

GUNNERS STOKED Spurs shock Liverpool

AFP, London

Roman Pavlyuchenko's stoppage-time winner knocked Liverpool off top spot in the Premier League as Tottenham Hotspur continued their unbeaten run under Harry Redknapp with a 2-1 victory.

This dramatic win, which saw Spurs climb off the bottom of the table, ended Liverpool's unbeaten start to the season and left Chelsea on top on goal difference after they thrashed Sunderland 5-0 earlier Saturday.

Dirk Kuyt fired visitors Liverpool into a 1-0 lead as early as the third minute at White Hart Lane.

Liverpool then spurned numerous chances to double their advantage, hitting the woodwork three times.

They were made to pay 20 minutes from time when Spurs - who'd beaten Bolton and drawn 4-4 with Arsenal since Redknapp's arrival from Portsmouth - levelled when Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher headed a David Bentley corner into his own net under pressure from Ledley King.

And just when it seemed the game would end in a draw, Russia striker Pavlyuchenko turned in Darren Bent's cross from close range.

Elsewhere Cristiano Ronaldo's two goals helped champions Manchester United leapfrog Hull City but only after they held on for a 4-3 win over the top-flight new boys at Old Trafford.

Victory put United on 21 points, five behind the leading duo, but with a game in hand.

Nicolas Anelka scored his first Chelsea hat-trick as Sunderland were put to the sword at Stamford Bridge, where Blues manager Luiz Felipe Scolari said he would have no qualms about starting the France forward against Roma in

the Champions League on Tuesday.

"Anelka has the number nine shirt here and tries his best always," Scolari said. "Didier Drogba is back but my decision against Roma is easy. Anelka is in better condition so he plays."

Meanwhile frustrated United boss Sir Alex Ferguson said: "I feel a bit low. We should have won by 10 or 11 and we ended up scrambling for a victory."

Arsenal's title hopes suffered a major setback against another promoted team as they lost 2-1 away to Stoke City, in a match where several players were injured and Robin van Persie red-carded.

Long throws from Rory Delap set up both Stoke's goals and Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger admitted: "It is not our greatest strength to deal with that and we were punished."

"We have very bad injuries with (Emmanuel) Adebayor, (Theo) Walcott and (Bacary) Sagna. At this stage, we don't know how long they will be out."

A third league defeat this season left Arsenal six points behind Chelsea.

West Brom came from a goal behind against Blackburn Rovers, a man down for more than an hour after South African goalscorer Benni McCarthy was sent-off, in a 2-2 draw at The Hawthorns.

Wigan ended a run of four straight defeats with a 2-1 win against Portsmouth. West Ham, who'd also lost four in a row, drew 1-1 away to Middlesbrough.

Everton won in the league for the first time this season at Goodison Park with a 1-0 victory over Fulham where France striker Louis Saha scored against his old club.

Bolton and Manchester City meet at the Reebok Stadium on Sunday while high-flyers Aston Villa are away to Newcastle on Monday.

After Alex put Chelsea in front at Stamford Bridge, Anelka scored

twice before half-time.

England midfielder Frank Lampard scored the 100th league goal of his career before Anelka completed his first hat-trick in English football for over five years since netting a treble for Manchester City.

At Old Trafford, Ronaldo fired United into a third minute lead. But Hull equalised in the 23rd minute when Daniel Cousin headed in Andy Dawson's free-kick.

Minutes later though United were ahead again through England midfielder Michael Carrick.

Portugal winger Ronaldo then scored his fourth goal in two games to make it 3-1 when he headed in from a corner before defender Nemanja Vidic volleyed in a Wayne Rooney corner.

Hull, however, hit back with Bernard Mendy's goal and Geovanni's penalty eight minutes from time setting up a grandstand finish.

Arsenal defender Kolo Toure couldn't cope with Delap's 11th minute throw, allowing striker Ricardo Fuller to score his second goal in as many games.

Another Delap delivery in the 73rd minute led to Seyi Olofinjana making it 2-0 at the Britannia Stadium before Arsenal's Gael Clichy grabbed a late goal.

West Ham midfielder Hayden Mullins scored his first league goal in nearly two years in the 21st minute at the Riverside but Boro fought back and were all square thanks to Egypt forward Mido's goal seven minutes from time.

Papa Bouba Diop, as he'd done in the midweek defeat against Liverpool, gave away a penalty and Egypt striker Amir Zaky put Wigan ahead at Fratton Park.

Pompey hit woodwork four times before Croatia midfielder Niko Kranjcar equalised in the 82nd minute only for England striker Emile Heskey to give Wigan all three points with the 100th Premier League goal of his career.



Tottenham striker Roman Pavlyuchenko (R) is ecstatic after scoring an injury time winner against Liverpool during their Premiership encounter at White Hart Lane on Saturday. Spurs came back from a goal down to beat the Reds in a tight match that saw them continue their recovery.

Still six months for Essien

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea midfielder Michael Essien has revealed he potentially faces a further six months on the sidelines as he recovers from a knee injury.

The Ghana star sustained anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) damage during a World Cup qualifier against Libya in September after landing awkwardly on his knee and has been sidelined since.

Although Chelsea boss Luiz Felipe Scolari initially expected Essien to return to action by the New Year, the 25-year-old admitted his rehabilitation could be prolonged to at least March after undergoing surgery.

"It's difficult for the moment to fix a date for my return," he said.

"But I know that my recovery period will last a total of four to six months."

Essien is currently recuperating at the Centre Technique National Fernand-Sastre (CTNFS) in Clairefontaine, France, before returning to London next week.

"The surgeon who operated on me who recommended to me to come to Clairefontaine as it's the first time in my career that I have been so seriously injured," he added.

"It's actually the third time I've come to the CTNFS. I'm very well looked after and the club doctor and physiotherapist have visited me."

"I will return to London but it's possible that I'll then come back to Clairefontaine."

"So far at the moment I'm not thinking about it much. I'm following the treatment calmly. Everything's going well."

FORMULA 1 Massa on pole, Hamilton fourth

INTERNET, undated

Ferrari's Felipe Massa took pole position for Sunday's Brazilian Grand Prix at the Interlagos circuit in qualifying Saturday while championship leader Lewis Hamilton starts from fourth on the grid. Massa registered a time of 1 minute 12.368 seconds for the 4.309-kilometre circuit to claim a third pole in succession at his home GP while Toyota's Jarno Trulli caused a major surprise by taking the second spot on the front row in 1:12.737 minutes.

Defending champion Kimi Raikkonen snatched third in the second Ferrari with Hamilton of McLaren-Mercedes a disappointing fourth, nearly half a second slower than Massa.

Hamilton holds a seven-point lead over Massa going into Sunday's final race of the 2008 Formula One season and needs a fifth place finish to ensure he goes into the record books as the youngest ever F1 champion at the age of 23.

Massa, who celebrated the sixth pole of the season in front of tens of thousands of adoring fans, requires a win or second spot, and must also rely on his rival finishing outside the top five, to become the first Brazilian since Ayrton Senna in 1991 to take the title.

LIGUE 1 Ben Arfa fires Marseille

INTERNET, undated

Olympique Marseille recovered from a lean spell to beat St Etienne 3-1 to climb to second in Ligue 1 on Saturday.

The former European champions had gone three matches without victory and suffered their first league defeat this season when they lost 4-2 at home to arch-rivals Paris St Germain last weekend.

Marseille have 23 points from 12 games, one point behind leaders Olympique Lyon who entertain Le Mans on Sunday.

France forward Hatem Ben Arfa, who caused controversy by refusing to come on as a substitute against PSG, made amends and was involved in all three goals.

Midfielder Benoit Cheyrou opened the scoring with a header from a Ben Arfa corner on 21 minutes but St Etienne equalised seconds later with an angled effort from the edge of the box by striker Bafetimbi Gomis.

Ben Arfa put the home side back in front with a penalty seven minutes before the break after St Etienne keeper Jeremie Janot brought down Ivory Coast striker Bakary Kone.

Nigeria defender Taye Taiwo wrapped it up for Marseille by heading in another Ben Arfa corner 19 minutes from time.

Girondins Bordeaux slumped to a 1-0 defeat at strugglers Nancy.

Last season's runners-up Bordeaux, who had gone seven league matches without defeat, dropped to third place on 21 points.

Morocco midfielder Youssef Hadji hit the winner for Nancy against the run of play when he fired into the top corner from 20 metres with 20 minutes left.

Toulouse also failed to keep the pressure on Lyon after losing 1-0 at home to Caen, substitute Benjamin Nivet on target with a superb drive from 25 metres on 79 minutes.

HOFFENHEIM FLY HIGH Bayern are resurgent

AFP, Berlin

Coach Jurgen Klinsmann switched to a 4-2-3-1 formation with Klose as the lone striker formation paid dividends as Bayern won the corner count 20-0.

The only blot on Bayern's copy book was a first half penalty conceded by Argentina defender Martin Demichelis, but Klinsmann was happy with the performance especially from Podolski, who was criticised last week after a string of poor performances.

"It was exactly the game we expected with Bielefeld setting out their stall, so we had to be patient," said Klinsmann.

"We took the lead, only to concede a silly penalty, but then we battered away in the second half and made it 2-1 and the corner count shows you how much pressure we applied."

And for Hoffenheim coach Ralf Rangnick the dream continues as his side went back to the top of the table in their first season in the Bundesliga after two promotions in the last two seasons.

Two goals each from Bosnia and Herzegovina striker Vedad Ibisevic - the league's top scorer with 13 from 11 games - and Nigeria forward



Barcelona full-back Dani Alves is over-the-moon after scoring during their Primera Liga clash against Malaga at the Romareda Stadium on Saturday.

BARCELONA IRRESISTIBLE Racism rears up again

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona reeled off their seventh successive win to reach the summit of the Spanish first division but Saturday's 4-1 win at Malaga was marred by racism directed at their Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o.

African forward Eto'o was subjected to monkey chants by the home fans at the La Rosaleda before being booed when he was substituted late on as racism reared its ugly head once again.

Eto'o, 27, has become a major figure in football's bid to kick racism out of the game after being on the receiving end of racist remarks in the past.

In February 2006, Eto'o had wanted to leave the pitch in a 2-0 victory against Real Zaragoza after being forced to listen to monkey cries and dodge peanuts thrown at him. Then coach Frank Rijkaard persuaded him to go on and Zaragoza were fined 9,000 euros.

The Eto'o incidents come just after a Spanish website targeted McLaren Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton with racist abuse.

Eto'o was not on the scoresheet in Barca's 4-1 win with Spain's Euro 2008 hero Xavi Hernandez and a sixth goal of the season from Argentine Lionel Messi sealing the points on a rain-soaked pitch.

"You couldn't really play on a pitch in this condition," said Barca coach Pep Guardiola. "It was a game of trying not to make mistakes."

"Malaga had won four matches in a row and that is no easy feat. I am happy with the win against a

physical team that can hurt you on the counter attack."

Barcelona's next match is at home on Tuesday when they face FC Basel in the Champions League looking to continue their perfect start in Europe.

In the league Barca are a point clear of Villarreal at the top with the latter also winning 4-1 over Athletic Bilbao to maintain their unbeaten start to the season.

Valencia could have displaced Barca at the summit but fell to their first league defeat of the season with a 4-2 home loss against Racing Santander.

Congo striker Mohamed Tchite scored a sensational hat-trick to down Valencia who stay third, two points behind Barcelona.

"My hat-trick is not important but the three points for the team certainly are," said Tchite. It was only Racing's second win of the season and they jump to 11th spot.

Defending champions Real Madrid, three points behind Barca, are in action on Sunday at Almeria.

Elsewhere Argentine attacker Sergio "Kun" Aguero gave Liverpool something to think about ahead of Tuesday's Champions League match at Anfield with a brace as Atletico Madrid defeated Real Mallorca 2-0 at the Vicente Calderon on Saturday.

Aguero was back in the starting XI after being rested for the past few matches and returned with a bang scoring a first half double.

It was Atletico's first league victory since September 24 when they defeated derby rivals Getafe 2-1 and Javier Aguirre's side climb to sixth.

"It is a relief because we had

picked up one point in the last four weeks," explained Aguirre, who said match hero Aguero still needed time to regain match sharpness.

"I will take him (Aguero) to Liverpool for the game but he is on an intensive training regime and has two more weeks of specialised training."

Villarreal put their Kings Cup nightmare firmly behind them with a 4-1 triumph at Athletic Bilbao to go second.

Villarreal went into the match reeling from a 5-0 Kings Cup humiliation by unknown Poli Ejido but responded in the perfect way.

Goals from Giuseppe Rossi, veteran Robert Pires, nearing the end of his career at 35, and Santiago Cazorla wrapped up the points for the visitors.

Villarreal now turn their attention to Wednesday's Champions League match against Danish side Aalborg BK.

Chivu damages ligaments

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan defender Cristian Chivu has damaged knee ligaments, the club said on Sunday.

The Romania captain was forced off during the second half of the champions' 3-2 victory at Reggina on Saturday due to the injury.

Inter did not reveal how much time the centre-back faces on the sidelines but said he will not need to go under the knife.

Roma in free-fall Roman sacks fifteen staff

AFP, Rome

Juventus piled more misery on crisis-ridden Roma with a 2-0 home victory on Saturday while Colombia centre-back Ivan Cordoba scored an injury-time winner to send Inter Milan top with a 3-2 win at rock bottom Reggina.

Juve were good value for their victory and found themselves in fifth place at the end of the day following a third straight Serie A victory.

Veteran forward Alessandro Del Piero scored the first and created the second.

But the crisis continues at Roma who have just eight points from nine games, are down in 17th place, just one above the relegation zone, and have lost their last four Serie A matches.

They have lost six of their nine matches, including all five away from home.

Roma coach Luciano Spalletti admitted his team were having difficulties overcoming their current malaise.

"We started off with the right enthusiasm and then we became disorganised and there was a little bit of fear," he said.

"Mentally we're a team that is having more difficulty rebounding from this situation."

Juve quickly established control and centre-back Giorgio Chiellini forced Roma's Brazilian goalkeeper Doni into a point-blank reaction save on 33 minutes.

Six minutes before the break, though, Del Piero gave the hosts the lead, planting a sumptuous free-kick from 25 yards into the top corner.

Juve kept dominating after the break as Doni saved a speculative bicycle kick from compatriot Amauri before Marco Marchionni took a pass from Del Piero, beat Jon Arne Rise and dinked the ball over a sprawling Doni to double the advantage on 48 minutes.

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Roma defender Cicinho (L) holds off Juventus striker Amauri (3rd from R) during their Serie A clash at the Olympic Stadium in Turin on Saturday.