

Inter climb to top

AFP, Rome



Inter Milan brushed aside the absence of manager Jose Mourinho to climb to the top of Serie A on the strength of a 3-1 success over Napoli on Wednesday.

A verbal assault against the referee in last weekend's win over Udinese earned Mourinho a one-match touchline ban but these three points will have eased the Portuguese coach's mood.

Samuel Eto'o put aside his financial dispute with former club Barcelona to open the scoring in the third minute and his new strike partner, former Genoa forward Diego Milito, doubled up two minutes later.

Another Inter newboy, Brazil World Cup winning defender Lucio who moved from Bayern Munich in the close season, made it 3-0 just after the half-hour mark with a header.

Napoli midfielder Ezequiel Lavezzi pulled one back before the break.

The win pushed defending champions Inter up to the Serie A summit after Sampdoria fell to a 2-0 defeat at Fiorentina - Samp's first loss of the campaign.

Montenegro striker Stevan Jovetic put the hosts into a 25th minute lead with Alberto Gilardino - red carded in the Champions League tie against Lyon last week - killing off the game in the second half.

Juventus, one point adrift of Inter with Sampdoria third on goal difference, can take the lead with victory at Genoa on Thursday.

Elsewhere AS Roma captain and talisman Francesco Totti converted a penalty in the 88th minute to earn the Italian capital side a share of the spoils in a six-goal thriller at Palermo.

AC Milan's difficult start to the season continued when they came away from a trip to Udinese 1-0 losers after the Serie A's leading goalscorer Antonio Di Natale produced the only goal of the encounter in the 22nd minute.

Fifth-placed Parma did their title hopes no end of good with a 2-1 win at Lazio.

Former Manchester City striker Valeri Bojinov put Parma ahead with Mauro Zarate levelling from the spot in the 42nd minute.

In first half injury time Nicola Amoruso bagged the winner, another penalty.

Down at the foot of the table Atalanta picked up their first point from five attempts with a goalless draw with Catania, while the game between Siena and Chievo ended similarly scoreless.

In the night's other game Bologna beat Livorno 2-0.

Trio crash out

Football

AFP, Berlin

There were three big upsets in the German Cup's second round on Wednesday as defending Bundesliga champions Wolfsburg, current league leaders Hamburg and Bayer Leverkusen were all dumped out.

Having beaten Stuttgart on Saturday to lift themselves off the bottom of the Bundesliga, Cologne claimed the scalp of Wolfsburg as Nigeria striker Manasseh Ishaku scored two first-half goals in a 3-2 victory.

Wolves striker Edin Dzeko pulled one back for the visitors in the 54th minute.

Then Cologne's Germany striker Lukas Podolski played a through ball to fellow forward Sebastian Freis who made it 3-1 on 65 minutes before defender Sascha Riether pulled back another goal for Wolfsburg less than a minute later.



Chelsea forward Salomon Kalou (R) shoots to score the opening goal against Queens Park Rangers during their Carling Cup third round clash at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

MU, Chelsea advance

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United advanced to the League Cup fourth round with a 1-0 win over Wolverhampton on Wednesday even though the holders played more than half of the match with 10 men.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, who made 11 changes to the team that defeated Manchester City on Sunday, saw Brazilian defender Fabio Da Silva sent off for a professional foul in the first half at Old Trafford.

Fabio, making only his fifth appearance, slipped as he tried to catch Michael Kightly in the 28th minute and only managed to drag the Wolves winger to the turf as he sprinted clear.

But Michael Owen had scored the winner against City and he turned provider with a pass to Danny Welbeck that allowed the young forward to break Wolves' stubborn resistance in the 66th minute.

Ferguson said: "Fabio was unlucky, he slipped and tried to recover and as he tried to recover he brought him down."

"Wolves were a threat on the counter-attack, but for the last hour we kept our discipline and that was very pleasing."

"That never-say-die attitude runs through this club and the goal was magnificent."

Chelsea extended their winning run under new boss Carlo Ancelotti to eight matches in all competitions as Salomon Kalou's goal earned a 1-0 win over west London neighbours QPR.

The Blues have triumphed in every game since the Italian took charge and, after a tight first half at the Stamford Bridge, the Premier League leaders took the lead in the 52nd minute when Kalou beat QPR's offside trap and fired past Tom Heaton.

There was more good news for Chelsea as midfielder Joe Cole returned from a knee injury that had sidelined him since January, while Russia winger Yuri Zhirkov made his debut after recovering from injury.

"I should have scored but I'm delighted to be playing again and I'm going to keep working hard to get back to the top of my game," Cole said.

Peter Crouch scored a hat-trick as

Tottenham's bid to reach a third successive League Cup final stayed on track with a 5-1 win against Championship promotion chasers Preston.

Crouch underlined his case for a more regular place in Harry Redknapp's team with his first treble for over two years and helped Tottenham, beaten by Manchester United in last season's final, run riot at Deepdale.

It was Crouch who opened the scoring in the 14th minute. Then Jermain Defoe increased their advantage in the 37th minute and Crouch notched his second in the 77th minute.

Chris Brown got one back for Preston in the 83rd minute but there was still time for Robbie Keane to add Tottenham's fourth goal three minutes from full-time before Crouch claimed his hat-trick in stoppage time.

Manchester City bounced back from their derby despair with a 2-1 win over Fulham after extra time at Eastlands.

Mark Hughes's team were beaten 4-3 at Manchester United on Sunday and fell behind to Fulham after 34 minutes when Zoltan Gera hit a spectacular half-volley from long range.

But City levelled through England midfielder Gareth Barry, who headed in after a mistake from Fulham goalkeeper David Stockdale, and Kolo Toure nodded the winner in the 111th minute.

Everton striker Ayegebeni Yakubu scored for the first time in 10 months to inspire his team's 4-0 romp at struggling Hull.

Yakubu was making his first start since November 2008 as the Nigerian continues his comeback from a snapped Achilles and he took just 11 minutes to make his mark, taking Diniyar Bilyaletdinov's pass and curling home.

Jo struck in the 20th minute and Dan Gosling added a third goal four minutes later before Leon Osman's second half strike completed Hull's misery.

Gabriel Agbonlahor's early goal was enough for Aston Villa to see off Cardiff 1-0 at Villa Park.

Villa took the lead in the third minute when Agbonlahor met John Carew's cross with a fine finish.

James Milner missed a second half penalty after Stilian Petrov was fouled and Cardiff felt they should have had a last-gasp equaliser, but Jay Bothroyd's effort was disallowed for offside.



Inter Milan defender Lucio (C) is ecstatic after scoring against Napoli during their Serie A tie at San Siro on Wednesday.

FA told to reform

AFP, London

The Football Association, the governing body of English football, was Thursday warned to urgently implement reforms recommended four years ago or risk losing government funding.

The threat came in a letter from Sports Minister Gerry Sutcliffe which demands that the FA act on recommendations made in a structural review of the organisation in 2005, notably in relation to transforming the ageing, white and male profile of the organisation.

The review, known as the Burns Report, resulted in the appointment of Lord Triesman as the FA's first independent chairman but Sutcliffe is frustrated at the lack of progress on its other proposals aimed at increasing the representation of women, ethnic minorities and fans in the organisation's decision-making bodies.

"Rugby did it with its old farts, cricket has done it and football is in a similar position," Sutcliffe said. "The old school can't continue."

Sutcliffe believes that the FA's unrepresentative structure is one of the reasons why

VDV left out in the cold

AFP, The Hague

Dutch vice-captain Rafael van der Vaart's miserable season continued on Wednesday when he was left out of the national squad for the friendly with Australia in Sydney on October 10.

The 26-year-old - capped 71 times - has not played at all for his club Real Madrid all season and Dutch national coach Bert van Marwijk decided that it was not worth selecting him for the trip to take on their fellow 2010 World Cup finalists.

Veteran Mark van Bommel was also not picked as the Bayern Munich hardman midfielder is injured.

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Ronaldo scored a great solo goal in the very first minute to make it five goals in four games and Kaka converted a controversial penalty for his first goal in Real's colours.

"It was important to start (the season) winning games," said Ronaldo. "I am really happy to win here and also to continue scoring goals."

"Villarreal are strong at home but we managed to get the three points."

It was a fourth straight win for Real as they joined Barcelona, who defeated Racing Santander 4-1 on Tuesday, on a maximum 12 points.

It was a special win for Real coach Manuel Pellegrini - who spent five successful seasons at Villarreal - and also captain Raul who came on as a substitute to equal Manolo Sanchis's league appearance record of 504 games.

It was a great day for Real but new Villarreal coach Ernesto Valverde is feeling the heat as he searches for his first win in charge after two draws and two losses.

"The sending off changed the match and I don't think the handball (for the penalty) was intentional but the referee decided otherwise," bemoaned Valverde.

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The Portuguese international produced a neat turn before showing a great turn of pace to skip past two defenders and fire into the bottom corner.

Ronaldo joins Barcelona's Lionel Messi and Valencia striker David Villa on five goals

Real keep pace

AFP, Madrid



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at the top of the goal-scoring charts and is developing a habit of early goals having scored in the first minute in Sunday's 5-0 drubbing of Xerez.

Villarreal were hand-capped from the 34th minute when stand-in captain Gonzalo Rodriguez picked up a somewhat harsh red card for clipping Kaka in the ribs.

However, the ten men of Villarreal almost equalised early in the second period with Giuseppe Rossi drawing a fine save from Iker Casillas.

Strangely Villarreal played better with one man less as Real failed to build on a promising first half display.

Pellegrini responded by bringing on Raul for his record equalling league appearance.

A fortunate penalty gifted Real the second goal they craved with Marcelo's cross accidentally hand-balled on 72 minutes.

Kaka ignored the angry jeers from the home fans to send the goalkeeper the wrong way for his first Real goal.

Neighbours Athletic Madrid were jeered off the pitch at the Vicente Calderon after a 2-2 draw with Almeria on Tuesday.

A late goal from Argentine Pablo Piatti denied Atletico a first win of the season and coach Abel Resino is increasingly under pressure with the club, fourth last season, sitting second from bottom on one point.

Valencia were another of the top sides to disappoint falling to their first defeat of the season losing 3-1 at Getafe despite taking the lead through Villa.

Villa struck his fifth goal of the season in the 22nd minute finishing off a great team goal involving four Valencia players but the good work was undone 60 seconds later as Manu del Moral levelled.

Manu then put Getafe in front in the 37th minute and Pedro Leon curled in a free-kick from the David Beckham school in the second half to wrap up the points for Getafe.

Valencia fall to sixth and are already five points off the pace at the top.

In other matches, Athletic Bilbao saw their perfect start come to an end with a 1-0 defeat by promoted Tenerife.

Mikel Alonso, the elder

brother of Real Madrid's Xabi Alonso, scored a late winner to stop Bilbao from joining Barca and Real on 12 points.

Elsewhere Xerez are still searching for their first ever goal and point in the Spanish top-flight after a 3-0 home loss against Deportivo La Coruna.

It is Xerez's first ever season in the Spanish top division but it has not started well with no goals and no points from the first four games.

Ze Roberto wants Brazil return

AFP, Berlin

Hamburg midfielder Ze Roberto is hurting over the "biggest mistake of his life" when he quit international football and says he burns to play for Brazil again at 35.

"My decision to leave the national squad in 2006 is the biggest mistake of my life. I watch each national game on the TV and it really hurts me not to be there," the defensive midfielder told Sport Bild magazine.

"If (coach Carlos Dunga) calls me, I'm there. It's my most cherished dream to play in the World Cup for Brazil," said Ze Roberto, who moved from Bayern Munich in the summer.

The Brazilian has been a key factor in Hamburg's electric start to the season and the northern team lead the Bundesliga.

"I am stronger at the moment than I've ever been. I'm in the form of my life."

Brazil was the first South American country to qualify for the World Cup in South Africa next year when they beat Argentina 3-1 earlier this month.

Ze Roberto, who won 85 caps for Brazil, first came to Munich from Real Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen in 2002 and stayed for four years. He then had one season with Brazilian side FC Santos before rejoining Bayern in the summer of 2007.

He won four German titles with Bayern in 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2008.

IN BRIEF

Messi can't win games on his own

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona ace Lionel Messi has pleaded for his Argentina teammates to pick up the slack as their World Cup qualifying hopes hang by a thread.

The midfielder said: "We have good players in the national team and I cannot win a game alone."

"It is the responsibility of the entire team to go out there and beat the opponent."

Messi also rubbished claims that Argentina's players perform better for their European clubs because they're paid so well.

He added: "This is horrible. We all wear the jersey with pride."

Hamburg give Smolarek a trial

AFP, Berlin

Poland international Ebi Smolarek is being given a trial at Bundesliga leaders Hamburg as the German club look to replace knee-injury victim and Peru striker Paolo Guerrero, it was revealed Wednesday.

The 28-year-old wing or striker has been on trial in Hamburg since Tuesday while Hamburg trainer Bruno Labbadia checks on the form of the Polish star who is currently out of contract.

"We want to look at him over several days," said Labbadia.

Ronaldo ordered to take DNA test

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Dual World Cup winner Ronaldo has been ordered by a Brazilian court to take a DNA test to resolve a paternity dispute, the press reported here Wednesday.

The demand was made after a Brazilian resident of Singapore claimed the three-time FIFA Footballer of the Year was the father of her four-year-old boy.

Speaking about her child 27-year-old Michele Umrazu said: "His hair, his eyes, his nose are the same as Ronaldo's."

According to reports the woman had up to now believed her child's father was her ex-fiance, an American, but when he agreed to a paternity test it came back negative.

Michele Umrazu's mother told 'Quem' magazine that her daughter and Ronaldo had first met at the 2002 World Cup in Tokyo, meeting up again in August 2004, nine months before the baby was born.

Ronaldo, who turned 33 on Tuesday, already has two children - Ronald, aged nine, and nine-month old Maria Sofia.

The Corinthians-striker confirmed last month that he was expecting a third child in early 2010.



Real Madrid star Kaka celebrates his goal in trademark style during their Primera Liga encounter against Villarreal at the Madrigal Stadium on Wednesday.