

Trezeguet rescues Juve

AFP, Rome

Frenchman David Trezeguet came off the bench to score a late leveller as Juventus narrowly avoided slumping to a first defeat this season in a 2-2 draw at Genoa on Thursday.

Herman Crespo looked to have given Genoa a victory that would have moved them to within a point of the summit, but dreadful defending at a free-kick allowed Trezeguet to snatch the equaliser and ensure Juve boss Claudio Marchisio's unbeaten run as club coach continued.

The result, however, represented the end of the team's 100-per cent Serie A record.

Since taking over two games before the end of last season, Ferrara has led the Old Lady of Turin to six wins and two draws. Now they sit behind champions and leaders Inter Milan only on goal difference.

Ferrara said his team had deserved the three points and complained about two disallowed goals when close offside decisions went against his side.

"It's clear they weren't offside. I'm disappointed because games can change on these decisions and straight after we conceded a goal," he said.

"We played really well and today we deserved to win but even if it's a bad result it shows how we're on the right path."

Juve were off to a flying start as Vincenzo Iaquinta gave them the lead in their first attack of the game.

Claudio Marchisio got down the wing and played a low ball towards the edge of the box where Mauro Camoranesi ran over it leaving Iaquinta in space to shoot home into the bottom corner.

On 20 minutes Genoa opened up Juve in

much the same manner, but Brazilian midfielder Felipe Melo threw himself in front of the ball to block Giandomenico Mesto's shot.

The Turin giants should have gone further ahead on the half hour mark when Fabio Grosso's free-kick found Juve's strike pairing both free, but Amauri took the ball off the better-placed Iaquinta's head and put his effort wide of the upright.

Juve were immediately made to pay as Mesto rose above his marker to head Giuseppe Sculli's left wing cross beyond Gianluigi Buffon.

The visitors also started well after the break and twice came close in the opening minutes.

Marchisio tricked his way into the area but shot straight at Marco Aurelia, who then came to the rescue, rushing out to crowd Iaquinta and block his shot after the Italy forward had beaten the offside trap.

It was an entertaining game with both sides pushing forward for a winner and Sculli brought a fingertip save out of Buffon.

Iaquinta had the ball in the net 17 minutes from time when he headed home a Grosso free-kick but it was ruled out for the most marginal of offside decisions.

And just as in the first half, Juve were made to pay soon afterwards as Crespo got between centre-backs Giorgio Chiellini and Nicola Legrottaglie to head home Mesto's cross at the near post with a quarter of an hour to play.

Juve had the ball in the net again on 84 minutes through Chiellini but substitute David Trezeguet was penalised for offside in the build-up.

But moments later Juve finally made one stick from a free-kick as Genoa's woeful defence stood and watched a Grosso chip into the box for the third time as Chiellini headed across goal for Trezeguet to nod home from barely a yard out.



Juventus striker David Trezeguet (R) heads in the second goal against Genoa during their Serie A encounter at the Luigi Ferraris Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

A two-man show

AFP, Madrid



With just four games gone the Spanish league appears to have turned into

the Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo show with the two biggest football superstars in the world inspiring Barcelona and Real Madrid to a maximum 12 points.

Argentine Messi has scored five goals in three appearances to push Barcelona to the summit while Ronaldo, the world's most expensive player, has scored in every league game for Real with five goals from four outings.

Barcelona crushed Racing Santander 4-1 on Tuesday, with Messi scoring twice, and they are on the road again travelling to Malaga on Saturday.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic has struck up a real partnership with Messi and the Swede made history by becoming the first ever Barcelona player to score in each of his first four matches for the club.

"Ibra (Ibrahimovic) and I are getting to know each other but it is easy because of his quality," explained Messi. "I

have to get used to his movement as he does to mine, however, slowly but surely our understanding is developing."

Ibrahimovic is a doubt for the Malaga game after twisting his ankle against Santander so Thierry Henry may be asked to play as a central striker having done so on many occasions at Arsenal.

Four wins represents Barca's best start since 1998 but Real have matched the champions with 12 points in their best opening sequence since 1992.

Real host promoted Tenerife at the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday and the spotlight will be on

FIXTURES

Saturday
Real Madrid v Tenerife (1600 GMT), Athletic Bilbao v Sevilla (1600 GMT), Malaga v Barcelona (1800 GMT), Valencia v Atletico Madrid (2000 GMT)

Sunday
all 1500 GMT unless stated
Espanyol v Xerez, Real Mallorca v Valladolid, Osasuna v Sporting Gijon, Almeria v Racing Santander, Real Zaragoza v Getafe (1700 GMT), Deportivo La Coruna v Villarreal (1900 GMT)

Portuguese centre-back Pepe who makes his league return following the completion of a 10-match ban.

Sevilla lie third, three points behind the leading duo, going into Saturday's match at Athletic Bilbao who are level with them on nine points after a promising start to the campaign.

The feature game of the weekend is on Saturday when struggling Atletico Madrid travel to Valencia.

Atletico, fourth last season, sit second from bottom after failing to win any of their first four matches and coach Abel Resino has reportedly been given two games to save his job, starting at Valencia.

"I am calm and have not had an ultimatum of any sort," insisted Resino. "I will go to work with the team and look for solutions. One game can change everything."

Valencia lost 3-1 at Getafe on Wednesday as they tasted their first defeat of the season leaving them five points off the leaders.

Villarreal are the other Champions League hopefuls but they have had a wretched start with two points from 12 as coach Ernesto Valverde seeks his first win in charge at Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday.

Inter face Samp test

AFP, Rome



Champions Inter Milan travel to Sampdoria on Saturday in a match that will prove a solid test of both team's title credentials.

Sampdoria were the surprise early front-runners in Serie A until Wednesday's 2-0 defeat at Fiorentina, a result that saw Inter replace them at the head of the table following a 3-1 win over Napoli.

Inter have been gradually improving since their disappointing opening day draw at home to promoted Bari and a victory at high-flying Sampdoria, just three days before an exhausting Champions League trip to Kazan in Russia, would be a demoralising blow for the pretenders to their crown.

The omens were good for

Inter against Napoli as all three of their goals were scored by new signings and forward pair Diego Milito and Samuel Eto'o showed increasing signs of developing a growing understanding.

Meanwhile, Sampdoria came up short in their first stern test of the season in Florence where they could easily have lost by more.

Inter will be boosted by the return to the bench of coach Jose Mourinho who sat out a one-match touchline ban on

FIXTURES

Saturday
Livorno v Fiorentina, Sampdoria v Inter Milan

Sunday
AC Milan v Bari, Catania v AS Roma, Chievo v Atalanta, Juventus v Bologna, Lazio v Palermo, Napoli v Siena, Parma v Cagliari, Udinese v Genoa

Wednesday. That did not seem to affect the team too much though and the game was over as a contest after half an hour with Inter leading 3-0.

Inter will need to be wary as Juventus sit only behind them on goal difference in the table and face a home match against Bologna on Sunday.

AC Milan are sitting six points off the top having won only two of their first five games. They slumped to a 1-0 defeat at Udinese on Wednesday.

Milan host unbeaten Bari, who have already left the San Siro with a point once this season when they went to Inter on the opening day of the season.

Meanwhile, former Italy boss Roberto Donadoni is under pressure at Napoli, who sit only one place above the relegation zone after one win in their first five matches. They host little Siena in a game they must win.

Brazil name team for WC qualifiers

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil squad for World Cup qualifiers against Bolivia and Venezuela on October 10 and October 14 respectively.

Brazil have already qualified for the 2010 World Cup finals in South Africa.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Julio Cesar (Inter Milan/ITA), Victor (Gremio)

Defenders: Maicon (Inter Milan/ITA), Daniel Alves (Barcelona/ESP), Lucio (Inter Milan/ITA), Juan (AS Roma/ITA), Luisao (Benfica/POR), Miranda (Sao Paulo), Naldo (Werder Bremen/GER), Andre Santos (Fenerbahce/TUR), Felipe (Deportivo La Coruna/ESP)

Midfielders: Gilberto Silva (Panathinaikos/GRE), Sandro (Internacional), Lucas (Liverpool/ENG), Josue (Wolfsburg/GER), Elano (Galatasaray/TUR), Ramires (Benfica/POR), Alex (Spartak Moscow/RUS), Kaka (Real Madrid/ESP), Diego Souza (Palmeiras)

Attackers: Luis Fabiano (Sevilla/ESP), Adriano (Flamengo), Nilmar (Villarreal/ESP), Diego Tardelli (Atletico Mineiro)

Police drop Bellamy probe

AFP, London

British police have dropped an investigation into a clash between Craig Bellamy and a fan who ran onto the pitch in last weekend's explosive Manchester derby, a spokesman said Thursday.

The Manchester City player was warned by the Football Association after he responded to the fan by pushing him in the face on Sunday, while the police said they had launched a probe.

But a Greater Manchester Police spokesman said Thursday: "We have received no complaints about this incident and are currently not investigating the matter."

The fan involved will appear in court on September 30 charged with going on to a football playing area without lawful authority.

Gary Neville, a non-playing Manchester United substitute, was also investigated for his actions in celebrating the home side's winner by running down the touchline towards the City fans.

But the FA have decided against charging either player with improper conduct, in Bellamy's case because referee Martin Atkinson told FA officials that he would not have sent off the Welsh star had he seen the incident.

United won the match 4-3 with a Michael Owen goal deep in second-half injury time.

Drogba boosts Blues

AFP, London



Didier Drogba returns to action on Saturday as Chelsea look

to extend their winning start to their Premier League campaign to seven matches with victory at Wigan.

Even without Drogba, it would be a major surprise if Carlo Ancelotti's side failed to overpower Roberto Martinez's struggling Wigan side and move closer to emulating Chelsea's last title-winning side, which began the 2005-06 season with nine straight league wins under Jose Mourinho.

Drogba was carried off during last weekend's win over Tottenham but Ancelotti was relieved to discover the Ivory Coast striker was only suffering from a cramp rather than the more serious calf problem feared at the time.

Chelsea travel north with a three-point lead over champions Manchester United -- who travel to Stoke -- and a six-point cushion over a chasing pack made up of Liverpool, Manchester City, Aston Villa and Tottenham.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson's team selection at Stoke will be the subject of much attention with Michael Owen, after his last-gasp winner against Manchester City at the weekend and a lively display in the League Cup win over Wolves in mid-

week, pushing for a starting slot alongside Wayne Rooney.

Ben Foster's status as first-choice back-up for the currently-injured Edwin van der Sar could also be under threat following a midweek display from Tomasz Kuszczak that contrasted with Foster's nervy performance in the derby.

Regardless of their line-up, Rory Delap believes Stoke are capable of upsetting United at the Britannia Stadium, although he expects the champions to overhaul Chelsea over the course of the season.

"I cannot see past them as they have the experience of doing it," Delap said. "They have lost a couple of good players but have bought very well."

"Hopefully we can put a bit of a dent in them on Saturday, providing we play our own game and concentrate for the full match. If you switch off for a second they will punish

FIXTURES

(1400 GMT unless stated)
Saturday
Birmingham v Bolton, Blackburn v Aston Villa, Fulham v Arsenal (1630 GMT), Liverpool v Hull, Portsmouth v Everton (1145 GMT), Stoke v Manchester Utd, Tottenham v Burnley, Wigan v Chelsea
Sunday
Sunderland v Wolves (1500 GMT)
Monday
Manchester City v West Ham (1900 GMT)

you."

Arsenal's absence from the top six, albeit at an early stage of the season, means Arsene Wenger's side have little room for error when they make the short journey across London to Fulham on Saturday evening.

Like his old rival Ferguson, Wenger is mulling changes in the goalkeeping department with Polish teenager Wojciech Szczesny in line to displace Vito Mannone with Manuel Almunia laid low by a virus.

A Liverpool win over second-from-bottom Hull at Anfield would increase the pressure on beleaguered Tigers boss Phil Brown, who is being tipped as the first managerial casualty of the season.

Portsmouth are in even worse trouble than Hull after six straight defeats but midfielder Michael Brown insists morale has not been completely crushed at the south coast club.

"There are 32 games to go and we are four points away (from safety), so we've just got to relax and try and play our way out of it," Brown said ahead of Everton's visit to Fratton Park on Saturday.

Tottenham, who have lost to Manchester United and Chelsea in their last two outings, will expect to return to winning form at home to Burnley, who have yet to claim a point away from Turf Moor.

Manchester City are not in action until Monday, when they entertain West Ham.

IN BRIEF

Jagielka in knife-raid horror

AFP, London

Everton defender Phil Jagielka was confronted by knife-wielding burglars, the latest Premier League star to fall victim to gangs raiding the homes of soccer's super-rich.

The 27-year-old, who is currently injured, was watching his team on television on Wednesday when three men burst into the father-of-two's plush home in Knutsford, north-west England.

He was threatened with a knife and forced to hand over jewellery and the keys to his car.

"Three men gained entry to a house in Knutsford. The homeowner was threatened with a knife and forced to hand over jewellery and the keys to his Range Rover car. Fortunately nobody was hurt and the car was found abandoned a short distance away," said a police spokeswoman.

Toni remains exiled

AFP, Munich

Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni faces a second weekend of exile with Bayern Munich's reserves instead of spearheading the German giants' Bundesliga clash against league leaders Hamburg.

The 32-year-old striker had been told by Bayern coach Louis van Gaal that he will play for the reserves against Aue in the German third division, despite having featured for the first team for 30 minutes in the 5-0 midweek German Cup win against Oberhausen.

Diouf asked to apologise

AFP, Liverpool

El-Hadji Diouf has been urged to retract a claim that he was subjected to racial abuse while playing for Blackburn at Everton on Sunday.

Diouf, who is being investigated by Merseyside Police for alleged racial abuse of a 14-year-old ball boy at the match, had claimed that bananas were thrown at him by spectators.

But Everton insist there is no evidence to back up the Senegalese striker's claims. Club spokesman Ian Ross said: "I don't think there's a worse allegation in modern sport than racism and it works both ways. At the moment, and from my perspective, it looks like Mr Diouf is accusing Everton fans of racist behaviour."

"The police will tell you that is completely untrue and in such circumstances we would expect him to apologise and retract his allegations."



Celtic manager Tony Mowbray (L) poses with new signing China captain Zheng Zhi during a photocall at Celtic Park on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP