



Chelsea striker Nicolas Anelka (L) celebrates scoring the opening goal with teammate Didier Drogba (R) during their Premiership clash against Burnley at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Blues bash Burnley

Ancelotti's honeymoon continues

AFP, London



Carlo Ancelotti's English honeymoon will stretch into September after Chelsea eased to a 3-0 win over Burnley on Saturday.

The west Londoners chalked up their fourth successive win under their new Italian manager thanks to goals from Nicolas Anelka, Michael Ballack and Ashley Cole and will go into the two-week international break in buoyant spirits.

Ancelotti will have been thrilled by Chelsea's patience, as much as their panache.

The scoreline might look comfortable but the Premier League title hopefuls were frustrated until deep into first-half stoppage time, when Anelka finally broke through Burnley's defences.

Ultimately, however, this was a deserved victory against a side who have already bloodied the noses of Manchester United and Everton this season.

Burnley had travelled south with a spring in their step but this defeat will serve as a reminder to Owen Coyle's newly-promoted team that the top flight can be an unforgiving environment.

The only disappointment for Ancelotti was that his side did not bolster

their goal difference by an even greater margin and Anelka, for one, could have helped himself to a hatful in the first half alone.

Having already seen a low shot saved by Brian Jensen, the Frenchman had an even more inviting chance in the third minute, when he snaffled possession from Tyrone Mears and burst clear. He ignored the waiting Didier Drogba in favour of trying to round Jensen, who saved at his feet.

But Anelka was not the only striker in a generous mood. Burnley's Martin Paterson was equally culpable in the 10th minute when he squandered a glorious chance to put the visitors into a shock lead.

After Frank Lampard had inexplicably gifted the ball to Mears, the full-back sprinted clear and picked out Paterson with a square pass. The Northern Irishman simply had to roll into the corner, but directed his shot just wide.

That, however, was a rare moment of threat from Burnley, who were reliant on Jensen to hold back the blue tide almost single-handedly.

He produced another magnificent stop to deny Ballack, after the German had been teed up by Lampard, and then reacted smartly to block a close-range volley from John Terry.

When Lampard then saw an almost identical chance fisted away, Chelsea

might have feared the worst.

They need not have worried. With Burnley eying the clock as it ticked into stoppage time, Michael Essien split their defence to release Drogba and the Ivorian's cross was bundled in at the back post by Anelka.

That left Burnley's hopes of snaffling a point hanging by a thread and they were dashed entirely moments after the re-start, when Lampard's chipped cross into a crowded penalty area was headed in by the diving Ballack.

A two-goal cushion allowed Chelsea to relax and play some picture-book football. A particularly pretty move in the 52nd minute led to the third goal, Lampard's lofted pass allowing Cole to flash a first-time volley over the diving Jensen for just his third strike in three years.

From then on, Burnley's efforts were devoted to simply keeping the score down.

They succeeded, partly through Chelsea's profligacy - Anelka clipped the top of the bar when it looked easier to score - and also through Jensen, who produced outstanding saves to deny Essien, twice, and Ballack.

Mears also cleared an effort from Salomon Kalou off the line in the dying seconds, but by then the match was long since won.

Real to table 60m euro Ribery bid

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid are preparing an audacious 60 million euro last minute bid to lure Franck Ribery away from Bayern Munich before the transfer window closes at midnight on Monday, Spanish sports daily Marca suggested here Saturday.

Real, who on Friday sold Dutch striker Arjen Robben to Bayern, are ready to make "a last attempt" to buy the highly coveted 26-year-old, the paper states.

The Spanish club's president Florentino Perez held talks about the French star's transfer with his Bayern counterpart, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge on Friday, As reported.

Real have been chasing 26-year-old Ribery for weeks but up to now have met with stiff resistance from Bayern who insist Ribery is staying put in Munich.

Golden Bolt in Zurich

AFP, Zurich

Jamaican treble world and Olympic champion Usain Bolt looked in trouble before pegging back compatriot Asafa Powell to win the 100 metres at the Golden League meeting here on Friday.

Bolt, who set new world records in the 100 and 200m (9.58 and 19.19 seconds) at the world championships in Berlin, was trailing Powell with 25 metres to go but put on the afterburners to ensure victory.

Bolt suffered the slowest start of all nine sprinters and seemed to lack his normal languid style coming out of the crucial 40m mark.

The towering Jamaican eventually clocked 9.81sec with Powell -- who equalled a then-world record of 9.77sec in Zurich three years ago -- at 0.07sec.

"It was alright," Bolt said. "I would say this was a shaky race. My body was sitting at the start."

"I was a little bit tired through the race. But all things considered the time is not bad. At the end I needed to pick up my speed as my body did not respond well to the race."

Powell said his second place had given him more confidence that he could regain his winning streak of a couple of years ago.

"The race gives me a lot of assurance that I can win races," he said. "I just need to work out the last part of the race. Now I know that I can also beat Usain when everything works out fine for me."

American Darvis Patton was third in a season's best of 9.95sec with compatriot Michael Rodgers also ducking under 10sec.



Barcelona players celebrate with the trophy after winning the European Super Cup against Shakhtar Donetsk at the Louis II Stadium in Monaco on Friday.

Messi steals the show

AFP, Monaco

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi lit up the European Super Cup on Friday as Champions League winners Barcelona defeated UEFA Cup holders Shakhtar Donetsk 1-0 after extra-time to claim the trophy.

Messi had the best opportunities in a disappointing match played on a cut-up, cabbage-patch of a pitch at the Stade Louis II and it was fitting that he played the pivotal role in the night's only goal.

With five minutes of extra-time left, and with a penalty shootout beckoning, Messi played a delightful one-two, between a line of defenders, with Pedro Rodriguez before the 22-year-old substitute slotted the ball past Andriy Pyatov in the Ukrainians' goal.

It was Barcelona's third SuperCup and already their second piece of silverware of the season having captured the Spanish SuperCup. Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola hit out at the state of the pitch.

"It was unacceptable and unforgivable," said Guardiola. "We talk about the health of the players, protecting them and the spectacle, but on a pitch like that?"

Shakhtar coach Mircea Lucescu said his team had suffered at the hands of referee Frank De Bleeckere.

"It's always difficult against Barcelona because the referee is always on their side," said the Romanian.

"There was a penalty for us which wasn't

given and twice he whistled against us when we were on top. But apart from that, I congratulate Barcelona as they are a great team and deserved to win."

Barcelona, who face a major battle to hold on to their Spanish title in the face of Real Madrid's chequebook power, were the better of the two sides throughout.

In a poor first-half, Thierry Henry flashed a shot over the crossbar of Pyatov while the Shakhtar goalkeeper was also quick to pull off a save, low down from Messi.

It wasn't until the 74th minute that a goal looked as if it might arrive.

Pyatov parried away a powerful drive from Messi and then back-pedalled smartly to tip over a clever chip from Henry.

Ten minutes from time, Barcelona newboy Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who had struggled all night to make any sort of impression, was replaced by Pedro Rodriguez.

In a stormy conclusion to the 90 minutes, Messi and Olexandr Kucher were booked for squaring up to each other in the penalty area.

Shakhtar brought on striker Julius Aghahowa at the start of extra-time and he had his side's best chance 10 minutes later, bringing Victor Valdes' only meaningful save of the night.

Barcelona start the defence of their Spanish title on Monday against Sporting Gijon and could have Shakhtar defender Dmytro Chyhyrnskiy in their starting line-up.

The 22-year-old had already become a Barcelona player before Friday's match but was allowed a farewell appearance alongside his Shakhtar teammates.

IN BRIEF

Benfica sign Menezes

AFP, Lisbon

Benfica have signed young Brazilian attacking midfielder Felipe Menezes, subject to the 21-year-old passing the traditional medical, the Lisbon side announced on Saturday.

Menezes joins Benfica from Brazilian club Goias on a five-year deal.

Black Cats snap up Mensah

AFP, London

Premier League side Sunderland on Friday completed the signing of Ghana international defender John Mensah from former French champions Lyon, the English side announced on their official website.

Mensah has joined on a season-long loan and Sunderland have the option to make the deal permanent at the end of the season.

Jose gets death threats

AFP, Rome

Italian Politicians and Muslim leaders have sprung to the defence of Jose Mourinho after reported threats were made against the Inter Milan coach on extremist websites.

British newspaper Daily Star claimed that death threats had been made against Mourinho on some Islamic sites following comments the Portuguese made relating to Ramadan.

Last week Mourinho had explained his early substitution of Ghana's Muntari Sulley against Bari by saying that the practising Muslim lacked energy, possibly due to observing the Muslim fast during the month of Ramadan.

The threats made on chat forums came after the president of the Union of Islamic communities and organisations in Italy (UCOII) Mohamed Nour Dachan had

said Mourinho should talk less.

But Dachan responded to the threats by saying: "We firmly condemn the threats made to the Inter Milan coach Jose Mourinho with whom we want to express our solidarity."

Claudio D'Amico, a politician for the right-wing Lega Nord, also spoke out in support of Mourinho and hit out at Muslim extremists.

"As usual there are Muslims who want to apply liberty of expression and democracy in their own fashion," he said.

"People cannot even make a simple observation, such as during Ramadan a Muslim who doesn't eat has less energy, without inciting someone's wrath."

"What Mourinho said is not offensive to anyone, especially the Islamic religion, but a simple banal observation."

However, D'Amico hit out at Dachan for his earlier comments.

"Maybe Dachan is forgetting that freedom of thought

and of expression is a fundamental pillar of our democracy."

"But if he doesn't share this principle he can also go and live in a Muslim country with our warmest blessings."

Mourinho himself, though, hit out at the media for twisting his words and said they were at fault for the threats against him.

"If something happens it will be your fault," he told journalists at his pre-match press conference ahead of Saturday night's Milan derby. "The Muntari situation is your responsibility, not mine. I know what I said, it's been taped but you like to change the words."

"I said 'one cannot criticise Muntari's decision because it is a question of faith and religion'."

"That means that I accept it, I never said Muntari should forget his faith and his practices."

"If someone in the Islamic community is angry with me, it's your fault."

Wenger furious at UEFA

AFP, London



Arsene Wenger has accused UEFA of launching a witch hunt against Eduardo after European football's governing body began disciplinary proceedings against the Arsenal forward following his Champions League dive against Celtic.

After complaints by Celtic and Scottish football bosses, UEFA decided to study video evidence of the incident, which saw Eduardo win a penalty by falling theatrically to the ground despite no evidence of contact being made with Celtic goalkeeper Artur Boruc.

UEFA have opened disciplinary proceedings against the Brazil-born Croatia international for "deceiving the referee" and Eduardo could now be handed a two-match suspension that will rule him out of the Gunners' first two Champions League group games.

Wenger is furious with the decision because he believes it singles out Eduardo for an offence committed by players across Europe every week.

"I find it a complete disgrace and unacceptable," Wenger said. "We won't accept the way we have been treated in this case for two reasons."

"I believe that you can debate whether

it was a penalty or not. For me it's a witch hunt that we see and not an objective judgement of a case."

"This charge implies there was intent and a desire to cheat the referee. Having watched the pictures again there was nothing conclusive."

"It singles out a player in Europe to be a cheat and that is not acceptable. UEFA has taken action that is not defensible."

Wenger claims Eduardo was jumping out of Boruc's way because of the career-threatening broken leg he sustained two seasons ago.

He said: "It's funny in football because you can break the legs of players and it doesn't make a debate for anybody. But this case has been all over the world and Eduardo has been treated like he's killed someone."

"I'm the first to say that it doesn't look like a penalty but it's another thing to say that he went down with intent. I wish good luck in proving that having seen the pictures again."

"Having seen his leg after that tackle I don't blame him for getting out of the way of the goalkeeper."

"There is completely lack of logic in this case. Why? Because people have reacted emotionally."

"This case has been ruled by the media and emotionally by Scotland, by the Scottish FA and by Scottish people working at UEFA who think this case is a bit

more sensitive because they have more influence there."

"I've fought my whole life against cheating and I've seen some obvious cases where UEFA didn't intervene. On and off the pitch things have happened where no action was taken."

"But now the existing rules of football have been changed just for one case so we will from now on challenge every single decision that is made in Europe by the referees."

"This is the first time since I've been in football that the judgement made by the referee is not accepted by the football bodies."

"They've opened the door to every single decision made by a referee can now be challenged. They've opened a very dangerous door."

Celtic boss Tony Mowbray refused to condemn Eduardo and hinted that the Arsenal star was paying the price for UEFA's desire to clamp down on cheats.

"I have seen the incident again but it doesn't matter, we are out of the Champions League," Mowbray said.

"The bigger picture is UEFA want to clamp down on simulation, to make a mark and if they feel they need to do it, then so be it."

UEFA president Michel Platini is keen to bring in extra officials, who would be stationed behind the goal, to provide an

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World's fastest sprinter Usain Bolt of Jamaica waves to the crowd as he is carried in a rickshaw during the opening ceremony of the Zurich Golden League athletics meet on Friday.