

Cardiff hold Gunners

AFP, Cardiff

Premier League Arsenal face an FA Cup replay against Cardiff City after the Welsh side held them to a goalless fourth round draw here at Ninian Park on Sunday.

Cardiff, beaten in last year's final by Portsmouth, spurned several good chances in the first half in a match where Arsenal missed chances of their own against the second-tier Championship club.

This match was a repeat of the 1927 final which Cardiff won 1-0 to become the only non-English club to win the FA Cup.

Afterwards Cardiff's Roger Johnson praised the Bluebirds' defending which helped earn them a second crack against Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium on February 3.

"Obviously they are a good side - they keep the ball well," the midfielder told Setanta Sports.

"But we defended well today - we have given sloppy goals away late on this season, that has been our downfall. But we were strong today and held on."

"We had a game plan not to sit back and let them play - we got in their faces and had a few chances early on. One goal was always going to win this game."

Chimbonda set for Spurs return

AFP, London

Frenchman Pascal Chimbonda looks like leaving Sunderland after a mere six-month spell and returning to Tottenham, it was revealed on Sunday.

The Black Cats, the Press Association understands, have given the go-ahead for the 29-year-old defender to have talks and a medical with Spurs on Monday.

Chimbonda had made just 16 appearances for the north-east club since his summer move from White Hart Lane, but has started the last four games.

After a promising first few weeks at the Stadium of Light, he lost his place in the side under former boss Roy Keane amid rumours of disciplinary problems.

Portsmouth bring in new faces

AFP, London

Struggling Portsmouth have brought two new faces into their squad in the shape of West Ham midfielder Hayden Mullins and Porto youngster Pele.

Mullins has signed up for a three-and-a-half-year deal for an undisclosed fee while 21-year-old attacking midfielder Pele has agreed to a loan until the end of the season, with a view to permanent move.

Both players will go straight into manager Tony Adams' squad for Tuesday's Premier League match with Aston Villa at Fratton Park.

Mullins told the club's website, www.portsmouthfc.co.uk "It was a little bit of a shock. I trained on Sunday with West Ham after the game on Saturday and then it all happened very quickly, but I'm very pleased to have joined."

"It was a great experience to have worked under Gianfranco Zola but it's a great challenge to come here and work with some really talented players."

"I enjoyed my time at West Ham but I was there for five years and thought that maybe it was time for a change."

"Portsmouth are a club with a lot of history. They won the FA Cup last year, so I'm very excited to be here."

Pele, a Portugal Under-21 international, only joined Porto last summer after previously playing for Inter Milan and scoring in last year's Italian cup final.

Pele said: "It's always been an ambition of mine to play in England, to play in the Premier League. I've always watched English football, and the crowds are always great here."

"England is the home of football, so it's fantastic to get this opportunity."



Milan star Kaka scores from a penalty to make it 3-1 during their Serie A encounter against Bologna at the Renato Dall'Ara Stadium in Bologna on Sunday.

Fergie plays mind games

AFP, London

Premier League leaders Manchester United can steal a march on closest pursuers Liverpool by going three points clear on Tuesday, 24 hours before their north-west rivals are next in action.

United are away to bottom-of-the-table West Bromwich Albion and few would bet against the reigning English, European and world champions coming away from the Hawthorns with all three points.

If they did, that would leave them three clear of Liverpool, whom they currently lead on goal difference, and with a game in hand before the Reds' potentially tricky away match against Wigan on Wednesday.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, renowned for playing 'mind games' with his side's title challengers, appeared to be trying to take some of the pressure off his quadruple-chasing team.

"We will drop points in the run-in, there is no question about that," Ferguson said. "We just hope we don't drop as many as the rest."

That Liverpool, fresh from two derby draws with Everton which have hampered their progress in both the Premier

League and FA Cup, remain in the hunt is evidence of their ability, so far at least, to defy conventional football wisdom.

This states that successful sides are ones which enjoy stability both on and off the field.

But manager Rafael Benitez has fallen out with chief executive Rick Parry over the issue of transfers.

And with the Kuwait-based Al-Kharafi family reported to have pulled out of negotiations to buy the club, the spectre of a fresh power struggle between feuding co-owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett looms large over Anfield.

More worryingly for Benitez, Liverpool look unsettled on the pitch as well after three straight draws.

Aston Villa, riding high in

fourth place, will be firm favourites to record an away win on Tuesday against Portsmouth even though Martin O'Neill's men were held to a surprise goalless FA Cup draw by Doncaster.

Holders Portsmouth were dumped out of the Cup by second-tier Swansea on Saturday and manager Tony Adams, promoted after Harry Redknapp left to join Tottenham, knows that both he and the south coast club, now just three points above the relegation zone, badly need a win.

"We've got to put this to bed as quickly as possible," Adams said. "We've got a four-month battle coming up. We'll have to scrap every game. I'm certainly going to scrap - I won't be running away."

Redknapp's team face Stoke who, like Spurs, are one of five sides at the bottom of the table on 21 points.

Chelsea, who are just two points behind the leading duo, will look to keep pace at home to Middlesbrough on Wednesday when top six rivals Everton and Arsenal go head-to-head.

Meanwhile, Manchester City will play Newcastle in what will be their first match since the failure of their world record bid for AC Milan's Kaka.

Table with 2 columns: Day, Match details (teams, time, location).

Raul leads Real

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's iconic captain Raul moved to just one goal from equalling Alfredo Di Stefano's club goalscoring record as Real cut Barcelona's lead at the top to 12 points with a 1-0 home win over Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday.

Raul appeared to use his ear to glance home Lassana Diarra's fierce 39th minute cross for his 306th goal in the famous white shirt, leaving him just one goal behind Di Stefano, who famously inspired Real to five consecutive European Cup triumphs.

Raul, 31, was taken off 20 minutes from the end as coach Juande Ramos put the team first so the former Spain international will have to wait until next week to try and get the goal.

Real moved three points clear of third-placed Sevilla, who lost 2-0 against Racing Santander, as they enacted revenge for their opening 2-1 defeat to Depor at the Riazor Stadium.

Portuguese defender Pepe admitted it was frustrating that Barca kept winning but pointed out that Real's other rivals were now further away.

"Barca didn't slip up but the teams behind us (Sevilla, Valencia and Atletico Madrid) did so we have some breathing space," explained Pepe. "We just have to wait for Barca to drop points and take advantage by winning."

It was a fifth straight win for Ramos who has had to deal with the speculation that Arsene Wenger could replace



Real Madrid striker Raul Gonzalez (L) is locked in an aerial tussle with Deportivo midfielder Angel Lafita during their Primera Liga clash at Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday.

him at the end of the season. Ramos has a six-month deal but presidential candidate Florentino Perez has stirred trouble by claiming he would bring Arsenal manager Wenger to the Santiago Bernabeu.

"We just have to concentrate on fulfilling our part by winning and wait and see what happens," said Ramos. "It is a long season and a lot can happen."

With Barca and Real in their custom positions of first and second the rest of the top sides appear to be fighting for the remaining two Champions League slots.

Despite playing against ten men for close to an hour Sevilla fell to a surprise 2-0 home defeat at the hands of Racing Santander.

Serbian striker Nikola Zigic, measuring in at 6ft 8in (2.05-metre), was the main

danger and scored the crucial second goal at the beginning of the second half.

Zigic flopped at Valencia after a 20-million-euro move from Racing but the striker, back at Racing on loan, repaid them a little scoring his third goal in four games to down Valencia's Champions League rivals.

Strugglers Mallorca shocked Valencia with a 3-1 win on Sunday with Jose Jurado netting a brace.

Mallorca moved off the bottom of the table with the win and Osasuna replaced them.

Atletico Madrid are still yet to win in 2009 after a 1-1 draw at Malaga who had won four out of their last five games in the league.

Elsewhere Espanyol's third coach this season, Mauricio Pochettino, saw his side draw 1-1 with Valladolid in his first match in charge.

Messi vows to stay at Barca

AFP, Madrid

Lionel Messi has said he would never leave Barcelona amid curious speculation Real Madrid want to sign the Argentine Wunderkind from their rivals.

Reports from Madrid suggested champions Real were preparing a sensational swoop but Messi laughed off the talk and pledged his future to Barcelona.

"I'll never leave Barca," the 21-year-old Messi told the club's official website. "I'll only leave if they throw me out. Barcelona is my home."

Messi is unlikely to be thrown out having scored 14 goals this season, including two in Saturday's 4-1 win over Numanica, as Barca sit 15 points clear of Real at the top of the Spanish first division.

Barcelona president Joan Laporta hit out at Real for using the media to try and unsettle the league leaders.

"They (Real Madrid) are relying on biased mass media institutions to spread these rumours," said Laporta. "It is an attempt to unsettle us and cover up their own problems."

"The most important thing is that he (Messi) is happy here, this is where he has grown up, and he is showing this with his performances."

Cudicini joins Tottenham

AFP, London

Tottenham Hotspur have signed goalkeeper Carlo Cudicini on a free transfer from Chelsea, the Blues said Monday.

The Italian will make the journey across London from the Premier League title contenders to a Spurs side struggling to avoid relegation but short of an experienced rival to the inconsistent Heurelho Gomes.

Cudicini, 35, had been at Stamford Bridge since 1999 and was Chelsea's first-choice goalkeeper until Petr Cech joined the west London club in 2004.

"Chelsea can confirm Carlo Cudicini has today (Monday) signed for Tottenham Hotspur on a free transfer," said a statement on Chelsea's website.

"The club would like to take this opportunity to thank Carlo for his years of service and wish him well."

Rosicky starts training

AFP, Prague

Arsenal's Czech midfielder Tomas Rosicky, sidelined by a knee injury for more than a year, started individual training last week, his agent Pavel Paska said on the www.rosickytomas.com website Sunday.

"This is another change for the better in his situation, another hope that Tomas's difficult period will end," said Paska.

The 28-year-old Czech Republic captain, who missed Euro 2008 because of the injury, underwent two surgeries on the knee tendon last year.

The Czech midfielder was last seen in an Arsenal shirt on January 26 last year when he hobbled off after nine minutes of the FA Cup tie with Newcastle at the Emirates Stadium.

Milan romp at Bologna

AFP, Rome



David Beckham struck his first goal in Italian football on Sunday while Kaka put the Manchester City transfer saga behind him with a brace as AC Milan romped to a 4-1 victory

at Bologna. But Milan remain six points off the top after leaders Inter Milan won 1-0 at home to Sampdoria.

It was Kaka's first match since his proposed world record switch to City collapsed and he responded with a calmly taken penalty and a left-foot rocket.

Kaka's contribution deflected somewhat from Beckham's first goal for Milan since joining on loan from the LA Galaxy earlier this month. The former England skipper found the net with his team's fourth goal on the hour mark.

"It was a truly special goal, just as it is special for me to be playing here," said Beckham.

"The important thing was to win so now we are even more confident ahead of Wednesday's game (against Genoa)."

Bologna took the lead on nine minutes after Christian Amoroso strode into area and was sandwiched by Paolo Maldini and Philippe Senderos. Marco Di Vaio converted from the spot for his 15th league goal of the season.

But just four minutes later Bologna lost the ball in midfield and Kaka hit a shot from distance that Francesco Antonioli couldn't hold, allowing veteran Dutch midfielder Seedorf to prod home the rebound.

The third goal in the 17th minute came following a controversial penalty awarded to Milan.

Davide Bombardini took the ball off Gianluca Zambrotta as he went into area but the full-back tripped over and the referee

pointed to the spot, with Kaka converting. Any hopes Bologna had of getting back into the game ended five minutes before the break when Gaby Mudingaye was sent off following a second booking.

Just three minutes later Kaka fired home a wonderful left-footed shot to ensure the game was over before the pause. Back then smashed home a fierce right-footer at Antonioli's near post on the hour after a pass from Seedorf.

Inter were made to work hard for the three points against a stubborn Sampdoria who were battling to try to avoid being dragged into the relegation mire.

With Zlatan Ibrahimovic suspended Adriano led the Inter line and scored the vital winner in first-half stoppage time.

His compatriot Maicon did the hard work, breaking down the right and chipping the ball to the back post for Adriano to poke home.

Coach Jose Mourinho was sent to the stands towards the end of the first half after reacting angrily to a yellow card shown to Dejan Stankovic.

"Tonight's referee doesn't have any experience and there was too much pressure on him," said the former Chelsea boss.

"He kept blowing up against us and in this moment I asked him if he was afraid of giving a decision in our favour."

The other big winners of the day were AS Roma who closed to within three points of fourth, the final Champions League qualifying position, with a stunning 3-0 win at Napoli. Centre-backs Philippe Mexes and Juan gave Roma a two-goal advantage at the break and Montenegro forward Mirko Vucinic added the third just after the restart.

It means Roma are fifth and only three points behind Genoa, who were surprisingly held to a 1-1 home draw by Catania.

Australian Open SECRETS

AFP, Melbourne

Serena Williams says there won't be any rematch against Andy Roddick no matter how badly journalists -- or Roddick -- may want one.

Williams and Roddick are spending much of their post-match press conferences at this year's Australian Open talking about Serena's win over him when they were both 10 years old.

If you listen to Serena, she beat Roddick 6-1, the greatest win of her career. If you believe Roddick, it was 6-4 and there were mitigating circumstances -- he was pencil thin and she "could bench press dumb trucks".

After she progressed to the quarterfinals on Monday, Serena was asked again whether she would take him on once more, this time for charity.

"I don't think it's necessary to have a rematch -- you know, I won," she said.

"I was clearly the better player. I beat Roddick, you know. Andy Roddick, yeah. There's really no need to have a rematch. It's unimpor-

tant now." When asked to confirm the score, she was in no doubt. "6-1. The score absolutely speaks for itself. He always jokes, 'rematch, rematch'."

"But I don't even have time for a rematch." There is clearly a lot of affection between the pair, who learned to play on adjacent courts at Delray Beach in Florida.

"You know, he was a sweetheart," she said.

"He was so sweet and he was so small. His older brother played really good tennis, John Roddick."

"He was always John Roddick's younger brother. I was kind of Venus's younger sister."

"I just remember he was a really sweet kid." And just in case anyone had forgotten.

"You know, he could never really beat me."

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

World number eight Svetlana Kuznetsova paid tribute to coach Olga Morozova Monday, saying her trailblazing exploits in the Soviet era paved the way for

the Russian revolution on the women's tour.

Half of the eight women to make the quarterfinals at this year's Australian Open are Russian, part of a wave of players from the country to emerge in recent years.

Kuznetsova said they all owed a debt to Morozova, who was the first Soviet player to emerge from behind the Iron Curtain.

Morozova reached the final at Wimbledon and Roland Garros in 1974 before Soviet authorities forced her to retire in 1977.

With Russian women's tennis on a high, Kuznetsova said the sacrifices of women who played in the Soviet era should not be forgotten.

"It's unbelievable what they experienced before in the USSR and how much they suffered," she said.

"They didn't let them play at a normal level, they missed so much."

"I appreciate them. Because of them, we are now here and we have the chance to play, to travel around the world and to earn some good money and to have fun."

Gerrard rescues L'pool

AFP, Liverpool

Steven Gerrard kept Liverpool alive in the FA Cup on Sunday as his equaliser rescued a 1-1 fourth round draw against local rivals Everton.

Just two days after pleading not guilty to charges of assault and affray, following an incident in a Southport nightclub, Gerrard captained Liverpool and led by example with a second half strike after Joleon Lescott had headed Everton in front at Anfield.

Gerrard needed a substantial helping hand from Everton goalkeeper Tim Howard, whose feeble attempt to stop the England midfielder's shot will make him a less than popular figure in the Blue half of Merseyside this week.

While Rafael Benitez's side deserving to secure a replay at Goodison Park in two weeks time, the Reds once again showed a lack of cutting edge that must concern the Spanish coach.

"We deserved to win," Benitez said. "We have to be disappointed because we had plenty of possession, control of the game and they had one chance."

"I think one team was trying to win and one trying not to lose. To attack against 10 players behind the ball is not easy."

Everton boss David Moyes hit back at Benitez's claim that his side were defensive and said: "I never come looking for a draw that's for sure, although I might have taken a draw in the end."

"It was a really tough game but we've been to Anfield twice in a week and got draws. So we're pleased we've given ourselves a chance to get into the next round."

The visitors started confidently enough and had an early penalty appeal turned down by referee Steve Bennett when South Africa midfielder Steven Pienaar tumbled under Xabi

Alonso's challenge.

Liverpool responded through an unlikely source as Jamie Carragher showed surprisingly deft footwork to trick Leon Osman and drive a shot into the side-netting.

Although the hosts had most of the possession, Moyes' team launched their own raids on the counter and snatched the lead after Victor Anichebe won a corner with a quick break in the 27th minute.

Pienaar floated over the corner and when Australia star

Cahill escaped Alvaro Arbeloa to head goalwards, Lescott was perfectly placed to nod past Jose Reina from close range.

But Liverpool haven't lost a Merseyside derby at Anfield for 10 years and they were back on level terms in the 54th minute.

A fine flick from Fernando Torres sent Gerrard surging clear and he fired in a low shot that should have been stopped by Howard. Instead the American allowed the ball to creep under his body and into the net.



Liverpool star Steven Gerrard (L) jumps for joy after scoring the equalising goal against Everton during their FA Cup fourth round tie at Anfield on Sunday.