionel Messi (Barcelona), Sergio Aguero (Atletico Madrid), Carlos Tevez (Manchester United), Diego Milito (Genoa)

Nigerian group losing patience

AFP, Newcastle

The Nigerian consortium bidding to buy Newcastle has warned the Premier League crisis-club that they are ready to look elsewhere if a deal isn't completed soon.

The African businessmen are believed to have tabled a 200 million pounds offer after Newcastle owner Mike Ashley signalled his intention to sell up.

But the group are unhappy with the response from Newcastle so far and Chris Nathaniel, of NVA Management, who is the consortium's front man, insisted they were ready to pull out if negotiations don't go smoothly.

"We're talking to possible manager and key personnel for the club," Nathaniel told The Sun.

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Borussia sack Luhukay

AFP, Berlin

Struggling Borussia Moenchengladbach on Monday sacked coach Jos Luhukay after 20 months in charge of the Bundesliga outfit.

The club lost 2-1 to Cologne on Saturday, a sixth defeat in seven games this season, leaving them bottom of the league and facing a long battle against relegation.

"We have great respect for him (Luhukay) both on a human and professional level but our current plight leaves us no alternative but to let him go," said club president Rolf Koenigs.

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Chelsea show their class

Dramatic comeback for L'pool

AGENCIES, London



Chelsea stayed top of the Premier League with a 2-0 victory over Aston Villa at Stamford Bridge on Sunday while Liverpool kept pace after an astonishing comeback earned them a 3-2 win at Manchester City.

First half goals by Joe Cole and Nicolas Anelka steered Chelsea to a routine win and put them on 17 points from seven matches, the same as Liverpool who trailed 2-0 before a Fernando Torres double and Dirk Kuyt's stoppage-time winner.

Tottenham Hotspur remained rooted to the bottom of the table after losing 1-0 at home to Hull City as the pressure mounted on manager Juande Ramos. Promoted Hull are third with 14 points.

Newcastle United ended a five-match losing sequence when they recovered from two goals down to draw 2-2 at Everton in Joe Kinnear's first match since being named the struggling club's interim manager.

Portsmouth beat Stoke City 2-1, England strikers Jermain Defoe and Peter Crouch both on target. Gianfranco Zola suffered his first league defeat as manager of West Ham United when they slumped 3-1 at home to Bolton Wanderers.

Chelsea, held 0-0 in Romania by CFR Cluj on Wednesday in the Champions League, made light of injuries to the likes of Michael Essien and Didier Drogba to outclass Villa.

Cole combined superbly with Frank Lampard before thumping a shot past Brad Friedel and they could have had five before the break as they dominated a Villa side who began the day in the top four.

Anelka doubled the lead before halftime when he tapped in from close range after a Friedel save from Michael Ballack.

With Liverpool trailing 2-0 at halftime to goals by Stephen Ireland and Javier Garrido it looked like Chelsea were heading for a three-point cushion in the early title race.

However, Torres, who hardly got a kick in the first half, burst into life. He halved the deficit with a simple finish after a slick move that ended

with an Alvaro Arbeloa cross.

Robinho should have put City 3-1 ahead but instead the home side had Pablo Zabaleta sent off for a horror tackle on Xabi Alonso before Torres headed in an equaliser.

The Spaniard should have completed his hat-trick when he wasted a glorious chance from Robbie Keane's cross but it did not prove too costly as Kuyt slotted a dramatic winner after a Torres shot deflected into his path.

Tottenham's early-season crisis shows no sign of easing as Hull won for the second week running in north London after their stunning 2-1 victory at Arsenal last week.

The only goal of the game came after eight minutes when Brazilian Geovanni curled a sensational free kick into the top corner. Tottenham struck the woodwork twice before the break and mounted sustained pressure after it but Hull hung on.

Tottenham have just two points from their opening seven matches, equalling their worst start to a season. Stoke are second from bottom with four points and Newcastle have five.

Sub-par Real falter

AFP, Barcelona



Sunday.

A below-par Madrid went behind in the penalty spot after 21 minutes with Raul Tamudo firing home after he was felled by Gabriel Heinze.

Raul, returning to the side after being rested for the Champions League clash against Zenit St. Petersburg, equalised with a header four minutes later.

On the half-hour, Luis Garcia

restored Espanyol's advantage, scoring from close range after good build up play from Roman Martinez, Tamudo and Ivan de la Pena.

But then Raul was on hand to bring Real back level at the end of the first half.

There were chances for both sides after the break notably for Luis Garcia and Nene for Espanyol, while Real's Ruud van Nistelrooy also had a shot saved by keeper Carlos Kameni.

The result brought Real's six-match winning streak to an end and left them in fifth place, three points behind leaders Valencia who beat Valladolid 1-0.

Real coach Bernd Schuster felt his team missed Dutch star Arjen Robben, who has been struggling with injury and was not brought into the action until late into the

game. "In the first half with Van Nistelrooy, Raul and (Gonzalo) Higuain it was not easy," said Schuster.

"Robben's state meant that I didn't start with him and we lacked depth. I tried options with (Ruben) de la Red and (Rafael) van der Vaart and I wanted to have the options of Robben and (Wesley) Sneijder for the second half.

"After the break we deserved to win, we were superior and we had chances but Kameni did very well and our finishing wasn't good."

Espanyol coach Bartolome Marquez was satisfied with the point.

"We have been brave by attacking as always. Against Barcelona, we had four strikers. I have a philosophy and I am ready to die by it."

A Manuel Fernandes strike in the 54th minute proved enough for a lethargic Valencia to reclaim top spot with 16 points.

"It was a very even game but I think that the result was fair. There were openings for both sides but not very clear chances," said Valencia coach Unai Emery.

Villarreal also have 16 points after a 2-1 win on Saturday against rock-bottom Real Betis but are in second spot on goal difference.

Earlier Sunday, Sevilla enjoyed a 4-0 mauling of Athletic Bilbao to move into third place on 14 points.

The home side went ahead after 26 minutes through Frederic Kanoute and then five minutes before the interval Renato Santos doubled their advantage.

The best goal of the game came after 75 minutes in a well-worked counter-attack with Adriano Correia providing the finishing touch. Substitute Ernesto Chevanton wrapped up the game with ten minutes to go.

"It's going well but it's still early days. We maintained a good rhythm and that is what we need to continue doing but the season will be long and hard," said Manolo Jimenez, who is the first Sevilla coach to string together eleven matches without defeat. Barcelona are in fourth spot on 13 points after their 6-1 thrashing of Atletico Madrid on Saturday.

Sporting Gijon moved off the bottom with a surprise 2-0 victory over Real Mallorca with goals from Carmelo Gonzalez and Roberto Canella.

Pierre-Webb added to Mallorca's woes when he missed a penalty. Malaga made easy work of struggling Recreativo Huelva, beating their Andalusian neighbours 4-0.

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PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid striker Raul celebrates his second goal in their Primera Liga match against Espanyol at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday. Raul's brace helped a struggling Real to a 2-2 draw against the Catalans.

Pagis hat-trick sinks Lyon

AGENCIES, Paris



of the season with a 3-0 thrashing of the seven-times champions on Sunday.

Striker Pagis found the back of the net once in the first half and twice after the interval, making up for his side's UEFA Cup exit against Dutch side Twente earlier this week.

Lyon, who started with Brazilian playmaker Juninho on the bench, barely threatened the Brittany side but remain top of the standings with 19 points from eight matches, two above Toulouse, 1-0 winners over Auxerre on Saturday.

Olympique Marseille, who beat Caen 2-1 on Saturday, are three points adrift of Lyon with Rennes up to seventh on 13 points.

Five days after snatching a 1-1 draw at Bayern Munich in the Champions League, Claude Puel's side were nowhere to be seen at the Stade de la Route de Lorient.

Puel's decision to field Swede Kim Kallstrom as a left back cost Lyon their first goal as Moussa Sow stormed up the right flank before providing Pagis with a perfect pass that allowed the former Marseille striker to open the scoring on 17 minutes.

The second goal came from the other side of the pitch with Olivier Thomert feeding Pagis with another fine cutback 11 minutes into the second half.

Pagis did it all on his own for the third, a superb 25-metre volley that went into the top corner of Hugo Lloris's goal.

Paris St Germain, who had lost their last two league matches, managed a 1-1 draw at Nancy despite being without midfielders Claude Makelele, Ludovic Giuly and Jerome Rothen, all injured.

They went ahead in the opening five minutes when Guillaume Hoarau headed home after connecting with a Stephane Sessegnon cross.

However, Paul Le Guen's side struggled and Nancy defender Damian Macaluso levelled with a powerful header from a Benjamin Gavanon free kick.

Nancy and PSG remain in the bottom half of the table, in 15th and 11th place respectively.

Elsewhere, Bafetimbi Gomis and Geoffrey Denis scored either side of the interval to give St Etienne a 2-0 victory over Monaco, who have now lost their last three league games.