



Inter Milan striker Julio Ricardo Cruz (C) fights for the ball with Udinese midfielder Gaetano D'Agostino during their Serie A encounter at San Siro on Sunday. Cruz scored an injury-time winner to take Inter to the top of the league.

## Inter back on top

**AFP, Rome**

Two injury time goals from Inter Milan's Julio Cruz and Lecce defender Andrea Esposito sent champions Inter to the top of Serie A at the expense of city rivals AC Milan.

Argentine substitute Cruz's goal gave Inter a 1-0 victory over plucky Udinese while Esposito denied AC Milan a win in a 1-1 draw on the south coast.

AC Milan are joint second with Napoli, just one point back from Inter, after Diego Maradona's former team beat Sampdoria 2-0.

The result in Milan was tough on Udinese, who were on the brink of holding out for a deserved point until they lost concentration at a corner.

Inter boss Jose Mourinho preferred to focus on his own team's strength of character in battling to the end.

"One day our opponents will score in the last minute but right now my team has the character that even when things are tough they never give up," he said.

"Today's match was difficult and it was even in the first half but

after the break Julio Cesar didn't have any problems. The goal came in the 91st minute but it could have come in the 89th or when Zanetti hit the post.

"And maybe there should have been a penalty when a shot from Ibrahimovic hit the bar."

The first half was notable only for being completely forgettable without a single chance of any significance.

After the break Udinese had good chances for Antonio Floro Flores and Fabio Quagliarella before Inter took control.

The hosts' captain Javier Zanetti almost won it two minutes from time with a skidding long-range strike but that cannoned back off the post with Handanovic beaten.

But then deep into injury time Udinese's defenders to a man got drawn to the near post at a corner, which was flicked on leaving Cruz free to head home in the middle of the six-yard box.

Ronaldinho looked to have won the match for Milan for the third game running when he converted Pato's cross from the right just 11 minutes remaining.

But Esposito came up deep into injury time to head home a free-kick and spark wild home celebrations.

Juventus are up to sixth after

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti blamed the referee, claiming the free-kick should never have been awarded.

"The game was won, the lack of concentration at the end was more on the referee's part than our own," he said. "It was a foul that only gets blown up in Italy, referees in Italy blow their whistles too much."

"That was our best performance of the season at home or away. We had many chances."

Napoli opened the scoring in the first half through Daniele Mannini, who tapped home at the far post after a cross from Ezequiel Lavezzi.

Antonio Cassano had a goal harshly ruled out for offside before Mannini twice within a few seconds cleared off the Napoli line.

Uruguay forward Marcelo Zalayeta came off the bench to add the second, finishing off into the empty net after a shot from the excellent Lavezzi was deflected, wrong-footing goalkeeper Luca Castellazzi.

Lazio are up to fourth after a 3-0 win over Siena with captain Tommaso Rocchi scoring twice in the last four minutes following an opener from Argentine Mauro Zarate.

Juventus are up to sixth after

their fourth win in a row as they triumphed 2-0 at second from bottom Chievo.

Evergreen forward Alessandro Del Piero proved he's lost none of his brilliance with yet another stunning free-kick five minutes before the break.

Del Piero has already hit the net with sumptuous free-kicks in victories over Real Madrid, Zenit St Petersburg and AS Roma this season and once again he demonstrated his unerring ability to find the top corner with a dead ball.

"The key to our success last season and these last few games is Alessandro Del Piero," beamed Juve boss Claudio Ranieri.

"Our team wants to fight and get back to its best. Then there is the impact of our stars that comes to the fore such as that of Del Piero, who in this moment is absolute magic."

"He's always been the leader, he carries Juventus and everyone else is right behind him. Given half a chance, he scores and that's good for us and our morale."

Vincenzo Iaquinta secured the three points by adding a second after the restart as Juve moved onto 21 points, just one win off top.

Fiorentina are also still in the mix, just one point behind Juve, as they won 2-1 at home to Atalanta.

## Mourinho not satisfied with attack

**SOCERNET**

Internazionale coach Jose Mourinho has warned his team cannot keep riding their luck if they want to keep their place at the top of the Serie A standings.

Julio Cruz's goal in stoppage time handed Inter a 1-0 victory over Udinese on Sunday.

The result saw the defending champions return to the summit after rivals AC Milan were held to a 1-1 draw at Lecce, but Mourinho admits he does not want late goals to become a habit for his team.

"I am not satisfied with my team's play in attack," said Mourinho. "In the last minute you can win or lose a game and in our last three encounters, we have won twice and drawn once. But it could be that in the future it will be our rivals who score in the last minute."

The Nerazzurri beat Reggina 3-2 last weekend with Ivan Cordoba scoring the winner in the 90th minute, while three days later it was Cruz who came to the rescue with a late equaliser at Anorthosis Famagusta in the Champions League.

Despite his concerns, Mourinho is nevertheless impressed by the determination shown by his players of late.

"At this time my team are showing character and even when facing adversity, we don't give up," he said.

"The fact is that against a good side like Udinese we won, we were pragmatic and we claimed three points. We are first in the standings in both Serie A and in our Champions League Group B."

Earlier on Sunday, Villarreal continued their impressive unbeaten start to the season, mov-

## Valencia keep pace

**AFP, Madrid**



Just two points separate the top four teams in the Spanish first division after Valencia defeated ten-man Getafe 3-0 on Sunday night to move third above champions Real Madrid on goal difference.

Barcelona lead the way with a point advantage over Villarreal and a two-point cushion over Valencia, now third, and Real who had a brief spell at the summit on Saturday.

A Manuel Fernandes strike, a terrific volley from Joaquin and a late Vicente Rodriguez effort helped Valencia overcome Getafe, who had been handicapped by the sending off of Roberto Soldado close to half-time, as Unai Emery's team closed to within two points of pacesetters Barca.

"It is a good win for us because Getafe are strong at home," explained goal hero Joaquin. "It was quite comfortable as we controlled possession and they got tired towards the end."

"I was really happy with my goal. I made good contact and it just flew in."

It was the first meeting between the two sides since last season's Kings Cup final, which Valencia won 3-1, and there was no chance of revenge for Getafe.

Earlier on Sunday, Villarreal continued their impressive unbeaten start to the season, mov-

ing a point behind league leaders Barcelona with a 2-1 victory over Almeria.

Villarreal took an early stranglehold on the match scoring twice in the opening quarter of an hour with Giuseppe Rossi scoring in the first minute before Jose Llorente registered his fifth of the season after 15 minutes.

Almeria pulled a goal back but Villarreal held on for their seventh win of the campaign.

Chilean coach Manuel Pellegrini has worked wonders at El Madrigal with Villarreal now considered serious title contenders and the club are keen to tie him down to a longer contract.

"We faced a really good team that were better than us in the second half," admitted Pellegrini. "The good thing is that we kept up our concentration levels to clinch the victory."

Barcelona sit above Villarreal by a point after lighting up Camp Nou on Saturday, crushing Valladolid 6-0 with Samuel Eto'o scoring four goals in a dazzling display.

"We are not the perfect team and haven't won anything yet," warned Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola.

Champions Real sit fourth, two points behind Barca, after Argentine Gonzalo Higuain scored four goals as Bernd Schuster's team laboured to a 4-3 win over Malaga on Saturday.

Sevilla are trying to break into that top four and closed to within five points of Barca with a 1-0 home victory against Recreativo Huelva on Sunday.

Manolo Jimenez's team bounced back from four successive defeats, including a midweek UEFA Cup loss against Standard Liege, with Frederic Kanoute's 63rd minute strike proving decisive.

Mall international Kanoute also missed a penalty 12 minutes from time but it proved insignificant.

"There is a sense of relief in the dressing room," admitted Sevilla defender Fernando Navarro. "We couldn't afford to draw and this win is just what we needed."

The Sevilla win was bad news for Atletico Madrid who were frustrated by struggling Osasuna in a 0-0 draw that leaves them down in seventh, six points off the Champions League spots.

It could have been worse for Atletico had French goalkeeper Gregory Coupet not saved Javier Portillo's 19th minute spot-kick for Osasuna, who have still not won this season.

Atletico coach Javier Aguirre was accused of lacking ambition in the post match press conference which irked the Mexican who replied: "That is your (the press) point of view. I have mine and we never agree."

"This point is no good for us and we have to try and win two or three matches on the spin to get involved with the teams at the top."

Racing Santander's in-form marksman Mohamed Tchite, who scored a hat-trick against Valencia last weekend, was on target again as his side ended Sporting Gijon's run of five straight league wins with a 1-0 triumph.

## Magpies slump into trouble

**AFP, London**

Newcastle slumped back into the Premier League relegation zone after Danny Murphy's second half penalty gave Fulham a 2-1 win at Craven Cottage on Sunday.

Joe Kinnear's side had looked on the up in recent weeks but they sit third bottom of the table thanks to a dismal defensive display in west London.

Andrew Johnson punished a mistake by Claudio Cacapa to open the scoring in the first half before Shola Ameobi equalised for Newcastle with his third goal in five games.

But Murphy's spot-kick - the 100th club goal of his career - ended Newcastle's two-match winning run after Fabricio Coloccini clumsily tripped Johnson.

Roy Hodgson's team moved out of the drop zone into midtable thanks to their fourth home league win this season.

Kinnear claimed his side had been harshly treated by the officials because Johnson had fouled Cacapa off the ball before winning the penalty.

"We were the far better team in the second half. Once we got back at 1-1, there was only one team that was going to win," he said.

"But the referee's decision has cost us dearly. When he sees it again he needs to apologise big-time. He has plenty to answer for."

Hodgson added: "Before the match, I didn't really think we were a bottom-three team. Now we are close to a UEFA Cup spot, I don't necessarily believe we are a UEFA Cup team."

## Lehmann blasts refereeing standards

**INTERNET, undated**

Stuttgart goalkeeper Jens Lehmann has claimed he is considering retirement because the refereeing in the Bundesliga is so bad.

The 39-year-old former Arsenal player, who returned to Germany this season after five years in the Premier League, was booked by referee Babak Rafati in Sunday's 2-2 draw at Eintracht Frankfurt.

Rafati allowed two controversial goals - one for either side - to stand, leaving Lehmann wondering if there are no better officials in Germany.

"We all have reasons to be not too happy with the performance of the referee," he told Premiere television after the match.

"I kept asking myself what on earth he was blowing for. These are referees for us and not for the two people in the stands who are writing a report about him. What that man did was unbelievable."

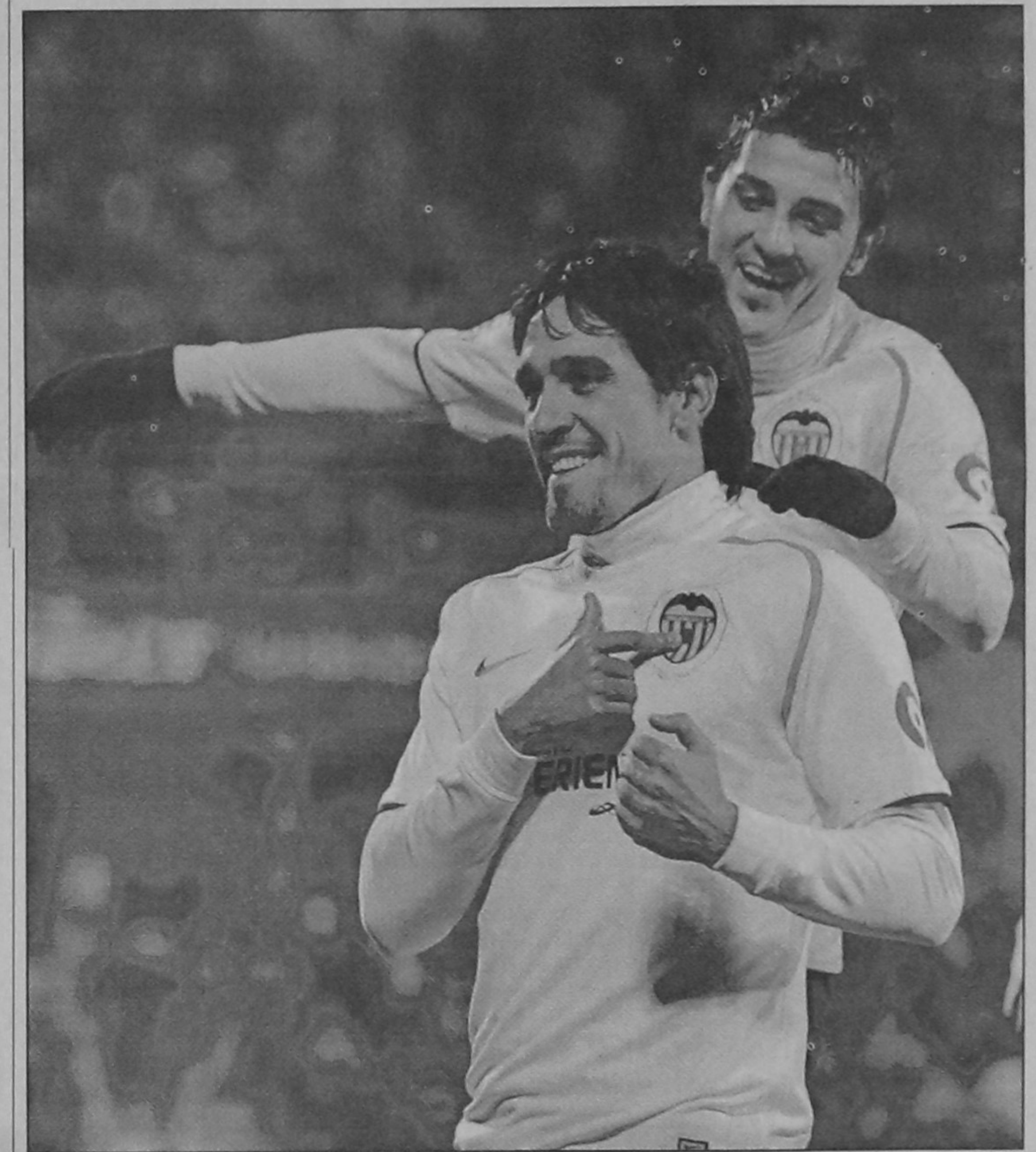
Lehmann was furious at the yellow card he received, his third of the season for dissent.

"There was a situation in which a Frankfurt player feigned an injury so we could not launch a counter-attack," he added. "The referee said he had to stop play for the injury and then the man stands up and doesn't even leave the field to be treated."

"I told the referee, 'Look! There he goes!' and he shows me a yellow card - incredible. That was so bad that I may as well not bother playing in future. I did not even say anything nasty to the referee."

"Surely there are better ones. I am sorry, but things cannot go on like this. This is sad for the whole of the Bundesliga."

Mid-table Cologne enjoyed a 2-1 win over Hanover on Friday night.



Valencia midfielder Vicente Rodriguez (front) celebrates with teammate David Villa after scoring the third goal against Getafe during their Primera Liga clash at Coliseum Alfonso Perez in Getafe on Sunday.

## GP to organise talent hunt for Special Olympics

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Grameenphone, in partnership with Special Olympics Bangladesh, is organising a regional talent hunt for intellectually-challenged athletes. This was announced at a press briefing at the Grameenphone Head Office yesterday.

The objective of the talent hunt is to form a 'national talent pool' of intellectually-challenged athletes and to empower them by nurturing and nourishing their sporting capabilities. Once finalised, the national talent pool will be further groomed, nurtured and prepared for the next Special Olympics, the largest sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, in 2011.

The first regional talent hunt starts with Rajshahi division at the Rajshahi Physical Training College from November 19-23. Athletes from nine special schools, covering Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Panchagar, Nilphamari, Joypurhat, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj, Natore and Sirajganj districts, will be participating. Subsequently the talent hunt will be extended to other divisions as well.

It is expected that 150 boys and 50 girls will be participating in the talent hunt in Rajshahi under the guidance of specially trained coaches from Special Olympics Bangladesh. Simultaneously, 50 coaches are currently undergoing a 6-day special training session by both local and international instructors at BKSP.

Syed Yamin Bakht, Director Public Relations Division Grameenphone, Shuvashish Priya Barua Head of CSR Grameenphone, Ashraf-ud-Dowla, Founder Chairman Special Olympics Bangladesh and Shamim Matin Chowdhury, Chairman Special Olympics Bangladesh were present at the press briefing.

## Ribery fires Bayern

**AFP, Berlin**



French star Franck Ribery scored his fourth goal in four consecutive league games on Sunday to seal a 2-1 win at Schalke 04 to put defending champions Bayern Munich in touch with the leaders.

Despite missing the first five games of the season after damaging ankle ligaments playing for France against Italy during Euro 2008 in June, Ribery is back to his best and his first-half strike in Gelsenkirchen put Bayern third.

"That was world-class! You

won't see better than that," pundit and Bayern resident Franz Beckenbauer told German channel Premiere after watching Ribery.

Hoffenheim dropped to second in the table by virtue of their 1-0 defeat at Hertha Berlin on Sunday as Bayer Leverkusen took over as league leaders with a superior goal difference.

But with five wins from their last five league games, defending champions Bayern are now on 24 points just one behind Hoffenheim and Bayer.

Last month's slump -- which saw them drop to 11th in the table -- now looks a thing of the past.

"We are very content to drive home with three points," said Bayern coach Jurgen Klinsmann. "Schalke put us under a lot of pressure in the first half."

"We had to correct a few things tactically in the break and afterwards the team was much more compact and things worked better."

"We want to be top of the league as fast as possible, the points will come our way, it is just a question of time."

Bayern took the lead as early as the third minute when Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni, back from a rib injury, combined with Munich captain Mark van Bommel and fired home from close range.

Schalke replied almost immediately when striker Jefferson Farfan converted a pass from Brazilian Rafinha and slotted his shot past Bayern goalkeeper Michael Rensing after five minutes.

The best goal of the game came when Ribery linked up with Brazilian midfielder Ze Roberto and scored on 31 minutes after some quick passing to give the guests the three points.

Having won their previous five league games, Hoffenheim were brought back to earth when they were lost 1-0 to Hertha Berlin at the Olympic Stadium.

Terrible defending by Hoffenheim gave Hertha's former Liverpool striker Andriy Voronin a simple one-on-one with the Berlin goalkeeper on 70 minutes and he made no mistake to put Hertha fifth.

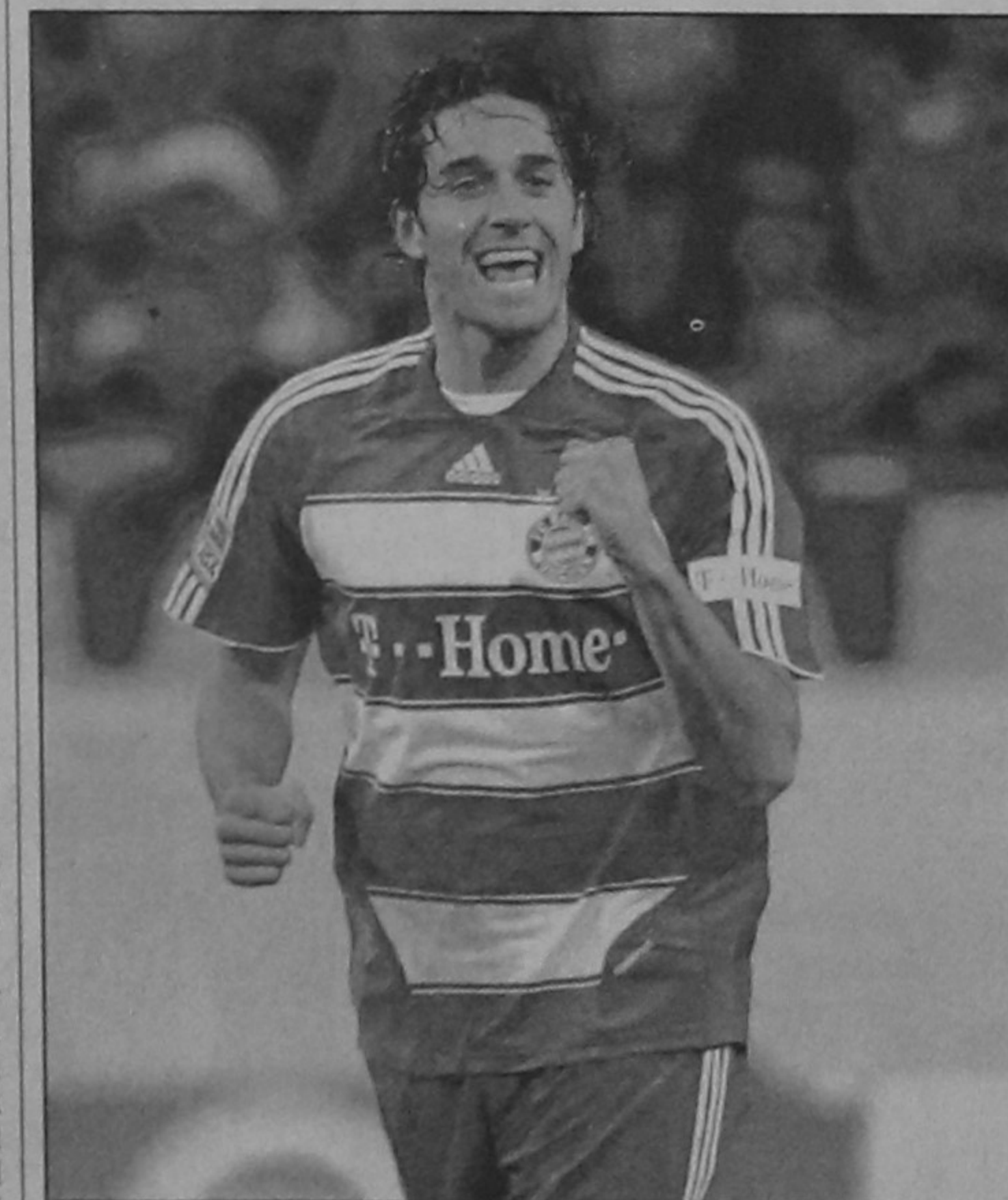
And Germany striker Mario Gomez scored a late header to seal a 2-2 draw for VfB Stuttgart against Eintracht Frankfurt.

On Saturday, Bayer Leverkusen allowed a 3-0 lead to slip in a 3-3 draw at Karlsruhe as the home side made a spectacular comeback.

Bayer missed out on their fifth straight league win while Karlsruhe finally broke a five-game losing streak to share the points.

Hamburg moved back up to fourth with a 2-1 win at home to Borussia Dortmund and having been hammered 3-0 in the Champions League in midweek by Panathinaikos, Werder Bremen are tenth after they drew 0-0 with strugglers VfL Bochum.

A hat-trick from Brazilian star Grafite including a first-half penalty gave Felix Magath-coached Wolfsburg a 3-0 win at home to bottom side Energie Cottbus which put Wolfsburg up to seventh in the table.



Bayern Munich striker Luca Toni pumps his fist after scoring the opening goal against Schalke during their Bundesliga match at the Veltins Arena in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday.

## Venus bags Doha title

**Tennis**

**AFP, Doha**

Venus Williams won her biggest title outside of Wimbledon for seven years when she captured the WTA Tour's year-end event for the first time here on Sunday.

Williams' 6-7, 6-0, 6-2 win over Vera Zvonareva, the week's surprise packet, in the final of the Sony Ericsson championships, proved that she is still a major force on surfaces other than grass.

"It was a hard fought match right down to the end," reckoned Williams, though that hardly looked the case. "I am so excited. I wanted it so bad."

Asked how she recovered from her first set setback, when she had a long lead in the tie-break only to lose it and then lose the set on an unlucky net cord, Williams said: "That's tennis."

"Sometimes it goes your way and then all of a sudden it comes crashing down."

"It's been a pretty good year for me. Next year I hope I can stay healthy and I can go higher," added Venus, who will finish the year as world number six. Zvonareva will be seven, her highest ever.

Williams began sluggishly, perhaps suffering lingering effects

from the tough match in which she beat world number one Jelena Jankovic the previous day.

She lacked penetration off the ground, and the more she sought to generate pace, the noisier she became with her gasp-grunts.

Zvonareva applied the majority of her attacks to the Venus backhand wing, but switched the ball around well too, looking the fresher and livelier player.

The lesser known player was also helped by an early double fault from the Wimbledon champion - a more frequent problem this week than she would have liked - which contributed to the loss of her first service game.

Zvonareva capitalised to reach 3-0 after a long struggle in the third game, and then held the advantage more comfortably to 5-3.

It was then that she showed, for the first time in five matches of the most impressive week of her career, an inhibition about winning. She failed to convert four set points on her serve, one of them an error from a very makable volley, dropped that game and was taken to a tie-break.

She encountered a quite different Williams, who found the depth and the angles better and made better tactical choices, getting to the net twice successfully to help break Zvonareva's serve for 2-0.

## Simon shocks Federer

**AFP, Shanghai**

France's Gilles Simon shocked top seed Roger Federer 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 on Monday at the Tennis Masters Cup, leaving the former world number one's bid for a third straight title in disarray.

Federer, who withdrew from last week's Paris Masters with a back injury, was sublime in the opening set but lost his way in the next two as Simon took control.

"I didn't serve full blast, especially from the start. I don't know if that cost me the match," Federer said.

"I was still in a position to win. It was just a pity I couldn't get to the finish line."

It was Federer's 14th defeat - and second to Simon - in a season in which he also lost his number one ranking after four-and-a-half years at the top and saw his five-year Wimbledon streak ended by Rafael Nadal.

"I'm very happy and very exhausted," said Simon. "It was a very long match but I played my best tennis in the last two sets."

Federer was also beaten in his first round-robin match here last year, by Fernando Gonzalez, but came back to clinch his second consecutive title and fourth overall.

The 27-year-old Swiss targeted Simon's two-handed backhand as he went a break up in the first, pummeling two deep forehands and finishing with a cross-court winner, and then converted the first set point with his second ace.