

Gunners self-destruct

AFP, London



Manchester United ended Arsenal's unbeaten start to the season as the Gunners self-destructed in their 2-1 defeat at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Arsene Wenger's side were well on top after taking the lead through Andrey Arshavin's superb strike late in the first half.

But the Premier League champions were handed a lifeline soon after half-time when Arsenal goalkeeper Manuel Almunia needlessly conceded a penalty that Wayne Rooney converted.

It got worse for Arsenal as French midfielder Abou Diaby headed a Ryan Giggs free-kick into his own net five minutes later to give United their third win in four games.

Arsenal's visit to Old Trafford was seen as the acid test of Wenger's young team and it started perfectly when Arshavin hit a swerving long-range shot that United goalkeeper Ben Foster could only push into the net.

But Almunia had a rush of blood in the 59th minute when he charged out and tripped Rooney.

United striker Rooney picked himself up to send Almunia the wrong way from the spot and Sir Alex Ferguson's team won it five minutes later when Diaby diverted Giggs's harmless free-kick past Almunia.

Robin van Persie thought he had equalised in the last minute of stoppage time but the Arsenal striker's effort was ruled out for offside, leading Wenger to be sent to the stands as he complained furiously.

Elsewhere at Bolton, Rafael Benitez's Liverpool showed they have the stomach to fight for the title.

The Reds had made a spluttering start to the campaign, with defeats against Tottenham and Aston Villa raising questions about their ability to win the league for the first time since 1990.

They fell behind to Bolton in the 33rd minute when Kevin Davies punished poor marking to drive home from close-range.

Glen Johnson equalised with a powerful strike from the edge of the penalty area in the 41st minute.

Tamir Cohen restored Bolton's lead two minutes into the second half. But Bolton's Sean Davis was harshly shown a second yellow card for a foul on Lucas in the 55th minute.

The visitors took full advantage as Dirk Kuyt found Fernando Torres and the Spain striker finished smartly.

Steven Gerrard, criticised in the week by Benitez for his poor form, hit the winner with a perfectly-struck shot in the 83rd minute.

"It was the perfect response from the players," Benitez said. "You could see all the players, from the first minute, played with a lot of determination to win. It's important to have this mentality."

Tottenham, in second place on goal difference, kept pace with Chelsea as Aaron Lennon's last-gasp goal sealed a 2-1 victory over Birmingham at White Hart Lane.

Harry Redknapp's team have made their best start to a season for 49 years and they chalked up win number four in dramatic fashion.

Peter Crouch put Tottenham in front after 72 minutes when the England international headed in Tom Huddlestone's free-kick.

Lee Bowyer levelled for Birmingham just three minutes later when Alan Hutton and keeper Carlo Cudicini made a hash of clearing.

But Tottenham won it five minutes into stoppage time through England winger Lennon.

Dave Kitson's first league goal for Stoke clinched a 1-0 victory over Sunderland at the Britannia Stadium.

Kitson, who cost 5.5 million pounds from Reading last year, lashed in Danny Higginbotham's knock-down in the 43rd minute.

Wolverhampton are still waiting for their first home win of the season as Hull ground out a 1-1 draw at Molineux.

Brazilian midfielder Geovanni gave Hull the lead in the third minute, but Richard Stearman equalised in the 46th minute.

Blackburn and West Ham played out a dull goalless draw at Ewood Park.



Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney (2nd from R) slots home the penalty after sending Arsenal 'keeper Manuel Almunia the wrong way in their Premiership encounter at Old Trafford on Saturday. Rooney's strike and an own-goal gave the Red Devils victory in a match where they often struggled.

C'Ron delighted with debut

AFP, Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo was delighted to start his Real Madrid career with a debut goal and a win as the new generation of 'Galacticos' defeated Deportivo La Coruna 3-2 at home on Saturday in the opening game of the new season.

Ronaldo, 24, became the most expensive player in history following a 94 million euro summer move from Manchester United and started to repay that fee with a well-taken 35th minute penalty.

The Portuguese international has taken over free-kick and penalty duties at Real and revealed that he had also been given license to roam all over the pitch.

"My position is set and then I play a free role in the centre, on the right and on the left," said Ronaldo.

Despite a good personal performance on his debut Ronaldo admitted it had been tough going against Depor and called for an improvement.

"It was important for us to start with a win as the first game is always complicated," Ronaldo explained. "We had some good and bad moments in the game and have to improve."

Aside from Ronaldo there were seven other debutants in Kaka, Xabi Alonso, Karim Benzema, Raul Albiol, Ezequiel Garay, Alvaro Arbeloa and Esteban Granero.

Brazilian Kaka was lively before being taken off in the closing stages while Benzema, a 35 million euro signing from

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Arjen targets title push

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's star-signing Arjen Robben insists he now wants the Bundesliga title after he capped a stunning debut with two second-half goals in the 3-0 win over defending champions Wolfsburg.

Having signed a four-year contract only on Friday to complete his 26 million euros transfer from Real Madrid, Holland star Robben came off the bench in the 46th minute on Saturday and converted two Franck Ribery passes into two goals.

It was an immediate return for Bayern, who picked up their first win of the season after a poor start to the season, and leaves Wolfsburg suffering their second consecutive defeat after being humbled by Hamburg the week before.

"It was fantastic, I've come on and scored twice. I couldn't have wished for a better start," said Robben.

"This is a very special day for me."

The win lifted Bayern from near the relegation zone to seventh in the league to take the pressure off new coach Louis van Gaal who only took charge in July, but Robben says Munich's goal has to now be the league title.

"That was just a start. We have to follow it up in our next match. That's why I'm here. I play football to win trophies," said Robben.

"It wasn't just me. The whole team deserves praise. We controlled the game."

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Wenger fuming

AFP, Manchester



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger hinted that referee Mike Dean had been swayed by the Old Trafford atmosphere as his side suffered a controversial 2-1 defeat at Manchester United on Saturday.

Just 24 hours after Wenger raged at UEFA for starting disciplinary action against Gunners striker Eduardo for his dive against Celtic, the French coach was infuriated by Dean's decision to award United a penalty that Wayne Rooney converted to cancel out Andrey Arshavin's opener.

Dean gave United a spot-kick when Arsenal goalkeeper Manuel Almunia's rushed out to challenge Rooney and had earlier ruled that Darren Fletcher's rash lunge on Arshavin was not penalty.

Wenger then had to suffer the added agony of seeing Robin van Persie's stoppage time strike ruled out as William Gallas was offside.

The Arsenal boss reacted by kicking a water bottle on the touchline and was sent to the stands.

Asked if he thought Dean got the penalty decisions right, Wenger told Sky Sports: "You should ask the referee. You know what you get at Old Trafford but I don't want to go into the performance of the referee."

"I don't know if we should have had a penalty but I don't know if they should either."

"I kicked a bottle when the goal was cancelled for offside. I didn't know you can't do that."

While Wenger fumed, United boss Sir Alex Ferguson was delighted with the way his side battled back to win their first clash with a big-four rival this season.

"When you are 1-0 down to a team of Arsenal's class it's an uphill task," Ferguson said. "We had to dig deep and we got break with the own goal but it was a clear penalty and we really performed well in the second half."

"The players know winning big games is important. Last season we lost four points to Arsenal and six to Liverpool. Now we've got off to a better start against the bigger teams. That can make a difference."

"Darren Fletcher was the outstanding player. He gave a marvellous performance. He's a big game player and always does well on these occasions."

Robben steals the show

AFP, Berlin



Arjen Robben celebrated his Bayern Munich debut in sensational style on Saturday when his two second-half goals sealed a 3-0 win over defending Bundesliga champions Wolfsburg.

Having only signed a four-year deal with the German giants on Friday, having left Real Madrid, the Dutch star came on just after half-time and made an early impact when fellow second-half substitute Franck Ribery put him clear.

Robben beat Wolfsburg defender Andrea Barzagli to curl his shot wide of goalkeeper Diego Benaglio on 68 minutes. Ribery then set up Robben again on 80 minutes as the defending champions were comprehensively out-played.

Robben, who cost Bayern 26 million euros, and Ribery gave their club their first win of the season in four attempts after Bayern were humiliated 2-1 at minnows Mainz last week.

"I think we played well as a team, it was the first time I saw them play," admitted Robben.

"We controlled the game well and we scored two good goals, with a bit of luck we could have scored a few more. At the moment, I feel really good on the right, but I can play on the left too."

"The main thing is I had the freedom to move: I started on the right, but switched to the left after Franck put me away and it is important to be flexible."

Despite reports Real are set to sign Ribery, Robben said the Frenchman's continued presence in Munich was one of the reasons he signed.

"He is a great player, we have a good understanding and it was part of the reason I signed," said the Dutchman. "I want him to stay and the

club has promised me he will."

The victory at Bayern's Allianz Arena lifts the Bavarians up from 16th to seventh and eases the pressure on coach Louis van Gaal who took over in July.

The win was also sweet revenge after Wolfsburg humbled Bayern 5-1 in April.

Bayern went ahead in the first half when midfielder Hamit Altintop smashed his shot at Benaglio, who parried the ball into the path of German striker Mario Gomez who fired home on 28 minutes.

The defeat leaves Wolfsburg sixth after their second consecutive defeat while Bayer Leverkusen stay top thanks to Germany-reject Steffen Kiessling hitting a second-half winner to seal a 2-1 win over Bochum.

Germany coach Joachim Loew has found no place for Kiessling in his squad for next Saturday's friendly against South Africa or the World Cup qualifier against Azerbaijan on September 9, but the Leverkusen star repaid in style.

His 68th-minute strike was enough to give his side the win which gives them a three-point lead over second-placed Hamburg, who play Cologne on Sunday when Hertha Berlin also host Werder Bremen.

Leverkusen built on last weekend's 5-0 win over Freiburg with a win over Bochum as Manuel Friedrich scored for both teams.

Leverkusen's ex-Germany defender Friedrich put Bochum ahead when he won a sprint against Cameroon midfielder Joel Epalle, but stabbed the ball into his own net on 32 minutes.

To repair the damage, he scored with a header on 41 minutes before Kiessling's second-half winner.

Leverkusen's teenage midfielder Tony Kroos found himself free on the right side of the penalty area and passed across for Kiessling to fire home from six metres out.

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IN BRIEF

Rafinha not moving

INTERNET, undated

The coach of German Bundesliga club Schalke 04 Felix Magath said on Sunday that Brazilian defender Rafinha would not be leaving the club. German news reports on Saturday said that the 23-year-old Brazilian would be joining Bayern before the end of the transfer fee on Monday.

Appearing on a German sport television channel, Magath however quashed the reports, saying that Rafinha would not be moving to the Champions League participants.

"I can say that he will not be moving to Bayern Munich," Magath, who is also manager at the club said, adding that "There were never any talks and there will be none."

Modric breaks his leg

AFP, London

Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp faces being without Luka Modric until the autumn after the diminutive Croatian suffered a leg fracture in Saturday's 2-1 win over Birmingham, the club revealed Sunday.

Ledley King was also in the wars, suffering a leg strain, as Spurs extended their perfect start to the English Premiership season.

Spurs said playmaker Modric had fractured his right fibula.

Redknapp was already without Jonathan Woodgate, Michael Dawson, Heurloel Gomes and Jermaine Jenas due to injuries, and now will have to shuffle his diminished pack still further.

Modric was initially thought to have suffered a badly bruised calf following a kick to the side of his leg, but he is now set to miss his country's World Cup qualifying encounter against England on September 9.

Shevchenko returns to Dynamo

INTERNET, undated

Troubled Chelsea striker Andriy Shevchenko transferred from Chelsea to Dynamo Kiev, Dynamo officials confirmed Saturday. A formal presentation of Shevchenko as a new member of the side was scheduled Sunday, according to the Dynamo website.

Team officials on Saturday said Shevchenko's contract would be for two years, but they were not giving financial details on the transfer.

Shevchenko, according to English media reports, received an annual salary of approximately 9 million dollars a year while at Chelsea.

Dynamo management in 1999 sold Shevchenko to AC Milan for 25 million dollars. Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich reportedly paid the equivalent of 50 million dollars to bring the forward from Italy to London.



Inter Milan defender Douglas Maicon looks to the heavens after scoring during their Serie A derby against AC Milan at the San Siro on Saturday. Maicon was one of four scorers as Inter routed their cross-town rivals 4-0.

Inter hammer Milan

AFP, Rome



Champions Inter Milan claimed derby honours by hammering city rivals AC Milan 4-0 after Gennaro Gattuso was sent off in the first half.

Milan, and Gattuso in particular, self-destructed in spectacular fashion during a 10-minute first half period in a match that suggests the loss of Kaka to Real Madrid has hit the red and black half of the city harder than they thought.

Thiago Motta scored his first goal for Inter and fellow new-recruit from Genoa Diego Milito added a penalty before Brazilian full-back Maicon's strike had all but ended the contest by half-time.

Serbian Dejan Stankovic's second half rocket put the gloss on an accomplished performance as coach Leonardo suffered a miserable first derby in charge of Milan.

Inter coach Jose Mourinho, who gave a debut to Dutch attacking midfielder Wesley Sneijder following his move from Real, had no desire to dwell on this victory.

"Tomorrow is another day, this is already finished," he said. "After the first goal it was no longer a contest and my team won easily."

Sneijder justified his manager's faith on six minutes, testing Milan goalkeeper Marco Storari with a curling effort from outside the box.

On 13 minutes Ronaldinho should have done better when teed up by Pato but after skying his shot miles off target and falling over in the process, the Brazilian tried claiming a penalty despite there being no contact from

Stankovic when he tripped over his own feet.

Milan looked lively at that time but the first goal on 29 minutes changed everything.

It came from a sweeping team move on the edge of the Milan box as Motta fed Samuel Eto'o, who shifted the ball on to Milito before the Argentine played the ball behind the backline where Motta, who had continued his forward run, unchecked by either Mathieu Flamini or Marek Jankulovski, curled a shot beyond Storari.

Six minutes later and Milan fell to pieces. From a Milan free-kick Inter broke at pace with Maicon lumping a long ball down the line for Eto'o to chase. The Cameroon forward skinned Gattuso who slung his arm around the Inter man's neck and hauled him down inside the box for a clear professional foul.

Inexplicably the referee only showed Gattuso a yellow card but Milito exacted adequate punishment by smashing his penalty home, straight down the middle.

Captain Gattuso had already signalled to the bench that he wanted to come off before the goal but his attempts to leave the field were hampered as substitute Clarence Seedorf wasn't ready.

Play continued and on 40 minutes Gattuso hacked down Sneijder, earning a second yellow before Seedorf had a chance to enter the fray.

Gattuso was irate and blasted his bench as he trudged off, leaving his team a man down.

Leonardo admitted he messed up on the substitution.

"Of course I made a mistake in not making the substitution sooner but Seedorf wasn't ready to come on, partly because he had some

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Bayern Munich's newest recruit Arjen Robben hugs teammate Franck Ribery after scoring his second goal in his debut Bundesliga match against Wolfsburg at the Allianz Arena in Munich on Sunday.