

Pompey ride on Crouch

AFP, Portsmouth



Peter Crouch boosted Portsmouth's bid to stay in the Premier League as the England forward scored twice to clinch a crucial 2-1 win against Everton on Saturday.

Paul Hart's team fell behind to an early strike from Leighton Baines at Fratton Park, but Crouch headed an equaliser before half-time and then snatched the winner late in the second period.

The victory was only Portsmouth's second in 14 league games and lifted the south-coast club three points clear of the relegation zone.

For Everton, a first defeat in six league games was a major blow to their hopes of snatching a place in the top four. The Toffees remain four points behind fourth-placed Arsenal but could slip further adrift depending on the Gunners' result at Newcastle later on Saturday.

Everton were without leading scorer Tim Cahill after the Australia star failed to recover from a calf injury so Louis Saha started in attack.

Portsmouth kicked off above the relegation zone only on goal difference and their plight looked even more perilous after four minutes.

Sylvain Distin bundled over Saha, conceding a free-kick just outside the penalty area.

Left-back Baines took the set-piece and struck a superb shot off David James' far post for his first goal for Everton since joining from

Wigan two seasons ago.

But, although Portsmouth are low on points, their effort has never been in doubt since Paul Hart replaced Tony Adams.

They responded well and when Everton only half-cleared a corner in the 22nd minute, Portsmouth took full advantage to grab the equaliser.

Kranjcar lofted the ball back into the danger area, Glen Johnson headed across the six-yard box, where Crouch arrived to power home a close range header.

Pompey appealed for a penalty when Younes Kaboul went down under a strong challenge from Joleon Lescott, but referee Peter Walton waved away their protests.

Moyes' men had a chance to regain the lead when Jo, on-loan from Manchester City, latched onto Sol Campbell's misplaced header on the edge of the penalty area but the Brazilian drove well wide.

There was another Portsmouth penalty claim early in the second half when Baines appeared to handle but again Walton said no.

Crouch met David Nugent's cross with a looping header that Howard saved on the line. Then Nugent had a clear sight of goal but shot straight at Howard.

Portsmouth showed no signs of losing patience. They probed away and won it in the 75th minute.

Sean Davis floated a cross to the far post and Crouch rose highest to nod home a close-range header.



Portsmouth striker Peter Crouch (R) scores the equalising goal against Everton during their Premier League encounter at Fratton Park on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Lennon wasn't coached well'

Football

SPORTINGLIFE

Tottenham boss Harry Redknapp has criticised the previous regime at White Hart Lane by insisting Aaron Lennon was not coached properly and questioning why a second right winger was bought last summer.

Lennon has earned a new five-year contract for his form since Redknapp's arrival in October and put himself in the frame for an England recall, two years since his last cap.

Redknapp has taught Lennon how to create space for himself and feels the 21-year-old still has plenty to learn, despite making his senior debut more than five years ago.

"He has that pace and skill but I don't think he has really been taught how to receive the ball and get the ball," Redknapp said.

"I spoke to him about getting behind people. When he runs behind, even if the ball doesn't come, full-backs are aware and drop off.

"Lots of players haven't been coached over the years, they play and do what they did as kids and then you step up a level. That's why there aren't that many top wingers, you get marked out of the game."

David Bentley arrived from Blackburn last summer in a £17million deal but has struggled for consistency.

Redknapp added: "They couldn't have fancied Lennon that much to have signed Bentley. Why would you sign two wide-right players? Strange, isn't it?"

Lennon's new contract has effectively warned off Liverpool, who were linked with the winger, and Redknapp wants to build a team around players such as Lennon and Luka Modric.

"You have to keep your best players to build a team," he

said. "If you start selling your Aaron Lennons then you are back where you were at the start of this season.

"We are in a situation where we are not looking to sell any of our best players this year in the summer."

Modric has been reported in Italy as a target for Juventus, but Redknapp said: "I wouldn't see why anyone would want to leave the Premier League and play in Serie A, we're way in front of them and there is no comparison."

Redknapp feels players such as Lennon need to look at his own nephew, Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard, who will be facing Spurs this weekend.

"I don't think I've ever managed a team where he hasn't scored against us," Redknapp said.

"He always scores, always. He has developed into an absolutely fantastic footballer."

Hiddink has no fears

AFP, London

Guus Hiddink insisted he has no fears about Chelsea facing Liverpool in the Champions League for the fifth successive season.

Friday's draw pitted the rivals against each other in the quarterfinals and Chelsea's temporary manager said his players were looking forward to the meeting, despite having lost twice to Liverpool in the Premier League this season.

"It's getting more and more exciting at the end of the Champions League season," Hiddink said. "If you have great desire to get to the end in May, you have to play them - Liverpool, Manchester United, Barcelona. I'm OK with the draw.

The Dutchman added: "I was told that there have been a lot of clashes between the two teams in several competitions. They're never boring games between these two big powerhouses of football.

"The draw happened during practice and one of the officials came and told us. The players stopped their exercises and said: 'Who, who, who?' That's nice.

"They were very keen to know who their opponent would be, which shows their enthusiasm. That's nice to see. Both teams like to play football and have players in their teams to play in an attacking way. That's a guarantee for big clashes."

Police caution Droghda

AFP, London

Chelsea striker Didier Droghda has received a police caution for throwing a coin at Burnley fans during a League Cup match in November, the Press Association reported on Saturday.

The 30-year-old from the Ivory Coast was cautioned for common assault when he appeared at a London police station on Friday.

The incident happened as Droghda and his teammates celebrated his goal, his first of the season, 27 minutes into the game at Stamford Bridge.

He was on the receiving end of at least one missile as visiting Burnley fans hurled abuse at the players and later admitted that he had flung an object back into the crowd.

He later admitted a Football Association charge of violent conduct and was banned for three games.

A Scotland Yard spokeswoman said: "On December 2, police interviewed a 30-year-old man under caution, by prior arrangement, in connection with an incident at the Chelsea v Burnley match at Stamford Bridge on November 12.

"He did not attend the police station and was not arrested."

A feeling of deja vu

AFP, Paris



There was a distinct air of deja vu about Friday's draw for the quarterfinals of the Champions League, not least after English powerhouses Liverpool and Chelsea were paired together for the fifth successive season in the competition.

A keen rivalry has developed between the sides since a controversial goal by Liverpool's Luis Garcia settled their 2005 semifinal tie and paved the way for the Reds' stunning comeback in that year's final against AC Milan.

The teams met again in last year's semifinal, when a John Arne Riise own goal in the last minute of the first leg at Anfield shifted the momentum of the tie in favour of Chelsea, who advanced with a 4-3 aggregate victory.

"We need to make sure we don't make a mistake in the first leg like we did in last year's semifinal," said Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez. "They will be two tough games but we are playing well and we are confident we can win."

FIXTURES

- Match 1
At El Madrigal
Villarreal (ESP) v Arsenal (ENG)
 - Match 2
At Old Trafford
Manchester United (ENG) v FC Porto (POR)
 - Match 3
At Anfield
Liverpool (ENG) v Chelsea (ENG)
 - Match 4
At Nou Camp
Barcelona (ESP) v Bayern Munich (GER)
- Quarterfinal matches played on 7/8 and 14/15 April
SEMIFINALS
Manchester United (ENG) or FC Porto (POR) v Villarreal (ESP) or Arsenal (ENG)
Barcelona (ESP) or Bayern Munich (GER) v Liverpool (ENG) or Chelsea (ENG)
Semifinals - 28/29 April and 5/6 May
Final - Rome May 27

The winners of the Liverpool-Chelsea tie will play either Barcelona or Bayern Munich in the semifinals, with Manchester United and Arsenal on course to meet if they can overcome Porto and Villarreal respectively.

"This is a good draw. We've met Porto before and obviously we respect any Portuguese team," United manager Sir Alex Ferguson said.

"We have had a huge Portuguese influence in the club, firstly with (former assistant manager) Carlos Queiroz but now with Cristiano Ronaldo and Nani so we understand Portuguese football."

Porto eliminated United en route to their shock 2004 Champions League triumph, while Arsenal are reunited with the side that they beat in the semifinals of the 2005-06 tournament.

The tie will hold special meaning for Villarreal midfielder Robert Pires, who won two league titles and two FA Cups in six years at Arsenal before leaving for Spain in 2006.

Henry happy

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona forward Thierry Henry said Friday he was relieved the Spanish club was drawn against Bayern Munich and not his former squad Arsenal for the quarterfinal of the Champions League.

"I did not want to play against Arsenal," he told a news conference.

Arsenal will instead play Spanish side Villarreal in a repeat of the 2006 semifinal which the Gunners won while Barcelona face Bayern in the first leg of the quarterfinal at home on April 8 with the second leg away on April 14.

"It is going to be a very difficult match, they scored a lot of goals in the previous round, so it is not going to be easy," he added, in a reference to the Bundesliga champions' 12-1 aggregate win over Portuguese side Sporting Lisbon in the last round.

"The English clubs seemed more dangerous but in football anything can happen and Bayern is a big team in Europe. They have many players who can make the difference and score goals," he added.

Henry said fellow French international midfielder Franck Ribery is as much of a playmaker as Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi, who was second behind Manchester United and Portugal winger Cristiano Ronaldo in the FIFA World Player of the Year award in January.

"Even when there is no room, he is capable of doing things. With his qualities, he can do harm to Barcelona, Real Madrid, Manchester, it does not matter which team," he said.

Other top Bayern players to watch out for are strikers Luca Toni and Miroslav Klose, who is recovering from an ankle injury, and midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger, said Henry.

Henry was in the Arsenal side that lost to Barcelona in the Champions League final of 2006.

He was the English league's leading scorer on four occasions during his eight years with Arsenal.

Mourinho, De Rossi fined

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan coach Jose Mourinho and Roma midfielder Daniele De Rossi were on Friday both hit with fines for comments they made following this month's match between the two clubs.

Mourinho and Inter were fined 25,000 euros each, while De Rossi and Roma were each handed a 20,000-euro sanction.

A decision on a punishment against Mario Balotelli, for gestures he made during the match after scoring a penalty, was deferred.

Both Mourinho and De Rossi criticised the standard of officiating in Serie A following the game, while Balotelli was investigated for goading his opponents.

Bochum snatch a win

SOCCERNET



Bochum survived a frantic finish to snatch a crucial victory at Borussia Mönchengladbach on Friday.

The visitors were impressive in the first half and took a deserved lead through Dennis Grote's sweeping shot from 25 yards, but there was a nervous finish as Gladbach piled forward in the final few minutes.

Through a combination of some frantic goalkeeping from Daniel Fernandes and a goalline clearance from Shinji Ono, Bochum hung on for a win that pulls them three points clear of the drop zone, and leaves Gladbach inside it.

Borussia dominated the early going, and Rob Friend should have done better after Alexander Baumjohann did brilliantly to set him up, wriggling free of several defenders to watch the striker curl a shot over the bar.

Bochum began to find their feet as the half wore on, and Mimoun Azouagh had already

forced one save from Logan Bailly before Diego Klimowicz fired in a shot that the goalkeeper did well to push away at his near post.

Paul Stalteri saw a shot deflected wide for Gladbach, but moments later the visitors led as Grote ran onto Klimowicz's lay-off to rifle home.

Karim Matmour worried Bochum with a half-volley that flashed over the bar, but the visitors finished the half on top with Christoph Dabrowski lashing over after the hosts failed to deal with a throw-in.

Daniel Imhof then raced through on goal but pulled his shot wide from a good position.

Chances were hard to find in the second half, with Michael Bradley unusually content to shoot from range, and failing to find the target as he did.

It took until the dying stages for Borussia to come to life, but Fernandes snatched the ball from the feet of Brouwers inside the six-yard box, and then made a great reflex save to deny Friend at close range.

Ono then hacked Roberto Colautti's header clear before Filip Daems' shot was charged down as Bochum hung on.



PHOTO: AP

Borussia Mönchengladbach's Bonifant Dante (R) challenges for possession with VfL Bochum's Diego Klimowicz during their Bundesliga clash in Mönchengladbach on Friday.